

CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS
Community Meeting of the City Council
City Hall
2077 West Larpenteur Avenue

MINUTES
July 27, 2016 at 7:00 P.M.

Community Meeting-Listening Session

The City Administrator, Sack Thongvanh, provides a summary of how we got here, what we're doing here, and what we can do in the future:

The Mayor and City Administrator have met with a number of groups including the City of Lauderdale, City of St. Anthony, Black Lives Matter-St. Paul, NCCP local chapter, and the Black Ministerial Alliance. They're trying to get feedback, to work together, and to work towards solving a systematic problem that has been going on in the nation.

This session right now is an information session. We will gather the information from this meeting and the previous Council Meeting Community Forum. This information will be used to make an analysis. This is a very complex analysis that has many moving factors including what the cities of Lauderdale and St. Anthony can do, and what the BCA is doing with their investigation.

The City of Falcon Heights is, and will continue to work behind the scenes on that process. They are currently working on creating a work group if it seems fit for it. It will consist of some appointed members of the community, residents of Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, and St. Anthony. This will be looking at process, procedures, training, and what the police department can do to help enhance what they do now. We are continuing to work toward resolving some of the issues.

Laura Boicin- 1775 Fairview Ave N-

She drives Larpenteur every day. Within weeks of moving there she noticed the disproportionate stop of people of color. She served on the Human Rights Commission and brought this issue up. She asked for the police stop demographics, and these statistics are not kept, only for the people who have been arrested. The response that she received was that Falcon Heights does not racially profile, and the police department is not racist. She tried to talk about implicit bias and aversive racism. She resigned from the Commission because she came to the conclusion that the conversation would never happen. She suggests Falcon Heights starts keeping data about stops and tickets, that we provide implicit bias training for all public officials and police officers, and that we form a citizen and community police board.

Tom Baldwin- 1716 Albert St-

He was Mayor of Falcon Heights from 1986-1995. He can give a first-hand account of all the police departments we've had. We left Ramsey County because we could not afford the contract. We contracted with Roseville, and then left them because we had concerns about the service. They spent too much time on the major thoroughfares at the expense of the neighborhoods. We

were unable to work out an agreement with St. Paul because they could not guarantee 24 hour police presence in the city which was not satisfactory to many of the residents. St. Anthony was the only reasonable alternative. There was little talk about increasing revenue through ticketing. He regrets not pursuing that conversation further. The highly regarded Maplewood Chief of Police fears the implications of stopping for minor infractions because it creates too many negative interactions between officers and the public. He disagrees that the council is not able to act on this event. He feels it is imperative to act because the trust relationship between a significant number of the residents and SAPD has been seriously damaged. What can be done is working with the SAPD to create a plan to regain trust and publicize it so the residents can help monitor it. The Council can articulate their expectations of the relationship of any agent of our city. Finally, allot funds for the City Attorney for consultation of contract law to see if any of the terms constitute a breach so we know our options.

Charles Johnson- 1718 Lindig St-

We've become too much of a law and order society and not as much of a peace-keeping society. The past couple of weeks he has been out on Larpenteur on his bike. There weren't any squad cars while he road, yet he felt safe. He is wondering what we are receiving from the St. Anthony Police Department right now and if they breached their contract.

Tom Brace- 1433 Idaho Ave-

His background is public safety, and he feels that we have a public safety issue in a number of areas. He was an unsuccessful candidate for City Council. He is the former MN State Fire Marshal. He got the sense from Council that there wasn't much that we could do until the BCA completes its investigation. There is a lot that can be done. Get the contract reviewed by the City Attorney. See if there are any other alternatives. He is interested in the work group, and the makeup of that has to be carefully crafted. What level of policing do we want, and where do we want the emphasis?

Steven McCarthy- 2286 Folwell Ave-

He'd like to see a different kind of policing where the officers are on foot or bicycle. There have been a number of studies of interaction with the citizens outside of the squad cars. The police would be more engaged and more accountable. It sets a distance when the police are behind their squad cars, badges, and guns.

Kay Andrews- 1471 California Ave-

She has lived with some of her children and grandchildren, all of whom are African American. They are not here tonight because they work to pay off their fines from SAPD. She said her grandchildren have experienced being pulled over in front of their own house and being asked for ID. In turn they ran a background check on them to make sure that was the case. They have lost hope and understand why people have become angry. We have to do something to build trust, respect, and communication. When the cops know her grandchildren by first name when they don't have a record other than tickets they have given them, there is a problem.

Eric Nilsson- 1469 Idaho Ave W-

He is here for penance and because he is hopeful. His son is an activist for Black Lives Matter. Penance comes from living here and having noticed people of color stopped and having not done anything. He is hopeful because he had an interaction on the bus with an African

American man who stated he has hope and believes that we can all work together and figure this out. If it weren't for this incident, that interaction likely wouldn't have happened. He would like to see the city sponsor a way to improve our discourse and perhaps produce a model that the rest of the country can follow.

Maura Brink- 1795 Simpson St-

She feels the problem is that we are looking for a technical solution to an adaptive program. Ending the contract is a technical solution. We would have still had these overt systems of power in our police department, government, and schools. She was a coach at JJ Hill and she's a teacher. She gets to be sad and angry because of white privilege. African Americans are afraid. Go to the schools; don't make them come to you. Listen to the children.

John Thompson

He worked with Philando, and has known him for nine years. He's a St. Paul Public Schools employee. His last conversation with Philando was about him working at Chelsea Heights for the summer. He did it because he loved the kids. He said he loved everybody. He's asking the City of Falcon Heights to get it right. The world needs to hear us. Philando was dedicated to the City of St. Paul and to the kids. He never travels Larpenteur because he knows he'll have to get out of his car and get on the ground for a basic traffic stop. This can't happen again. We can't do this separately. Together we can make it happen.

Melanie Leehy- Fairview Ave-

We have an opportunity to get this right and make a shift for this nation. She still believes we are the city that soars. It takes humility to do this right. She doesn't want anyone to be ashamed for being white, just as she doesn't want anyone to be ashamed for being African American. She hasn't heard all of those stories, and she has had good interactions and knows some of the SAPD. These are stories that a lot of Caucasians haven't heard because they don't have to deal with it on a day to day basis. We can get this right if we learn how to humble ourselves, work together, figure out what we can change, and learn how to honor and respect each other.

Paula Mielke- 1868 Arona St-

Her son has been very involved with Black Lives Matter. She has visited those who were occupying the governor's mansion to let them know she is sorry. Many people were arrested for occupying, and she encourages everyone to go to the Black Lives Matter website and make a donation for bail. She asked a fellow colleague with the Ramsey County Libraries what her experience is driving through Falcon Heights. She said when driving up Snelling she puts her hands on the wheel at 10 and 2, and turns her baseball cap around if she is wearing one because of the aggressive policing in Falcon Heights. She tells her son not to drive on Larpenteur. She was pulled over on Larpenteur for having her brights on and was told that that was a sign of a stolen car.

Greg Weyandt 1364 California Ave-

He knows why it is different for him driving on Larpenteur and why he hasn't been stopped. He wants a memorial in this city for Philando. He wants his grandchildren to know what happened, why it happened, and that it won't happen again. There is power in symbols, and he wants a symbol as a reminder.

Runney Patterson, Woodbury Resident-

He pastors a New Hope Baptist Church. He has experienced Minnesota ice instead of nice. He has been stopped 10-12 alone in Woodbury. Whenever he has been pulled over it's been in his Mercedes. He always pulls out his license first, then his business card that says 'pastor'. After that he has been told to go ahead, but they won't give him a reason for being pulled over. He also has his permit to carry and intends to use it if a gun is pulled on him, because he will not be killed for an unjust reason.

Reverend Charles Gill- Senior Pastor of Pilgrim Baptist Church and President of the St. Paul Black Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance-

The Alliance is made up of 15 congregations. He agrees with the statements that have been made earlier about the lack of trust, respect, and professionalism. They are concerned about the termination of the contract and amnesty for all African Americans who have gotten tickets as a result of racial profiling from SAPD. We are angry and frustrated. Those who choose to carry legal fire arms should not be treated the way Philando Castile was. He is not alone in his asks.

Signe Nestingen 1447 Iowa Ave-

She is very sorry to the Castile family. She hopes that the memorial is one of change and transformation. We have a responsibility to step forward, speak up, and be involved. We need to start conversations and have an agenda.

Peter Demorath- 2297 Folwell Ave-

This is not just an issue for people of color. This is an issue for all of us. We are talking about a pattern, not just one incident. He has never been pulled over on Larpenteur in the 9 years he has lived here. We have an opportunity to get this right, to look at the contract, sever the contract if needed, and to create a national model of policing. Many of us want to see police training that involves mediation, communication, cultural competence, de-escalation, and much less training in weapons. He wants more transparency in regards to timelines of when to expect the results of the investigation and know what is going on behind the scenes. We can ask our police department to respect everybody.

Jacob-

There was excessive force at the Governor's mansion by the St. Paul Police Department. Do you want to represent that? Acceptance changes lives, judgement kills.

Curtiss Avin- St. Paul Resident-

He has taken a stand personally and was part of the occupy movement. He said everything about it was peaceful. The St. Paul Police are benefiting off Philando's murder by paying their officers overtime. Contract policing is not working. Police should be required to live 5-10 miles from the city that they are working in. What is the district attorney Choi going to do? What are you going to do to change the lack of accountability and to set precedence for the nation to show that this cannot happen again?

Michael Robin- St. Anthony Park Resident-

He had been driving with a broken taillight for three and a half years. Three months ago he was stopped and nothing happened. The police officer didn't ticket him, and he advised him to put a piece of red tape over the broken part. If being white means black lives don't matter, then this

isn't a country he wants to live in. There's a lot Falcon Heights, St. Paul, and the state can do. Our founding fathers set up the law to dehumanize and disenfranchise black people. This country was founded on the genocide of Native Americans and enslavement of black people.

Tyree Johnson- St. Paul Resident-Philando's cousin-

His family won't sit quietly and watch this officer scurry off. He's a coward, and he made a bad call. His cousin was quiet, but now he's making the most noise. The Council is the face of the police department and this event. The people are tired, and they're not going to take it. He experienced getting pulled over by the BP off Snelling and his car got searched because he seemed mischievous. Meanwhile, he lay on his stomach for 30 minutes. His girlfriend was put in the back of the squad car, and his daughter was set on the curb. The United States is looking at Falcon Heights.

Aletha Thompson- St. Paul Resident-

She has one son. She teaches her son to do everything the police ask him to do. Yet, her problem is that Philando did the same thing and his mother still lost him. So, what can she do? There are many that are afraid because they have sons who are strong black men, like she does. They are rallying and being peaceful, but the police are rushing in and being forceful. What does she tell her son? He cannot be Philando.

Lakitta Troupe-prior Falcon Heights resident at 1550 Larpenteur-Philando's cousin-

She has met the Council before, and she will never forget them because they made a lot of promises. She has called the Mayor before about the way she has been treated by police when living at 1550. She received a no proof of insurance ticket when she wasn't even driving. She also was appointed to the Park and Recreation Commission but it was treated like it should be a full time job when she wanted to volunteer and participate in the community. The Police harass the people at 1550. The Council needs to do something today.

Patti Holmes- 1635 Garden Ave-

She is deeply concerned that an act of violence was committed in this community because of his race. She suspects that the ticketing that has been done in this city has helped to subsidize the policing in the community. She would have given more money rather than having the citizens who drive through the community supporting the police force.

Geogianna May- 1477 California Ave-

The Council has to answer the people's questions. The way to answer these questions is to do something. The Council can do something. We all can change the way we live. She wants a memorial. She wants the Council to make sure that the memorial that is there right now not be taken down. Her son received a ticket on Larpenteur Ave, and she doesn't worry about him being mistreated by the police because he is white. She has been telling herself since the event, that if her black neighbor is not safe then she is not safe; if her black neighbor is not free, she is not free.

Rachel Vard-

She was detained during the occupation yesterday. She has talked to many police officers, and the response that she keeps getting is that that is their job. She's tired of the system just

operating as it is and everyone acting like it can't change. We need to do something different about it.

Bob Haight- 1477 California Ave-

He feels the same shock and sadness when he sees the memorial that he did the first day he heard of the tragic event. He also feels the anger at the unfairness of the loss of life and feels anger at the continued oppression of African Americans. Please protect the memorial that is there now.

Deb Alexander- 1700 Albert St-

One of the things that she can do is require transparency. The ACLU has done some work looking at the statistics in Northeast Minneapolis, and was able to establish a pattern of bias policing. This is something that we should consider doing. When the Council learns things, they should be shared with the residents and the public in order to be transparent so that people don't retreat to their corners out of fear and anger.

Beth Mercer-Taylor- 2231 Folwell Ave-

She feels shame and responsibility as a person with white privilege. She had known when she was on the council that there was a problem with racial profiling. She has the responsibility to ask questions and to get these answers, but she didn't do it when she was on the council. We need a world where people know they are in a safe place, where they are cared for and respected. There is another group called Showing up for Racial Justice that works with Black Lives Matter. They are also taking funding for Black Lives Matter and for bail. They also provide training on how to have hard conversations about race.

Renita Wilson- Philando's cousin-

She went to the UMN St. Paul and knew not to take Larpenteur. She always chose to take Como because it was the safest route. You shouldn't hear these stories and not be motivated to do something different. It's all a theme of implicit bias: profiling based on peoples financial status, abusive power, inappropriate conduct, lack of accountability, and imbedded fear of people of color. The Council has a lot of opportunity to do something different, and it is her hope that they do.

Valerie Castile- Philando Castile's Mother-

He was her only son and he had been working since the age of 13. He adored the kids at his job. The tickets he received were because he was devoted to his job and being there for the children. He paid those tickets. Any one of you could be Philando, directing the comment to Administrator Thongvanh. Someone has to step up and hold people accountable for their behavior. She asks that they do the right thing.

Council Member Fischer-

He believes the only way to make things better is to listen to these experiences. He hears calls for transparency and that we have a broader responsibility than just to the residents of Falcon Heights. He has a lot of work to do in terms of learning more, listening more, and trying to do the right thing. He's hopeful that the conversation doesn't peter out. He wants it to build towards something positive.

Council Member Harris-

She heard a lot of stories tonight that she had never known were happening on Larpenteur. Our city takes pride in being fair, and this is behavior we won't tolerate. She appreciates hearing what everyone has had to say. We are planning to move ahead to do group work and work together.

Council Member Brown Thunder-

He is American Indian. The stories he heard he has also experienced. Being in a position to affect change, he makes a pledge that he wants to do something. He also is elected to do a job. He pledges that transparency is a priority and that the temporary memorial is important. We need to do something and we will do something. This affects his family, and he will see this through.

Council Member Gustafson-

He heard a lot of sadness. He takes from this that we can get this right. We can be hopeful and we will do things the right way. We stand at an opportunity to do it. We need to get all of the facts and have due process. We need to work throughout the whole process and be transparent. We want to keep hearing and learning from people.

Mayor Lindstrom-

Thank you to the Castile family for being present. He heard a call for action, and there will be action. It is his desire to form a work group made up of residents of Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, and St. Anthony. He believes the work group will be moving forward. There will be a thorough top to bottom review. There will be more opportunities to hear from residents.

City Administrator Sack Thongvanh-

He understands as he is also a person of color and his family came here for a better life when he was four and a half. He believes transparency can look different for many people. Please talk to him, email him, or make an appointment with him if there are more comments. He will be providing weekly updates on the process.

Peter Lindstrom, Mayor

Dated this 27th day of July, 2016

Sack Thongvanh, City Administrator