

CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS
Regular Meeting of the City Planning Commission
City Hall
2077 West Larpenteur Avenue
MINUTES
February 28, 2023 at 7:00 P.M.

A. **CALL TO ORDER:** 7:00 P.M.

B. **ROLL CALL:**

Scott Wilson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jake Anderson _____
Laura Paynter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jim Mogen <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Joel Gerich <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	VACANT
VACANT	

Council Liaison Wehyee _____
City Administrator Linehan
Staff Liaison Lynch

C. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Paynter motion to approve agenda; approved 4-0

D. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Paynter motion to approve January 24th, 2023 minutes; approved 4-0

E. **PUBLIC HEARING**

Subdivision of Community Park Land

Staff liaison Lynch provided an overview of the proposed subdivision of Community Park. She explained that the City is in the process of purchasing the northern 15.5 acres of the 40-acre parcel that currently contains Community park. The City has been leasing the land since 1973, and the lease is expiring. The City would like to purchase it so that the existing building can be rebuilt. To facilitate the sale, the parcel needs to be subdivided. The land will remain a park; there are no plans to change the use. The proposal is in alignment with the Comprehensive Plan.

City Administrator Linehan further described the ongoing negotiations with the University of Minnesota. He stated that the Falcon Heights City Council recently

approved a purchase agreement, and the University of Minnesota also approved the sale on February 10th. The final step is the subdivision of the parcel. He described the location of the split, with the southern line being just north of the existing fence. The city's intent is to keep the trails as they are today, but to potentially modify the northern portion of the park, including the existing parking lot, rebuild the community building, and expand and potentially relocate the community gardens.

Chair Wilson then opened the public hearing.

Michelle Caron (1845 Moore St) asked about impacts to the walking path between the neighborhood and the park. Administrator Linehan stated there are no plans to change the path, other than potentially re-paving in the future. Linehan also clarified that the surveyors will find the actual lot lines between the adjacent properties and the park. Linehan also stated there are no plans to change the wooded areas between the park and the residential neighborhoods. The University does not want to maintain the wooded areas north of the fence line, so the City would sign a maintenance agreement to be responsible for those areas. Caron also requested that the signs around the trails be shorter so that children can see them. Linehan stated that the City has applied for a grant to replace those signs and acknowledged Caron's feedback.

Randy Singer (1853 Moore St) asked about plans to increase the usability of the ballpark, which is underutilized. Linehan stated that the City is planning to hire a design consultant that will hold community meetings to get feedback to what the residents would like to see in a new park design. As a result, it is likely that the ball field will be included in those changes.

John Ward (1811 Moore St) asked if a more permanent fence will be added between the park and the University fields. Linehan stated that the University owns the fence and could make changes. The city has no plans to address the topic.

Linda Barnes (1823 Moore St) asked how the park purchase and changes will be funded. Linehan stated that the city has been setting aside funds for several years and has also applied for bonding, which has failed so far. The city has enough in reserves to buy the land outright and has enough budgeted for \$1.5 million in renovations and repairs. Beyond that, they are looking at a bonding bill and would try to replace other bonds that are rolling off in the future.

Donna Daykin (1854 Moore St) asked about the total cost of the purchase. Linehan stated that the City has settled on a price of \$1.625 per square foot, and this was created based on the use of the land as a park. Donna also complimented public works for the paths being kept up and cleared this winter.

Erin Williams (1974 Autumn St) expressed concern about the financial impacts of the purchase. Additional discussion and clarification with Administrator Linehan on the planned costs and funding sources of the project. Approximately \$2.5 million is

ready for the land purchase and improvement efforts, which is about \$1 million short of the total expected cost. This gap is the amount that would be bonded.

Chair Wilson called for speakers two more times, after which Mogen motioned to close the public hearing. Gerich motioned to recommend the approval of the subdivision to city council.

Discussion and comments from each of the commissioners followed. Chair Wilson called for a vote on the recommendation to city council, which passed 4-0.

F. NEW BUSINESS

1. Comprehensive Plan Review

Staff Liaison Lynch outlined an effort to perform a Comprehensive Plan review. The commissioners agreed to form a subcommittee ahead of a workshop. Paynter nominated Scott Wilson and Joel Gerich to the subcommittee. The subcommittee will meet before the next Planning Commission meeting in March and a workshop will be scheduled then.

G. INFORMATION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Staff Liaison Lynch announced that the new Commissioner will be attending the next meeting in March. Also, the THC ordinance that was sent to City Council will be coming back to the Planning Commission for review. The March meeting should be full and Lynch encouraged all Commissioners to attend.

H. ADJOURN 7:35 P.M.