



CITY OF NORMAN, OK CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE

Municipal Building, Executive Conference Room, 201 West Gray, Norman,
OK 73069

Tuesday, December 13, 2022 at 5:30 PM

MINUTES

It is the policy of the City of Norman that no person or groups of persons shall on the grounds of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, place of birth, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, marital status, including marriage to a person of the same sex, disability, retaliation, or genetic information, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination in employment activities or in all programs, services, or activities administered by the City, its recipients, sub-recipients, and contractors. In the event of any comments, complaints, modifications, accommodations, alternative formats, and auxiliary aids and services regarding accessibility or inclusion, please contact the ADA Technician at 405-366-5424, Relay Service: 711. To better serve you, five (5) business days' advance notice is preferred.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Heikkila called the Meeting to Order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Mayor Larry Heikkila
Councilmember Ward 1 Brandi Studley (arrived 5:36 p.m.)
Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler
Councilmember Ward 3 Kelly Lynn
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant (arrived 5:45 p.m.)
Councilmember Ward 5 Rarchar Tortorello
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman
Councilmember Ward 8 Matthew Peacock

ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 6 Elizabeth Foreman

AGENDA ITEMS

1. PRESENTATION FROM THE NORMAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COALITION ON THE COMMUNITY SURVEY.

Mr. Lawrence McKinney, Director of Norman Economic Development Coalition (NEDC), said NEDC conducted a survey to garner community input on how to create a vibrant, thriving economy and become a world-class community of choice; how to ensure the rising tide lifts all boats including the unhoused, unemployed, and underemployed; and how to collaborate and partner locally, regionally, and statewide.

The vision statement for Norman states, “Norman aspires to be a city of connected and complete neighborhoods and districts, celebrating the best qualities of a small town, our rural landscapes, a world-class university, and big city amenities. We will have a mosaic of unique places that provide access to a full range of housing, jobs, parks, open spaces, arts, culture and education across the city. Norman will lead Oklahoma and the region with opportunities for all residents to participate in and benefit from a healthy, innovative, and inclusive community. Norman will be the model for environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable and resilient mid-sized communities.”

Mr. McKinney said NEDC spent 300 hours over the last year conducting confidential interviews with more than 130 community leaders and are continuing those interviews even though statistics will not be in current documents. He said there are four questions on the survey that consist of:

1. How would you characterize the Norman economy today?
2. For comparisons, if you looked back over the last five years, would you say the Norman economy is improving, declining, or is flat with no change?
3. Do you find elected leaders are doing everything possible to ensure an improved economy and quality of the citizens? and
4. To be certain we understand your perspective, how do you define improvement?

NEDC also wants to know if they are talking from a social perspective or an economic perspective.

Mr. McKinney highlighted percentages of diversified survey participants as Utilities – 2.63%; Automotive - 2.63%; Construction – 2.63%; Educators – 13.16%; Entrepreneurs – 3.95%; Financial Institutions – 11.84%; Foundations – 1.32%; Government – 14.47%; Healthcare – 3.95%; Individuals – 2.63%; Manufacturers – 5.26%; Media – 2.63% Non-profit – 6.58%; Professional Services – 5.26%; Real Estate Developers – 7.89%; Commercial Realtors – 2.63%; Residential Realtors – 2.63%; Restaurants - 3.95%; Retailers – 3.95%; and Tourism – 2.63%.

In 2017 through 2019, Market Street Services, Inc., performed a four-phase pre-COVID assessment that included Community Assessment, Target Sector Analysis, Economic Development Strategic Plan, and an Implementation Plan, which suggested an option to merge with the Chamber of Commerce. The Market Street Services Plan (Plan) was never published due to COVID and NEDC wanted to find out if these issues are still relevant post-COVID.

Mr. McKinney said according to the Whitehouse Office of Management and Budget, local governments do not struggle to provide essential services, i.e., trash, water, sewer, etc. (people have different perspectives on essential services that could include helping the unhoused as an essential service), schools are strong and prepare students for work, streets are safe and clean, recreational programs are abundant, social welfare programs are minimal (social welfare program demand is increasing), citizens enjoy consistent employment and regular wage gains, businesses are able to plan for consistent expansion, businesses are willing to risk significant capital (most businesses have stated they will move headquarters within the next five years due to Norman’s toxic political environment), businesses are able to hire full time employees

(this is a struggle), and communities grow as young professionals remain in the area as employment opportunities in their home town capture their interest (statistics show Norman is losing young professionals).

Mr. McKinney said the Whitehouse Office of Management and Budget states, “A vibrant, dynamic retail sector is not the cause of a strong local economy, but the result of it.” Mr. McKinney said Norman’s total population spendable income is \$3,959,944,800, which circulates in the economy, but that figure does not include gross income of businesses. He said taxes and imports come out of the economy, but there is money coming into the economy from manufacturing headquarters, research universities, healthcare, and tourism.

