

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

MINUTES
Wednesday, January 8, 2025
7:15 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 7:17 PM

B. ROLL CALL: GUSTAFSON_X_ LEEHY_X_
MEYER_X_ MIELKE_X_ WASSENBERG_X_

STAFF PRESENT: LINEHAN_X_

C. POLICY ITEMS:

1. City Commission Stipend Discussion

Linehan explains during the 2025 budget process, one of the council recommendations was to include a stipend for commissioners. This was included in the final budget at \$21,000 annually or \$50 per meeting, per commissioner as a budget figure. This calculation was used to determine a budget figure and is not final. Staff has been working on an implementation plan but had some questions for the Council.

- If a stipend is recommended, how much should it be and what commissions should be included (i.e. ad-hoc commissions or task forces included?)
- Should the pay be automatic, or only awarded based on attendance?
- Should officers receive a stipend at the same amount, or more to account for the additional work?

Linehan also explains staff has been researching the topic with the League of Minnesota Cities and the City Attorney. There were questions about the sick and safe time that the state introduced last year, but the attorney was able to clarify that this does not need to be tracked for commissioners, as they would not “work” more than 80 hours annually. Lastly, there are ordinances from other cities included for reference as well as current city code regarding city commissions. He points out this would be a good opportunity to update other aspects of the code related to commissions.

Wassenberg and Mielke comment it’s a good way to diversify commissions and encourage attendance by providing a stipend.

Gustafson wonders if an attendance record will need to be kept and by who. Linehan suggests a sign-in sheet at each meeting, and attendance is recorded in the minutes.

The council discusses that commissioners will receive the stipend if they attend the majority or duration of the meeting. There is no need to differentiate the amount for the chair versus other commissioners.

Mielke wants to be cognizant of ensuring commissions meet monthly. Leehy notes that sometimes the meetings fall on holidays, or they don't meet during the summer because there is no activity, and it would be forcing a meeting. It can be tricky to schedule an interim meeting due to the council chamber's availability.

Linehan comments attendance and meeting guidelines are in the standing rules of each commission.

Meyer looks at the stipend amount and feels \$50 is sufficient to cover a babysitter, for example. The council agrees.

The council wonders about income taxes and whether commissioners can be treated as independent contractors. Linehan answers that the direction from the League of Minnesota Cities is to treat commissioners as employees, and the stipend would be reportable income; they would receive a W2, similar to the council. Leehy suggests allowing the commissioners to not accept the stipend and just volunteer.

Wassenberg adds that commissioners should still receive the stipend even if there is no quorum and an unofficial meeting.

Leehy wonders about insurance and liability if commissioners are on the payroll. She also asks about off-duty responsibilities and whether there will be more onboarding guidelines, similar to council onboarding. Linehan answers that council members are not held to the standards of the personnel policies, but he is unsure about commissioners as they are appointed.

The council discusses the merits of annual or quarterly appointments of a group of commissioners and resignations. This would allow for a more robust onboarding. Leehy points out that often people don't want to wait too long to get appointed or they will fill their time with another activity. She also feels there is not enough competition for commissioner spots. The council discusses the onboarding process and keeping track of commissioners' individual terms. Wassenberg prefers having a commissioner's term start when they get appointed by the Council instead of doing annual or quarterly appointments.

Meyer agrees with Wassenberg on having terms start right away and wonders if the Council is open to changing the term limits. The council prefers to keep the term limits to ensure new commissioners with fresh ideas are brought in and others don't burn out.

The council discusses the publications of commission openings next. Linehan explains that until the council officially accepts a resignation, openings are not publicized. However, residents can submit an open application at any time. Leehy points out that one responsibility that should be clarified to all commissioners is to recruit other commissioners.

The council continues to talk about the benefits of quarterly or annual commissioner appointments. Linehan explains the current interview process and wonders if paying commissioners a stipend could make joining more competitive and provide more applicants. There are various ways to have the interview process. Leehy points out first rolling out the stipend and see if it creates more competition amongst commissioner

applicants. Wassenberg feels commissioners should start their term when they are appointed, and that should be used to compute their term. Linehan agrees with that update to the city code.

Mielke wonders about terms for youth commissioners and suggests allowing them to serve 1-year terms and giving them the ability to vote. Council agrees. They continue to discuss the resignation process because, without the formal resignation, the vacancy cannot be publicized and could hold up filling the position. Linehan believes that because they are appointed, the resignation cannot be handled administratively.

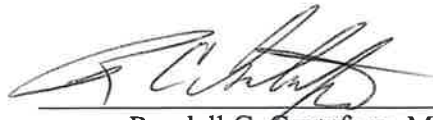
Leehy departed at 8:09 PM

Wassenberg brings the conversation back to the stipend discussions and wonders if other costs would significantly increase. Linehan believes that it would not be significant. The council is in consensus about the \$50 stipend.

Linehan notes this provides a good framework for staff to continue updating. He agrees the rules and requirements around youth commissioners should be spelled out better, especially regarding age and whether they will be receiving a stipend. Gustafson wonders whether we keep a spot open just for a youth commissioner or would they be additional. The council agrees that having a youth commissioner is a great addition.

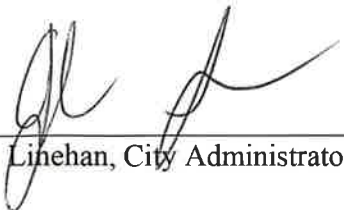
D. ADJOURNMENT: 8:23 PM

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 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 22nd day of January, 2025



Jack Linehan, City Administrator