

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

MINUTES

Wednesday, June 4, 2025
6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:34 PM

B. ROLL CALL: GUSTAFSON_X_ LEEHY_X_
 MEYER_X_ MIELKE_X_ WASSENBERG_X_

STAFF PRESENT: LINEHAN_X_ JOHNSON_X_

C. POLICY ITEMS:

1. Pay-by-Mobile Pass Distribution Discussion

Linehan provided an update following the May 14 City Council meeting, where the Pay-by-Mobile Parking Plan was approved. The State Fair Task Force (SFTF) has since reviewed implementation details, particularly around the distribution of the third and fourth parking passes. The recommendation is to issue these additional passes digitally, offering greater flexibility for both staff and residents. A hardship variance will need to be completed. When a hardship variance is requested – for situations like home health care – residents will complete a form that allows staff to assess the need for extra passes. Unlike physical hang tags, which require in-person pickup, digital passes can be issued remotely and customized for durations from 1 to 12 days. They are tied to license plates and automatically exempt vehicles from enforcement in applicable areas.

Key benefits of digital passes include:

- Lower cost (\$1 per pass vs. \$4–\$5 for physical tags)
- Easier to adjust or revoke, if needed
- Streamlined administration for staff
- Fewer logistical barriers for residents

Digital passes will not be used on north-south streets designated for resident-only parking permits. Concerns about enforcement were discussed. Physical passes that use a numbering system are more difficult to manage and verify, and stickers can be duplicated or forged. Digital passes allow for enforcement through license plate lookups. Ambassadors can verify compliance by checking ParkMobile records, which show the list of permitted vehicles per zone.

Meyer asked how digital passes would be distributed. Linehan explained that residents would receive a confirmation email with pass details – no app required. Vehicle and date information will be entered into the ParkMobile system by staff, and the pass will work in all designated zones.

Wassenberg noted that eliminating block-by-block zones could simplify enforcement. Linehan agreed, adding it would also improve data collection and ambassador efficiency. Signage will include a text-in option for ease of use.

Meyer and Linehan clarified that hardship passes are not transferable and must be requested in person. Meyer raised concerns about residents with limited mobility. Gustafson suggested these cases could be handled individually. Discussion also touched on the hybrid system:

- Residents receive physical hang tags
- Visitors and special cases use digital passes
- Residents can request digital alternatives if needed.

Meyer asked how large events (e.g., family reunions) would be handled if more than 4 passes are needed. Leehy acknowledged parking challenges are long-standing and not unique to the new plan. Mielke emphasized the importance of maintaining control over how many passes are distributed.

Leehy noted that while the new parking changes have drawn criticism, it's important to highlight the positive work of the SFTF. She suggested including a newsletter link summarizing SFTF outcomes to help the community see the broader effort. Gustafson added that the new system allows the City to better manage visitor parking during the State Fair and helps offset related costs. Mielke agreed and mentioned that little has changed in the overall parking policy. At the next SFTF meeting, State Fair leadership will attend, and members will begin auditing street parking patterns during the day and weekends.

Linehan concluded by noting that:

- A job posting related to enforcement will go out soon
- ParkMobile implementation has begun, including sign ordering and staff training
- There will be one-time startup costs, but the system is being built to be efficient, safe, and scalable
- In the future, the parking ambassadors may be able to issue citations, reducing the burden on law enforcement

2. Class and Comp Study – List of Cities

Linehan explained that the consultant strongly recommends the City Council approve the proposed list of comparable cities to be used in the upcoming Class and Compensation Study. The findings of the study will play an important role in the 2025 budget discussions. The consultant assisted in identifying comparable cities by considering several factors, including population size, number of full-time employees, and overall city budget. Because Falcon Heights has unique characteristics, the consultant also recommended including a set of "spotlight cities". These are not exact matches, but represent cities where staff may see potential career progression, offering insight into competitive positioning without skewing the data. During the discussion:

- Leehy and Wassenberg suggested including Lauderdale as a spotlight city.
- Meyer inquired about Arden Hills.
- Mielke raised a question about the differences between unionized and non-union workforces. Linehan noted that most of the comparable cities have one bargaining unit, making the comparisons still relevant.

Linehan emphasized that more recent and comprehensive data will be used in this study. The current dataset dates back to 2016 and is outdated. The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) salary dataset was also referenced and included in the materials. The updated plan will be tailored specifically for Falcon Heights, with flexibility in implementation and a focus on aligning pay ranges. Employees will gain transparency around where their position falls within the range and the progression opportunities.

Mielke suggested focusing on inner-ring suburbs of Minneapolis for stronger comparability.

Linehan added that Lauderdale recently completed a class and a comp study, providing relevant insights. The resulting plan will help staff understand their pay ranges and abilities for growth within the City structure.

Gustafson noted that the study will also support the City's compliance with state pay equity requirements.

3. 2025 Bond Series Review

Linehan shared that Ehlers will assist with the pre-sale process for two upcoming bonds—one for a road project and one for Community Park improvements. The road bond will be a General Obligation (GO) Improvement Bond, and is based on assessed property values, in accordance with city improvement laws. The park bond will be a Tax Abatement Bond, which involves selecting specific qualifying properties (e.g., rental buildings without TIF that meet a minimum value threshold) for tax abatement. Property owners will not be notified individually of the abatement.

The City plans to borrow a total of \$2 million—\$1 million for each bond. Debt service for both will be paid through the debt levy. Linehan presented the proposed repayment schedule:

- 10-year term for the street bond
- 15-year term for the park bond

In 2024, the City levied \$189,000 in debt service, which remains low for a municipality of this size. Under the new plan, the levy for the existing bond will end in 2027, allowing for a level debt levy over time and avoiding sharp increases. Additionally, the City will front \$1.5 million in cash for the park bond to support project timing. This bond issuance will be larger than past road bonds, but it sets the City up for sustainable financing of future projects. The City is also pursuing an updated credit rating—currently at AAA, due to strong reserves and consistent debt payments. Linehan emphasized the importance of maintaining this rating, noting that delaying a rating review can diminish lender confidence. The potential savings on interest will outweigh the costs of obtaining the rating.

Leehy asked whether the bonds would be sold together; Linehan confirmed they will be, as bundling them on the open bond market will likely secure better interest rates. This process functions similarly to an RFP.

Gustafson inquired if the bonds will be callable or able to be repaid early. Linehan

confirmed that is the intention again this year.

Wassenberg asked about the debt levy schedule. Linehan explained the figures are based on the City's financial planning. When asked about the coupon rate, Linehan deferred to Ehlers for details.

Linehan noted that tax abatement bonds are commonly used for facilities like parks or city halls, while general obligation bonds require a public vote, introducing uncertainty.

Gustafson asked if any major road construction is anticipated in the next two years. Linehan said that while full reclamation projects won't be necessary thanks to proactive pavement management, the City will need to plan for mill and overlay work, which is less costly. Keeping roads in good condition also helps the City qualify for a higher share of state aid, which is tied to maintenance quality.

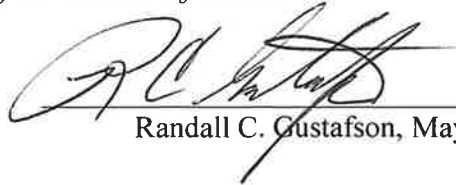
4. Future Agenda Items

Linehan noted that budget discussions will be starting in August. Items identified in the goal-setting documents will be incorporated into future workshop discussions. Additionally, staff will have a kickoff meeting with New Look Construction regarding the renovations at Community Park, and a timeline.

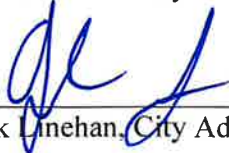
D. ADJOURNMENT: 8:03 PM

Councilmember Leehy 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 25th day of June, 2025


Jack Linehan, City Administrator