

CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION MINUTES

January 18, 2022

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a Special Session at 5:00 p.m. hosted in the Municipal Building Council Chambers on the 18th day of January, 2022, And notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT:	Councilmembers Foreman, Hall, Holman, Lynn, Peacock, Schueler, Studley, Tortorello, Mayor Clark
ABSENT:	None

Item 1, being:

CONSIDERATION OF ADJOURNING INTO AN EXECUTIVE SESSION AS AUTHORIZED BY OKLAHOMA STATUTES, TITLE 25 § 307(B)(3) TO DISCUSS THE ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY IN CONNECTION WITH THE GROUNDWATER BLENDING PROJECT.

Motion to Adjourn. Moved by Councilmember Foreman. Seconded by Councilmember Peacock. Ayes: Mayor Clark, Councilmembers Foreman, Hall, Holman, Lynn, Peacock, Schueler, Studley, and Tortorello. Nays: None.

The City Council convened into Executive Session at 5:01 p.m. Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney; Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager; and Mr. Rick Knighton, Assistant City Attorney, were in attendance at the Executive Session.

Motion to Reconvene. Moved by Councilmember Foreman. Seconded by Councilmember Peacock. Ayes: Mayor Clark, Councilmembers Foreman, Hall, Holman, Lynn, Peacock, Schueler, Studley, and Tortorello. Nays: None.

The Mayor declared the motion carried and the Special Session was reconvened at 5:45 p.m.

The Mayor said the acquisition of real property in connection with the Groundwater Blending Project was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken and no votes were cast.

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Item 2, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES.

Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager, said he recently met with Mr. Richard McKown regarding property he thought the City might be interested in purchasing for an affordable housing opportunity. He said the property is currently owned by the State of Oklahoma (Griffin land) and could accommodate a multi-family affordable housing project in Norman. He said Mr. McKown has a large portfolio on designs built by Ideal Homes and created renderings of the proposed project to present to Council. He said if Council wants to pursue this idea, Staff will take steps to bring this project to fruition.

Mr. McKown said a good friend of his created a really throwback multi-family idea and built it in the Plaza District of Oklahoma City. He said the multi-family unit looks like a single family home, but has four one bedroom units all with its own front door. He said he took his friend's idea and ran with it creating designs for a combination of one and two bedroom units. He said while this concept was initially created to be a luxury product, the fundamental bones of the project is building a nice, elegant, old school house with four sides and windows on all four sides, while still being a simple box design giving it elegance and symmetry. He said elevation and roof lines can easily be changed to create a real neighborhood feel, which is critical in affordable housing.

Mr. McKown said the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recently issued guidelines regarding focusing on financing six units or more housing projects because they want density with smaller multi-family units rather than large apartment structures. With that in mind, he began working on plans for six units in one multi-family home architectural style.

Mr. McKown said there is an incorrect assumption among the public that multi-family buildings have more cost saving efficiency than a single family home, but that is not true because a 24-unit structure requires a common area and stairs made of steel and concrete that is costlier to build as well as costlier to operate and maintain. The denser the building, the costlier the square per foot and that is the opposite of what the public perceives. He said his design concept keeps things simple and cost efficient by not having a common area, stairs, or balconies to maintain. He highlighted design concepts as a two bed, one bath option (can do a two bed, two bath option if needed) or a three bed, two bath option. He said these products are not currently being built so a lot of market research will be needed in order to get the product right, but the idea is to build something that can be constructed in incremental stages as needed by demand. He said incremental staging also allows architects and builders learn from each product so they can improve on the next product.

Mr. McKown said he was proposing building this product as an expansion to the tiny homes provided at Food and Shelter for Friends on Reed Street. He said approximately 320 affordable housing units can be constructed in the area with enough room for a zero barrier shelter in the future. (The overall thought process for a zero barrier shelter is to get as many people off the streets as possible where everyone is welcome. These shelters remove every reason that might keep someone from coming to the shelter, i.e., no identification required, pets are welcome, no background checks required, and sobriety is not a requirement).

Item 2, continued:

Mr. McKown said he is open to suggestions from Council and Staff on the architectural styles, arrangement of units, number of units, types of units, etc.

Mr. Pyle said the State is sending him appraisals on all available property they are willing to sell and they also discussed what entity needs to own such a project, but no one showed interest so he reached out to the Norman Housing Authority (NHA) who have stated interest in being the property manager. He said HUD could be a source of financing as well as using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to help buy down the cost to make the units more affordable. He said the City does not have the Staff or ability to own, maintain, or operate such a large project. He asked if Staff is on the right track in helping Council achieve its goal of investing in affordable housing in Norman.

Councilmembers felt this project would be very appropriate for the proposed area, but wants to continue efforts for addressing affordable housing issues. They thanked Mr. McKown for his presentation.

Mr. Pyle said Staff has been actively searching and will continue to actively search for locations for affordable housing, but felt what was proposed tonight would be a rare opportunity for an affordable housing solution right now.

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ADJOURNMENT

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

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ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor