



CITY OF NORMAN, OK
CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING
Municipal Building, Executive Conference Room, 201 West Gray, Norman,
OK 73069
Thursday, November 14, 2024 at 4:00 PM

MINUTES

The City Council Oversight Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Regular Session in the Executive Conference Room on the 14th day of November 2024, at 4:00 p.m. and notice of the agenda of the meeting was posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and on the City website at least 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mayor Heikkila called the meeting to order.

PRESENT

Mayor Larry Heikkila, Chair
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman
Councilmember Ward 8 Scott Dixon

ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 1 Austin Ball

OTHERS PRESENT:

Councilmember Ward 5 Michael Nash
Councilmember Ward 6 Joshua Hinkle
Ms. Shannon Stevenson, Assistant City Manager
Ms. Beth Muckala, Assistant City Attorney
Mr. Scott Sturtz, Interim Public Works Director
Mr. Jason Olsen, Parks and Recreation Director
Mr. James Briggs, Park Development Manager
Mr. Chris Mattingly, Director of Utilities
Ms. Kathy Hammans, Tech III, City Clerk Office

AGENDA ITEMS

ITEM 1: PRESENTATION OF EMERGENCY SHELTER STATISTICS FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER, 2024.

Mayor Heikkila presented the Emergency Shelter Statistics provided by Ms. April Doshier, Executive Director, Food and Shelter for the Oversight Committee.

A Friends House provided shelter for...

86 unique quests

Five Veterans

20 with physical disabilities

Four with developmental disabilities

Nine with chronic health conditions.

Those with income report having \$1,000 or less per month is insufficient to maintain housing costs in Norman. Housing vouchers have been placed on hold causing housing placements to come to a stop.

ITEM 2: DISCUSSION REGARDING SMOKING IN PARKS

Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreations, presented the history on Smoking in Parks and why it is necessary to designate them as Tobacco Free.

"Why Tobacco Free!" Secondhand smoke is hazardous to everyone's health and is responsible for nearly 50,000 deaths among adult nonsmokers each year in the United States. More than 81 percent of Oklahomans want cities and towns to adopt smoke free policies for all workplaces.

Litter from tobacco products is harmful to children, pets and the environment. Going tobacco free will demonstrate that the community cares about the health of its citizens and employees.

The City of Norman is the only government entity in Oklahoma that is not fully tobacco free. The only location not designated as Smoke Free at this time is Westwood Municipal Golf Course. When the TSET Smoke Free program was first brought before the council, there was a lot of push back because the golf course is located outside and Golfers, like to enjoy a smoke and a beer when golfing.

Recent surveys conducted by TSET and Parks employees showed that this is no longer the sentiment and that everyone sees the value in making the Golf Course Smoke Free.

In order to be eligible for additional T-SET Grants at the Gold Level and Built Environmental Grants, Council would need to pass an ordinance designating all City facilities, vehicles and parks, including the Golf Course, as Smoke Free.

This designation is especially important to carry out the Master Plan for Reaves Park, a plan which includes a spot for a "Miracle Field", specifically designed for children with physical and or cognitive challenges. This field is made with a rubberized surface that is fully wheelchair

ITEM 2: (continued) DISCUSSION REGARDING SMOKING IN PARKS

accessible, bases and pitching mounds are painted onto the surface so that there are no raised obstacles found on a typical baseball field. Everything is enlarged to accommodate wheelchairs and other apparatus, allowing children with physical and cognitive challenges to play sports like their peers. When these children were asked what was important to them, they quickly answered "to play sports in the same place that their siblings and peers played".

In addition to the Miracle Field, the Kids Space Playground that was created as a community partnership approximately 25 years ago, is past its useful life, (recently graded a D and C) and is not ADA accessible. This was originally built as a Community Build Project and volunteers can be rounded up again, with contractors on site for concrete work and to ensure things are constructed to meet building codes and safety standards. Mr. Olsen said the new Kids Space Playground will be built with Trex, which will allow it to last longer, be splinter free and safer for kids.

Both of these projects will cost between \$750,000 to \$1,000,000 each and grants through TSET and Built Environmental could be a vital part of turning them into a reality without too much financial strain on any one entity. Councilmember Grant asked where would the balance of the project funds come from. Mr. Olsen said 20% would be from City funds, a portion from Grants and other groups are anxious to raise funds for the Park Foundation to be used for park projects.

