

**CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS**

City Council Workshop City Hall  
2077 West Larpenteur Avenue

**MINUTES**

September 2, 2020

6:30 P.M.

**NOTE: THIS MEETING WAS HELD BY WEB CONFERENCE**

**A. CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:35pm.

**B. ROLL CALL:**   X   ANDREWS   X   GUSTAFSON   X   LEEHY   X   MIAZGA  
  X   WEHYEE

**STAFF PRESENT:**   X   THONGVANH   X   MARKON   X   WALTER   X   OLSON   X    
FREIHAMMER

**C. PRESENTATIONS:**

**D. POLICY ITEMS:**

**1. Stop Sign(s) Request**

City Engineer Freihammer

The agenda packet includes results of the traffic study which we feel shows accurate results. Speeding does not appear to be an issue. The majority of vehicles are not speeding. Typically for stop signs, they're used for assigning right of way. Putting them up to control speed is a poor approach and can cause problems during winter on icy roads. We looked at the speeding issue and option of installing a stop sign and neither seemed reasonable.

Council Member Miazga

Residents had expressed that a stop sign was cheaper than stop light. Had this been done during the State Fair, I think the study would have shown different results.

Council Member Wehyee

If stop signs are coupled with speed reduction, how would that play out?

City Engineer Freihammer

People tend to drive at their comfort level speed. If you install a stop sign, people will go slower, but you sacrifice people running it eventually. It also creates ice issues in winter, and you will have people accelerating so that can also create noise concerns. We do a dozen or so of these studies in Roseville and FH and this is one of the lowest ranking in terms of people speeding.

City Administrator Thongvanh

There may be some alternative methods we can do, such as having a deputy around during peak speeding times.

Council Member Leehy

What I've learned in past years, the perception of speeding versus actual speeding is important. I also want to acknowledge is kids are playing in their yards more because people are home, so I've been thinking about that. When we consider putting in extra stop signs it creates a false sense of safety.

City Engineer Freihammer

There is a concern that allowing the request to proceed sets a precedent for other requests. Throughout the metro, there are many stop signs that actually create more problems. The City of Crystal has been very active about removing unwarranted ones. Sometimes they get pushback.

Council Member Miazga

I'm absolutely in favor of a stop sign. I disagree with the city engineer's perspective.

City Administrator Thongvanh

I do get quite a few calls about stop sign requests every year.

Council Member Wehyee

It seems to me that the pros outweigh the cons. The ultimate objective is to decrease speed. It's important for us to make a decision that could potentially be lifesaving. I think it's imperative for us to move forward with the stop sign.

City Administrator Thongvanh

If this goes forward, I want to make sure we have some form of standard for future requests. Most of the concerns for residents is regarding speeding. Once the stop sign is installed, it's difficult to remove it.

Mayor Gustafson

With stop and go traffic, will be more noise and increased fuel consumption.

Council Member Andrews

I would like us to look at lowering the speed limit first. If we lowered the speed limit, then we could determine if that made a difference. I like the idea of having the traffic monitoring police there.

City Administrator Thongvanh

We can continue to monitor and research to see if we need to do any traffic calming for the streets.

Council Member Miazga

If we put this on a workshop a couple months from now, and we gather the data and look at other traffic calming options in the meantime, we're not saying no to stop signs.

Mayor Gustafson

Gather data, do some studies of other cities that have a similar layout as Falcon Heights so we have a standard going forward.

City Administrator Thongvanh

Just to recap, the consensus is that the current request does not meet the threshold of the standard, but it does allow us to be more proactive and looking at other places that may warrant it. I can look at previous requests to decide whether we need to reevaluate.

2. Lower Speed Limits

City Administrator Thongvanh

In 2019 the state legislature authorized cities to set speed limits. Minneapolis and St. Paul established procedures for lowering speed limits. I wanted to discuss whether this is something we'd like to consider.

Council Member Wehyee

The stop sign would enhance safety. I would personally be interested in pursuing it.

Council Member Miazga

Very rare to see speed limit sign, seems like lack of clarity on what speed limit on neighborhood streets are.

Mayor Gustafson

Moving to a lower speed limit in the city is a good idea. Could we roll these two agenda items together- both the discussion of the stop sign and the speed limits?

City Administrator Thongvanh

Yes, that will be the direction going forward.

3. Beekeeping Ordinance

Community Development Coordinator Markon

This was first discussed in 2012 and was discussed at the Environment Commission in March and again when we reconvened in June. In July, had a representative from the U of M bee lab (Gary Reuter) to present on residential beekeeping. To clarify, this is honeybee keeping for the production of honey for one's own consumption or sharing small-scale. At the moment, code is silent on beekeeping except for some language on mason bee habitat structures.

The draft ordinance is about 90% copied from the 2012 version of this discussion. At the last planning commission meeting, we gathered a few comments about flyway barrier and permit related to allergies. A few of these were implemented into the version in front of you. I'm looking for any feedback from the council at this point. The Environment commission will

review again before recommending for review by the Planning Commission and a public hearing. Finally, the Council would do a final review and vote in October. The permitting would likely follow a similar process to backyard chickens, and we anticipate fees would be similar.

Council Member Andrews

Environment commission is enthused and has worked hard. This is about benefitting pollination of plants, not just about honey production.

Council Member Wehyee

Question about requiring source of water required. What constitutes that?

Community Development Coordinator Markon

Yes, the water requirement is for the bees. Information for residents in packet-form could be developed to help educate them on requirements.

Council Member Leehy

Are there guidelines about how many houses can have bees, i.e. density of permits?

Community Development Coordinator Markon

Mr. Reuter didn't discuss this as a potential issue. We aren't anticipating that this will be a heavily demanded permit, probably similar to the chicken permits where we have 8-10 in the city.

Council Member Leehy

I think it's important to have language about density limitations in the ordinance in case it becomes an issue.

Mayor Gustafson

Could be an issue if too many bees and not enough food sources locally for the pollinators. But it may be something that would regulate itself. The ordinance also seems to put a lot of pressure on permit holder to be responsible beekeepers.

Council Member Andrews

There is a certain cost to having bees, that will also create some internal regulation.

City Administrator Thongvanh

Regarding allergy concerns, could institute a time window for neighbors within a certain radius to comment on requested permit, similar to the process of notifying for a public hearing.

Council Member Leehy

I know we'd like to keep the turnaround time short for approving the permit. But maybe should be a clause about nonresponse from neighbors to account for transition of neighbors, if they are out of town, etc.

City Administrator Thongvanh

We also may need to consult city attorney. I'm thinking about cases of turnover in property owners. We're authorizing a use, difficult to remove without some legal parameters. Also relevant in cases where an allergy is acquired.

5. 4. 2021 Proposed Budget and Levy

- a. General Fund
- b. Special Revenue
- c. Debt Service

City Administrator Thongvanh

Page 125 of the packet is a broad overview of Revenues, Expenditures, Debt Service, and Capital Projects if we're doing one that year. The 2021 levy is 8.9%; I've been trying to balance being fiscally conservative with keeping our AAA bond rating and getting the tax rate to single digits again.

Council Member Miazga

Are there any challenges for us keeping this at single digits looking ahead to 2022?

City Administrator Thongvanh

We want to keep it within the realm of other cities. Concern of fiscal disparity where if we continue to lower the levy, the assumption is that you no longer need it. For 2022 and beyond, will want to have a more focused conversation with council because we'll have street projects coming up that will bring debt service in the next budget year. We'll also be discussing future changes to the Community Park building.

The preliminary levy is based on current operations. We can reduce the levy, but we can't increase it come December.

Mayor Gustafson

We should set this up so that we're covered for our expenses. We want to make sure we're not levying at a certain increase level. We get additional state revenue if you have to increase levy in order to meet city expenditures. But if you work to keep levy low, you can't use that as a source of revenue.

City Administrator Thongvanh

Some cities have 0% levy or negative levy, but that's usually in extreme cases. One was because the city sold their golf course for a few million and used that revenue to supplement their levy.

Mayor Gustafson

Where do we need to be to maintain fiscal disparities?

City Administrator Thongvanh

About where we were last year, 7.9%. I give a lot of credit to staff for their collaboration on this. Move forward unless more questions in future. Will bring forward a resolution to Council at one of the council meetings in September.

#### 4.5. City Council Process and Procedures

##### City Administrator Thongvanh

We've talked about this before. Had a presentation from Dave Unmacht with the League of Minnesota Cities about procedures and strategies for effective councils.

##### Mayor Gustafson

I think it's a great exercise. I see this as part of our admin manual.

##### Council Member Miazga

Would like to review this every year, have a document that can be shared with future council.

##### Council Member Andrews

I really like the Woodbury document. Seems like we all like that version, would be a good format to start from. I would like to see a draft.

##### City Administrator Thongvanh

Direction will be to put together a draft based on the Woodbury directive, and try to incorporate additional comments from council as I receive them. Then we will recirculate for review.

#### E. INFORMATION/ANNOUNCEMENTS

##### Council Member Andrews

Garden committee is a challenge, however, we are making progress. Had a meeting last night, it's clear that no one is concerned about edible vegetation in residential garden. More confusing about what constitutes a community garden and where/how it would exist. Trying to use experience of spring as guide. Anticipated we'll have an ordinance to bring before council within the next month. Had over 300 respondents to the survey, but some weren't Falcon Heights. Working with staff to sort through the results.

##### City Administrator Thongvanh

Ramsey County Sheriff's Office won't participate in Night to Unite this year. The Fire Department is potentially open to participating. Wondering if the Mayor and council would like to participate, or if we should cancel the city's role this year. Do council members feel open to attend block gatherings if invited?

Still work on boulevards. Council Members Leehy and Wehyee and I met with Mariah and Kathy at the UMN, who had previously worked with us in 2016. Council has approved funds for the purpose of community conversations in the wake of the George Floyd killing. Dena and Julie from the CEC were also involved in planning some next steps. Going to try to move forward, hold at least one conversation in September or October. We're going to have to host remotely, probably using Zoom. Still need to work on setting expectations for what are we trying to get out of these conversations.

Ramsey County Sheriff will be coming to the September 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. He will provide a general update and some changes related to COVID-19 procedures and operations.

Council Member Leehy

Would like to provide him some initial points we're happy with in terms of our partnership with Ramsey County to set the stage in a positive way. Are we promoting Night to Unite as much as in the past?

City Administrator Thongvanh

Not as much as in past due to COVID-19. Within the form, we'll include option to request presence of Council members/mayor.

Council Member Wehyee

Have we done anything to promote the Welcoming City policy in the newsletter, community conversations, or in a press release? The Night to Unite would be a good chance to promote.

Council Member Leehy

When we roll out our first community conversation, this would be a good place to include it.

Council Member Miazga

I also would like for us to promote this, we don't do enough to talk about our accomplishments as a city.

Mayor Gustafson

Could put into the e-newsletter and formalize the fact that we're a welcoming community. To confirm in formal policy what we've been doing for the past 7 years. We could clarify what the policy means, what staff procedures are, etc.

Council Member Andrews

I think it's important to emphasize the seriousness of COVID-19 and to clearly state that we are not promoting Night to Unite, and that we recommend physical distancing with those outside one's household.

Mayor Gustafson

Should encourage people to hold block party distanced from other houses. Similar to Tuesday Together.

City Administrator Thongvanh

I am concerned about fire department's participation, putting our city's first responders at risk of exposure.

Council Member Leehy

Could do drive by with fire trucks, council members could also drive by in vehicles if requested.

City Administrator Thongvanh

I will tell staff. The fire department's participation will drive by. Mayor and council members may participate if requested but this will also be as a drive-by.

F. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24pm.



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Randall Gustafson, Mayor

Dated this 2nd day of September, 2020



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Sack Thongvanh, City Administrator