



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 10/27/2026

REQUESTER: Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation

PRESENTER: Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION, REJECTION, AMENDMENT AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF RESOLUTION R-2627-57: A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, APPROPRIATING \$205,000 FROM THE CAPITAL FUND BALANCE TO THE HOMELESS SHELTER FACILITY PROJECT FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE EXISTING NORMAN WARMING SHELTER FACILITY.

BACKGROUND:

The emergency temporary homeless shelter was opened in the winter of 2021, in a City-owned warehouse located at 109 West Gray Street. The shelter was originally established as a temporary warming shelter for approximately two months during the winter months. However, due to the continued need for emergency shelter services, the facility has remained in operation year-round. It has provided a safe place for individuals experiencing homelessness to stay overnight for the past four years.

In 2026, voters approved a bond issue to construct a permanent homeless shelter facility immediately south of the privately-operated Food and Shelter facility on Reed Avenue. Although the bond issue was passed, it is currently awaiting review in court before the project can proceed. Until the permanent facility can be constructed and placed into service, the City intends to continue providing an appropriate and safe location for the existing shelter operation.

In late Spring of 2026, the Oklahoma State Fire Marshal inspected the current shelter facility at 109 W. Gray Street. The building is not equipped with a fire sprinkler suppression system. Following the inspection, the State Fire Marshal determined that the facility had exceeded the intended use and duration as a temporary shelter. The City was given a specified timeframe to install a fire suppression and fire alarm system, or to discontinue operation of the shelter.

The existing building at 109 W. Gray Street is not well-suited for installing the required fire protection systems, and the cost of bringing the building into compliance would not be reasonable given its current configuration and condition.

City staff identified the adjacent City-owned property at 113 W. Gray Street, also known as the Couch Building, as a more suitable location for the shelter operation. The Couch Building is a

standalone structure with intact firewalls and a layout that will allow the required fire sprinkler and fire alarm systems to be installed more efficiently and economically.

Relocating the shelter operation from 109 W. Gray to 113 W. Gray Street will provide a safer, more appropriate facility while allowing the city to maintain emergency shelter services until the permanent shelter can be constructed and brought into operation.

DISCUSSION:

After evaluating the condition of the Couch Building (113 W. Gray Street), in June of 2026, staff have determined that remodeling the facility will require up to \$175,000 to prepare it for use as the emergency homeless shelter. The cost, along with the plan, was presented to the City Council that same month at a Council Conference with a consensus to proceed with this plan. On July 4th, a strong storm with high winds that hit the Norman area caused significant damage to an HVAC unit on the Gray Street buildings, along with some minor electrical damage. The replacement of that unit and the repair of the damage added an extra \$30,000 to the project, bringing the total to \$205,000.

Approval of this funding is necessary to provide a safe, code-compliant facility for the shelter's continued operation. The remodeling will allow the city to address the requirements identified by the Oklahoma State Fire Marshal, including installing the necessary fire suppression and fire alarm systems, while making the building suitable for continued shelter operations.

The \$205,000 investment is also intended to be a practical use of City resources. The Couch Building is already City-owned, eliminating the need to acquire or lease another property. Its existing construction, including intact firewalls and a standalone configuration, makes it significantly better suited for the required improvements than the current shelter building at 109 W. Gray Street. Investing in the Couch Building will allow the City to make the necessary safety improvements without incurring a substantial cost to build a facility that is not well-suited to the required fire protection systems.

Additionally, the permanent homeless shelter approved through the 2026 bond issue is still awaiting review through the court system and will require additional time for design, construction, and completion. The City intends to maintain a safe and operational shelter during this interim period. The proposed remodel will provide the City with a reasonable solution to meet the immediate safety requirements while continuing to provide shelter services until the permanent facility is available.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council Approve Resolution Number R-2627-57 in the amount of \$205,000 to appropriate funds from the Capital Fund Balance (50-29000) into the Homeless Shelter Facility project (BG0099, 50193365-46101 Construction), to be used for the Norman Warming Shelter Improvements described herein.