

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

**MINUTES**

Wednesday, November 6, 2024  
6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:30 PM

B. ROLL CALL: GUSTAFSON\_\_X\_\_ LEEHY\_\_  
MEYER\_\_ MIELKE\_X\_\_ WASSENBURG\_X\_\_

STAFF PRESENT: LINEHAN\_X\_\_ JOHNSON\_X\_\_ LYNCH\_X\_\_ OLSON\_X\_\_

C. POLICY ITEMS:

The Snelling and Larpenteur Corridor Study was moved to Policy Item 1 to accommodate the presentation by the consultant WSB.

1. Snelling and Larpenteur Corridor Study Draft Plan Review

Community Development Coordinator Lynch explains after gathering feedback a final draft plan was created format of the Larpenteur Corridor Study. Kim Lindquist, from WSB, will provide updates.

Lindquist shows the entire Larpenteur and Snelling study area. She explains that Larpenteur Ave. is the main focus as Snelling Ave is a state road and has many regulations, a majority also abuts the fairgrounds. Even though traffic on Larpenteur is a big concern for residents, this study is also more focused on land use, rather than transportation, because Larpenteur is a road maintained by Ramsey County.

Areas are the private ownership areas identified.

Lindquist explains the public engagement process. She explains renters might not have been engaged as much during the project as they are harder to reach. Survey participation was higher than in other cities. Residents like the current development pattern of small and local business owners and city feel of housing. There is an understanding the city needs to create opportunities for new families, which is a focus of the study, to identify opportunity areas. Lindquist explains that 4 areas along the corridor were identified.

Area 1 - Golf Course

Lindquist explains this is a good opportunity and there is a strong interest in keeping the space open. She shows some of the concepts. The University of Minnesota is the current owner and has expressed reservations about the details of land use, they don't want the public to think, this is the direction it will go in. They don't want to advocate

any concept per se. The recommendation in the study is if it becomes available the city should further research a master plan of the area that would

#### Area 2 - Larpenteur and Lindig St.

Lindquist explains redevelopment should be explored. This could be townhomes or a small apartment building.

#### Area 3 – Warners’ Stelian Site.

Lindquist notes many see the parking lot is not being utilized and can be confusing for shoppers. Some proposals are a restaurant or another small property north of the building. They also looked at cleaning up the parking lot pattern. Some more curbing and clearer striping would be helpful. Overall, it’s a prominent intersection in the city, the owners are happy with it and have no desire to further redevelop at the moment. These are opportunities to upgrade the area.

#### Area 4 is Falcon Town Crossing.

Lindquist explains this is an economically viable area. The parking lot is also very confusing, as there is a lot of traffic entering and leaving from various sides. During the study, they were trying to determine better access for the property, by for example removing one of the access points and potentially looking at making the drive behind it a one-way.

Lindquist sums up the recommendations:

- The golf course is a unique opportunity. She suggests bettering the relationship between the U of M and the City and creating common goals for when they do decide to dispose of the land. Lindquist encourages a master plan.
  - o Lindquist points out that the community is very interested in the golf course site. They want to ensure open space remains and there is a mix between small businesses, residential, and some higher density.
- The community is interested in more development along the corridor and wants to ensure consistency with adjoining properties.
- Make people feel more confident and safe walking and biking along the corridor
- Ensure ordinances are up to date for redevelopment.
- Falcon Heights can take a more proactive approach on redevelopment sites.
- Look at the financial benefits of redevelopment such as grants, TIF districts, and low-interest loans.
- Prioritize redevelopment sites.
- Long-term: support home-based businesses on the east side of Snelling.

Councilmember Meyer wonders if business members have participated in the study, what the reaction has been, and if there are plans to share it. Lynch answers they have not seen the draft. There was a business meeting in March, however, it was during a winter snowstorm, so there was a low turnout. She also mailed every business owner in the city and has seen low turnout or information. Linehan explains the full version will be shared after council approval. Staff had an individual meeting with the University. They don’t have current plans to dispose of the land and this does not match their vision. This is to envision the community and not what an individual property owner wants.

Lindquist expressed that the business owners who attended are very proud of their

business.

Councilmember Mielke adds it was tough timing with the snowstorm.

Councilmember Wassenberg wonders if Warners' Stellan was open to adding space in their parking lot. Lynch notes they are pretty set on keeping that amount of parking. Regardless, the circulation of the lot is not great. The study will help formulate code to help direct development. Lindquist adds the study can help determine performance standards, such as parking, building materials, and height.

Lynch explains the Planning Commission is working to clarify city codes and streamline processes to make redevelopment more accessible and appealing to developers. Current challenges include the burdensome PUD process, which can deter developers, especially when projects face rejection. Clear codes and community-backed concepts are seen as key to attracting development and ensuring alignment with the city's future vision.

Linehan adds the areas the study did not consider were the Get Pressed property, Amber Flats, and the Blaze Credit Union property. Mielke adds the underutilized space in front of City Hall.

Lynch notes Approving the proposed plan would incorporate the community's vision into the 2050 comprehensive plan without altering zoning, offering a roadmap for future development and avoiding surprises by involving residents early in the process.

