



MINUTES

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Conference in the Executive Conference Room of the Norman Municipal Building on the 24th day of September, 2024, at 5:30 p.m., and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray Street 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT

Mayor Larry Heikkila
Councilmember Ward 1 Austin Ball
Councilmember Ward 2 Matthew Peacock
Councilmember Ward 3 Bree Montoya
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 5 Michael Nash
Councilmember Ward 6 Joshua Hinkle
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman
Councilmember Ward 8 Scott Dixon

AGENDA ITEMS

1. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CONTRACT WITH FOOD AND SHELTER FOR THE EMERGENCY SHELTER.

Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney, provided a status update on negotiations with Food and Shelter, Inc., for operation of the emergency shelter located at 109 West Gray Street. He said an audit of the existing contract was conducted in late 2023/early 2024 and on May 21, 2024, the City Auditor presented draft findings of her audit to Council. Mr. Purinton said from June to September 2024, staff worked on revisions to the contract to address audit concerns. Staff originally intended to present a finalized contract for Council approval on October 8, 2024, but the situation changed when Food and Shelter informed the City on September 19, 2024, of its intent to step away from managing the shelter. Food and Shelter issued a letter, social media post, and interview, each citing slightly different reasons for their decision as:

- Concerns that the revised contract “micromanages” operations.
- Reputational risk tied to the City’s audit and oversight.
- Differences in philosophy about service provision.
- A willingness to continue on a temporary basis or return to negotiations if conditions are improved.

Item 1, continued

Mr. Purinton said Food and Shelter raised concerns regarding a “third-party audit” provision, but staff confirmed this language had been consistently included in all drafts. Staff noted confusion regarding Food and Shelter’s willingness to continue operating—whether only temporarily or through further negotiation. Mr. Purinton emphasized that, under the current agreement, the shelter operates month-to-month unless terminated by Council.

Councilmembers raised concerns about the following:

- Security provisions: Food and Shelter discontinued its contracted security vendor despite receiving \$32,000 monthly for security services, reallocating funds to in-house staff.
- Liability, safety of residents, and best practices regarding security screenings (e.g., wandering, unarmed CLEET-certified guards).
- Transparency: Staff stressed that communication breakdowns contributed to public perception issues regarding shelter funding and operations.
- Audit findings: Confirmed that overtime pay and staffing allocations were not aligned with best practices.

Mr. Purinton emphasized the revised contract was developed collaboratively and provided Food and Shelter more operational flexibility, with administrative oversight strengthened. A reimbursement-based model for expenses, with required documentation, was included as industry standard. He said the revised contract resolved all audit findings and would “close out” the audit.

Councilmembers recommended a follow-up study session to continue discussion. Staff will seek clarification from Food and Shelter on their willingness to continue operations beyond a temporary basis. The Council directed staff to maintain accountability, ensure safety at the shelter, and communicate transparently with the public.

Council recessed the meeting at 6:14 p.m., to be continued after adjournment of the regular Council meeting at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting was reconvened at 7:34 p.m. Councilmember Peacock was not present.

2. DISCUSSION ON ALTERNATIVE LOCATIONS FOR A PERMANENT HOMELESS SHELTER.

The parcel in question is located across the street from the emergency shelter at 109 West Gray. Staff reported that the land is currently vacant, with utility connections available, and suitable for development.

Item 2, continued

Staff recommended issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit interest from developers and service providers. Potential uses may include permanent supportive housing, affordable rental units or mixed-use or service-focused facilities that complement shelter operations. Staff emphasized the RFP process would ensure transparency, competition, and alignment with community priorities.

Councilmembers expressed interest in ensuring that any project aligns with the City's housing and homelessness strategy, developers include wraparound services such as case management and mental health support, and community engagement be conducted early in the process to avoid misinformation.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor