

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

**MINUTES**

Wednesday, February 14, 2024  
7:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 9:16 PM

B. ROLL CALL: GUSTAFSON\_\_X\_\_ LEEHY\_\_X\_\_  
MEYER\_\_X\_\_ MIELKE\_\_X\_\_ WASSENBERG\_\_X\_\_

STAFF PRESENT: LINEHAN\_\_X\_\_ NELSON\_\_X\_\_

C. POLICY ITEMS:

1. Discuss community outreach strategies regarding a potential partnership for police services with the City of St. Anthony Village

Council Member Mielke listened to the St. Anthony Village workshop meeting and thought it was good.

Council Member Wassenberg adds that it was informative to hear them speak freely, without us there.

Council Member Leehy is looking forward to listening.

Mayor Gustafson says that we need to involve the officers and show them that we want them in the community.

Mielke would like to have a meeting with Chief Spiess to hear about the direction of the department.

City Administrator Linehan says there are mixed feelings for the officers. Some officers felt like the City of Falcon Heights and Council did not support their officers in 2016/2017. They felt like members of the community at one point and then treated like contracted employees at another. Knowing this is a concern for the officers, what can we do to learn more about them and potentially welcome them to the community?

Linehan adds that police leadership shared some ideas with him. It's important that we recognize the extreme emotional turmoil of the past. In 2025, we have a great need for policing. It will be at a huge undertaking for them to do it. They would have to hire staff and would have a significant burden on their department in the short-term, but they recognize the value in finding the right partner to potentially grow the department. We have to be cognizant about requesting a change in practices or contract differences between cities they serve.

Wassenberg stated one SAV member expressed concern on their end whether there is genuine desire from Falcon Heights to have SAPD serve the community, and questioned whether it isn't a last resort scenario.

Gustafson appreciates Valerie Castile's support and understanding of the City talking to SAV.

Leehy says there are three groups of key internal stakeholders: The City Council of SAV, the City Council of Falcon Heights and the police officers. We, as a collective community, have to have ownership of what happened here. Yes, the shooting in Falcon Heights took place. But, a large population of Falcon Heights residents miss SAV as our police department.

Mielke adds how 400 people signed a petition to end the policing contract in one day. That can't be ignored.

Leehy says that it doesn't tell the whole story though; residents were scared to speak out and show support. Supporters were shouted down at a meeting. SAV PD doesn't know the entire story and they should, but there wasn't enough communication between the communities in the aftermath.

Meyer adds there was some scapegoating and a kneejerk reaction that happened.

Gustafson says one of the reasons we're willing to go through this pain and reconciliation with them is because both cities are willing to hear each other and work together; we have a willingness to work through this now.

Leehy says that out of the gate, SAV was willing to find tools to continue to grow and that says a lot. For the community engagement piece, to reintroduce them to the community, we need to present them as our partner.

Wassenberg says he's not looking to place blame on the actions in the past. We are interested in who they are and where both organizations are going, and want to work together.

Mielke says that's why it's important to have a meeting with police officers so that we can be their ambassadors to help welcome them to the community.

Linehan shares that SAV has a three-question survey that would be helpful to discuss. He adds that he reached out to Morris Leatherman (Peter Leatherman) as a research firm and independent consult to gather info on that process. Morris Leatherman has a methodology to sample residents and get down to a 5% margin of error for community opinion polling.

Mielke says she likes these three questions, but isn't sure how to compile the results because the questions are open-ended. She adds that the City should door knock.

Wassenberg adds that door-knocking allows you to explain what the survey is and have that conversation.

Leehy adds that if we do a mailer, we should add "time sensitive" to make it clear that we need a quick response.

Meyer asks what we need to decide tonight?

Mielke says that the bottom line is that we need a police department and doesn't feel like the emphasis should be so much on what we learn from the survey, but that we care about the community's input.

Leehy wonders if we do the survey blindly or if we introduce the public to the SAV police force first. She adds that having their data helps us tell their story to our residents.

Mielke wonders how officers will feel passing by the Philando Castile Peace Garden memorial and if that will be difficult.

Leehy says that the peace garden is for everyone. The garden is also for their healing. If Valerie (Castile) was sitting here, she would say the same and invite anyone to visit with her. Valerie has stated that the department didn't kill Philando; one officer did.

Linehan says we could do a Survey Monkey survey, along with printing copies with a return envelope postmarked. Do we want to mirror SAV's three questions?

Mayor Gustafson says that it's nice to have similar questions to show how we align.

Mielke asks if a professional can help us draft the survey.

Linehan states that Goff Public also has a public engagement team that could be consulted for question review.

Wassenberg wonders how we'll compile the data. Asks Council Member Meyer if AI could be used to aggregate results?

Meyer states that it could.

Mielke says that we should include U of M students in our survey.

Wassenberg says several approaches would be good and we should have similar questions to SAV.

Leehy says we need to have the education component before the survey. Some residents won't even be aware of a potential new policing contract.

Linehan states the March newsletter is forthcoming, and it could include FAQs / background. Survey could follow.

Council directed Administrator Linehan to share our plan with St. Anthony Village.

D. ADJOURNMENT: 10:31 PM

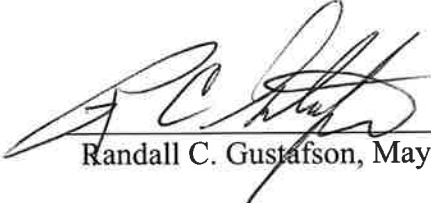
*DISCLAIMER: City Council Workshops are held monthly as an opportunity for Council Members to discuss policy topics in greater detail prior to a formal meeting where a public hearing may be held and/or action may be taken. Members of the public that would like to make a comment or ask questions about an item on the agenda for an upcoming workshop should send them to [mail@falconheights.org](mailto: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.*

Councilmember Meyer motions to adjourn the meeting; approved 5-0.

Dated this 13<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2024

  
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Jack Linehan, City Administrator

  
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Randall C. Gustafson, Mayor