The University of Oklahoma (OU) brings in a lot of federal dollars, which is income from taxpayers from other states coming to Norman. Mr. McKinney said it is important for Norman to support OU and help them grow and expand. Councilmember Schueler said there has not been a bridge to a relationship between the City and OU, but there needs to a concerted effort from both sides to having a larger conversation about what is going on and the relationship between OU and the City. She suggested a Study Session with OU leaders and conversations about their plans moving forward with the Southeastern Conference (SEC). She said the move from The Big Twelve to SEC will have an important economic impact on the City, OU, and the Norman community. She said City Council needs to be on board with OU’s plans because without City Council, OU’s dreams cannot be made into a reality.

Mr. McKinney said primary contributors to manufacturing headquarters are Trade; Transportation; Utilities; Construction; Destination Tourism/Retail/Sports; Manufacturing; Education; Healthcare; and Business, Technology, and Professional Services. A headquarter company makes money from all over that comes back to the headquarters, which comes back to the local economy. He said there are 6,300 companies competing for the same buyers, there is a wide range of resources, some subsidized, and there are 500 annual announcements of \$10 million per 100 jobs. He said there are initial start-up and long-term operating costs and it takes time to establish the operation.

The most important elements for development include existing buildings; approved, improved, and pre-permitted industrial and commercial property; tax structure that recognizes the importance of primary businesses and does not disproportionately place the burden of revenue generation on the productive sector; and a history of cooperative attitude which fosters cost maintenance or cost reduction for the company (i.e., uncertainty greatly impacts development).

Mr. McKinney said Oklahoma relying on revenue from retail sales is such a disaster for so many reasons and he would love to speak to the State legislature about changing that. He said retail has its highs and lows and there is a lot of uncertainty in relying on sales tax. He said the County is not interested in sales tax; they are interested in ad valorem tax just like every other State and if the County and City were on the same page, there would be a much better working relationship.

When asked if Norman is improving, is flat, or is declining based on trends over the last five years (innovation curve), 12.16% said improving, 66.22% said flat, and

21.62% said declining. Mr. McKinney said NEDC is trying to help Norman innovate using all resources available.

Mr. McKinney said as Norman starts to grow, there are “town and gown” opportunities; however, there are potential conflicts with Max Westheimer Airport. He said four months ago, NEDC invited airport and OU representatives to discuss airport conflicts with economic growth opportunities. He said out of that meeting, representatives agreed to meet every month until they could get conflict issues resolved. He said OU representatives stated they have not been a good partner with the City, but are willing to begin talking about what the partnership would look like.

Mr. McKinney said the Oklahoma Aviation Academy (OAA) is unique to Oklahoma and the nation and is on Westheimer Airport property. OAA has an innovative partnership with industry, public schools, technical schools, and OU that elevates Oklahoma’s Aerospace Workplace Development to world-class status. OAA provides a workforce pipeline solution to the Aerospace Industry and opportunities for diverse students, including low-income and minorities. OAA has statewide delivery of math, science, and aviation related curriculum to any and every school district that wants it.

Mr. McKinney highlighted bullet points of NEDC’s Strategic Plan as follows:

- VISION, LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIPS
 - Community Vision and Private Sector Leadership
 - Team Norman SEC Readiness
 - Regional Partnerships
- ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INNOVATION
 - Local Business Retention and Expansion
 - Entrepreneurship and Incubator(s)
 - Targeted Attraction – Weather and Radar
- PLACEMAKING AND LIVABILITY
 - Talent Retention and Attraction
 - Quality of Life – NORMAN FORWARD II/Infrastructure
 - Great Outdoors

When the community was asked if they could be King/Queen for the day (meaning neither politics nor money were an issue) what is the single most important issue, project, or initiative that you would decree to ensure it happens immediately. The responses included:

1. Develop a holistic community development plan, with a positive vision and brand for Norman,
2. Develop a destination event/shopping and entertainment venue district, and
3. Engage and unify the private sector around a new economic future – and innovative economy.

Mr. McKinney said in order to meet the goals of the Strategic Plan, Norman needs to find its “burning platform” or the “why”; create a dashboard and benchmark of economic development to peers; smart planning – understanding connectedness; focus on the math; galvanize the business community – get wealth off the sidelines

– change the business model; citizens must define the roles for their government; respectful civic engagement; a vibrant downtown – programmed 24/7; focus on kindergarten through twelfth grade (particularly grades three through five); and relentless communication and transparency. To accomplish these goals, there needs to be a Comprehensive Visioning Process and the Comprehensive Master Plan will have six core components that include government; private sector leadership; infrastructure; placemaking and quality of life; education; and economic development. He said these core sets can be changed at any time during the process.

Mr. McKinney said the Norman Public School (NPS) System will be asking voters to pass a bond on February 14, 2023, that includes \$32 million for the OAA so NEDC will be promoting passage of the bond.

Councilmember Studley asked what businesses are leaving in the next five years and Mr. McKinney said he cannot divulge that information, but collectively they represent a billion dollars in sales. Councilmember Studley asked if the City Manager could have a private conversation with these company leaders to salvage the relationship and Mr. McKinney said absolutely.

Councilmember Studley said she appreciates development that brings more money or jobs to the community as long as it is the right development that does not put profit over people.

Councilmember Schueler said NEDC's work is important and she would like the City to be a good partner in the larger discussions and not sit on the sidelines.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "The Coalition – Celebrating 25 Years – 1997 through 2022"

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor