

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

MINUTES
Wednesday, September 25, 2024
7:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 7:32 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 Renewed Police Partnership with St. Anthony Village

Administrator Linehan highlights spots in the process of contract negotiations. St. Anthony Village Council had their workshop meeting last night. They are working through the request to start services earlier on March 1, 2025. Linehan met with St. Anthony Police Chief Spiess and City Manager Yunker to work through what this request would look like. St. Anthony recognized that renewing the relationship was important for the future of the department. As staffing remains a challenge, St. Anthony Village (SAV) and St. Anthony Police Department (SAPD) are working on bringing different recruitment and staffing concepts into the contract, such as:

- Expansion of the cadet program from 2 to 6.
 - o These cadets would not be dedicated purely to Falcon Heights but would serve the entire contract area and can help with non-emergency calls and be candidates for entry-level officer positions.
- Hiring bonuses
 - o a one-time hiring bonus program for lateral-level officers.
- Referral bonuses
- Retention bonuses
 - o To avoid losing officers during the transition process.

Councilmember Leehy and Mayor Gustafson agree these are good ideas, especially if they provide bonuses to new hires. Council also likes the referral bonus. Leehy appreciates the creativeness of the contract and the work put in by city leaders of both cities; it's starting to pay off.

Linehan states Chief Spiess wants to focus on building relationships and trust with Falcon Heights.

Councilmember Mielke adds that it was mentioned during the SAV workshop that an anonymous survey of officers showed that 80% are in favor of this contract.

The council discusses the shift in attitude between the two communities and feels like the work is starting to pay off.

Linehan explains other proposed contract changes. The cost of the contract is being discussed. There are talks of removing the ramp-up period and work towards a mutually agreed process, to avoid having specific numbers in the contract. The goal is to work towards full 24-hour coverage as soon as possible. The joint operations committee will further discuss details of the ramp-up period and hours of coverage. The hours the police are present will be impactful for the community; it will be focused on community building. For example, drive the whole city, each street, each alley.

Leehy wants to clarify the ramp-up period, to make sure its communicable to residents. She adds a starting goal would be helpful. Councilmember Wassenberg notes it will be an 8-hour presence, but a 24-hour response. He acknowledges the increase in the levy but adds that not all that money will be spent right away as officers will not be present for 24 hours. Mielke wonders, if there is room to bring down the levy, as we're promoting a community-based policing model, but it will not be like that right from the start of the contract. Linehan answers the increase is there to get to that point of community-based policing.

Gustafson adds that the city has been receiving a response model of policing and not community-based policing that is proactive and patrols actively. There will be more involvement, and community involvement takes time.

Linehan explains trust has to be built over time. It is a leap of faith by both communities. There is still a chance of no police coverage on March 1st if the contract does not work out. While there is enough mutual aid surrounding Falcon Heights that can respond, any kind of dedicated patrol coverage would be better. They can help with traffic enforcement around State Fair time. Speeding is also a big concern voiced to City Hall frequently by residents in neighborhoods. There will be more speed control.

Finally, there is a facility upgrade that has been in the works long before Falcon Heights showed interest in a partnership. The challenge is the true cost of the facility.

Council wonders about the next steps. Linehan answers SAV needs some time working through the contract, but Falcon Heights needs an answer as soon as possible as there is a deadline. Both cities will decide the end of October.

Linehan explains changes to the contract language. There are minimal severability clauses, as it's built on good faith, which is not always favorable by attorneys. Council notes good progress to the contract.

Wassenberg wonders about pricing models during the ramp-up period. Linehan explains this will need to be discussed. A blended pricing model can be instituted in the current department. The city would still be responsible for 27%. 3 officers vs 9 full times, should only be 3rd of the hard costs, but they still will be responding to calls 24/7, so Wassenberg is wondering what the formula is for that. Pricing will need to be further detailed for the ramp-up period. If staffing levels are not at what they want

them to be, to fully cover Falcon Heights, they need to be ready to have resources as to not take resources away from SAV and Lauderdale. Meyer explains he is happy to see light at the end of the tunnel. Wassenberg wonders about the interim period for staffing. Linehan explains their target date to be fully staffed is July 2026. To make the contract work, both parties are flexible in their staffing requirements, and negotiation clauses can be added to the contract.

D. ADJOURNMENT: 8:13 PM

Councilmember Mielke motions to adjourn;
Approved 5-0

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 23rd day of October, 2024



Jack Linehan, City Administrator