

CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS
Community Engagement Commission Work Session
City Hall
2077 West Larpenteur Avenue

MINUTES

February 2, 2026 at 6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER - 6:32 PM

B. ROLL CALL:

Julie Ebbesen___ Denise King__X__ Sarah Caflisch__X_ Emily
Schmall__X_ Emmett Fischer__X__

STAFF PRESENT:

Elke Johnson__X_

COUNCIL LIAISON:

Paula Mielke__X_

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jim Wassenberg_X__ Ainsley BrownX___

C. AGENDA

1. Rebranding of Community Engagement Commission

1. Reviewing data and materials

a. King - started off by reviewing materials, comp city data and survey that were provided by city and council. There are specific things in the 2025 Goal Setting process that have not been completed that will help guide future work. CEC needs to make recommendations to the City Council about what CEC needs to move forward keeping the voice of the resident in mind.

c. King pointed out on page 16 of city plan calling out resident communication plans; also survey, also, bullet to formalize commissioner roles and commissions. King stated that this goal and community-informed document will lead the CEC's process

d. Council Member Mielke offered that the council has completed some of the goals and will share timeline for the council to address goals and stated an updated survey does need to be done.

e. King spelled out what communications are already established (Facebook, email, newsletter)

f. King is looking for what the council needs and what the CEC should tackle

g. Caflisch asked "why now" survey and other communication

- h. Council Member Mielke shared that last survey of residents was in 2018 and that we need an updated survey. And, agrees with King that it should be broader than just CEC
- i. Wassenberg shared that past council discussed Commissions, that City and commission should evaluate what would stimulate current and future members and
- j. King concurred that coming up with mission would be helpful moving forward, and the need for a clear intent from city and council for the commission.

2. Brainstorming Core Values

- a. King asked for a brainstorming session to develop clear and defined objective for the commission, and said consensus were wanted in moving forward.
- b. Schmall said that looking at comp cities were focused on Equity and Inclusion and how to address that in our work.
- c. King brought up "connection" and "community" as a theme from commission interviews and hearing from residents
- d. King brought up rental data, which is now up to 40 % of residents.
- e. Cafilisch brought up a point with Council Member Mielke about some of the needs of renters in the community, and the need for an updated survey.
- f. Fischer stated that "making one's voice heard" within the community is important for him and including the voice of all residents is paramount.
- g. Cafilisch wondering if there was a comparable city who was "getting it right"
- h. King suggested getting in contact with comp city leadership (New Hope, Vadnais Heights) to see how they run their Community Engagement Commission for a quick 20 minute networking and discovery meeting (what works, what doesn't, what is successful).
- i. Wassenberg concurred that investigating other city CEC would be a great idea
- j. Council Member Mielke noted that some cities have a dedicated staff member for Equity and Inclusion (Roseville, Willmar, Stillwater, etc) as opposed to a commission. Roseville has a dedicated DEI commissioner
- k. Johnson spotlighted that district councils were a thing to explore
- l. Schmall concurred that district councils were interesting, and suggested "asking what the community is looking for and how to does that translate to core values."
- m. Brown said that the St. Anthony Park council was active and engaged and thinking about getting the word out and new people.
- n. King mentioned that the 2018 survey had 450 surveys sent back and the demographics of those responders, interested to see what the 2026 respondents

- o. Brown brought up Fischer's last comment about going to where people are at events where parents would be at
- p. Caflich suggested additional engagement opportunities (inviting them to City hall, listening sessions). Brought up the Institute for Local Government participant worksheets and listening events.

