



CITY OF NORMAN, OK CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING

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

Thursday, June 11, 2026 at 4:00 PM

MINUTES

The Oversight Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Regular Session in the Executive Conference Room in the Municipal Building, on Thursday, June 11, 2026 at 4:00 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

Chairman, Grant called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 4, Helen Grant, Chair
Councilmember Ward 1, David Gandesbery
Councilmember Ward 8, Scott Dixon

OTHERS PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 3, Robert Bruce
Mayor Stephen Holman
Ms. Amanda Sherf, Community Services Manager
Ms. Kara Fritz, Community Outreach Social Worker
Mr. Shawn Lloyd, Chief Programs Officer, City Care
Ms. Brittany Taylor, Director of Homeless Services, City Care
Ms. Heidi Smith, Director of Operations, Thunderbird Clubhouse
Ms. Katherine Griffith, Admin Tech III, City Clerk

AGENDA ITEMS

1. QUARTERLY UPDATE ON GRAY STREET SHELTER OPERATIONS AND OUTCOMES.

Mr. Shawn Lloyd, City Care Chief Programs Officer, and Britney Kelly, City Care Director of Homeless Services provided an update on shelter operations and outcomes.

Mr. Lloyd reported the Gray Street Shelter has remained at or near full capacity throughout the reporting period, averaging approximately 53 guests per night and providing just under 8,000 nights of shelter services. A total of 209 individuals utilized the shelter to date in 2026.

Item 1, continued

For comparison, the annual Point-in-Time count identified 165 individuals, (92 sheltered and 73 unsheltered), experiencing homelessness in Norman during the January count. Staff explained that the count represents a snapshot of homelessness on a single night and includes both sheltered and unsheltered individuals.

Mr. Lloyd discussed City Care's housing navigation efforts, including use of the Coordinated Access Housing Team (CHAT) assessment system, which evaluates the severity of an individual's homelessness experience and housing needs. As of May 2026, 85 CHAT assessments were completed and 25 individuals connected to permanent housing vs 28 total in 2025.

Housing placement efforts can be affected by fluctuations in housing voucher availability, but placements have been supported through Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds and flexible funding by covering first month's rent and documentation costs.

The following characteristics were self-reported among shelter guests and noted that guests may qualify for multiple categories simultaneously (e.g., veteran status, disability, and chronic homelessness).

- 97 individuals identified as chronically homeless.
- 13 veterans (approximately 6% of shelter population).
- 182 individuals reported a mental health disorder (87%).
- 76 individuals reported a physical disability (36%).
- 84 individuals reported experiencing domestic violence (40%).

Key race and age demographic observations included:

- African Americans represent a disproportionately larger share of the shelter population compared to their percentage of Norman's overall population.
- Native American representation within the shelter population is also comparatively high.
- The number of older adults experiencing homelessness continues to increase, particularly among individuals ages 45 to 64 and those 65 and older.
- Staff reported that more individuals are experiencing homelessness later in life for the first time.

Reported figures for guest income levels compared to local housing costs included.

- Fair market rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Norman is approximately \$840 per month.
- To maintain housing affordability at 30% of income, an individual would need approximately \$2,800 in monthly income.

Guest income distribution:

- 136 individuals reported no income.
- 4 individuals reported income between \$1 and \$500.
- 36 individuals reported monthly income between \$500 and \$1,000.
- 15 individuals reported monthly income between \$1,000 and \$2,000.
- 7 individuals reported income above \$2,000.
- 34 individuals receiving Social Security Disability Income (SSDI).
- 33 individuals receiving Social Security retirement benefits.
- 11 individuals with earned income from employment.

It is noted, individuals with earned income are often able to transition to housing more quickly with assistance from ESG and flexible funding resources.

Mr. Lloyd emphasized the need for additional workforce development and employment support programs in Norman, noting City Care currently transports some clients to Oklahoma City to access job readiness and employment services unavailable locally.

When asked whether individuals receiving disability benefits could earn income while remaining eligible for benefits, Mr. Lloyd explained that disability programs impose limits on earnings and work hours, noting that many shelter guests receiving disability benefits earn less than \$1,000 per month and often rely on housing subsidies to secure permanent housing.

Mr. Lloyd stressed the importance of healthcare coverage for individuals with mental health conditions or physical disabilities and noted service providers regularly conduct enrollment efforts to connect guests with available healthcare benefits.

- 72 individuals uninsured.
- 45 individuals enrolled in Medicaid.
- 40 individuals enrolled in Medicare.
- One individual receives Retention Health Insurance.
- Five of 17 Native American shelter guests were actively utilizing available tribal benefits. Possible reasons for lower participation may include eligibility issues, lack of enrollment, or limited connection to available services.

Mr. Lloyd reviewed case management and advocacy activities conducted by shelter staff require a significant portion of their time and effort. Advocacy involves actively assisting clients with tasks necessary to access services, including making phone calls, scheduling appointments, conducting online searches, completing applications, arranging transportation, and assisting with referrals. Other examples of advocacy activities include:

- Assistance with Social Security and disability benefits, including resolving benefit interruptions, address changes, and other administrative issues.
- Housing-related advocacy, including communication with landlords and the Norman Housing Authority, transportation to appointments, and completion of housing applications.

When asked why the number of mental health referrals is so low when compared to the high percentage of shelter guests reporting mental health concerns, Mr. Lloyd explained that while many guests identify as having mental health needs, a significant number are already seeing mental health providers and additional referrals are not necessary. He also noted that successful referral completion can be impacted by a variety of factors, including client engagement and service availability.

