

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

MINUTES

February 23, 2026 at 6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:28 PM

B. ROLL CALL:

Julie Ebbesen___ Denise King___ Sarah Caflisch__X__ Emily Schmall__X__ Emmett Fisher__X__

STAFF PRESENT:

Elke Johnson__X__

COUNCIL LIAISON:

Paula Mielke__X__

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jim Wassenberg__X__ Jack Linehan___ Ainsley Brown__X__

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Caflisch suggests tabling items if we get to the agenda item. Schmall can still continue the discussions.

Schmall motions to approve the agenda - approved unanimously

F. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- January 26, 2026 Community Engagement Commission Meeting Minutes
- February 2, 2026 Community Engagement Commission Meeting Minutes

Schmall motions to approve the meeting minutes - approved unanimously

G. AGENDA

- Unfinished business
 1. Rebranding of Community Engagement Commission
 - a. Caflisch - notes that core values were identified at the last meeting
 - b. Schmall - made contact with Crystal's Inclusion & Diversity Commission. Waiting to hear back. They are going through a similar process.
 - c. Fisher - reached out to the New Brighton DEI Coordinator. Bring together the community. Host similar events.

- d. Caflisch - New Hope has a Human Rights, Planning, and Citizen Advisory Commission. They often bring in presenters to help inform the commission and/or the community and provide updates. Liked the idea of inviting speakers to the commission meeting.
- e. Mielke - feedback from the LMC Event is that the new term for Community Engagement is public participation. The city has a lot of community engagement around projects, but mostly carried out by staff and not necessarily by the community engagement commission. Suggest giving the commission a new name. Building community and connections is more of a focus of the commission.
- f. Johnson - shows all the mission statements submitted by everyone. All statements are similar and align with each other.
- g. Schmall - used core values. Can mix and match these statements. Maybe table item for King and Ebbesen to join in.
 - i. Caflisch - bring these statements to a listening session.
- h. Wassenberg - agrees. That was the idea, to ensure they align and we're all on the same page.
- i. Caflisch - next steps, further discuss with the entire commission. Next meeting, highlight words and sentences that commissioners align with and try to combine them all into one statement.

2. Hosting Listening Session

- a. Johnson - explains that Caflisch, Johnson, and Brown met to write out a listening session proposal. Outlines the listening session pilot proposal.
- b. Caflisch - explains that a small pilot would help test and get deep qualitative data. Worried about having too large a session, with attendees not feeling heard or listened to.
- c. Mielke - CEC hosted a listening session in 2021. Generated a list of ideas for the commission. Maybe change the focus from engagement in the proposal. Agrees with the idea of having a pilot.
- d. Schmall - pilot is a good idea or have multiple sessions for people to participate. Suggest scheduling multiple dates and keeping track of participants and feedback. Gives time to improve. Regardless, having a small test group is smart.
- e. Caflisch - personally invite people. Taking pieces from the listening session and bring it to Spring Together as an activity and getting more feedback.
- f. Fisher - pilot sounds good, get different kinds of people.
- g. Wassenberg - hand selecting, personally inviting, is a good way to invite people.
- h. Caflisch - if successful, can host a larger session.
- i. Schmall - divide group up in different table activities
- j. Mielke - suggests adding a category for the target audience: new resident, less than 5 years. Maybe looks at phrasing engagement differently. Can define as community building.

- k. Schmall – Believes community building, civic engagement or community engagement are all related. Engagement can occur through different pathways and levels. Ensure we are clear at the start of the session, what we are looking to answer, and provide a definition.
- l. Caflisch - the goal of the session is to try to find out what engagement means to different people.
- m. Brown – Including physical activity, ice breaker types. Makes it more inclusive and less static.
- n. Caflisch – continue discussions at next meeting and work out the timeline.
- o. Wassenberg – suggest creating an elevator pitch for inviting participants.

3. Every Meal Volunteering

- a. Johnson – explains the status. Registered as a team, and selected Wednesday, March 18, as a date to have a team volunteer at Every Meal for 2 hours, spots for 10 people. Every volunteer will need to sign a waiver either beforehand or on-site.
- b. Caflisch and Mielke – pilot it for the commission. Then open up to residents. Can also see about volunteer opportunities at other organizations, such as Keystone or Good Acre.
- c. Johnson – International Institute of Minnesota.
- d. Caflisch - suggest inviting other commissioners

- New Business

4. Spring Together

- a. Johnson – explains looking for direction and ideas for Spring Together. The Spring and Summer Newsletter will go out in March, good time to start promoting the event, but we would need some more information.
- b. Brown - Suggests inviting the Falcon Heights Orchestra
- c. Mielke – Snack item. Speedy Market. Popcorn, cookies. 1919 Root Beer. Cotton Candy.
- d. Lawn Games
- e. Resources
- f. Fisher – having a sporting activity, to attract younger attendees. Having a competition. Parents v. kids.
- g. Johnson – should also discuss a cancellation policy/back-up.

5. Les Bolstad Golf Course Redevelopment - Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

- a. Mielke – for the redevelopment of Les Bolstad Golf Course, the city hired Bolton & Menk consultants, and they recommended creating 2 committees. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Community

Advisory Committee(CAC). The idea is to have a member from each commission be on the CAC. The Grove will get their own representative as well as a representative at large for Falcon Heights, as well as a representative from the neighboring communities. The key is to figure out how to balance equitable representation. Still working out details. Multiple commissioners can apply.

- b. Caflisch – great idea to get community feedback.
- c. Mielke – this is a draft, open to feedback.
- d. Caflisch -- having rotating commissioners join?
- e. Mielke – suggests having a report back from the CAC as an agenda item for the CEC.

H. INFORMATION/ANNOUNCEMENT

- Report from Council Liaison:
Mielke – the council's response to ICE, is that they joined the Cities of Safe and Stable Communities Coalition. Passed ordinance regarding staging on public property. She also attended a local government meeting for the school district. ICE is having a heavy impact on the school district. Many ways people are volunteering and helping. Each year, the council makes a list of legislative priorities it will lobby for during the LMC Day on the Hill.

Fisher – agrees it has been very sad, everyday staff and volunteers are standing around the school. A lot of kids haven't been coming to school.

I. ADJOURNMENT: 8:00

Schmall motions to adjourn - approved unanimously.

Next Regular Meeting is on Monday, March 16 at 6:30 PM