

CITY OF FALCON HEIGHTS
 Falcon Heights Inclusion and Policing Task Force
 City Hall
 2077 West Larpenteur Avenue

MINUTES
 March 21, 2017 at 7:15 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER: 7:16 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

ANDREWS	X		JOHNSON-POWERS	X
BALLENTINE	X		LEEHY-CO CHAIR	X
COLOND	X		THOMPSON	*
DEMERATH	X		WADE	X
JOHNSON	X			

*Web-Conference Call

STAFF PRESENT:

MAYOR LINDSTROM	X
CO-CHAIR/COUNCIL MEMBER GUSTAFSON	X
CO-FACILITATOR QUICK	X
CO-FACILITATOR MORRIS	X
ADMINISTRATOR THONGVANH	X

I. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:21pm with a thank you for the hard work and a reminder to look at long term goals, relationship building and community engagement.

II. Review Agenda

No additions were requested for the agenda.

III. Review of March 14, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Minutes were accepted as is.

IV. Continue Discussing Candidate Recommendations for Policing Policies, Procedures and Resources

The goal of the evening was to have the substance of two pages of recommendations for the city council and have this ready for the April 3rd community conversation meeting. There were a number of areas of consensus with some areas of divergence. More information was requested for the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) and Citizen Review Board (CRB).

Members divided into two groups one to discuss the pros and cons of a JPA and the other to discuss the pros and cons of a CRB. Typically JPAs provide the ability to influence and have oversight of a police force. CRBs are, in general, are more for complaint handling. CRBs can have police involvement or be composed of citizens only. It is possible to have both a JPA and a CRB.

Notes from the CRB group

A CRB can be a place to provide feedback, both positive and negative, to the police while looking at short term and long term trends from the community.

While police and a CRB can receive complaints, it would be best to have one place for complaints to be processed. A mechanism needs to be in place that people can trust. A CRB is still considered governmental but is not part of the police department and needs to be perceived as being neutral. People interacting with the police can be made aware of the CRB through a card from the officer. The process would be in line with what most employers have today where the person does not need to give a name and there should be no fear of retaliation.

Some CRBs report to the police chief. Any discipline would need to go through the boss as the CRB doesn't supervise each police officer. Due to employee rights and data privacy there are limits on what response the complainant can receive. People want to have some feedback to know they were heard. Some discipline could be in accordance with the contract.

The question was raised about having an Ombudsman full time with resources and some authority to investigate complaints.

The hospital analogy was mentioned where patients are not asked for comment on technical aspects of treatment. Technical problems can't be resolved by CRB but provide some accountability.

Community engagement commission exists in Falcon Heights today with regular attendance from the police department. Police are nonvoting but could receive information at the meetings. There could be a group that reports to the commission and makes sure feedback gets to the chief. Community engagement responds to reports of bias. There was no capacity to respond to one complaint when it was the human rights commission. It is challenging to get people on commissions and staff is stretched. There were zero police complaints in five years in St Anthony but there was no neutral party to report to. Maybe the CRB could be sunset after two years if it was no longer necessary.

One suggestion for surveying people who drive through the city was to have signs with the city website or a number for texting feedback.

Sometimes CRBs are not taken seriously but if police are present then the board might not be trusted. Police can provide value as they know officers who aren't doing their jobs and have insight into protocol and policies. Input from other police departments may be helpful.

If more justice is sought from a police interaction then the court system would be the avenue.

As a community we want to hold police accountable but there are limits. Police quarterly reports can be required to include community feedback that was submitted.

The CRB can provide ongoing compliance with the contract and monitoring that the values are being expressed.

V. Break

Discussion continued regarding a CRB where the board could monitor the health of police and community over time. The board would serve as a safe place to submit complaints. What authority and resources would be board have? Would the police chief ever accept that authority? Open questions remain with the presence of police on the board and trust and independence vs. expertise. Should an ombudsman with resources and authority to investigate be retained?.

JPA

Notes from the JPA group

A JPA is favored for accountability, oversight and influence. A new model of policing needs to be explored. Maybe Falcon Heights should have its own police force. The options would need to be fleshed out with the community. JPA is an administrative solution and not a solution to police brutality. The JPA would likely include Falcon Heights, St. Anthony and Lauderdale. A culture change would occur with the same police in place. The JPA would need to state specifically the relationship with St. Anthony police.

Who will be providing oversight? A long time has passed since the shooting without putting something in place. People are losing hope in the task force and we need to come to consensus.

One member shared their positive experience with a JPA with an agency involving nine cities and is still going. Issues come up but can be worked out. The JPA would provide authority over the police dept. and would make sure our values would be represented. The transition would be more prolonged and selling this to the community would need to start immediately. A new police dept would take awhile also.

Another comment was the influence the city could have over hiring of officers. If the JPA is successful this could be used as an example for others to follow. The JPA needs to be explored but we also need some action in the short term as a result of the shooting.

The timeline for the JPA implementation could be lengthy but this is not the same as putting it off because we are striving for a more ambitious goal.

A JPA and a CRB could both be implemented or just one could be a solution.

The Lexington, Circle Pines and Centennial JPA has been going for twenty years. Police violence has been addressed and a priority is given to warnings over tickets. Is St. Anthony already doing this? Some St. Anthony police issue warnings and they are now tracking all stops. Falcon Heights didn't enforce parking on snow days but this changed 10 years ago by city council directive. Now there is no warning regarding snow removal. The city council could

achieve similar policing actions. The police have been responsive to recommendations of the council for 20 plus years. All St Anthony employees went through implicit bias training recently.

One member talked about their ride along experience. There is wide discretion regarding what laws the officer chooses to enforce. The officer was doing the things we want and his conduct was impressive.

How many excessive force complaints against the police? Not that common but data on would help confirm this. No judgements against St. Anthony police in the last 5 years.

Some police beatings are not being reported. Some in New Brighton have a negative opinion of St. Anthony police.

What crime occurs in Falcon Heights? Is 24/7 policing needed?

VI. Refine Draft Recommendations

Refinement of the draft recommendations is to be continued.

VII. Preparation for Upcoming Task Force Meetings

A panel discussion of policing specialists will be held Thurs. March 30.

VIII. Announcements and Update

Community Conversation on Mon. April 3rd.

Next task force meeting on Tues. April 11th.

Discussion continued around discretionary policing. Guidelines are given to public safety workers because each situation is unique. Giving police and firefighters discretion is intentional.

The three central recommendations appear to be around the JPA, a CRB and a contract restructuring. These recommendations need to be more better formed and worded. More community involvement is needed as the task force does not feel it has the information to decide what is best.

Remember that the council will do its own research regarding the recommendations. The recommendations are what the task force believes is worth pursuing.

Continue to look at the definition of community and inclusion. Some people won't feel included. The community conversation meetings have not had many people of color in attendance. A drafting committee was formed with Kate, Peter D., and Jim who will work with Kathy on creating a 2 page document from the current 8 page document of draft recommendations.

A new item was presented to not have police officers take action about a person's immigration status. St. Anthony is not asking about this today and there is no current policy so this is not an issue. An ordinance could be put in place about this as we want immigrants to be working with the police and not be fearful of calling 911. The risk is the potential loss of grants to the city from

the Department of Justice.

ADJOURNED

Meeting was adjourned at 10:06pm