

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

MINUTES
Wednesday, October 1, 2025
6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:35 PM

B. ROLL CALL: GUSTAFSON__X__ LEEHY__X__
 MEYER__X__ MIELKE__ WASSENBERG__X__

STAFF PRESENT: LINEHAN__X__ NELSON__X__

C. POLICY ITEMS:

1. Review of Revised Draft of City Code Chapter 105 – City Inspections

City Administrator Linehan introduces the proposed changes and says feedback was taken from a previous workshop to further amend the air conditioning provisions to have applicability; further refinement was done.

Administrative Services Director Nelson explains that City Council, Staff, the Fire Marshal and the City Attorney have all reviewed the previous draft and goes on to summarize the current proposed changes to Council, which they feel should be close to a final version. Nelson states that a number of proposed changes are simply done to modernize, update and to use consistent language throughout. She adds that one larger change is to add air conditioning supply requirements, so that if air conditioning is provided by an owner, it must be kept in working order and capable of keeping at least one habitable room at 80 degrees or below during stated dates. Finally, Nelson says that another larger proposed change is in the rental inspections section (Sec. 105-94) of City Code. Currently, City Code says that inspections of multifamily dwellings are of common areas; the proposed change would add wording to reflect that individual units may be subject to inspection. This would require permission from the owner or occupant, but wording was also added to state actions the City may take if entry is refused.

Council Member Wassenberg says his understanding has increased over the last few days and that Sections 603.1 and 603.2 go together to state that air conditioning will not be required, but it must be maintained.

Mayor Gustafson says the comments from the attorney are easy to understand and that the changes are not overly burdensome but make certain that their properties work for their tenants.

Council Member Leehy says the language is compliant, whether it's a tenant, a landlord, a property manager, or the City Inspector reading and understanding the wording.

Linehan says he spoke to Council Member Mielke, who is out sick, and Mielke asked about

considering changing the seasonal requirements of Section 603.3 to go from May 15 through September 30.

Linehan says that we could have swings either way, where on or by October 1, your heat has already been on for several weeks. Or, we could have an October 1st where you still need your air conditioning.

Council Member Meyer asks if you can write something into the Admin Manual to outline flexibility.

Linehan says that it would be a situation of administrative discretion. If a landlord says they turned the heat on, but it takes a week for the boiler to fire up, then the situation would likely be remedied by a reinspection and there would not be a penalty

Meyer asks if this affects new equipment only and new licenses only.

Gustafson and Leehy say that it's for all properties.

Wassenberg adds that these changes shouldn't affect many landlords because it isn't requiring new equipment to be provided; it is just mandating that provided equipment must be kept in working order.

Gustafson wonders if wording could be added to reflect that the stated dates for heat and air conditioning requirements are weather-dependent and may be affected by climate change. If it's unseasonably warm in the fall, air conditioning should continue to be provided.

Linehan says it would be hard to enforce.

Councilmembers voice various suggestions to add wording to reflect how unseasonably warm or cold weather may affect whether air conditioning or heat is required outside of the stated dates.

Meyer adds that it will be 89 degrees this coming Saturday, October 4, and you would want the air conditioning on.

Gustafson suggests giving property owners flexibility to react to current conditions and says that he is not a fan of putting things in City Code that do not offer flexibility.

Linehan suggests adding wording to Section 603.3 Seasonal Enforcement so that it reads, "these standards apply from May 15 to September 15 each year, except when temporary shutdown is required for reasonable maintenance or repair purposes, OR weather conditions warranted as determined by the Fire Marshal." Linehan does not want to leave it open-ended for interpretation but also recognizes the need for some flexibility.

Meyer asks if the dates have to be included at all.

Linehan says that this now mirrors state law, and state law lists these dates. The dates make it crystal clear when someone is in violation.

Meyer adds that exceeding the temperature range would also be crystal clear.

Linehan says it is harder to know which system is needed if you have fluctuations. It could be 45 degrees overnight and then warm up to 82 degrees during the day. That would make it harder to know which system would be needed.

Wassenberg says it's probably best to have something that applies to both heating and cooling and states that exception may be given due to unseasonable temperatures, as determined by the Fire Marshal.

Linehan says that if October 1 is a day in which heat is needed, then unusually warm temperatures on October 15 may not warrant or be feasible to ask for air conditioning to be provided.

Linehan adds that Mielke shared that CTC shared in their recent newsletter that window air conditioning units would be coming out September 30, as an example of landlords needing a date, making a case that dates are needed in City Code. We will also be a test case for air conditioning in Minnesota so it's best to mirror how heat is done because it has already passed state law and has a lot of case law with it. Knowing that we are being experimental, we should not deviate too much for now and can make changes in the future.