3. Brainstorming Mission Statement

- a. King brought up SAP Council district 12 Core Values as a place (copy and paste this on page 3)
- b. Schmall likes that SAP Council District 12 is high-level enough that even if we get survey results, we could combine core values and the voice of the residents. Likes that the Core Values are at high levels.
- c. Council Member Mielke brought up Falcon Families for an example
- d. Schmall likes the word "connect"
- e. Wassenberg said the list we are working on is a great place to start and thinking of "actions" what comes up out of the core values and actions for the second tier.
- f. King wonders if we "start" with action instead of values, would be find them connected to Core Values? Maybe?
- g. King wants people on their block to know their neighbors. Speaking from past experience as a renter, she is familiar with sometimes receiving a less-than-welcome feeling from neighbors.
- h. Council Member Mielke suggested Compas from Wilder for information on stats about the Falcon Heights- NPR cultivating community program this weekend.
- i. Schmall was also wondering what the actual demographics of the city were as opposed to just survey respondents.
- j. Johnson- one of the values of the city was cultivating a caring community. City has not redone a mission statement in a long time
- l. Wassenberg- maybe all the commissions should do a mission statement
- m. Caflich - You matter, residents matter, you make this community - Local politics matter- in a small city, opportunity to make a difference
- n. Schmall- What does community engagement mean to the resident? Put in a survey what it looks like to engage in community. What will light that fire? Acknowledge that some people just might not want to be involved.
- o. King - Going beyond tabling to inviting engagement
- p. King - For council: How do you define connected? How connected do you feel? "Open field: What would engagement look like to you." These questions can be included in the community survey.
- q. King - asked the group if there were objections to building upon Council District 12
- r. Schmall-no objections
- s. King asked about the "Partnerships" and wanted to substitute "collaborative"

- t. Schmall-Agreed that collaboration was a better, more inclusive word.
- u. King - stated that "respect" was for sure, and adding "connectedness," Fostering connection.
- v. Caflisch - Agency and action are values
- w. Schmall- equipping residents to participate
- x. Wassenberg- Fostering action
- y. King suggested " support our community to participate in community and civic affairs; fostering action.
- z. Council Member Mielke- Fostering safety...does that belong?
- aa. Caflisch - should safety be in mission? It's the result of engagement.
- bb. Schmall- What is safe for one doesn't mean the same situation is safe-neighborhood watch went away due to racism. We need to be careful to define "safety."
- cc. Council Member Mielke- Agreed.
- dd. King argued for "safety" as a value.
- ee. Wassenberg and Council Member Mielke suggested "well-being of ALL residents."
- ff. King advocated for a sense of security for ALL, not meant to be for "some of the people."
- gg. Council Member Mielke mentioned that a lot of the values mentioned echo what is already in the recently passed resolution by the council
- hh. Caflisch - What are the phone calls to the city right now?
- ii. Johnson- Will take call log and share with commission -right now, AARP Taxes Talk of Coyote calls commenced and garbage can placements
- kk. King wants us to think about the mission, waiting for information from the survey and input from the council. What is the council wanting from this commission? What is the expectation and hope that's on the agenda for the next council
- ll. Council Member Mielke and Wassenberg confirmed that this will be on the future agenda
- mm. King expressed appreciation to the Council for their help and wisdom

4. Action plan and next steps

- a. King won't have survey results for months. So, getting listening sessions on schedule, with a demographically diverse group for focus groups. Explore listening suggestions. Set-up mission and validate it with a survey.
- b. Wassenberg- Look within yourself for the commission mission statement and do homework.
- c. King - likes the suggestion of a homework assignment before the February 23 meeting. Each commissioner comes with a draft mission statement.
- d. Caflisch will come with listening session ideas.
- e. Council Member Mielke suggested adding responsive to values.

- f. King proposes next month bring the mission statement - the more ideas in the hopper, the better.
 - i. Caflisch come prepared for the run-down of the listening session - King proposes a communication strategy, a postcard campaign.
 - ii. Council Member Mielke knows postcards work well
 - iii. Caflisch suggested calling
 - iv. King wants to do at least two listening sessions
 - v. Bring ideas for maximum engagement
- g. King asked for commissioners to contact other commissions and ask about success, their mission, and any helpful advice.
- i. Schmall and Johnson will look at Crystal
 - ii. Caflisch will take on New Hope
 - iii. Fischer will reach out to New Brighton (if it works with his schedule)
 - iv. Vadnais Heights - King
 - v. Council Member Mielke will be at League of MN Cities meeting and will ask advice

D. ADJOURNMENT: 7:58 p.m.

Next Regular Meeting is on Monday, February 23 at 6:30 PM