

CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS  
City Council Workshop  
City Hall  
2077 West Larpenteur Avenue

MINUTES  
April 7, 2021  
6:30 P.M.

**NOTE: THIS MEETING WAS HELD BY WEB CONFERENCE**

- A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:33 PM
- B. ROLL CALL: ANDREWS X GUSTAFSON X LEEHY X  
MIAZGA    WEHYEE X
- STAFF PRESENT: THONGVANH X WALTER X
- C. PRESENTATIONS:
- D. POLICY ITEMS:  
1. American Rescue Plan Act – Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (CLFRF)

Administrator Thongvanh

The act was signed by the Biden Administration on March 11 which included funding assistance for local government. The first round of funding from the CARES act went to public safety and safety improvements at City Hall. The funds from CLFRF would first be available to the City in May and would not expire until December 2024. The funds can be used for lost revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic due to loss of facility rental and sewer fund revenues. The City could also transfer funds from the CLFRF to other organizations such as NYFS. A third option is investment in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

Any assistance that the City would offer residents for housing would need to be closely administered so that it does not disqualify the applicant for assistance through other agencies.

Council Member Wehyee

How soon we can expect information on the use of these funds?

Administrator Thongvanh

I've been requesting clarification from the LMC and MMB, as well as our auditors. We want to prepare for this. The last round of funding was more chaotic but this round of funding allows more time to get prepared for the use of funds.

2. Stop Sign Update

Administrator Thongvanh

In 2019 the Council received a request for a stop sign in the Northome neighborhood. Staff worked with the City engineer and based on data analysis, it was determined that a stop sign would not meet standards. Council then directed staff to research lowering the City speed limit on residential streets to 20mph.

In the packet is data from a speed study as well as a memo from our City attorney about the process of reducing the speed limit to 20mph.

Jesse Freihammer, City Engineer

Stop signs are designed to determine who should get the right of way. A lot of research has been done regarding stop signs, much of which indicates that they are not intended to control speeds. We really want to use these signs when it's going to be effective and avoid sign pollution. The current stop signage in the Northeast and Southeast quadrants is consistent and organized in a basket weave formation with stops every other block. We also want to be consistent with the reasoning used in decisions around stop signs in the past. Any one stop sign isn't going to create drastic problems but the concern is that the City is setting a precedent and requests in the future may be difficult to deny using the same logic.

Council Member Wehyee

I appreciate the research that went into the speed study and understand the argument. I nevertheless do support the stop sign because I think there's something important about giving residents the peace of mind regardless of what the science says. Also, I'm not convinced about the snowball effect because I think Council could assess each request as they are brought forward.

Mayor Gustafson

Would we then adopt a policy that says we abandon our efforts to standardize and do research on issues to support decisions?

Council Member Wehyee

What I was suggesting is that when issues come up, Council considers them and determines what they think is best.

Mayor Gustafson

That's what we did in requesting this research and analysis. What kind of standard do we use to apply citywide?

Council Member Leahy

What I'm hearing is that whatever our decision is, it's going to impact what we do in the future. Either we set it up like a petition process or we use the research and resources of our staff to provide a recommendation based on the data.

Administrator Thongvanh

Best practices for all communities in Minnesota is to use fair standards to make determinations, such as use of speed studies, traffic volume, traffic incidents. Staff would then make decisions based on the data and the recommendations of subject matter experts.

Council Member Wehyee

Does the City have a policy that establishes this to be the policy? The conversation is being framed as if this is already the process.

Administrator Thongvanh

We don't have policies for everything. We have to focus on the most reasonable process to run city government. If this is something that the council feels it is important to have a policy on, then I agree that we should create one so that we can be consistent.

Council Member Andrews

I can't imagine having a policy along the lines of "if we have five requests we'll put in a stop sign." In that case it's going to be driven by the residents that want it, and that varies depending on who is there. I support changing the speed limit to 20, I think that would help. For me, I don't need more info. In the speed study, there were not a lot of people that were speeding but there were a lot of people that were exceeding 20mph.

