

Falcon Heights Community Conversations III
Meeting #3
Thursday, January 7, 2021
6:00-7:30 PM
Meeting Notes

NOTICE – These notes summarize the third of three in a series of community conversations. No final decision has been made about implementation of any of the ideas discussed during this meeting.

Welcome, Review/Preview and Updates

A Planning Team comprised of City Administrator, Councilmembers and members of the Citizen's Engagement Commission worked on the design of these meetings. Their purpose:

- Share and reflect on what has been done since the 2018 Task Force.
- Acknowledge calls for reform sparked by the deaths of Mr. George Floyd and Mr. Philando Castile and others & ask how members of the community are doing.
- Ask for input for strategic planning to continue the next three years' inclusion and public safety work.
- Seek partners in the community to take steps together.

Conversation #1 was on 12/7/2020 and Conversation #2 was on 12/17/2020.

- Meeting notes are available on Falcon Heights' website <https://www.falconheights.org/government/our-inclusion-efforts/community-conversations/>.

Preview of Conversation #3 Tonight

- Updates from City Administrator, Sack Thongvanh on Public Safety in Falcon Heights
- Tonight's two questions focused on police services and public safety overall:
 - Rate the city's police services "0-5" and explain how to achieve a "5".
 - How is the community feeling about public safety in Falcon Heights and how can the community work together to enhance safety?
- Desired Outcomes for Meeting 3 – focus on Police Services and Public Safety
 - Collectively take public actions to create a safer community.
 - Community members provide input for policing contract – desired services.
 - Residents contribute to community efforts, work with the City.

Update on public safety services in Falcon Heights (Sack Thongvanh, City Administrator)

- The 2015 Community Conversations discussed policing (and other issues). After the conversations, a task force was formed to review the outcome of the

conversations and make recommendations to the Falcon Heights City Council. Some of the recommendations were about public safety.

- Falcon Heights investigated finding a provider for policing services.
- Ramsey County Sheriff's department was the only one to respond to Request for Information. (Ramsey County Sheriff would provide emergency services if we had no service.)
- Our contract with Ramsey County Sheriff goes until 12/31/2021.
- Sheriff presented to the council in fall of 2020. During that discussion he informed the group that an additional officer for backup was necessary; law enforcement cost would increase \$350,000.00.
- The Sheriff told Falcon Heights that the City should look at other options because Falcon Heights is not next to any other cities Ramsey Sheriff covers and it takes a long time for backup to arrive.
- City Council authorized Sack to investigate other options – starting our own force or finding another community partner.
 - Starting the City's own force is very expensive.
 - Sack is currently contacting other agencies, U of MN, State Fair, St. Anthony, Roseville and St. Paul. Roseville is not interested.
- Benefit of Ramsey County Sheriff is backup from other communities, sharing of information and outreach and resources with other communities.
- Fire department – City Council authorized Sack to make modifications to the budget proposal and look at contracting with St. Paul. There is a meeting next week.

Community Conversation #1:

- Rate the City and Falcon Heights' police services for the past three-year contract with Ramsey County on a scale of 0 to 5 with "0" being "not valuable at all" and "5" being "very valuable."
- Explain your rating. If your rating was less than a "5", what would need to occur to raise your rating?
 - Average rating was "3", with a high of "4" and low of "1".
 - There was satisfaction with the Sheriff in the beginning, but the majority opinion has now gone the other way- to unsatisfactory.
 - Community members want improved communication and transparency from police.
 - Community members want to start implementing recommendations from community conversations in 2017.
 - Increased cost for policing services from Ramsey County is unfavorable.

Community Conversation #2:

- Part A: With events which may decrease a sense of safety going on metro-wide, how are you feeling in Falcon Heights?

- Part B: What can you do personally and collectively to enhance safety in your neighborhoods?

Safety in Falcon Heights

- Community members are taken aback by current events, but generally feel safe in Falcon Heights- acknowledged feeling of safety could be due to privilege of being White.
- What can be done collectively:
 - Be a good neighbor – talk with each other.
 - Focus on how information is spread when crimes occur- social media/newsletter.
 - Look out for neighbors.
 - Crime map from Ramsey County Sheriff.

Community Feedback on Public Safety Options

- On a scale of 1-4. “1” being “Most favorable” and “4” being “Not favorable at all” rate each of the three options.

Option 1: Form own police department.

- Average 3.5
- Cost could be too high.

Option 2: Communicate with surrounding agencies.

- Average 2.1
- Most likely either Saint Anthony Police or Saint Paul Police.
- Community members prefer Saint Paul due to history with Saint Anthony.

Option 3: Stay with Ramsey County

- Average 3.5
- Increase in expenses is too high.

Closing & Next Steps (Councilmember Yakasah Wehyee and Citizen’s Engagement Commission Members Julie Ebbesen)

- Thank you to all participants, facilitators, and planners.
- Meeting notes will be posted (summary of this meeting, not a plan).
- Police Services conversation will be ongoing.
- City Council will have a workshop to review progress on last set of recommendations, input from survey and the three recent community conversations and decide next steps.