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-2627-7 UPON FIRST, SECOND AND FINAL READING BY TITLE: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, ADDING SECTION 24-510 TO CHAPTER 24 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF NORMAN; PROHIBITING CAMPING AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ENCAMPMENTS ON PUBLIC PROPERTY; PROHIBITING OBSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC SIDEWALKS, TRAILS, EASEMENTS, AND ACCESS ROUTES; PROVIDING EXCEPTIONS; PROVIDING FOR ENFORCEMENT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. **POSTPONED UNTIL 11-24-2026**

BACKGROUND

The proposed ordinance establishes reasonable regulations governing camping and encampments on City-owned public property while ensuring that public sidewalks, trails, rights-of-way, parks, easements, and other public facilities remain safe, accessible, and available for their intended public use.

The City has experienced situations in which unauthorized encampments and the accumulation of personal property on public property have interfered with pedestrian access, impeded accessibility for individuals with disabilities, created sanitation concerns, increased fire risks, damaged public infrastructure, and limited the public's ability to use parks, sidewalks, and trails. The ordinance is intended to address these concerns through content-neutral regulations that apply to all persons regardless of housing status.

DISCUSSION

The proposed ordinance prohibits camping and the establishment of campsites on public property except in connection with City-sponsored or City-approved events. It also prohibits storing personal property in a manner that constitutes a campsite or interferes with the intended public use of public property.

In addition, the ordinance prohibits substantial obstruction of sidewalks, trails, public entrances, easements, and ADA-accessible routes. A violation occurs only when a reasonable path of travel

is obstructed or access is materially impaired, thereby focusing enforcement on conduct that interferes with public access rather than incidental or temporary use of public spaces.

The ordinance includes several important exceptions. It does not apply to permitted events, City-approved recreational activities, emergency response activities, persons experiencing medical emergencies, or conduct protected by federal or state law, including lawful expressive activity.

Recognizing that enforcement often involves individuals experiencing homelessness or other hardships, the ordinance encourages a measured enforcement approach. When reasonably practicable and consistent with public safety, the City should provide notice before removing a campsite and allow individuals an opportunity to voluntarily remove personal property. The ordinance further authorizes coordination with shelters, outreach organizations, and service providers to connect affected individuals with available assistance. Immediate action remains authorized where necessary to address imminent threats to public health or safety.

Enforcement options are flexible and include warnings, notices of violation, citations, or other lawful enforcement actions. The ordinance also authorizes the removal of unauthorized campsites and associated debris in accordance with applicable law and City policy.

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.

During the October 20, 2026, City Council Special Meeting, Staff was directed to postpone this Ordinance to November 24, 2026, Regular City Council Meeting. This postponement would allow the Police Department time to establish an enforcement policy.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the ordinance prohibiting camping and the establishment of encampments on public property.