

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

MINUTES
Wednesday, March 6, 2024
6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:37 PM

B. ROLL CALL: GUSTAFSON_X_ LEEHY_X_
 MEYER_X_ MIELKE_X_ WASSENBERG_X_

STAFF PRESENT: LINEHAN_X_ VAN DER WERFF_X_

C. POLICY ITEMS:

1. Potential Police Partnership - Engagement Plan

Administrator Linehan shares preliminary results of the survey with Council. He is pleased with the responses so far. Next, St Anthony has an open house prior to their Council Workshop on Tuesday, March 12 at 5:30 PM. Falcon Heights has their open house prior to their regular Council meeting on Wednesday, March 13 at 6 PM. The Councils of St. Anthony Village, Lauderdale and Falcon Heights are invited to both open houses. Administrator Linehan wonders how engagement with the police should be built into this. St. Anthony Village hired a consultant and Administrator Linehan hopes they will discuss police engagement.

Councilmembers Mielke and Leehy wonder about the format of the open houses.

The Council discusses the logistics of the open house.

Administrator Linehan notes there is no specific structure to the open house. There will be four open houses total plus two town halls in April.

Councilmember Mielke states that councilmembers should act as hosts and welcome attendants.

Councilmember Leehy suggests pairing up councilmembers during the open house.

Councilmember Mielke wonders if it would be beneficial to have conversation starters and use easels around the room.

Mayor Gustafson adds that after one open house, they can re-evaluate.

Council discusses the creation of a handout for the open house with contact information, the survey and information about the potential partnership.

Councilmember Wassenberg wonders how long the survey will stay open.

Administrator Linehan answers the survey will close in April and the two town halls will be after the survey closes in order to present preliminary results. Town halls provide more opportunities for engagement as the public has the opportunity to speak directly to Council and they can respond.

Councilmember Leehy wonders the dates and times for the open houses and town halls.

Council discusses if there should be a facilitator running the town halls to free up time for both mayors and city administrators/managers.

Administrator Linehan sees potential in that. The town halls will mark the end of the public engagement. This will help direct Council towards a decision if they want to continue moving forward with the discussions around the partnership or move in a different direction.

Councilmember Leehy suggests being available for seniors in the community during the time that they are available for door-knocking.

Mayor Gustafson suggests attending one of their coffee hours.

Administrator Linehan agrees and adds that staff can reach out to some of the senior buildings in the city. The idea is to create multiple ways for residents to engage in the discussions. For example, mailing out paper surveys with return envelopes.

Councilmember Wassenberg likes the idea of making it easier for seniors to ask questions by coming to some of the meeting rooms that are available at their buildings.

Administrator Linehan notes the door-knocking should start sooner rather than later as residents need time to take the survey as well. Staff can reach out to property managers of apartment dwellings and senior housing.

Councilmember Leehy adds that a lot of apartment buildings have spots to put up a flyer with information.

Administrator Linehan stresses the goal of the engagement plan is for people to take the survey and to collect data.

Councilmembers Leehy and Wassenberg wonder about engagement with local businesses. They should be invited to the open houses and town halls as well.

Mayor Gustafson adds landlords/property owners.

Administrator Linehan wants to divide up the door-knocking responsibilities. Council then discusses how they want to divide up the neighborhoods and streets for door-knocking and the supplies needed.

Administrator Linehan suggests taking the multifamily buildings out as the Council wants to hold open houses at those locations.

Councilmember Wassenberg wonders about campus housing as they have their own campus police.

Administrator Linehan states that April 5th will be a soft cut-off for the survey; after, Goff Public will start analyzing the data.

2. Community Park Updates

Administrator Linehan explains WSB is in the design phase. Staff interviewed three firms for Construction Managers as Advisor (CMA) that have experience in parks construction in the Twin Cities. Two firms will submit proposals. He explains the City can bring in the CMA to assist in pre-construction cost estimating and construction management. They will work with the architect and WSB on preconstruction and assist with keeping the other parties in check as well. All contracts will be between the City and the trade contractors. The fee was built into the cost estimates for the park. Administrator Linehan explains the other possibility of Construction Managers at Risk (CMAR), but staff recommends the CMA route.

Mayor Gustafson states the CMA has a managerial role in the construction.

Councilmember Leehy wonders about inspections and permit fees.

Staff explains that the City's building inspector will assist with state charges, other fees and inspections.

Administrator Linehan states the fees for all CMAs were similar, so the proposals will be evaluated based on experience. They will also help oversee the bid process. He explains that staff is working on a grant application and this particular grant requires a match from the City and will be used for an inclusive playground. This process has made staff realize how much more engagement is needed around the playground alone, depending on colors and themes.

Councilmember Wassenberg appreciates the idea of having a CMA running day-to-day operations and the bid process.

Administrator Linehan notes the City will pay the contractors directly, but the CMA will help oversee this process as well. He adds that the CMA is also preferred by the City Attorney. He explains a rough timeline of the demo and construction of the building.

Mayor Gustafson wonders about financing and bonding.

Administrator Linehan explains the City will put forward a bond reimbursement resolution. This will provide the City statutory authority to have any cost attributed or refunded towards the bond. Currently, there is enough cash on hand, but long term, a bond will be needed in order to keep capital on hand. The bond process will most likely start in summer, once bid estimates are known.

Councilmember Wassenberg wonders about cost ramp-up.

Administrator Linehan agrees it will ramp up at the end and the City can pay back its capital from the bond. The CMA will handle the RFP processes for the subcontractors. In order to hire the CMA, the City does not have to go through the RFP Process. He explains there was a third option that was explored for the project called Sourcewell, but the City Attorney was not in favor of this process for hiring service providers. It works for buying products such as a new truck.

Mayor Gustafson notes Ice Cream Social can still be held at the Community Park.

Administrator Linehan states staff is cautious with events and field rentals at the park as the timeline is still uncertain.

Councilmember Leehy wonders what the City's Finance Director's thoughts are.

Administrator Linehan notes he is in favor of passing this resolution.

Council is in favor of passing the bond reimbursement resolution at the next City Council meeting.

3. Legislative Updates / Priorities

Administrator Linehan explains the Minnesota State Legislature is in session and has numerous bills for consideration. There are certain bills that the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) and the City are watching. With the upcoming "City Day on the Hill" organized by LMC, staff has identified areas the Council may want to consider taking official positions on. A key priority is state bonding for the park project. Linehan says he is being realistic and notes that it is unlikely but it's good to have a conversation.

Council agrees.

The second priority is Local Government Aid (LGA). Administrator Linehan explains 2/3rd of our city is exempt from local property tax, so the city relies on LGA. Last year, aid was increased significantly and a portion was transferred to the capital fund, but a large portion was donated to the general fund to cover the large increase in police costs. This funding is key for balancing the levy. The goal is to advocate that the state maintains LGA. Another goal is making restoration and unity days statewide, which was brought forth by Senator Oumou Verbeten. The last set of bills is "Local Control," which includes preemption of decisions that are traditionally at the local level. This year, the state has legislative bills that would encroach on some local control regulations. There are bills that would introduce statewide zoning and land use preemption provisions. For example, limiting parking restrictions for housing and increasing height restrictions. The state sees a lot of current municipal zoning guidelines as unhelpful with the increasing housing demand. Administrator Linehan notes some cities are opposed to these bills and he wants to take a proactive approach. If passed, cities will be required to update their code within a certain timeframe.

Lastly, there is a bill with a proposal to change election timing. This would require municipalities and school districts with odd-year elections to move to even-year elections.

Councilmember Leehy likes that local elections are separate so people can pay attention to local elections as well as state/federal elections.

Administrator Linehan adds it would reduce our costs as the City contracts with Ramsey County for election administration. Council Member Mielke states there has not been a lot of traction with the bill. Linehan adds that he will be lobbying at the City Day on the Hill organized by LMC.

Council discusses the City's stands on the legislative priorities.

Administrator Linehan notes that he is hopeful that the City's bonding requests will be kept in the mix with the bonding requests for the Governor's recommendation.

4. 75th Anniversary Planning

Administrator Linehan wonders what direction Council wants to take for the 75th anniversary. He learned there was a parade down Garden Ave. for the 50th anniversary of the City and the official celebration was held at the end of summer. April 1st is the official date for the incorporation of Falcon Heights.

Councilmember Leehy notes they could do a tour again with Falcon Heights facts.

Mayor Gustafson talks about some of the old photos that are available and they bring up good memories.

Councilmember Mielke suggests an open house with old photos and a presentation of Falcon Heights' history.

Councilmember Leehy explains she is fascinated with generational stories of families staying or returning to Falcon Heights.

Councilmember Wassenberg suggests having a 75-year history booth at the Ice Cream Social with photos and some history.

Councilmember Leehy states having the incorporation date be recognized is good, but the celebration can be held at the Ice Cream Social.

Councilmember Mielke likes having an open house to which all old councilmembers and mayors can be invited. The anniversary could also be acknowledged at Spring Together.

Councilmember Leehy likes acknowledging it on April 1st and noting it at the Spring Together.

Councilmember Wassenberg likes having banners acknowledging the anniversary on the new street lights.

Administrator Linehan notes the goal is to have the 75th anniversary celebration be resident-driven by creating an ad-hoc committee.

5. Future Agenda Items

Administrator Linehan provides the opportunity to the Council to suggest future agenda items. He notes that the assessment policy was brought up previously.

Councilmember Wassenberg agrees it would be beneficial to take another look at the policy.

Administrator Linehan states the Falcon Woods project includes the Northome east and west-bound streets as well and the city is considering including the alleyways. Other alleyways were done as part of previous PMP projects and the cost came out significantly lower than anticipated.

Councilmember Mielke suggests cleaning up some of the old ordinances and routinely reviewing them to ensure they stay up to date. She also wonders about snow plowing the alleyways.

Administrator Linehan explains the Planning Commission is going through the land use ordinances and staff routinely reviews City Code. He states that Lauderdale was added and more sidewalks are being plowed by Public Works as they are fully staffed now. They are reviewing the possibility of alleyway snow plowing, but have to determine capacity of Public Works staff.

Councilmember Leehy appreciates that this is being reviewed by staff as it is impactful for residents.

Councilmember Wassenberg agrees, but notes that there are a number of pros and cons that need to be reviewed before the City can offer that service.

Administrator Linehan suggests reviewing the possibility of having a single trash hauler. He believes the city could get a lower cost contract than residents could with the current offerings of multiple trash haulers.

Councilmember Wassenberg believes it is beneficial to have multiple trash haulers to create some competition. He adds having a single hauler could disenfranchise smaller haulers as they cannot compete with larger haulers.

Councilmember Leehy wonders if Falcon Heights ever had a single hauler.

Mayor Gustafson answers no, it was attempted, but never successful.

Administrator Linehan explains that the haulers have to be licensed with the city and during their renewal they provide pricing. But, those fees exclude additional fees such as fuel surcharges. Lastly, he wonders about a date for the Council retreat. He wants to bring Third Sphere back for a DEI recap training. A tentative date they are considering is April 27th. It would be good to talk about next steps then for the police partnerships as all engagement opportunities have wrapped up then.

D. ADJOURNMENT: 9:29 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 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.



Randall C. Gustafson, Mayor

Dated this 27th day of March, 2024



Jack Linehan, City Administrator