Mayor Gustafson appreciates the frequent referral to pedestrian and traffic safety. Even though it was not a focus of the study.

The Council thanks WSB.

## 2. 2025 Budget Workshop #4

Linehan explains the 2025 budget continues to be tweaked. Next up for discussion is the capital improvement budget.

### a. 2025 Capital Improvement Plan Budget

#### o Highlights:

- Largest capital plan: \$4.89 million
  - Community Park – Budget: \$3 million
    - o Prefab restroom/serving kitchen: \$825k
    - o Large prefab shelter: \$400k
    - o New playground: \$350k
    - o New parking lot: \$300k – include in 2026 PMP
    - o Splash pad: \$320k
    - o Indirect cost: \$450k
  - Falcon Woods reconstruction – 2025 PMP
    - o Early estimate: \$1.8 million. Linehan is hopeful to have more information by December when they will complete the feasibility report. Any alleys will be excluded from the project.
  - Machinery & Equipment: \$60k

- John Deere 1585: \$60k was approved for 2024, but funds were used for purchasing a used snowplow from the County instead. Linehan is requesting to purchase soon as there is a long wait.
- Current John Deere will be traded in, and has an estimated value of \$29k
- Lift Station #1 Pump replacement: \$15k
  - Linehan explains there are issues with the communication system in it. It's an important part of the sewer system. The replacement will be fully paid for by the sanitary fund.
- Upgrades to City Hall:
  - City-Hall Door upgrades: \$15k

b. 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan

- Linehan shows plans for the roads in Falcon Heights. He explains road maintenance is important because if neglected, it requires a full reconstruction. Mill & Overlay are cheaper than full reconstructions of roads.
- Ramsey County released their 5-year preliminary plan. Linehan points out 2 crossings and roads, such as Fairview Avenue have been brought up to the County as areas in need of improvement.
- Meyer wonders about improvements to Curtiss Field. Linehan notes he would recommend completing a Parks Master Plan first.
- Council discusses the potential of updating City Hall Chambers. Linehan agrees, it would be a good option for a 10-year plan. Wants to get more of a vision and feasibility of the chambers before budgeting for it.

3. Cannabis Regulations

Lynch points out that the law is not fully written by the state yet and questions remain. She explains the city has to allow at least one cannabis business in the city. There is the ability to limit operation hours and to prohibit operation from certain areas. The Planning Commission was in favor of buffers and limiting hours of operation. They recommend allowing it in the B3 zoning district. The City also can enact buffers, but they would not have much effect if only allowing cannabis business in B3. This would only matter if B-3 changes. The registration for a cannabis business will be treated similarly as liquor licensing.

Linehan explains that the buffers can change over time, however, they can become less restrictive but not more restrictive.

Mielke wonders about the Chelsea Heights elementary school, that's close to a little strip mall on Hamline. Lynch states that the area is zoned B-1.

Gustafson wonders if liquor stores are only zoned to B-3. Lynch answers yes.

Linehan notes it can be a lucrative business good for economic development.

Mielke wants to match buffers with St. Paul in consideration of Chelsea Heights.

Wassenberg wants to ensure the city would not get legally challenged if it's solely allowed in one zoning district. Lynch answers no, we do not need to create a specific zoning district.

Meyer feels a buffer is not needed as more restrictive regulations are in place. Wassenberg feels the same way. Restrictions are redundant if it's only allowed in one zone.

Gustafson: liquor stores are not buffered either. Limits one business to one zoning district. Lynch continues to explain the city can prohibit smoking at an establishment.

The council discussed regulations surrounding cannabis and related products, focusing on zoning, compliance, and licensing. Key points included:

- **Buffer Zones:** A 300-foot buffer from schools, similar to St. Paul, was agreed upon. The council noted the proximity of small businesses to schools, emphasizing the importance of thoughtful location planning for traffic and redevelopment.
- **Licensing and Compliance:** THC and hemp-based products require state licensing, with low-dose products exempt from registration. Liquor stores selling THC products already undergo compliance checks. Administrative fines will align with tobacco regulations, including penalties for unlicensed sales.
- **Zoning:** The moratorium on cannabis establishments halts new developments but doesn't cover hemp-based products. Zoning regulations will ensure businesses operate in appropriate areas, with no conditional use permits favored.
- **Special Events and Smoking:** Smoking cannabis on patios or at events is discouraged, and events must meet special event regulations. Definitions aligned with state law will be added to city codes.
- **Application Process:** The city must process applications within 30 days. A lottery system may be necessary if applications exceed capacity. Restrictions cannot limit when applications are accepted.

The council aims to balance state regulations with local considerations, ensuring clarity and enforceability while preparing for potential licensing delays from the Office of Cannabis Management.

#### 4. Apartment Outreach

Johnson explains The Community Engagement Commission (CEC) has identified the need for community outreach, specifically to residents of multifamily apartment buildings in Falcon Heights, to cultivate a sense of belonging. They want to hold individual events at apartments and are looking for availability from council members to join in. Council is very supportive of the idea.

D. ADJOURNMENT: 9:15 PM

*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](mailto: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.*



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Randall C. Gustafson, Mayor

Dated this 11<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2024



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Jack Linehan, City Administrator