Wassenberg feels this is a mild ordinance. If landlords provide air conditioning, it just needs to work.

Leehy reiterates that it can take time for systems to switch over from heat to air conditioning.

Meyer would be supportive of changing the air conditioning dates Mielke proposed, but then it would affect the heat dates.

Linehan says that the start date of heat enforcement mirrors state law, so we can't switch that date. State law's stated dates are October 1 to April 30, which is why we updated those dates.

In regard to having two weeks between heat and air conditioning requirement dates, Linehan says that if the Fire Marshal says that length of time is unreasonable, then we can make adjustments.

Wassenberg adds that property owners will likely watch the forecast as they always have and determine which system is needed and when.

Leehy asks Nelson if the feedback makes sense.

Nelson says that it does and adds that although the air conditioning supply section of City Code is new, the heat supply portion has always included dates, which have not been an issue. Furthermore, under Enforcement and Penalties (Sec. 105-97 (5), the wording reads "Violations of Section 603, *the air conditioning maintenance standards*, may result in fines...." Nelson emphasizes that the word "may" is used instead of "will," allowing discretion from the Fire Marshal.

Linehan tells Council that there will be an Open House held this fall with property owners to help advise them of the proposed changes.

Wassenberg adds that it would be beneficial to get their feedback, although practical

application may not go into effect for another six months (when air conditioning is needed).

Linehan says that we are hoping to adopt all changes to City Code at once and there is one section of proposed changes that would go into effect more quickly, which is Rental Inspections. Linehan says the majority of changes are to reinspections, which could affect property owners in 2026. If someone is a no-show at a scheduled fire inspection, then we could charge a fee.

Gustafson asks if the proposed City Code changes can be mailed to all property owners during the license renewal process.

Linehan said we can include a QR code to invite commentary and feedback.

Leehy recommends simplifying how the draft is presented, without the comments provided.

Linehan says that it will be considerably cleaned up. Strikethroughs will show what is being deleted, and underlined portions will show what is being added. That is how we format for Ordinances.

Nelson suggests reformatting the RCA as well to become a summary guide to include.

Linehan says our goal is to adopt the changes before 2026 but asks if it is generally supported by Council to seek owner feedback before then.

Council supports seeking constructive feedback and input before they are asked to adopt the changes.

Gustafson says the document is largely making things clearer rather than making many changes.

Meyer asks how tenants will be notified.

Gustafson says that it is required of the landlord to notify tenants when they sign or renew a lease how they can contact the Minnesota Attorney General and of City Code.

Linehan adds that the City will also hold a series of Renter's Rights events, and we can use those opportunities to help inform renters as well, including offering sessions in various languages.

2. Class & Compensation Implementation Plan

Linehan summarizes that during Council's regular meeting on August 27, Council heard a presentation from David Drown & Associates Human Resources (DDA), summarizing their study's findings. Since then, Linehan has used those numbers as a guide for budgeting purposes.

Linehan says that prior employees would leave their position for more pay elsewhere and then the City would have to increase the pay being offered to fill that vacant role.

Under the proposed Class & Compensation Plan, staff would still receive a COLA. To

implement the plan, the staff's anniversary date would be their step adjustment date, and there would be a 10-step plan. There is about a 29% range between the ten steps. Linehan says we currently do this unofficially. Current practice provides an annual COLA and then merit increases at 6-months, 18-months, 5-years and 10-years. There are no steps beyond ten years.

The why behind this is the operational why. It attracts, retains and compensates good employees. The second part is that we have to do a pay equity report every three years. While the City has not failed pay equity when reporting, our current system has its challenges as it mirrors the state's job match system, and it does not always work well for certain positions. Linehan says the short-term financial implications are not a lot; it's actually fairly inexpensive to implement. But what it will mean for employees is that we won't pay them less. What becomes more expensive for the city is in years six through ten.

Meyer says it makes more sense to have a graduated increase over time rather than these sporadic increases at certain times. There is not much financial incentive for employees to currently stay beyond five years. As a city, we value keeping people around rather than training new employees on a regular basis.

Leehy asks for clarification regarding current pay steps and where they currently end.

Meyer says that after your five-year merit increase, there is one at 10 years. And, merit increases end at 10 years.

Linehan says the change with the new step system is that we would have established pay ranges and they would be totally predictable. He then walks Council through a model of the 10 steps to show how the pay would increase across ten years.