Ordinances, signage and employee Wellness Programs will need to be updated to meet grant eligibility requirements. Councilmember Grant asked what needs to be done to meet the guidelines. Assistant City Attorney Muckala said what needs to happen right now is pretty simple and Ms. AshLynn Wilkerson, Assistant City Attorney, is working on a draft to meet these guidelines, as well as Zoning Ordinance changes.

Existing business' selling tobacco within 300 feet of schools will be grandfathered in, as long as they remain open or until ownership changes. Ms. Muckala also stressed that this ordinance needs to be completed before the state changes their regulation from 300 feet to 1,000 feet.

Councilmember Hinkle asked if this will be limiting only the sale of tobacco or will it include other smoked products. Councilmember Holman said there are already limits on other smoking products and the distance from schools that sales are allowed. He said that the definition of school needs to be clearly spelled out in the ordinance.

Mayor Heikkila said he visited the Golf course and did not find any cigarette butts or trash and feels the amount of good that comes from going Smoke Free will be impactful.

Councilmember Grant asked about enforcement, will tickets and fines be issued. Mr. Olsen said the Smoke Free Ordinance has been in place since 2012 and no tickets have been issued in any parks since it was passed.

Mr. Olsen said he would like to see them come back in December with an Ordinance to so Staff can meet the deadline for the next TSET grant and not get another application kicked back.

ITEM 3: DISCUSSION REGARDING THE DECLARATION OF A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE ISSUANCE OF PERMITS FOR LARGE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS.

Councilmember Nash presented a power point on a Large Projects Ordinance to the Oversight Committee. He said that Norman has well established expectations for smaller, relatively benign projects, but upon review of the City of Norman's permit process he has found that it does not address large scale projects and the need for an environmental impact study.

He said water independence is very important for the City of Norman and efforts must be taken to protect its continued viability. Councilmember Nash would like to propose an ordinance that will put requirements for an environmental study for projects meeting at least three of the following criteria: encompasses at least 640 acres within City limits; covers at least 100 acres within the Lake Thunderbird Watershed; covers at least 100 acres within any flood plain as defined by FEMA; crosses a stream or creek that is recognized as impaired; would result in the taking of at least 20 properties through eminent domain; would result in the taking of at least 10 primary homes through eminent domain; and has a cumulative cost of \$500 million or more.

The original intent was to require the developer to perform National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) studies, which a municipality cannot do. He would like to see the City of Norman define their own study standards, drawing from NEPA, California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and other similar policies, define our own Environmental Assessments (EA) and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). The end result would be stakeholder (resident) protection.

Mr. Scott Sturtz, Interim Public Works Director, talked about Environmental Study requirements by the City of Norman on Federal projects and the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority (OTA) Environmental Study done on the proposed turnpike expansion.

Councilmember Nash said that this Ordinance is not intended to stop or change OTA, but about putting protections in place for major projects in the future.

Councilmember Grant said she understood that the City of Norman's Environmental Engineering Design Criteria would take care of platting, but asked if we have something in place that would fit a large project now. Mr. Sturtz said that the Engineering Design Center would definitely take care of these projects in the review process.

Mayor Heikkila said that Norman does not have any parcels that would fit the size of a large project as evidenced by a recent notice put out by the Department of Commerce looking for large parcels throughout the state and not producing any in the State of Oklahoma. He also said that the new AIM Plan for Norman will help take care of some of the larger projects in the municipality. He also said Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB) is very strict on flood plain disturbances in the City of Norman and feels the City already has protections in place for our resources.

Councilmember Nash suggested that being reactionary versus being pro-active is not a good route to take. Councilmember Grant said when looking at the future, some things included on the list does not matter in the City of Norman. Councilmember Hinkle said he has no desire to support the ordinance for a moratorium as it will further hinder projects and send out a negative perception of Norman.

ITEM 3: (continued) DISCUSSION REGARDING THE DECLARATION OF A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE ISSUANCE OF PERMIT FOR LARGE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS.

Councilmember Nash said he is worried that Council would make decisions based on others perceptions. Mayor Heikkila said building legislation into ordinances is going too far. He further said that an Association of Central Governments (ACOG) Study is coming out in the near future and asked if Councilmember Nash would like to be on the committee to be part of the process to ensure sustainability for communities.

Councilmember Nash said he would be disappointed if the ordinance was rejected without everyone fully understanding the ordinance and the need for it to be in place. He asked if the presentation could be given to the full council at a study session before a final decision is made.

Mayor Heikkila requested that staff include this item on a study session for the full council members to consider.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:39 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor