



CITY OF NORMAN, OK CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE

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

Tuesday, September 09, 2025 at 5:30 PM

MINUTES

The City Council Conference of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Conference in the Executive Conference Room in the Municipal Building, on Tuesday, September 09, 2025 at 5:30 PM, and notice of the agenda of the meeting was posted at the Norman 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

PRESENT

Mayor Stephen T. Holman
Councilmember Ward 1 David Gandesbery
Councilmember Ward 2 Matthew Peacock
Councilmember Ward 3 Bree Montoya
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 5 Brandon Nofire
Councilmember Ward 6 Joshua Hinkle
Councilmember Ward 7 Kimberly Blodgett
Councilmember Ward 8 Scott Dixon

AGENDA ITEMS

1. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING THE URBAN FORESTRY MASTER PLAN.

Mr. James Briggs, Park Development Manager, introduced the item, explaining that the City contracted with Davey Resource Group in 2024 to develop an Urban Forestry Master Plan. The process included assessment of the City's forestry division, public engagement through stakeholder and community meetings, and benchmarking against regional and national standards.

Mr. Briggs noted that the plan aligns with the Community Wildfire Protection Plan and the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Master Plan, both previously adopted under the Norman Forward initiative. The Parks Board reviewed the plan the prior week and provided minor comments.

He introduced Ms. Dana Carter, Urban and Community Forestry Specialist with Davey Resource Group, to present the findings and recommendations.

Presentation by Ms. Dana Carter, Davey Resource Group

Ms. Carter outlined the scope and objectives of the Urban Forestry Master Plan, a 20-year guiding document designed to support canopy growth, tree health, and sustainable management practices citywide.

Key Points of Presentation

- Planning Process
- Began in late summer 2024 with data gathering, policy review, and stakeholder engagement. Public meetings and surveys informed the plan's recommendations.
- Community Engagement Findings
 - 84% of survey respondents felt there were too few trees in parks and neighborhoods.
 - The community highly values tree canopy for shade, environmental benefits, and neighborhood character.
- **Urban Forest Overview**
 - Approximately 30% canopy cover citywide.
 - Inventory identified 5,775 park trees, with Eastern Red Cedar as the dominant species.
 - Staff noted that Eastern Red Cedar is invasive and under review for management strategies.
- **Forestry Operations**
 - Approximately 687 trees were planted, 85 trees removed, and 900 trees distributed through city programs.
 - Staff currently includes three part-time employees devoted to tree maintenance under the Parks Division, supported by contractors as needed.
- **Budget Overview**
 - Annual forestry budget is \$450,000, primarily for pruning and removals.
 - Compared to peer cities, Norman's forestry staffing and funding levels are significantly lower.
- **Recommendations**
 - Expand Staffing: Establish a unified forestry crew with additional personnel and a crew chief; acquire a grapple truck for debris management; develop standard operating procedures; and provide annual progress reports.
 - Prioritize Tree Maintenance: Implement routine pruning cycles, maintain new plantings, and utilize contractors for high-priority removals
 - Protect the Urban Forest
 - Use pest- and climate-resilient species.

Item 1, continued:

- Monitor invasive species (e.g., Eastern Red Cedar, Emerald Ash Borer).
- Conduct detailed canopy studies to guide equitable planting.
- Plan for Sustainable Growth
 - Incorporate trees into development planning.
 - Expand planting programs in low-canopy neighborhoods.
 - Establish “Historic Tree Districts” to preserve significant trees.
- Enhance Partnerships
 - Coordinate with utilities, nonprofits, and volunteers.
 - Host tree planting events and workshops.
 - Develop online FAQs and participate in regional forestry networks.

Ms. Carter emphasized the long-term benefits of increasing proactive maintenance and staffing to reduce emergency tree removals, improve canopy health, and strengthen community engagement.

Council Discussion

Councilmember Peacock asked about plans to address Eastern Red Cedar, noting its invasive nature.

- Ms. Carter responded that recommendations for management and mitigation are included in the plan.
- Mr. Briggs confirmed the city will incorporate those strategies into future operations.

Councilmember Grant asked about programs for historically significant trees and how they are defined.

- Ms. Carter explained that communities define their own criteria—by species, size, or age.
- Mr. Briggs added that the city is revising its tree ordinance to allow neighborhoods to apply for Historic Tree District designations, enabling city assistance with maintenance and replacement.

Councilmember Peacock asked for clarification on the proposed budget increase to approximately \$1.4 million, noting it represented a million-dollar increase from current levels.

- Ms. Carter confirmed the estimate primarily covers staffing costs, with additional needs for equipment such as the grapple truck.

Councilmember Grant inquired about the availability of federal funding for forestry programs.

- Ms. Carter explained that many federal funds, including the Urban and Community Forestry Program, were recently reduced, and cities increasingly rely on local general funds or dedicated park taxes.

Councilmember Gandesbery commended City Staff for their efforts, particularly the small forestry team. He emphasized the importance of expanding staffing to prevent knowledge loss and sustain long-term tree management, even if growth occurs incrementally over several budget cycles.

Item 1, continued:

Mayor Holman and staff acknowledged the direction to explore additional funding during upcoming budget development, focusing on identifying cost savings in storm debris removal and contracted tree work to offset potential increases.

Councilmembers expressed general support for the Urban Forestry Master Plan and its long-term goals. Consensus was reached to advance the Urban Forestry Master Plan to the next stage for Council consideration and adoption, direct staff to evaluate phased staffing increases and equipment acquisition during budget development, and to explore cost savings in storm cleanup and contracted services to support implementation.

ADJOURNMENT

The Meeting was Adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor Stephen T Holman