

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

MINUTES

November 29, 2023
7:30 P.M.

- A. CALL TO ORDER: 8:03 p.m.
- B. ROLL CALL: GUSTAFSON__x__ LEEHY__x__
MEYER__x__ WASSENBERG__x__ WEHYEE__x__
- STAFF PRESENT: LINEHAN__x__
- C. POLICY ITEMS:
1. Law Enforcement Contract Update

Linehan started by sharing the developments that led to the City Council’s decision to reach out to the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Office following their November 15th, 2023 meeting. On November 28th, the City received a letter from Sheriff Bob Fletcher outlining what would be required for the City to continue to receive police coverage in 2024.

Linehan goes on to share that per the letter, the City has until Friday, December 1st to respond. The City had expected the letter based on the conversations with the Undersheriff at the Contract Communities Committee meeting.

Linehan shared that a draft response to the Sheriff is provided to the Council. The City could generally accept all of the terms outlined by the Sheriff, except the requirement for \$10M in liability coverage. Negotiations with the City of St. Paul for policing services fell through with the issue of liability – the League of MN Cities, the City’s insurance provider, could not provide that level of coverage. \$4M is the City’s current policy limit.

Council Member Meyer stated that it was unfortunate that a deal couldn’t be finalized with St. Paul, but understood that liability was an issue.

Mayor Gustafson said that the letter was expected, but the cost increase of 30% will be a significant requirement for the budget.

Linehan responded that the City had budgeted \$1.6M for police, expecting that a potential return to the RCSO would be more expensive than other contracting options. The City could increase the police budget up to \$1.7M by redirecting some of the local government aid (LGA) funds from capital to the general fund.

Gustafson stated that it was the best option available. St. Paul would have been a good option and the City tried everything they could to make it work, but could not accept full liability for

St. Paul Police officers beyond our liability insurance coverage. A claim could risk bankrupting the City.

Council Member Wehyee asked what other options the City may have. Linehan stated that he drafted a letter to Mayor Carter and the St. Paul council that would request St. Paul consider providing emergency mutual aid to Falcon Heights. The proposed compensation would be \$125K per month. This would be an interim consideration while the two cities worked on liability for a long-term option. Linehan stated it was not an ideal option for either party and would not provide liability protection for St. Paul. It was a "hail mary" approach that could potentially provide the City Council with an alternative if discussions with the Sheriff's Office didn't work.

Council Member Leehy asked if this approach could complicate the tight timeline of working with the RCSO. Linehan stated that it would.

Council Member Wassenberg stated that as it currently stood, there was only one offer for providing police services to Falcon Heights: the RCSO. He felt that the best option for the City would be to respond to the Sheriff by the December 1st deadline. Having coverage on January 1st, 2024 was the primary goal, and other options may muddy that.

The Council shared their consensus with Wassenberg's statement.

Linehan stated he would work on an updated draft response for the Council to review on Thursday, with the goal of getting the Sheriff a response letter before Friday's deadline.

Linehan asked if the City Council could designate a representative authorized to negotiate a contract with the Sheriff's Office.


Mayor Gustafson stated that he wouldn't be the right person due to the potential conflict of interest with his employment at the Sheriff's Office.

Council Member Wassenberg volunteered to be the representative. The Council supported the idea unanimously.

Linehan stated an email would follow the next day with the draft contract.

D. ADJOURNMENT: 9:05 p.m.

Councilmember Leehy motions to adjourn the meeting; approved 5-0


Randall C. Gustafson, Mayor

Dated this 10th day of January, 2024


Jack Linehan, City Administrator