Council Member Leahy

I just know from today, I am more convinced that putting in the stop sign will not solve the problem but lowering the speed limit will. I appreciate the clarification on the Council's request to our engineer to do a speed study. I'm in favor of us denying the stop sign.

Mayor Gustafson

My opinion has not changed; the data does not support the sign but it does support a 20mph speed limit throughout the City. I'm fearful of ignoring the expertise of our staff.

Council Member Andrews

I agree.

Council Member Leahy

I agree that we need to work on changing the speed limit and not install the stop sign.

Jesse Freihammer, City Engineer

We have to do traffic counts for some of the state aid roads. We can do another study this year of the intersection in question, it's not a significant amount of work.

Administrator Thongvanh

It might be a good practice to do the study after the 20mph change so that we know the true effect of it.

Council Member Andrews

I do think we should go ahead with the speed limit because that would show our residents that we are taking their concerns seriously.

Council Member Wehyee

There are a number of residents attending the meeting, I think we should let them speak.

Administrator Thongvanh

This would be up to the Council to decide.

Mayor Gustafson

I am not in favor of allowing residents to speak at this time. There time allowed during the community forum at our regular council meetings. Workshops are a time for Council to work with staff on issues.

Council Member Wehyee

There have been instances we have allowed community input at Council workshops. I'm disappointed that the Council won't allow them to speak.

Administrator Thongvanh

When we have allowed this in the past its usually been City staff making comment, such as when we had input from firefighters. This time is supposed to be for staff to get feedback from council on how to move forward with different agenda items.

Jesse Freihammer, City Engineer

I do have a few slides to share about the speed limits. Lower speed limits are less fatal to pedestrians. This will only apply to neighborhood roads as most of the main roads are under MnDOT or County jurisdiction.

Mayor Gustafson

Alright, if we have experts from the public that want to speak, let's hear them now.

Administrator Thongvanh

We will now take some feedback from the public. Please raise your hand and we'll bring you into the meeting.

Elizabeth Penrod, 1468 Idaho Ave W

I am one of the community members that has been asking for a stop sign at Iowa and Pascal. One of the concerns is that people turn from Hoyt onto Pascal and then speed to Larpenteur. Adding a stop sign would prevent this.

Mayor Gustafson

Thank you for your input.

### 3. Police Services Update

Administrator Thongvanh

The Council was notified in September 2020 that policing costs would increase through our contract with the County by \$350,000 annually. We've been researching alternative agencies, and St. Paul has expressed interest. Working with St. Paul for policing would provide additional benefits in the conversation around a 20mph speed limit because the officers would have consistency with enforcing these same speeds in St. Paul.

Sheriff Fletcher of Ramsey County told us that he would provide notice by January 2021 of the increase in costs. In reality, I did not receive a letter from Ramsey County. I was also not aware that Sheriff Fletcher was in communication with St. Paul regarding our policing services. Staff are working with St. Paul on the numbers in the contract, I'm hoping to get a contract for review in the next couple of months. There will likely be an increased cost initially, but in the long term, the cost will be lower.

I also included a letter sent by the City of Little Canada to Sheriff Fletcher; they are considering alternative agencies for law enforcement. Their council has voiced concerns of transparency and communication regarding critical issues.

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#### 4. Fire Department Equipment Sale

##### Administrator Thongvanh

I have been in conversations with a company that could help sell one of the fire trucks. I got an appraisal and the truck is worth more than initially thought.

#### 5. City Events and Facility Rentals

##### Administrator Thongvanh

The City has received a number of requests to use City Facilities, specifically by organized groups that would like to use City Hall such as the Falconeers senior card club and the Taekwondo program. I am comfortable allowing the building to be used for these purposes, assuming City Hall would remain closed for walk-in services. We've been operating under an appointment-only model since last spring and I have not heard any complaints. Our permits and licensing have been done electronically via our website and email.

##### Council Member Leehy

We may need to allow time between uses for staff to disinfect the surfaces, this could be added to the fee we charge for rental of the space.

E. INFORMATION/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

F. ADJOURNMENT: 9:23 PM



Randall C. Gustafson, Mayor

Dated this 7th day of April, 2021



Sack Thongvanh, City Administrator