

Falcon Heights Community Conversation 3: April 3, 2017

Analysis of Key Themes

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Background

On April 3, 2017 approximately 70 people attended the third in a series of five community conversations on inclusion and policing. This meeting centered on reviewing and providing input on a set of draft recommendations created by the Falcon Heights Task Force on Inclusion and Policing. Information gathered will inform the final recommendations that the Task Force will make to the City Council in the spring of this year.

These draft recommendations are oriented towards the procedures, policies, and programs of law enforcement departments and officers. Residents, visitors, city leadership, and other community institutions also have responsibilities for public safety. Recommendations about those contexts and other measures to improve inclusion will be shared at the May 2017 community conversation.

The feedback below is drawn from frequently expressed statements, grouped by theme under the associated recommendation header. They are not consensus statements.

Community Input: Themes Cutting Across All Recommendations

Communicate Goals and Values: There was a strong desire that the City's goals and values be clearly articulated in any type of contract or arrangement for police services. The City must achieve clarity on those goals and values. Previous Task Force and community meetings have led to the draft statements of community values circulated at the meeting.

Community Responsibility: There is support for the community to continue to be involved and a sense that solutions are the responsibility of the entire community. There should also be structured review and space for continued public feedback on the values and next steps. Numerous comments addressed the ideas that "the police" and "the community" is a false dichotomy and that police should be a part of our community and vice versa.

Measurable and Actionable: Across all of the recommendations there was strong support for ensuring recommendations and expectations are measurable and actionable. There were some concerns raised that some recommendations are not measureable and specific enough.

Ownership: Support for stronger ownership of the police force was expressed relating to all of the recommendations - stronger ownership will be needed in order to set priorities for training hiring, policing activities, etc. The idea of having designated Falcon Heights officers was expressed frequently.

Positive Reactions: Many community members felt positively about the recommendations as a whole and felt that this was a good start. People were thankful of the work that had been put in and said it was nice to see the alignment of values and the recommendations.

Resources and Funding: Comments and concerns were raised about financial resources and revenue streams for policing and the resources needed to support the policing.

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Priorities for Policing Activity

TASK FORCE'S ORIGINAL DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS¹

The highest priorities for policing activity are:

- **Response.** Responding to violent crimes and 911 calls.
- **Community policing.** Officers need to get out of their cars to engage regularly with people.
- **Cultural competence and community engagement:** Training for cultural competency must be linked with positive cultural and community engagement to build relationships.
- In traffic policing, **dangerous moving violations.** Conversely, policing for minor traffic violations are very low priority, and the policy for these should be to issue a warning.



Are there other areas or priorities to consider?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON THESE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Focus of Police Actions: There was support among groups that police should focus on critically important responses including 911 calls and emergency calls with less focus on or changes to traffic stops and equipment failure issues. Comments included seeing a stop to racial profiling stops and no more stops for “driving while black,” no more shootings, and ensuring safety and respect for all.

Support of Community Policing: There was support among groups that seeing police get out of their cars and interacting with residents and having officers designated to Falcon Heights so people can know and build relationships with officers is important. Clarification was requested for what officers getting out of their cars would look like and mean in practice.

Police Participation and Acknowledgement: Including police in the dialogue on establishing priorities for policing activities was raised to ensure the final recommendations are realistic and include the ideas of the police. There was a desire to have the police acknowledge that inequity exists in policing and that the police could improve. There was a desire for mutual learning.

Culture and Values

TASK FORCE'S ORIGINAL DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Community values. Officers will uphold and advance our community values.

¹ The Task Force members supported with a high degree of unity all of the draft recommendations circulated at the community conversation except where a yellow star indicates that we were not in agreement and/or are seeking more information. Stars indicate areas where we especially invited additional input.

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Equity. All residents and guests of the city are to be treated fairly and equally under the law, across racial and ethnic groups, generations, places of origin, socioeconomic status, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc.

Motivations. Revenue generation should never be a factor in law enforcement.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON THESE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Comments on Values: There was support for ensuring the values can be measured and implemented. Concern raised by groups about the treatment of people of color and women and that life needs to be valued above all.

Equity: Equity was expressed as important but a group would like to see justice added to the statement. Desire was expressed for a stronger equity statement.

Healing: A need for a healing process was expressed.

