

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

MINUTES
Wednesday, February 7, 2024
6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:33 PM

B. ROLL CALL: GUSTAFSON_X_ LEEHY_X_
MEYER_X_ MIELKE_X_ WASSENBERG_X_

STAFF PRESENT: LINEHAN_X_ VAN DER WERFF_X_

C. POLICY ITEMS:

1. Goff Public - Media Training

Administrator Linehan introduces Sara Swenson from Goff Public who has been working on messaging about the potential partnership with St. Anthony Village Police Department (SAPD). She will help prepare for the upcoming joint workshop.

Sara Swenson, from Goff Public, notes she has been planning for the press release that went out on Monday, February 5. They also assisted with conversations with various identified stakeholder prior to the press release. Lastly, the message was brought out to the public on social media and through press releases to all major news outlets in the Twin Cities. Some might attend in person and virtual at the joint workshop. Swenson adds that a recap of the meeting will be released on Friday and what next steps are.

Councilmember Wassenberg appreciates the FAQ, they were very thorough.

Administrator Linehan notes both City Councils will take their own roll call. Both mayors will have an opening statement, both City Managers will be present as well. They further discuss the details and operations of the workshop.

Mayor Gustafson adds there will be a one sheet handout available to inform residents of the difference between a regular meeting and a workshop. He informs that the SAPD is excited about the potential partnership, but also has their reservations. A number of new officers are not familiar with working in Falcon Heights. He is looking forward to rekindling the relationship.

Administrator Linehan requests that media requests are deferred to him.

Swenson notes reporters will likely take quotes from statements said during the meeting and for Council to take wording into account.

City Council discusses messaging, as words matter.

Administrator Linehan recaps some of the media coverage that was done by the news outlets. They all had different but positive narratives.

Swenson anticipates there will potentially be follow-up stories from news outlets after the joint meeting.

Administrator Linehan discusses how the policing analysis done by Center for Values-Based Initiatives in 2022 and 2023 ties into these partnership conversations and SAPD was identified as a potential partner.

Mayor Gustafson explains some of the details of the study done by Bostrom, such as call volume, nature of visits, etc.

City Council discusses current police visits and the importance of transparency of reporting.

Mayor Gustafson notes SAPD has done tremendous work in the community as has the St. Cloud Police Department.

Councilmember Meyer wonders about demonstrators.

Swenson states anything is possible. Therefore, having an outlet available, where people can express their feedback, is important to have and it's important to inform the audience of this. It's also possible that people will attend the Council Meeting on February 14 to speak during community forum.

Councilmember Leehy appreciates the help of Goff Public in getting ahead of the narrative by assisting with messaging and the press release.

Mayor Gustafson wonders about next steps after the joint workshop meeting, specifically community engagement.

Councilmember Mielke notes it's good to have various ways for people to provide feedback such as through a survey or a feedback form as some like to remain anonymous.

Councilmember Leehy adds there will most likely be separate town hall meetings done by both cities, so there will be various opportunities for people to attend.

Swenson cautions council that the full story should be told, while the economic part is a good argument, the development of the SAPF is also a good argument for Falcon Heights wanting to have conversations around a partnership.

Administrator Linehan adds that it logistically would also be beneficial for St. Anthony as only being in contract with Lauderdale is challenging for SAPD as it is somewhat of a drive. If they have officers in both Falcon Heights and Lauderdale it logistically makes more sense. Thursday's joint workshop focuses more on the relationship and not necessarily the economics of it. He explains that if this partnership does not work, the city would need to explore other options such as restarting conversations with a

neighbor or a hybrid department. The cost is not the only challenge that comes with that. Hiring and training officers is also becoming increasingly difficult in recent years.

Councilmember Wassenberg wonders if this is an opportunity to learn more about the St. Anthony Village Council and their police department.

Administrator Linehan states there are a lot of new faces and both parties will have to get to know each other. This partnership allows more say for Falcon Heights rather than just being part of developing a contract.

Councilmember Leehy notes that in the past, the Chief of SAPD was present at certain commission meetings that took place once a month in Falcon Heights.

Mayor Gustafson agrees, they were more involved in the community.

Councilmember Leehy adds they also organized safety events and held trainings to prepare residents who are interested in the police academy.

Council discusses neighborhood events that took place in Falcon Heights in previous years when SAPD was present.

Swenson adds that the City has done a lot of community engagement for policing already and so they are familiar with what the community is looking for in a police department and it is helpful to note that in the joint workshop.

Council discusses being realistic of what they will expect of the partnership with SAV.

Mayor Gustafson adds that every call an officer responds to is a community building opportunity and the forming of a relationship; SAPD is incredible at this aspect. The workshop is an opportunity to learn more about the new council members.

Swenson notes that Allison from Goff Public will be present to handle media inquiries. She adds that messaging matters, while staying true to yourself.

2. Community Park Redesign

Administrator Linehan notes it is important for everyone to be on the same page with the park redesign renderings. There is a public hearing scheduled for Monday, February 14 to give residents an opportunity to provide feedback. Following approval of the plans, WSB / HCM Architects will spend the next few months drafting the final plans for bid release. Goal is to have the building framed before winter, otherwise it will be pushed to 2025. He states the City hopes to release bids on Wednesday, February 28 for a construction manager at risk. This is essentially the general contractor to oversee the build of the project, very similar as how the City redoes the roads.

Councilmember Mielke wonders if budget estimates can be added as part of the February 14 meeting.

Councilmember Wassenberg comments that he attended the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on the past Monday and they discussed minor details of the design, but overall, they were satisfied with the major design of the building.

City Council states the plans and designs look great.

Administrator Linehan will present along with the consultants and hopes to approve the plans to trigger the next steps in the process.

Councilmember Meyer anticipates questions regarding tax increases and wonders if staff is able to help create scenarios of what the levy increase would be.

Administrator Linehan answers that the numbers that were estimated previously by staff for bonds are still available, but levy increases depend on the size and length of the bonds. He anticipates less of a levy impact than this year's levy increase was. It would be a couple percentage points increase, however certain debts will also be paid off by the time the levy would be introduced.

Councilmember Wassenberg clarifies that they would balance each other out.

Administrator Linehan adds it also depends on police costs. He is unsure of the costs of the potential partnership with SAPD.

Mayor Gustafson wonders if action needs to be taken on February 14 and about the plan for February 28.

Administrator Linehan answers that it is recommended for Council to approve the plans so the architects can spend the next couple of months drafting final building plans. It can be tabled but it will affect the timeline of the rebuild. Before the meeting on February 28, it will need to be determined if the City will utilize a general contractor at risk or bid everything out individually. The consultants and attorneys have different thoughts on what the best route is for the City.

3. Council Standing Rules Discussion

Councilmember Mielke notes that she spoke with various city managers, previous councilmembers and mayors and is proposing the language change for item B3 of the Council Standing Rules regarding the topic of Council Liaison. She suggests having a discussion between councilmembers during a December or January workshop followed by approval by a majority vote and to rotate assignments annually.

Councilmember Meyer comments this would force a rotation on an annual basis and he wonders if they could add language that members can continue to stay at their commission if that aligns with their interest.

Mayor Gustafson and Councilmember Wassenberg state it could include that it is recommended to rotate on an annual basis. It is good to learn about different commissions. The role of the liaison is to bring information from the commission back to the council and vice versa and not to direct the commission.

Councilmember Leehy adds that “recommended” and “encouraged” are good rather than “require it” for when a commission is working on a project towards the end of the year.

Councilmember Wassenberg agrees and believes that the Council Liaison is not there to direct the commission meeting. It would be helpful to clarify the role more in the rules and make it known to the commission as well.

Councilmember Mielke wonders if commission roles and the appointment process are clarified.

Administrator Linehan notes that each commission has their own set of standing rules.

Councilmember Meyer agrees with Councilmember Wassenberg about defining the role of the Council Liaison as it was not clear in his first year on the Environment Commission.

Councilmember Leehy states that they can participate, but not direct the meeting.

Councilmember Wassenberg is working on further defining the Council Liaison role.

Administrator Linehan notes that there is some language in City Code regarding commissions, but not about the appointment process. He adds that City Code does need to be updated to include some other details that are mentioned in the Administrative Manual. Council adopted the Administrative Manual policies many years ago, so they are still in effect, but need to be modernized.

City Council discusses the process of commission applications in previous years and how roles were appointed.

Councilmember Leehy provides an example of everyone on the commission should recruit commissioners.

Mayor Gustafson discusses how to do the appointments and if they should discuss at a workshop. He adds that it’s helpful to have input from Council on what commission they are interested in.

Council discusses the best approach.

Councilmember Wassenberg notes the liaison role is to serve as an information resource to the Commission and back to the Council.

Councilmember Leehy wonders if it can be added that liaisons can participate and bring ideas to the Commission.

Councilmember Leehy wants to ensure that it notes that it is a two-way form of information between the Commission and the Council.

Council recommend the role of the liaison to include: in the interest of fostering independent discussion among commission members. The role of the council liaison is not to direct the commission or steer debate or sway opinion, but rather to serve the commission as an information resource between the commission and council and to faithfully represent the discussion and recommendation of the commission back to the City Administrator and council. An additional change suggests adding to B4 number of meetings and events.

Administrator Linehan notes if standing rules are accepted, the revised document can be approved at the next City Council meeting. It would also be beneficial to have the appointment of the commissioners codified, but he recommends getting attorney involvement and having this discussed at a future workshop meeting as it is a longer process.

Mayor Gustafson explains the current process for commission applicants.

4. Council Appointments

Mayor Gustafson states he based the assignments on needs and expertise.

Councilmember Mielke states she is open to be on any commission.

Councilmember Wassenberg notes next year he is open to commission appointment that require daytime meetings but prefers to stay on the PARC this year

Councilmember Leehy is eager to be a liaison to the CEC after taking a break from serving as the chair as a commissioner.

Councilmember Meyer is interested in the Planning Commission, but is content with staying on the Environment Commission for the year.

Mayor Gustafson is interested in the Planning Commission after serving on it in the past as a commissioner. He notes it would not be bad to take a break from a commission assignment.

Councilmember Mielke will be able to be a liaison to the Environment Commission as well as the NineNorth Commission.

Councilmember Meyer will take over the liaison role of the Planning Commission.

Mayor Gustafson provides some of his experience with the Planning Commission.

Administrator Linehan proposes he could be a City representative for the Northeast Youth and Family Services Commission. After the presentation done by NYFS, he appreciates the vast services they provide and sees there is a need to offer those services in the City.

Councilmember Wassenberg will be able to attend NYFS throughout the year with Administrator Linehan as alternate.

Councilmember Mielke wonders if this will be approved on the next Council Agenda.

Councilmember Leehy answers yes.

5. State Fair Task Force Next Steps

Administrator Linehan states that members from the Task Force presented their findings and provided future recommendations to the City Council on January 10, 2024. The Council should now discuss the next steps. One item is creating a pedicab ordinance. Another item to discuss is the marking of the *no parking* within 30 feet of stop signs as this is a year-round rule and not just during the State Fair.

Councilmember Leehy notes these signs are helpful for everyone, as many might not be aware. She wants to follow Public Works' direction of this.

Administrator Linehan notes he prefers temporary signage as that stands out more than permanent signs. He adds the next step is to operationalize some of the recommendations and get an idea of how to implement it.

Councilmember Leehy likes having a resident task force as they were very effective and residents are the most impacted.

Councilmember Wassenberg makes a clarification to no sale of parking on lawns or permeable surfaces to state residential lawns and impervious surfaces/driveways.

Councilmember Mielke suggests further defining kid lemonade stands.

Administrator Linehan notes rules explained in the Administrative Manual are tough to be enforced by law enforcement and should be codified.

Councilmember Meyer suggests it could state concessions sales by a minor.

Council discussed how to further define the language without opening a can of worms.

Mayor Gustafson suggest kids' beverage stands.

Administrator Linehan wonders if Council wants to approve the report and further operationalize and create policies out of some of the recommendations as the report alone has no enforceable policies.

Council further discusses next steps of the State Fair recommendation.

Councilmember Leehy likes the idea of having a task force as it is effective.

Council discusses details of the task force, such as how often they should meet, number of members, sunset date, etc.

Administrator Linehan explains that Council can officially accept the report as a consent agenda item.

Councilmember Mielke adds that a number of the task force members would like to reapply as they felt that the work is not done.

Council likes the idea of having a State Fair Task force again to continue to work on State Fair related issues. They then discuss having temporary signage during the car show at the Fairgrounds. Lastly, they discuss how to add it to the agenda. The task force would be a 2-year term, they will meet 10-12 times a year or more, as needed. The task force will sunset in December of 2025 and it will have up to 10 members from various neighborhoods.

6. Future Agenda Items

Councilmember Mielke comments she does not want to lose track of the Falcon Heights Special Assessment Policy.

Administrator Linehan notes after the 2025 PMP in Falcon Woods is completed, all roads in the City will have been redone and assessed. He notes that the policy might need to be amended for Falcon Woods as the layout is different than other neighborhoods in the City.

Lastly, they discuss scheduling the Council retreat.

D. ADJOURNMENT: 9:45 PM

Mielke motions to adjourn the meeting; approved 5-0

DISCLAIMER: City Council Workshops are held monthly as an opportunity for Council Members to discuss policy topics in greater detail prior to a formal meeting where a public hearing may be held and/or action may be taken. Members of the public that would like to make a comment or ask questions about an item on the agenda for an upcoming workshop should send them to mail@falconheights.org prior to the meeting. Alternatively, time is regularly allotted for public comment during Regular City Council Meetings (typically 2nd and 4th Wednesdays) during the Community Forum.


Randall C. Gustafson, Mayor

Dated this 28th day of February, 2024


Jack Linehan, City Administrator