



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 9th day of March 2023, 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

Mayor Larry Heikkila called the meeting to order.

PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 3 Kelly Lynn, (Chair)
Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman

ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 1 Vacant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Mayor Larry Heikkila
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 5 Rarchar Tortorello
Mr. Darrell Pyle, City Manager
Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney
Ms. April Heiple, Food and Shelter Director
Ms. Karen Wallier Dodge, Chief of Client Services, Oklahoma Indigent Defense System, (OIDS)

AGENDA ITEMS

ITEM 1: WARMING SHELTER UPDATE AS WELL AS CURRENT CONTRACT TERMS/END

Ms. April Heipel presented the February 2023 warming shelter report.

- Four guests have moved to permanent housing

- Five guests have started employment

- Two guests have gone to long-term treatment

- Four guests started working with Central Oklahoma Community Mental Health Center

Representatives from the Veterans Administration come to the shelter two times a week and the Department of Mental Health visits the shelter weekly to work with the shelter guests.

Chairman Lynn asked what percentage of funding comes from government funds. Ms. Heipel said that funding for the Warming Shelter has been received from the Sarkeys Foundation, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds, HUD Grant Funds, United Way funds (\$10,000 max), Private Funds, with 18% being from government grants.

Chairman Lynn asked Ms. Heipel what she would like to see happen with the warming shelter to which she replied she would like to see the temporary contract be extended at the current location until a permanent plan and location can be found.

Councilmember Tortorello asked about the current location and what is proposed to go into the facility. City Manager Pyle said they are approximately two years out until Factory Obscura would possibly be ready for the location.

Councilmember Schueler asked what Food and Shelter is wanting to do with the contract. Ms. Heipel said the current agreement expires March 31, 2023, but the weather has not cooperated and they may not be able to close then. She said she would like to see the contract extended for six months at a time until something more permanent is decided.

Councilmember Schueler asked what the monthly costs are to operate the shelter. Ms. Heipel said the City funds \$53,000, but Food and Shelter is spending \$65,000 and supplementing with other funds. She asked if it would be possible to continue on a quarterly or six-month basis, instead of monthly.

Councilmember Schueler asked if there is a downside to finding another temporary location. Ms. Heipel said she did not believe so, but they would have to close down for a few days and move the industrial bunk beds.

City Manager Pyle said that Staff has not had a conversation about finding a larger space for the shelter as of yet, but will look into more space that could be open.

Councilmember Holman asked how many shelter guests have been moved into permanent housing since November to which Ms. Heipel said 11. The shelter moved to a "save bed" model in January, which reduced the loitering issues. Allowing staff to get more services to people and reducing the worry and stress on the homeless regarding where they would sleep at night, so they could concentrate on working.

Councilmember Tortorello asked about statistics on people seeking treatment since last year, how many employed, can the City of Norman hire people to help with tornado cleanup.

City Manager Pyle said we can always use extra hands in Parks and Recreation, Sanitation, etc. There is a program in Oklahoma City that we can use to model in Norman. City Manager Pyle will get more information on this.

Mayor Heikkila said the City will need to secure a space that is large enough to house people that want to work and help clean up debris. City Manager Pyle said they will review the request for a larger capacity facility and incentives for workers. The consensus of the Committee Members is to move forward on this.

Chairman Lynn asked how many churches are in Norman, need to get them involved and raise donations so that tax payer money is not used for this work program. Ms. Heipel said there are currently 27 partner churches with Food and Shelter.

City Manager Pyle said he will have a draft agreement with a 45-day window to continue the existing contract on a quarterly agreement with navigation to a permanent location for the next council agenda.

Chairman Lynn asked that Ms. Heipel send Councilmembers the Friends House reports from November 2022 forward so that they can have a cumulative picture of people served and helped since then.

ITEM 2: DISCUSSION REGARDING UNSOLICITED JUNK MAIL

Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney, provided a presentation on the Regulation of Unsolicited Written Materials to the committee members. He said for the past 10+ years the City Attorney's office has updated Council on potential solutions to the City's longstanding issue with the haphazard distribution of unsolicited written materials on the lawns of private residences, with these materials ultimately filling the streets, clogging the storm grates and the storm water system.

A potential solution is an Ordinance similar to the Lexington-Fayette Ordinance designating where these materials can be delivered to a premises.

There would be 1st Amendment concerns and violations with this type of ordinance, such as free speech, time, place, and manner restrictions and could receive legal challenges. Ordinance cannot be too broad, has to allow alternative communication methods and the City has to sufficiently prove harm to public safety.

The City has developed a robust data evidence collection to prove the harm is real, consider alternatives, and leave open alternative routes for communication. The StormWater Division has gathered photographic evidence at different times, with focus after heavy rain events, showing the visual blight. Citizen complaints need to be logged through the Action Center, emails to City staff and Council and direct complaints to the City Attorney's office.

Chairman Lynn asked about creating a permit process for delivery of the flyers. Assistant City Attorney Purinton said this would not correct the fling and fly delivery of unsolicited mail and keep it out of the storm water system.

Mayor Heikkila said taking action on this item would affect political advertising and asked how good is the argument that this is pollution?

Mr. Purinton said the content is not the issue, but how it is being delivered and that it is getting into the streets and storm water system. The city is looking for a way to reduce the materials from becoming litter and subsequently entering the drainage system.

By mirroring an already approved Ordinance, the City can reduce the chances of it being challenged.

A draft ordinance will be brought to the Oversight Committee for review when the Legal Department has it completed. When the Oversight Committee has completed its review, it will be taken to a council study session and on to Council for the First Reading and Second Reading and approval.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

ATTEST:

Mayor

City Clerk