Data and Transparency

TASK FORCE'S ORIGINAL DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Policing data collection: The police department will collect comprehensive data on all police interactions and crime, to include: the impetus for the interactions (e.g., response to call for service), the nature of the interaction (e.g., vehicle and pedestrian stops, searches, citations, arrests); location; and any demographic information that the subjects offer.

Public Feedback: The City of Falcon Heights will gather public feedback on policing through at least two mechanisms. Annually, the city will conduct a survey of households to solicit feedback on policing. In addition, in every interaction, police officers will give the person with whom they are interacting a card that identifies the officer by name and provides a phone number and website to submit complaints, concerns, or questions about the policing interaction.

Reports and review: Reports on the data collected by the police department will be made monthly to the City Council and published on the City's website in as much detail as possible without violating privacy. These reports and synthesis of any public feedback collected will be reviewed by the Council, Police Chief, and Community Engagement Commission at least quarterly to identify and respond to concerning patterns regarding crime and public safety and/or biases and disparities in enforcement.

Serious incidents: When serious incidents occur, including use of deadly force, or incidence of possible police misconduct, the police department and City of Falcon Heights will communicate promptly, openly, and decisively, in a manner appropriate to the incident.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON THESE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Data Collection: Overwhelming support around the importance of data collection and support for the recommendations on data collection. Data collection should include race and demographic information on officers and civilians. Strong request that there be clarity

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around who collects, analyzes, and reports on the data so that the community can trust that information is unbiased.

Transparency and Accountability: There is consensus that transparency and accountability is important. Comments included the need for space and process for community input and grievances to be easily heard and concern about whether there is a way for residents' concerns to be heard.

Community Relationships

TASK FORCE'S ORIGINAL DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Presence. We want to know our officers and have them know and be attached to our community. Falcon Heights should have law enforcement officers who work specifically and routinely in Falcon Heights and who get to know our community.

Community engagement. From initial training through their ongoing work, their duties will include participating in community-led trainings on interactions (before officers begin service in Falcon Heights), community-police mutual listening sessions, and other community events. The purpose is to build relationships and to be aware of and appreciate the diversity of our community.

Hiring and workforce. The police department will continually strive to constitute a workforce that represents the broad diversity of the community that interacts with the police. For example, the department could have a hiring priority for candidates who speak one of the top 5 non-English languages spoken in the Roseville school district, or for candidates with demonstrated experience with community service organizations or community engagement skills, as well as their formal prior training and policing experience.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON THESE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Presence and Community Connection: There was very strong support of the recommendations of having Falcon Heights officers and having a relationship between the community and officers. Concern was raised that the recommendation does not do enough to address relationships with people who drive through Falcon Heights. There was a suggestion to make the profiles of officers' available online/social media so people can know their backgrounds and be more comfortable with those protecting them.

Hiring and Workforce: There was support for the focus on hiring and ensuring that officers are diverse and/or culturally competent. Comments also centered on the need education and training of the officers.

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Training and Capacity

TASK FORCE'S ORIGINAL DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Training: Officers will have regular training to build their capacity for de-escalation of themselves and others, for interacting effectively and respectfully with diverse persons in our community, for recognizing and preventing bias (including implicit bias), and for minimizing the use of lethal weapons. Conversely, training emphasizing a “warrior” or similar mindset should not be permitted.

Mental health. A social worker or trained mental health professional will be on call at all times to provide on-site support for de-escalation and assistance to or with persons with mental illness.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON THESE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Training: Overwhelming support training specifically de-escalation and a need to have experts in the field determining and leading training.

Mental Health: Groups expressed support for the focus on mental health training and social worker component. One group was split on roles of police and social workers where some wanted police officers who did not act as social workers and others in the group wanting officers to have social work-like training.

Oversight

TASK FORCE'S ORIGINAL DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Oversight. Falcon Heights needs to have significant authority over our law enforcement officers and police department. The current situation of a brief annual report and review of an externally contracted agency does not provide sufficient oversight of a police department and its officers. The City needs to be able to respond in a timely and effective fashion if there is a serious (acute or persistent) concern, for example about police misconduct or a pattern of bias. If policing will be provided by an externally contracted agency, the city should have provisions for regular review and an out clause and/or penalty for non-compliance.



Civilian oversight: An entity independent of the police department will serve as a channel for community members to give feedback on police conduct. The existing Community Engagement Commission or an ombudsperson could accept and investigate complaints. This would require resources to conduct investigations and the buy-in of the police department. The Task invites community input about the *idea* and/or the *structure* of civilian oversight.

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COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON THESE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS²

Support for Civilian Oversight: There was general support for civilian oversight but lack of consensus on the form it should take.

Related Suggestions: Some ideas that were expressed include: A stand-alone review committee; a panel that meets on an on-going basis; in addition to residents include visitors to the community and membership should be diverse; ombudsperson role would need clear definition.


Ownership

TASK FORCE'S ORIGINAL DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Ultimately the City Council has authority and responsibility for keeping a contract with SAPD or moving to some other arrangement. Here are some of the major options being discussed in the community. They offer varying levels of direct control by Falcon Heights over the police department. All of these options would take time to implement, some probably more than others.

- **Renegotiate with SAPD** to implement changes that reflect community values and improve service and control.
- **Issue a new Request for Proposals to contract a police department.** The RFP would reflect community values and be a transparent foundation for negotiating the policing contract. One negotiable item would be having a Falcon Heights representative on the hiring panel for hiring officers serving our city.
- **Create a new Joint Powers Authority:** Falcon Heights *could* join with other small cities to create a police force over which Falcon Heights and others would have joint ownership and oversight. Saint Anthony and/or other cities might be a partner in a JPA.

The Task Force does not have a strong, unified opinion on this topic, and invites community input to inform our next steps:

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1. How important is it to enhance the City's ownership of the police department?
 2. Which options you prefer? **Why?**
 3. If there are tradeoffs between acting quickly and accomplishing more systemic change, do you have an opinion about how to balance those tensions?

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK ON THESE DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Importance of Ownership and Contract Language: There was consensus among groups that there is a need for greater ownership and control. Many comments signaled that the desire for

² Note from Task Force co-facilitators: Please keep in mind that additional input is being gathered beyond the community input from this conversation. The Task Force heard many comments about civilian oversight from the participants in the March 30 police specialists panel, and will have an additional resource person attend the April 11 Task Force meeting.

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ownership and ensuring our values were met was more important than the structure. Additionally, many community members stressed the importance of the contract language and detailed goals and values that should be included.

- **Issue a new Request for Proposals to contract a police department. *This option had the most and substantially more support from community members than any other ownership option presented in the draft recommendations.*** Comments expressed that this option allowed for our values and priorities to best met. Questions were raised about the number of responses the city would receive and what would happen if SAPD was the only bidder.

Renegotiating a contract with SAPD or creating a joint powers authority were roughly equally supported by participants. There was not strong support for a Falcon Heights PD.

- **Renegotiate Contract with SAPD:** Support was expressed from numerous community members that the focus should be to renegotiate the current contract. Some community members would like to see the community values expressed in the contract and if the renegotiation does not work then open up a RFP. A very small number of participants were completely opposed to renegotiating with SADP.
- **Create a new Joint Powers Authority:** There is split support for this option of ownership. There was some support among community members for exploring this option, but others felt that this was an unrealistic option as it is expensive, challenging, and takes time.

Tradeoffs between acting quickly vs. systematic change: Community members are split on this tradeoff. Some community members expressed a need for action to be taken now. There were also frustration and anger over the question because the city has already not taken quick action in the past nine months. Other community members expressed support for taking time to make systematic changes and that the task force should take its time and not make hasty or knee jerk reactions.

The most support was expressed for a combination of both short and long term actions and that there cannot be one over the other.

- Actions that were expressed as options for the short term include: change in traffic stop procedures; warnings vs. tickets; data collection; hear and valuing people.
- Actions that were expressed as options for the long term include: cultural change in police force; long term continuous improvement.

Other Community Input (not directly tied to recommendations)

Keep the Conversations Going: Some community members expressed support for continuing these conversations and ensuring conversation doesn't end with this process. There is a sentiment that there is still a long way to go and that hard conversations need to be continued.

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Anger and Frustration: Community members shared their stories of harassment and mistreatment, and expressed anger and frustration. There is anger and frustration around the lack of change and action.

Other Models/Ideas Proposed: Community members shared ideas for other recommendations or models to look to. Ideas include: bold action and real innovations including using the restorative justice process on all cases including police conduct review; Columbia Heights, MN – inviting everyone to be a part of the community and having officers visiting mosques and other things in the community; Camden, NJ – looking at their de-escalation techniques; considering the Department of Justice report and best practices; thinking about kids and arrest rates for kids; adding a statement to the values that includes “do no harm” policing.