

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

MINUTES

Wednesday, September 4, 2024
6:30 P.M.

A. CALL TO ORDER: 6:32 PM

B. ROLL CALL: GUSTAFSON X LEEHY
 MEYER X MIELKE X WASSENBERG X

STAFF PRESENT: LINEHAN X VAN DER WERFF X

C. POLICY ITEMS:

1. Community Park Discussion

Administrator Linehan explains staff has been working on getting the project back on track. They spoke with each individual consultant involved to ensure everyone knew the budget was a max of \$3.5 million. WSB provided 4 options:

- Option 1: HCM designed (custom-designed) restroom with servery and shelter structure, associated site/utility work, 5,000 sq. ft. play area (not including all rubber surfacing or perimeter fence). Note that Item 6A on Cost Estimate Option 1 is for a pre-fabricated (pre-fab) shelter and item 6B is for increased cost for a custom shelter.
- Option 2: HCM designed (custom-designed) restroom, pre-fab shelter, associated site/utility work, larger play area (7,500 sq. ft.) with rubber surfacing and perimeter fence and splash pad.
- Option 3: Renovate the existing building, pre-fab shelter, associated site/utility work, larger play area with rubber surfacing and perimeter fence. Note this option is the minimum requirements to get the building to code and still requires another \$500k over the next 10 years to complete the full renovation. Staff advised WSB that this would not be the City's preferred option at this time. Not the direction Council wants to take.
- Option 4: Pre-fab restroom/concessions building, which is a concrete vault style building, pre-fab shelter, associated site/utility work, larger play area with rubber surfacing, and perimeter fence and splash pad. For example, restrooms like those at rest stops and at state parks. Not a lot of room for modifications. Very cost effective. Would allow for large-scale playground, not contingent on bonding or grants.

Staff gathered samples of the pre-fab bathrooms for the Council to view. Council likes the look of them and they remind them of state parks and rest stops. Linehan states they are designed to last for a while.

Councilmember Wassenberg states the buildings are sturdy and in-stock. He wonders if the pre-fab can be both restroom and servery. Linehan answers yes, and they can utilize

state bidding software since the vendor is active on it.

Councilmember Mielke wonders if option 1 would be the custom shelter that was presented previously.

Linehan adds that without a park building, WSB feels Kraus-Anderson's and HCM's contracts are not needed anymore if the Council decides to go with option 4. A general contractor would need to be hired and the City would go out and bid for that position.

The council agrees option 4 is the best way to move forward and feels like this is a good use of the funds. With pre-fab, the council can see the options before selecting. This same restroom design can be used to be placed at Curtiss Field.

Councilmember Leehy wonders about gathering space inside. Linehan notes they can get pretty large with their concession stands, they also have warming house styles. This could be an emergency weather space and maybe a warming house.

Linehan shows a condensed version of a potential timeline with the hopes of building in 2025.

Councilmember Wassenberg wonders if fencing and surfacing can be added later after the playground is built. Linehan is unsure about the rubberized surface. Just the accessibility aspect would make it more appealing for grants.

Mayor Gustafson wonders if community expectations are that the building and playground be completed at the same time. Or could it be done in a phased approach? The grant will be known by the end of July. Based on the finish of the build, many outdoor amenities are not going to be available due to winter. But it would be a full opening in the spring of 2026. Could include bid alternatives for the playground.

Mielke and Leehy state that's typically how construction goes, in a phased approach. Linehan adds the current playground will remain until the new playground is built. Leehy suggest placing a picture or sign by the current playground to create excitement.

Mielke wonders if money can be put in the budget for the shelters that are already at the community park to make them tie in with the other buildings. Council agrees.

Linehan continues, that as plans are being built out, they need to determine the placement of the new pre-fab and could potentially leave room for a new building.

Gustafson wonders about the bathroom and water source close to the garden. Linehan answers water sources need to be added for the splash pad and the garden.

Wassenberg wonders if each cost estimate includes the cost of demolishing and site prep. He also wonders about heating. Linehan answers yes, that is all integrated in the total building cost. Heating is something that needs to be looked at still.

Linehan notes, in order to keep the project moving along, decisions for playground design, fencing, surfacing and the splash pad can be made ahead of time. Staff will apply for the DNR Grant again and this will be used for a rubberized surface of the

playground and fencing around the playground. Gustafson likes the idea of fenced-in play areas. He suggests making the fenced areas not for dogs. Fencing is helpful for sensory-friendly areas and would benefit everyone.

