

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

AGENDA

Wednesday, November 5, 2025
6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:30 PM

B. ROLL CALL: GUSTAFSON_X_ LEEHY_X_
MEYER_X_ MIELKE_X_ WASSENBERG_X_

STAFF PRESENT: LINEHAN_X_ JOHNSON_X_ ASANI_X_

C. POLICY ITEMS:

1. Rental Rights

a. Just Cause Evictions

Mielke brought forward a bill drafted by HOME line for the legislature. They are currently looking for support from the local level.

Michael Dahl from HOME Line provided an overview of statewide eviction trends. Minnesota has experienced a 40% increase in evictions since before the pandemic and has some of the shortest timelines for eviction filings. He explained that many tenants contact HOME Line because they do not understand why their leases were not renewed. The proposed Just Cause legislation would:

- Require landlords to provide a valid, documented reason for non-renewal or eviction.
- Extend the notice period from 14 days to 30 days.
- Standardize tenant protections already in place for some subsidized and tax credit-financed housing.

Dahl shared that Brooklyn Center adopted a similar ordinance in 2022, which has contributed to measurable declines in eviction filings without reducing new housing construction.

The Council heard additional research from Kenton Clark, from the University of Minnesota who reported that communities with Just Cause ordinances, such as Brooklyn Center, have seen lower eviction rates without negative impacts on housing development. Just Cause can help with the fear of retaliation when tenants have to report issues.

Councilmembers discussed:

- Whether Just Cause provides additional protection against retaliatory non-renewals.
- How the ordinance defines non-renewal, lease amendments, and material

breaches.

- Ownership changes and tenant protections during the sale of a rental property.
- How the length of the eviction process (approximately 21 days) interacts with proposed notice requirements.
- The lack of city-level data on evictions.
- The difference between state laws already protecting certain low-income or subsidized housing tenants versus private-market tenants.

Questions were raised about enforcement mechanisms. Brooklyn Center relies primarily on tenant-initiated legal action rather than city enforcement. Councilmembers discussed whether cities could or should attach fines for non-compliance.

Gustafson asked a series of questions. The first question was related to the status of the bill and lack of support at the legislature, and why Falcon Heights would want to be involved in a state matter. He asked about the protection available for public housing or federal programs. He asked about the Brooklyn Center program and how other cities are enforcing the regulations, as well as expressing his concern that the program would not be necessary.

Meyer asked how developers might view this type of renter protection and whether it could be perceived as a barrier to new housing. Clark noted that the available research shows no negative impact on housing development in cities that have adopted Just Cause policies. Meyer added that he struggles to understand what the main objections to the policy would be.

Clark responded that the issue involves a cascade of broader questions about how renters, an often underrepresented group, are protected in a largely unregulated private rental market. He explained that renter protections in Minnesota are limited, and Just Cause requirements help level the playing field by ensuring families have greater stability. He described the concept as “common sense,” even though it is not currently written into law. Dahl emphasized that supporting the state legislation is important because renters often hold fragile leases, and sudden non-renewals can drastically disrupt their lives. He also noted that property owners have significant lobbying influence, whereas tenant advocacy groups generally do not.

Meyer remarked that it is surprising these kinds of regulations are not already in place, given how reasonable they appear. Leehy agreed, adding that some property owners are more focused on protecting their own equity than supporting tenant stability. She noted that renters may not always be aware of a property’s history or the landlord’s intentions when they move in, making additional protections valuable.

While councilmembers generally expressed interest in supporting stronger tenant protections and reducing the fear of retaliatory non-renewals, several expressed caution about weighing in on state legislation that has not yet advanced through committee. Dahl and Clark encouraged local support, explaining that the bill had previously been part of a broader tenant rights

package but had not received a hearing.

Linehan agreed to compile additional information on Brooklyn Center's ordinance and suggested gathering feedback from both property owners and residents as part of the city's legislative priorities discussion.

b. Review of Proposed Crime Free Housing

Linehan provided an overview of the proposed updates to the city's Crime Free Housing ordinance, noting that the Council had discussed rental code changes the previous year but that several concerns remain with the ordinance as it currently stands. He explained that while the city already has a Crime Free Housing program, it is unclear how consistently landlords use it, and there is no appeals process for tenants who face early lease termination under its provisions. The proposed updates would maintain the program but modernize it, including revising the lookback period to 36 months for background checks and creating an appeals body to review disputes. Linehan emphasized that without an appeals process, tenants have no formal recourse if the program is misapplied.

Asani added that the U.S. Department of Justice has raised significant concerns nationwide about due process within crime-free housing programs, particularly when landlords use the programs too broadly or apply them to minor issues that do not warrant eviction. She explained that the DOJ's guidance calls for clearer safeguards to ensure that landlords can address genuinely problematic behavior while still protecting tenants from unfair or premature lease terminations. Under the proposed changes, a conviction, not merely a charge, would be required to trigger certain actions, and any violation would need to be supported by evidence. This is intended to prevent tenants from being penalized based solely on old or unproven allegations.

Linehan asked the Council whether they wished to move forward with the modifications or consider stepping away from the program entirely. He noted that while the ordinance does provide some benefits, it is also susceptible to misuse and can be used to remove tenants unfairly if not properly regulated. Creating an appeals body would introduce essential safeguards and ensure a fair, private process for tenants to be heard, rather than addressing these matters in a public meeting. He recommended adopting the changes sooner rather than later.

Leehy agreed that the program can be a useful tool in addressing nuisance tenants who jeopardize the safety or well-being of others, but only if structured carefully. She stressed the importance of preventing the ordinance from being used against individuals who have served their time and are working to improve their lives. She supported the idea of an appeals body as a necessary "safety net" built into the system.

Asani noted that if the city includes a 36-month limit on what can be considered during a background check, that restriction becomes embedded in the city's broader rental licensing framework. This prompted Wassenberg to question

whether it was necessary for the city to regulate background checks at all. Gustafson observed that if a tenant has committed a serious offense that threatens the safety of neighbors, waiting for a formal conviction might unnecessarily delay action; however, Asani clarified that the ordinance includes an exception for serious incidents involving violence, allowing action prior to a conviction when safety is at risk.

Wassenberg questioned the need for the Crime Free Housing program altogether, noting that eviction is already a relatively accessible process. Linehan and Asani clarified the distinction between eviction, which is a court action, and early termination of a lease, which is a contractual matter. The Crime Free Housing program affects the latter and currently allows landlords to end leases early based only on a criminal charge, not a conviction. The proposed revisions would provide renters with more protection and ensure that past, irrelevant issues could not be used against a tenant who is not currently causing problems. Asani also explained that the program outlines what landlords may and may not consider when screening prospective tenants and that DOJ concerns centered on ensuring these limitations cannot be misused.

Finally, Gustafson asked whether St. Anthony Village, which provides police services to Falcon Heights, maintains a similar ordinance. Asani confirmed that St. Anthony recently updated its own ordinance and removed law enforcement from the decision-making process, aligning with the approach Falcon Heights is considering.

2. Gun Violence Prevention Ordinances

Linehan provided an update on the discussion from the previous meeting regarding potential gun violence prevention ordinances and shared examples of how other cities have approached similar issues. Mielke noted that no other cities in the region are currently pursuing such ordinances and suggested that the topic would be more appropriately addressed at the state level. She recommended adding it to the city's legislative agenda rather than pursuing a standalone local ordinance at this time. The Council agreed with this approach. Gustafson added that it would be beneficial to invite state representatives to a future workshop to discuss the city's legislative priorities and explore opportunities for partnership on this issue.

3. Budget Workshop #4

a. 2026 Capital Improvement Plan Budget

Linehan presented the 2026 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) as part of the broader budget discussion leading up to the Truth in Taxation hearing. He noted that while capital projects are not tied directly to the levy, they do rely heavily on internal transfers.

Major 2026 CIP Items:

- Community Park Finalization – \$1,400,000
 - Covers final phase of construction.
 - Follows \$1 million invested in 2025.
 - Total project cost remains on track at \$2.4 million (excluding land

purchase).

- Machinery & Equipment – \$265,000 to \$790,000
 - Street Sweeper Replacement
 - Option 1: 2017 refurbished diesel Pelican – \$185,000
 - Option 2: Regenerative air sweeper with catch basin hose – \$400,000
 - Option 3: Hybrid electric Pelican – \$700,000
 - Notes:
 - Joint ownership with Little Canada was explored; both cities need the sweeper simultaneously.
 - Current sweeper used daily in fall/spring and after storm events.
 - An upgraded sweeper could make contracting with Lauderdale possible.
 - Concern about climate goals vs. high cost of hybrid model.
 - Council leaned toward Option 1, with the possibility of purchasing an electric unit later.
 - Gustafson suggested adding funds for additional catch basin cleaning tools if needed.
- Truck Replacement
 - Replace F-250 with electric F-150 Lightning – approx. \$80,000 (with upfitting).

Other CIP Requests:

- Les Bolstad Consultant – \$60,000
- Council Chambers Technology Upgrades – \$15,000
 - Improved screens, wireless connections, and display systems.
 - Could be first step in a broader 5-year chambers renovation plan.
- Paper-Free Agenda Packets – \$5,000
 - Tablets for Council and commission members.
 - Supports both sustainability and IT security upgrades.
- Proprietary AI Solution – \$10,000 annually
 - Internal staff tool for research and code navigation.
 - Helps reduce reliance on public AI platforms and enhances data security.
 - Not resident-facing.
 - Will go out for RFP; Metro-INet has shown limited interest in a shared system.
- SAPD Body-Worn Cameras – \$40,000 annually
 - 10-year contract; fund will require ongoing replenishment.
- Curtiss Field Drinking Fountain Installation – approx. \$10,000
 - Final cost dependent on proximity to water lines.
 - Mielke also requested estimates for adding water service on the City Hall lawn and exploring additional community garden space.

City Hall Signage

- Mielke suggested adding an electronic sign or updating existing monument signs.
- Linehan noted City Hall is the most appropriate location. Proposed adding a \$50,000 placeholder to the CIP.

Street and Infrastructure Planning

- No street reconstruction projects scheduled for 2026.

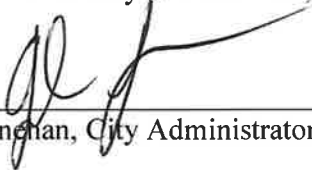
- Roselawn Avenue project likely deferred to 2027 or 2028.
- Hoyt Avenue in the Grove neighborhood is next on the list.
- Council noted that the Luther Seminary development may impact future infrastructure needs.

~~4. 2026 City Calendar Draft~~

D. ADJOURNMENT: 9:40 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.

Dated this 10th day of December, 2025



Jack Linahan, City Administrator



Randall C. Gustafson, Mayor