CITY OF NORMAN, OK
STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 10/27/2026

REQUESTER: Rickey J. Knighton II

PRESENTER: Rickey J. Knighton II, City Attorney

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF ORDINANCE O-2627-8 UPON FIRST, SECOND, AND FINAL READING BY TITLE: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, AMENDING SECTION 2-316 AND SECTION 24-507 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF NORMAN PROVIDING FOR OVERSIGHT; PROHIBITING CERTAIN ACTIVITIES IN PUBLIC PARKS; PROVIDING EXCEPTIONS; PROVIDING FOR ENFORCEMENT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

BACKGROUND

Section 24-507 establishes rules governing activities within the George M. Sutton Urban Wilderness and Community and Neighborhood Parks. These regulations are intended to protect natural resources, preserve park facilities, promote public safety, and ensure that parks remain available for the enjoyment of all visitors.

Since the ordinance was last amended, recreational activities, mobility devices, and applicable legal requirements have evolved. Staff has reviewed the existing regulations and recommends several revisions to improve clarity, modernize terminology, and ensure consistency with current operational practices.

DISCUSSION

The proposed ordinance makes several substantive updates to Section 24-507.

Within the George M. Sutton Urban Wilderness, the ordinance expressly prohibits camping, recognizing the area's purpose as a protected natural preserve and reducing the potential for environmental degradation, wildfire risk, and conflicts with wildlife. Existing prohibitions are reorganized and clarified without materially changing their intent.

The ordinance also updates restrictions regarding watercraft by replacing the existing reference to "boats or canoes" with broader language prohibiting the operation or launching of any watercraft, including boats, canoes, kayaks, rafts, float tubes, paddleboards, and similar floating devices. This amendment reflects the variety of recreational equipment now commonly used on

waterways and eliminates ambiguity regarding prohibited activities. It also preserves flexibility if, in the future, the City decides to allow such activity at a particular park by allowing it only by posted park rules.

For Community and Neighborhood Parks, the ordinance similarly updates the watercraft prohibition and modernizes provisions governing vehicle use. Rather than broadly prohibiting bicycles, the ordinance distinguishes between motor vehicles and devices that are commonly and lawfully used within parks, including bicycles, electric-assisted bicycles, wheelchairs, and other power-driven mobility devices used by individuals with mobility disabilities as required by applicable law.

The ordinance also updates provisions relating to projectile weapons by prohibiting the discharge of firearms, bows, slingshots, air guns, and similar devices except where otherwise authorized by law. This language better aligns the ordinance with Oklahoma law while maintaining public safety within City parks.

Finally, the ordinance clarifies that violations of posted park rules constitute violations of the City Code and retains the Parks and Recreation Department's authority to issue permits for scientific study, conservation activities, park maintenance, and other appropriate uses. Amendments to the duties of the Board of Parks Commissioners ensures that the Board can act in an advisory role related to any review of the permit system. Changes to this section also include an allowance for the Parks Board to designate the appropriate classification for city parks, i.e. community parks, neighborhood parks, etc.

An emergency clause has been added to the ordinance. If Council desires to enact the ordinance by emergency, it can be done by separate vote on the emergency clause. The affirmative votes of 6 Councilmembers are required to adopt the emergency clause.

Staff was directed to revise this Ordinance during the Special Meeting on October 20, 2026. The revised version will be attached in the packet as requested by Council.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the ordinance prohibiting certain activities in public parks, providing exceptions, for enforcement and severability.