Linehan is excited to see a full design of the playground and give the Parks Commission more “power” to help design the playground. It could be a mini-destination playground.

2. Tenants’ Rights Event

Linehan explains that staff sent mailers out to all residents and they ordered food and drinks. Mielke reserved a room at the library. She states it fits 125, but she believes around 30/40 will attend. The attorney from HOME Line attending is a Spanish speaker and there will also be a Somali interpreter. There will be the ability to watch children. The organization is a nonprofit providing free legal advice to tenants. The council believes it will be a good event.

3. Assessment Policy Amendment

Staff worked on updating the assessment policy based on Council direction and had the city attorney reviewed it and approve it. An equalized assessment was recommended by the council and engineering for the upcoming Falcon Woods PMP as the design of the neighborhood makes for very unequal lots. Staff added options to assess the policy at the discretion of the Council. These are the options the Council would consider to determine how a parcel will get assessed.

Wassenberg suggests a small change to the policy. Linehan notes there are other assessments that do not look at lineal foot but at lot size. For example, storm sewer is determined differently than street improvement. Linehan adds that this will be added to the Council agenda for next week for the Council to vote on.

4. Police Partnership Discussion

Linehan notes the RCSO is able to provide coverage for two more months. In a proposed draft contract with St. Anthony Village, the St. Anthony Police Department (SAPD) would begin coverage by March 1, 2025, with 24/7 emergency coverage provided immediately and ramp-up patrol options afterwards. Linehan added an appendix to the contract that allows start-up staffing. If SAPD cannot agree to this, Falcon Heights will be forced to look elsewhere for coverage. Starting March 1st, 2025, Falcon Heights will not have dedicated police coverage if SAPD cannot provide services that soon. If that is the case, New Brighton Public Safety (NBPS) may be interested in a long-term contract.

Leehy clarifies this would allow time to wait for what happens with SAPD, and, if it falls through, we can go to New Brighton.

Linehan explains the SAPD has previously requested a longer period to staff up, allowing full coverage before a contract begins. They still want to start on January 1, 2026 to allow time for recruitment, as fewer officers and more coverage areas would add more stress/mandatory OT concerns. It would be a part-time coverage model and coverage hours are up to mutual agreement between councils. The next step is to

propose this contract update to SAPD. This would put the ball in their court. The last option would be to create our own police department, but this requires much more time and other cities or agencies of similar size are struggling with staffing.

Linehan will pitch the new contract to SAPD. Specific numbers will be discussed, but March 1, 2025 has to be the start date. The Council believes 3.0 FTE's would be a good start.

Wassenberg appreciates the New Brighton police website; there is a lot of data and transparency. Linehan will circle back to them after hearing back from SAPD. Wassenberg suggests not slamming the door with them. If Falcon Heights ends up not getting coverage, they would be able to provide some. Maybe do a hybrid model and contract for sergeants, but hire officers.

Gustafson explains the difference between a patrol/community policing model and a response model. It works in rural areas, but not very much in urban areas.

Linehan adds that St. Anthony Village received plans back for new police facility renovations with a cost of 8 to 10 million. They are also exploring other plans.

Gustafson believes that the community work done with St. Anthony was a good move regardless if the cities can come to an agreement on an accelerated timeline.


Mielke notes a State Fair discussion was never added to the future agenda items and asked if it can be discussed. Linehan adds it wasn't added as there is a dedicated task force for the State Fair as well to discuss. He provides calls for service reports from the RCSO. The Public Works crew and office staff spend a lot of time on the State Fair with signs, staff hours, a resource guide, and state fair parking permits. He wants to have the task force review the number of State Fair parking permits. Linehan wonders how much more the city can help residents. More traffic enforcement in the streets is needed, but without a dedicated police force, this will be difficult. He believes it will become more challenging as the fair gets bigger and is hoping the task force can provide more directions and relief for the city.

Gustafson suggests adding a budget line for the State Fair cost.

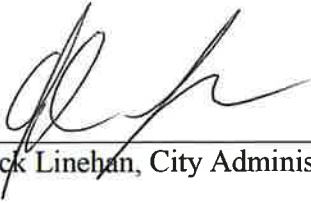
When asked, Linehan provides an update on code enforcement with Amber Union.

D. ADJOURNMENT: 8:50 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 9th day of October, 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Linehan', written over a horizontal line.

Jack Linehan, City Administrator