

Falcon Heights Task Force on Policing and Inclusion  
Tuesday Jan. 10, 2017  
Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Melanie Leehy, Randy Gustafson, Sack Thongvanh, Mayor Peter Lindstrom, Michael Wade, Kate Thompson, Kathy Quick, Ken Morris, Amy Johnson, Kay Andrews, Jay Colond, Jim Ballentine

Peter Demarath and Dan Johnson-Powers planned to be absent.

I. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 7:20pm.

II. Review Meeting Minutes

Minutes from the Jan. 3, 2017 meeting were reviewed and approved as is.

III. Adoption of Participation Agreement

Changes were made to the Participation Agreement regarding progress markers and a statement about task force meetings being open to the public but participation is restricted to task force members. A copy of new agreement was made and was signed by all members present.

IV. Community Meeting Plan

Members thought the Community Meeting Plan looked good and would provide a safe environment for conversations. Meetings would have 8-10 people to get a cross section of opinion from the public. A question was raised about where the attendees would come from. This will be a challenge to the task force members. Communication ideas suggested were personal invitations, city newsletter, the city's listserve, and bulk mail. The city has Facebook and Twitter accounts. There are also a couple of neighborhoods that have Facebook pages. The sooner the plan is approved the sooner invitations and advertising can be distributed. The city has a list of email addresses of those who provided feedback during the listening session in July. The meetings are designed to walk attendees through levels of discussion and will provide more than one occasion for people to talk. People will be encouraged to attend the meetings they are able. A debrief before each meeting was recommended to help everyone be aware of what was discussed at prior meetings.

Members should be engaged in the meetings although the primary role is to listen and observe to gain a better understanding of what the community is saying. The design team has a pool of trained facilitators. A question was raised about how to get people to attend who don't think there is a problem. Suggestions were made around having conversations with those members of the community and framing discussion around community values. People may not seem interested in the current task force activities but will be interested in what the task force recommends to the city council. This could also be mentioned to those who don't believe there is a problem.

Members approved the Community Meeting Plan were looking forward to having the design team at the next meeting.

There was a discussion around previous community dialogues based on cards and emails that were received by the city. The time frame of the feedback was from July 6 or 7 through January 9. Some community member's comments and tone changed over this time period while others did not. Every response has value to the community discussion.

Members who attended the DOJ listening session on Monday, January 9 provided their impressions of the meeting. There was clearly tension in the room and attendees were passionate about their concerns. Some felt this would be swept under the rug and that there was little hope of change. There were two

very different narratives of driving on Larpenteur. Attendees who were white never had an issue while breaking many laws. Attendees of color said their experience was the opposite. Discussion continued around a lack of trust, action, and leadership. Sometimes Falcon Heights gets negative publicity when incidents occur in other cities along Larpenteur. Falcon Heights staff has been responsive to issues raised by the community. Policing complaints have not been raised. Some community members may believe nothing would change if a complaint was brought forward. More communication is needed from the council, that they are concerned and want to address these issues.

V. Break 5 mins.

#### VI. Community Dialog Assignment

Members shared feedback from the assignment to ask 3-5 community members about what problems need to be remedied, what healing needs to occur, what is going well and what should be sustained. Common themes were a lack of trust, shame, lack of respect for people of color and lack of action regarding discrimination. Members were encouraged to think about trust being built on caring, competence, communication, consistency and courage. Community members who don't feel they have a stake in this will not see the need to be involved. Those who do have a stake will be frustrated with the other group. All need to realize the importance of equality for the common good.

Suggestions were made for more deescalation training and mental health training for the police. Perhaps a citizen review board could be established to help hold police accountable. CRB's are present around the country however police unions have been resistant to these. Sustainable change is needed but racism is a difficult subject to bring up. People will quickly put walls up. Task force members can have influence through building relationships in the community and by getting community members talking to one another. This will then affect values, behaviors, and policing.

Some in Falcon Heights would say we don't have a race problem but the police are racist and don't see this as a broader issue. Community sets the standard on how policing is done. Who is supervising the police? How are citizens communicating with elected officials. There appears to be a communication barrier. Some from the community have been vocal about their experiences along Larpenteur but more voices are needed.

Ken and Kathy to draft statements for the task force members to wrestle with and discuss in individual mtgs with Ken and Kathy

Task force has a broader scope than policing. Inclusion is part of the charter. Sack is working on getting the DOJ involved with group to avoid overlap and contradictions.

9:34pm meeting adjourned.

Next meeting Tuesday January 31.