



CITY OF NORMAN, OK
CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING
Municipal Building, Executive Conference Room, 201 West Gray, Norman,
OK 73069
Thursday, February 10, 2022 at 4:00 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

Chairman Hall called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Chairman Councilmember Ward 4 Lee Hall

Councilmember Ward 1 Brandi Studley

Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler

Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman

ABSENT

NONE

OTHER STAFF PRESENT

Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney I

Ms. Lisa Webb, Administrative Tech III

Mr. Rick Knighton, Assistant City Attorney III

Ms. Cinthya Allen, Chief Diversity & Equity Officer

Ms. Jane Hudson, Director of Planning & Community Development

Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works

Mr. Jason Smith, Assistant Fire Chief

Ms. Lisa Krieg, CDBG/Grants Manager

OTHERS PRESENT

Ms. Cristina Owen, Chairman of Human Rights Commission

Ms. Ashley Morrison, Consultant

Ms. Ali Quilitzsch, Norman Regional Hospital

AGENDA ITEMS

1. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CREATION OF THE CITY OF NORMAN DIVERSITY ROUNDTABLE.

Chairman Hall said the Diversity Roundtable item last appeared on the agenda of the Oversight Committee on August 21, 2021. The Boards and Commissions review has been ongoing for over two years but due to the pandemic this Committee was not able to discuss it again until March 12, 2020. It was discussed again on April 8, 2021, but no action was taken.

The following are reasons that a review of the Boards and Commission structure is needed:

1. Number of Boards and Commissions needs to be reduced and/or consolidated
2. Efficient use of staff and member's time
3. Review of the structure of Boards and Commissions (i.e., how many terms to serve, how many members are needed for a workable group, etc.)
4. Ward representation
5. Expand community participation

While the Boards and Commissions discussion continues, staff is currently working on an entire recodification of City code. This will be a lengthy process before going to the City Council. Regardless of what is decided today with the Diversity group, the review of the current Boards and Commissions will take considerably more time to complete.

At the August, 2021, meeting, there was a recommendation given from the Human Rights Commission regarding the creation of a Diversity Roundtable.

Ms. Cinthya Allen, Chief Diversity & Equity Officer, along with Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney, presented the information regarding the Diversity Roundtable.

Ms. Allen began the presentation by identifying the guiding star not just for the City of Norman workforce, but for our community and explained how to be part of the solution. Balance is needed in everything we do and education bridges our gaps in understanding. As a community we value diversity and education and access are keys to our success. We want everyone in the City of Norman to have quality of life and hold

the City accountable. Mr. Purinton has done important work to guide us on how to accomplish these goals within the legal framework.

Mr. Purinton said the Oversight Committee previously recommended staff review the proposal and recommendation from the Human Rights Commission. The proposal was developed around the problem and not necessarily what may be legal in mind so we had to look at the key components and build a structure to that end.

Virtual meetings are not allowed under the Open Meetings Act. However, virtual meetings could be important in responding to an emergency situation within the marginalized communities that we are trying to serve. By organizing this Diversity group as a Committee, the Oklahoma Meetings Act would not allow these virtual meetings to happen. Utilizing virtual meetings is an important component in serving the community.

Mr. Purinton said Council Members should keep the Open Meetings Act guidelines in mind while deciding how to move forward with this group. Outside of an open meeting, ideas cannot be shared and discussed without violating the Open Meetings Act. Members of marginalized communities would be hindered due to the Open Meetings Act by not being able to discuss what is considered City business outside of an open meeting.

The Open Meetings Act exists to provide transparency within our government boards and committees, how do we value that, but not hinder the marginalized communities we are trying to serve?

Ordinance requirements such as Mayor Appointments to the Committee could become political. Would we rather have that or the ability to choose members of this Diversity group in other ways?

Mr. Purinton said, based on the current proposal, staff does not have anything that could be translated into an Ordinance or City Code. City staff would need to work out the details and create a Mission Statement. This could prove difficult and once codified it is not easily changed. The Diversity group was meant to be flexible and if you codify, you lose the flexibility. Utilizing the Roundtable format would allow the Board itself to define their mission. The proposal, as presented, does not have the enumerated requirements and functions of the group because it is meant to be flexible and open ended.

One of the biggest goals of this Diversity group is to elevate marginalized people to serve in these types of groups and we also want people in these marginalized groups to serve on other Boards and Commissions to share their viewpoint in other areas of City business. (i.e., Planning Commission or the Greenbelt Commission.) We should avoid putting anyone in a position of only being able to be involved in one group. If we choose to make this Diversity group a Board or Commission, they would be limited in their capacity to serve on other Boards and Commissions based on current City Code. Lastly, the intent of the Boards and Commissions review is to limit and/or reduce the number of Boards and Commissions.

If this Diversity group moves forward as proposed, we would be adding another group and utilizing more City staff time. There would be less City Staff time involved if this group is organized as a Roundtable group versus a Committee.

Ms. Allen stated that staff and Council must look at the purpose for this group and include all areas of diversity. This would include not just race but accessibility, LGBTQ, Cultural, etc., to be eligible to be members of this group. We need to serve all of our community and include everyone. One of the reasons for this group is to reduce barriers, increase engagement, increase quality of life, enhance vibrancy, showcase diversity and increase tourism for the City of Norman.

Hosting bi-monthly meetings would keep this group relevant. The Cohort would serve in a two year timeline. The two year timeline to serve in this group is important because the idea is to have a revolving door of people, learning and then going out and sharing and then having new people coming in and doing the same. People would learn how City Hall functions and about the departments and then go out and share this with their communities and families. We would have an open application process that would be posted so anyone would have access to it and include a rubric and this would be processed and hosted through the Diversity and Equity Office. It is very important that this process is transparent and open to everyone.

The content of the meetings would be a two way conversation. We need to find out what barriers there are in their communities and what is going well and what we need to fix. We need to provide information in the meetings from each department and other agencies and how the departments are doing their business and what projects they are working on. Providing empowerment and education is vital to the success of this group. This proposal in front of you is to have actionable pieces, to have measurable results and come away from these Cohorts and say we have initiatives come through and that we have people apply for membership to the group, etc.

Mr. Purinton said we appreciate Ashley Morrison for providing the original proposal and the Human Rights Commission for their support. This is not about who wins or comes out on top, this is about how we are going to serve our community in an inclusive way that is thorough and transparent.

Councilmember Holman wanted to know if Tulsa's Diversity group is set up like a Committee and has to follow the Open Meetings Act.

Mr. Purinton said he cannot speak for the city of Tulsa but in the city of Norman we have adopted an Ordinance that all Boards and Commissions have to follow the Open Meetings Act. We cannot exclude just one group from doing this. The paths forward whether this is a Commission or a Roundtable are the same.

Councilmember Holman wanted to know if they could have meetings anytime.

Mr. Purinton said the whole group could meet anytime, anywhere if this is kept in a Roundtable format. The Roundtable group could have a food drive or outreach activities based on what is needed in the community and respond quickly as needs arise rather than be restricted due to the Open Meetings Act regulations. This is the reason that we approached this group this way and with this structure.

Councilmember Studley asked if the Diversity group had recommendations, how would those recommendations get before the Council if the group is not an official Committee or Board. If the majority of the Diversity group votes to do something, how would they move forward if City staff did not approve.

Ms. Allen stated that not having to bring everything before Council is a benefit because the group can decide to take action based on what is needed in the community and run with it.

Mr. Purinton stated that members of this Roundtable are going to have direct access to Council Members and Council Members can then bring those items forward for consideration. Their recommendations can go through the Human Rights Commission to Council as well. The ideas brought forth by this Roundtable are not in danger of being ignored or not acted upon.

Councilmember Studley felt this group should only be about race and should not include the other marginalized communities. She said the other marginalized groups already have other committees representing them and do not have a place in this Diversity group as it was supposed to be about the inequality of race in our community.

Ms. Allen said that we do already have a community group for ADA but not for LGBTQ, except for the City Staff groups being formed. The race element is very important but she asked the question, how can we do this in an inclusive way? This group should include race, gender, etc, the entire definition of inclusivity.

Councilmember Schueler was concerned the group would not have a pathway to Council if the group is kept informal. She also wanted to look more at the application process for selecting members of this group. She was concerned that by allowing the Diversity and Inclusivity Office to be in charge of the selection process for members, this could end up with one person deciding who serves on the Diversity Roundtable or Commission.

Ms. Allen said that it would not be just one person deciding on membership and that she would seek out Council input for Roundtable appointments. She felt that it would be important to stick with the application process and be transparent in all aspects. She said staff will look to Legal for guidance on this issue.

Councilmember Schueler asked if the Diversity group has an end date or a sunset. She felt it should be something that is permanent for the City of Norman and not a temporary group.

Chairman Hall said ad hoc committees are the only groups that have sunset dates not Roundtable groups.

Councilmember Schueler was concerned that if we go in the direction of forming a Committee for this purpose, the Boards and Commissions review that is currently underway through the Oversight Committee could potentially delay the start of the Diversity group.

Councilmember Studley, Holman, Schueler and Chairman Hall were in favor of moving toward a Roundtable format for now with the intent that it would eventually become a Commission.

Items submitted for the record:

1. Staff Recommendation for Diversity Roundtable Memorandum
2. Power Point presentation titled, City of Norman, Diversity Roundtable

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2. STAFF REPORT ON HOMELESS ACTIVITY.

Chairman Hall presented the written report on Homeless Activity and said there will be a City Council presentation on February 15, 2022, with the Home Base Group that will address the public engagement piece and surveys that were done.

Ms. Lisa Krieg, CDBG/Grants Manager, said staff has received the Strategic Plan and are happy with it. She said the Home Base team will be doing this virtually and the report will be emailed out to Council prior to the next meeting.

Chairman Hall said even with the cold snap last week we have been able to accommodate all people that needed shelter. The Emergency Shelter will stay open even during the transition to a different location.

Chairman Hall said Council is sensitive to the needs of the city's unhoused neighbors but also the businesses being impacted by the current location of the shelter and are searching for a new location but are committed to keeping the shelter open.

Items Submitted for the Record:

1. Shelter Quarterly Report (Homelessness Update)

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ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:02 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor