

CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS
City Council Joint Town Hall Meeting

Falcon Heights City Hall
2077 West Larpenteur Avenue

MINUTES

Wednesday, April 17th, 2024
6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:32 PM

B. ROLL CALL:
Falcon Heights
City Council

GUSTAFSON_X_ LEEHY_X_
MEYER_X_ MIELKE_X_ WASSENBERG_X_

St. Anthony Village
City Council

WEBSTER_X_ DOOLAN_X_ JENSON__RANDLE__
STEPHENS_X_

STAFF PRESENT:

Falcon Heights LINEHAN_X_ NELSON_X_ VAN DER WERFF_X_
St. Anthony Village YUNKER_X_

C. POLICY ITEMS:

1. Joint town hall meeting with the St. Anthony Village City Council to present the results of community engagement efforts and hear from the public regarding a potential police partnership.

Mayor Gustafson states this town hall is an opportunity for our two cities to share the results from the public engagement process to date, as well as an opportunity to hear from the community on the potential partnership. He then outlines the agenda for the evening and explains the rules of the town hall.

Administrator Linehan provides background information about the exploration of renewing a police services partnership with St. Anthony Village. He explains St. Anthony Village currently provides contract policing services to the City of Lauderdale and previously provided contract law enforcement services to Falcon Heights from 1994 through 2017. The former policing partnership with Falcon Heights was highly valued in both communities. The contract with Falcon Heights was terminated by both communities following the shooting death of Philando Castile by a St. Anthony Police Department (SAPD) officer in July 2016. Falcon Heights has contracted with the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office since January 2018, and the contract will expire at the end of 2024. Falcon Heights is seeking a long-term fit for its policing services beginning in 2025. The SAPD is currently authorized for 20 sworn officers, increasing to 22 on July 1, 2024. If the partnership moves forward, St. Anthony Village will add additional positions to support the expanded area while maintaining the high level of service the St. Anthony Village and Lauderdale

communities currently receive. Linehan describes the process as divided up into stages and they are currently in phase 2, stakeholder input, to gather and analyze the feedback received from both communities and the police department. Allison Winters from Goff Public will provide an outline of the stakeholder process and some common themes.

Winters explains that Goff Public has been providing both cities with communications and engagement support. The engagement period began in March and to date, it included online surveys with about 450 total responses. The survey was promoted through various platforms. There were also 4 open houses, 2 in each city. There was a period of door-knocking and discussions at community meetings by City Council members and staff, as well as dedicated engagement with SAPD officers. This week there are the 2 town halls to provide updates. Winters provides key themes from survey responses. Potential benefits identified by both communities are proximity between the two, increased capacity for SAPD, and financial benefits. She notes many respondents felt more information was needed to fully identify benefits and some saw no potential benefits. The top themes in Falcon Heights are community-based policing and an increased level of service. Both communities were asked to provide questions and concerns. Common topics are SAPD staffing levels, trust, cost, policing style, and current St. Anthony Village and Lauderdale residents who don't want to see a decrease in current levels of service as a result of the potential partnership.

Dr. Weinstein, president of Ethical Leaders in Action, Inc. specializes in engagement with public safety. He explains the SAPD reached out for engagement with the police department, not to influence any decision-making. He is very impressed with the SAPD, specifically their commitment, professionalism, and compassion exhibited in their work. He continues to explain their confidence and eagerness to learn and improve. The SAPD has a high degree of trust in their city and departmental leadership. Dr. Weinstein interviewed everyone at SAPD and rode along for two nights. When discussing the potential partnership renewal there were various perspectives, some have strong reservations, and some are extremely enthusiastic. All noted that if the partnership is pursued it should be done right and certain operational and relationship concerns should be addressed.

City Manager Yunker provides a preliminary staffing and contract approach. Staff believes a total of 9 additional personnel is needed to service Falcon Heights and to maintain service levels in St. Anthony Village and Lauderdale. This would consist of 4 patrol officers, 2 swing shift patrol officers, 1 investigator, 1 community engagement officer, and 1 person for administrative support. Yunker then provides the methodology utilized to determine a contract price. They allocated costs based on a 50/50 blend of population percentage and call volume percentage, which was then applied to the total police costs. For population numbers, the 2020 US census was utilized. For calls for service, St. Anthony used their numbers and collected numbers from the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office for Falcon Heights aligned to St. Anthony Village practices. Based on this draft methodology, a preliminary contract price would be \$1.6 - \$1.8 million. Yunker explains each City Council will discuss moving to the next step at their upcoming regular meeting.

Mayor Gustafson opens the public comment of the town hall meeting.

- John Blair – 1582 Vincent St. Wonders what the current situation is and how this proposal would compare to the existing service with Ramsey County Sherriff's Office. He also wonders if there have been conversations with Roseville or St. Paul. He would like to know what community-based policing entails. Lastly, he explains why he is cautious of the potential partnership.
- Michael McGregor – 1884 Sheldon St. Suggests St. Anthony Village charges more money. He shares an example that ambulances currently take two years to order and receive. If SAV would happen to need a new patrol car, he says he wants them to have the finances. He adds that if something were to happen, both cities need to step up. He wonders who the mutual aid partners are and how long does it take to respond from St. Anthony Village to Falcon Heights.
- Tom McNinch – 1508 Iowa Ave. W. He would like St. Anthony Village to know Falcon Heights is not anti-police. It's not who the police are, but what they do. He is open to the partnership and believes Falcon Heights would have more influence on a smaller agency than a larger one.
- Bob Haight – 1477 California Ave. W. Haight wants to emphasize relationship concerns and the need to build mutual trust between the community and the police. This needs to be addressed professionally and carefully.
- Cheryl Pray – 1771 Arona St. Wonders what the distance is from St. Anthony Village to the farthest point in Falcon Heights. She also wonders how will the gap in time be managed from 2025 to 2026/2027. Lastly, she wonders about a plan for accommodating the state fair.
- Gary Tournier – 2261 Folwell Ave. He appreciates St. Anthony Village for showing an interest in providing police services to Falcon Heights.
- Farook Meah – 1597 Hollywood Ct. He tells a story of when he was profiled and pulled over, accused of speeding. His wife was pulled over and accused of drinking. Meah explains they are Muslims and do not drink. He has lived in Falcon Heights for 40 years and has seen several police departments during that time and would like to see properly trained officers.
- Sara Bancroft – 1878 Pascal St. N. She is appreciative of the footwork. Bancroft's biggest concern is communication and she gets the impression St. Anthony Village is defensive, which causes concern that they may not own what happened in the past and want to move forward. Bancroft asks about the possibility of forming our own department.
- Nancy Peterson – 1442 Iowa Ave. W. She loved having SAPD and never felt personally threatened. Peterson talks about past practices involving profiling she heard neighbors went through under St. Anthony Village previously. She appreciates the work and training they have done and is more than happy to welcome them back.

- Frank Crowley – 1769 Snelling Ave. N. Wonders if there will be cost savings if Falcon Heights decides to go back to St. Anthony Village. Crowley is unaware of any problems with Ramsey County Sheriff's office that would make us want to look elsewhere.
- Sharon Castle – 1891 Pascal St. N. Castle is involved with the Philando Castile Peace Garden. Castle is not anti-police. She feels this is an opportunity to see how the two communities have grown and if they can build something positive out of it.
- Wendy Noble – 1539 Crawford Ave. She appreciates the willingness of both cities to discuss this because there has been a lot of hurt on both sides. She is in support of the partnership.
- Bob Haight – 1477 California Ave. W. Haight thanks both councils.

Mayor Gustafson thanks residents for providing feedback. Both Councils will further discuss the potential partnership at their next scheduled meetings.

Councilmember Leehy motions to close the Public Hearing by consent

Councilmember Leehy notes the decision to end the contract with the St. Anthony Police Department was done by the Council. She is appreciative of everyone's input and comments, specifically that the SAPD was able to provide input as well. She adds this time around there is a lot more involvement in the development of not only a contract but a relationship as well.

Mayor Gustafson explains Falcon Heights wants to be transparent in its policing needs. The Ramsey County Sheriff's Office (RCSO) has been providing policing services since 2018. The City and the RCSO agreed that Falcon Heights should explore law enforcement options that are a better long-term fit, primarily for logistical reasons. There have been various conversations with neighboring cities and Falcon Heights also partnered with the Center for Values-Based Initiatives in 2022 and 2023 to analyze policing needs. Many residents expressed that they missed the level of services previously provided by the SAPD and appreciated the department's community-based policing approach. At the start of 2024, both parties decided to start exploring renewing the police service partnership. They also felt community engagement and feedback were needed before deciding to proceed with a partnership.

Mayor Webster is appreciative of the transparent process that was created to explore this partnership and learn from all stakeholders involved. She thanks Falcon Heights community members for sharing their feedback and comments. She also notes it is great to see alignment in the survey data.

Councilmember Meyer explains Falcon Heights Council had the opportunity to meet with members of the SAPD. The proactive policing practices stood out to him and he provides examples of the practices that he aligns with community policing. He also explains their training practices on how to deal with mental health issues.

Councilmember Mielke thanks all residents who partook in the survey and participated in community conversations. She encourages residents to continue to provide feedback.

Councilmember Wassenberg is appreciative of the preliminary staffing and contract approach as he believes it will help improve the level of policing for all communities.

Mayor Gustafson explains the answers to questions from the Town Hall will be provided as part of the agenda packet of the next City Council meeting and this can be found on the City's website as well as budgeting documents. Both City Councils will discuss the next steps at their next scheduled meetings.

Administrator Linehan further explains that staff will gather questions and that some answers might not be directly found in the agenda packet as some are bigger philosophical questions. They will help guide the City Council in their discussion to consider moving forward with the partnership at their next scheduled meeting.

Councilmember Leehy wants to add business owners and managers in Falcon Heights as a stakeholder in the process. Time was set aside to reach out to them and provide the opportunity to provide feedback. She also wonders about the role of the community engagement officer.

City Manager Yunker notes they have not written out in detail yet, the job duties of the community engagement officer.

D. ADJOURNMENT: 8:03 PM

Councilmember Mielke motions to adjourn;
Approved 8-0

Dated this 22nd day of May, 2024



Jack Linehan, City Administrator



Randall C. Gustafson, Mayor