Leehy asks if we'd have to bring it to Council to approve for each employee on their anniversary.

Linehan recommends being transparent and having ten separate Consent Agenda items (one per each full-time employee on their anniversary).

The challenge we have with awarding it annually is if an employee is hired on December 15 and then receives a step increase on January 1. We might have to require them to be employed for 12 months prior to their step increase.

He adds that we do not have to give someone a step increase if they are not performing satisfactorily.

Leehy prefers to award on the anniversary hire date.

Wassenberg says that for the long term, awarding on January 1 for all employees who have been on staff for 12 months or more makes it easier to predict for budgeting purposes.

Meyer agrees with Wassenberg that annually in January seems easier to implement, but wonders how far in advance Linehan feels comfortable doing performance reviews before January 1.

Councilmembers discuss the performance review component and that doing all of those at once to be able to provide a step increase for all at the same time is challenging.

Wassenberg shares that he previously had reservations of step increases and COLA adjustments being stacked. He then looked at federal and state employees to see what their step programs are like and realized that they have similar percentage step increases in addition to COLA. That drove home to him that the public sector and private sector are very different. And, it's a little different in the way that this is arranged; the COLA moves the scale. If individuals stay with the City, they could regularly receive 6% every year (if COLAs remain around 3%). But, if someone leaves the City, then the range resets. The amount the City would pay for a new employee only moves up by a COLA, not by a COLA and a step. In the private sector, if you give someone a raise, then that kind of becomes the expectation for that position.

Linehan says that he reached out to City Administrators in the 17 comp cities that were used in the survey and annual adjustments are the standard. However, it is split between having automatic increases and having a performance review. We have more steps, but we have smaller increases between the steps. Ours starts a little more aggressively and becomes less aggressive as time goes on, but this was a choice from the City; we could consider doing it the same across the steps. Linehan walks the Council through how the job assessments were done and says that we do have a points system for the positions.

Gustafson says that when we rehire a position, we'd have a salary range for it.

Linehan adds that the pay scale would help identify pay equity issues if the candidate wants pay beyond that job's range. DDA could then help us spec a new job description for a position at any point since we can't pay outside the range.

Wassenberg says that it keeps salaries in line so the city budget is not growing at a rate above inflation, but rewards individual people for years of service.

Linehan says that, if at any point, the increases exceed the budget, then pay freezes are an option.

Leehy asks how many staff are salaried versus hourly.

Linehan responds that most are hourly, and three are salaried.

Gustafson asks what the next step is, and Linehan says that he will find out if an ordinance is needed and likely bring it to Council in December with the budget. At the November workshop, Council will discuss the part-timers, including the Council, and that would be on the same timeline to bring forward at a meeting in December.

3. Planning Consultant RFP

Linehan says that we are still very early in the process, but if we are to look ahead, we will need to supplement our staff through the development process of the Les Bolstad Golf Course. Although we may not yet fully know how we would like to utilize a planning consultant, areas may include administering the AUAR/EAW process, environmental reviews, grant writing, and assisting with continued community engagement. The city would like to begin preparing a draft of an RFP/RFQ so that we mirror the University's timeline and release the RFP/RFQ on October 23.

Gustafson asks how specific we should write the RFP/RFQ since we don't currently know what the future holds.

Linehan said the biggest immediate need is bringing in an architect and having this person in our corner. And, once the building actually begins, we will need additional consultants at that point.

Linehan talks about whether it's best to release an RFP or RFQ, saying that RFQs are based on qualifications. Most other cities have done RFPs.

Wassenberg prefers an RFP since that will include their qualifications as part of it.

Meyer suggests placing an emphasis on community feedback and incorporating that into the plan.

Leehy said it's important if they've interacted with communities rather than just staff.

Gustafson said that he looks at this as step one. There will come a time when permits will need to be reviewed. But, we aren't at that point; we don't even have concepts developed at this point.

Linehan said that the tentative plan is to bring this as an agenda item on October 22.

D. ADJOURNMENT: 8:48 PM

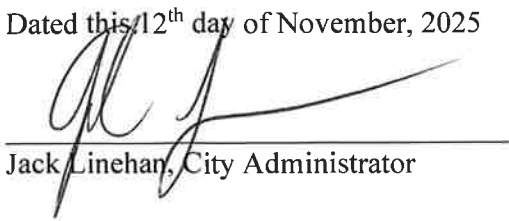
Councilmember Meyer motions to adjourn the meeting;
Approved 4-0

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 12th day of November, 2025



Jack Linehan, City Administrator