Shelter length-of-stay data was discussed and Mr. Lloyd noted individuals utilizing the Norman shelter generally remain sheltered longer than individuals served in Oklahoma City or Tulsa.

- Approximately 34% of guests stay between one and five days.
- A larger-than-expected number of guests stay for several weeks to one month.
- 21 individuals have remained in the shelter for approximately one year.
- Long-term shelter residents in Norman are often older adults facing health-related challenges, may require supportive housing, assisted living, nursing care, or other long-term care arrangements.

While shelter expansion would be beneficial, the greater need is for additional low-income affordable housing units that allow individuals to transition from shelter into stable housing.

Mr. Lloyd provided an update on the June 8th interruption of shelter operations due to required building renovations which prompted a relocation of services. City Staff and Community partners quickly coordinated temporary shelter space at two alternative locations within several hours, through the assistance of strong relationships developed through Home Together Norman and the local faith-based community, minimizing disruption to guests.

Collaborative response, partnerships and discussions with local organizations are valuable to help strengthen future winter shelter planning, emergency sheltering and severe weather response efforts. Mr. Lloyd stressed the importance of proactive winter planning, noting severe winter weather is predictable and should be addressed through advance preparation rather than emergency response.

The status of the state inspection that prompted the required renovations and what the renovations cost is being handled by the City of Norman, while City Care's focus is ensuring continuity of shelter services and guest safety. He said the renovation work may occur in multiple phases, including immediate safety-related improvements and additional long-term compliance projects, but understood shelter operations were expected to return to the facility the following day.

Mr. Lloyd reported that 25 individuals have been connected to housing during 2026 to date, compared to 28 total housing placements during all of 2025. He attributed the increase in housing outcomes to strong performance by the housing navigation team, development of positive relationships with local apartment complexes and landlords and access to Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding and flexible financial assistance resources.

Mr. Lloyd noted that housing voucher issuance has slowed significantly due to funding concerns and anticipated year-end shortfalls, staff continue to utilize alternative housing resources whenever possible. The limited number of available vouchers effectively functions as a temporary freeze on voucher access, creating additional challenges for housing placement efforts. It was noted that:

- Norman Housing Authority has reopened its waiting list and continues to issue a limited number of vouchers.
- Oklahoma City Housing Authority and the Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) have experienced periods of wait list closures due to funding concerns.
- Maintaining relationships with landlords and apartment providers willing to accept housing vouchers was stressed.

ESG resources, (approximately \$2,500 per household), were directly utilized to address housing placement barriers and assist 12 individuals to secure permanent housing during 2026. ESG eligible expenses included:

- Rental application fees
- Security and/ Utility deposits
- Rental arrearages
- Housing stabilization services
- Case management support

Item 1, continued

When asked whether individuals who secure housing remain stably housed or subsequently return to the shelter system, Mr. Lloyd stated he did not have current return data available, but such information could be obtained through the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Obtaining accurate long-term outcomes requires consistent participation and data entry from multiple service providers and efforts are underway to improve system-wide data utilization and coordination among community partners.

Improved data collection would help identify:

- Patterns of service utilization across agencies.
- Housing stability outcomes.
- Community service gaps and bottlenecks.
- Opportunities to improve system performance.

Mr. Lloyd noted addressing long-term homelessness requires a coordinated community approach that combines resources from multiple sectors and further responded successful expansion of supportive housing and case management services will require:

- Stronger community-wide data collection and analysis.
- Increased competitiveness for federal grant funding.
- Private donations and philanthropic support.
- Financial participation from local, state, and federal government partners.
- Foundation grants and other diversified funding sources.

When members asked if City Care receives financial support from Oklahoma County, Mr. Lloyd stated he was not aware of any significant county-level funding currently supporting City Care operations, although occasional county-supported initiatives may occur, but the majority of City Care funding originates from federal sources. He further noted that funding from the City of Oklahoma City MAPS initiatives supports the organization's Key to Home system and related homelessness response efforts.

Councilmember Gandesbery commended City Care staff and local service providers for their work supporting individuals experiencing homelessness. He emphasized the importance of supporting existing staff and preventing burnout, noting the loss of experienced personnel could significantly impact community progress.

Mr. Lloyd stated additional emphasis on diversion services could help reduce pressure on the shelter system. He explained diversion efforts focus on rapidly resolving housing crises for individuals who have income or other resources and may only need short-term assistance to avoid prolonged homelessness, noting:

- Individuals who experience homelessness for shorter periods are generally more likely to maintain long-term housing stability.
- Extended shelter stays increase the likelihood of chronic homelessness.

2. UPDATE FROM THE CITY OF NORMAN'S COMMUNITY SERVICES MANAGER.

Homelessness impacts multiple City departments and placement of the newly established Community Services Division within the City Manager's Office facilitates coordination across city operations. The program is funded through Opioid settlement funds and incorporates substance use prevention and treatment initiatives into its scope of work.

Ms. Amanda Scherf, Community Services Manager for the City of Norman, joined the City of Norman in early May, while Ms. Kara Fritts, Community Outreach Social Worker, began employment in mid-April. Together they bring approximately 13 years of combined experience in mental health, housing, and community services.

Ms. Scherf responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Coordinating homelessness, mental health, and substance use initiatives.
- Serving as a liaison to community partners, businesses, and residents.
- Managing contracts and budgets.
- Developing evidence-based strategies and policies.
- Coordinating homelessness-related efforts across City departments.

Ms. Fritts responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Direct outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Case management and peer recovery support services.
- Referrals and warm handoffs to community resources.
- Follow-up services and advocacy.
- Client assessments and de-escalation support.

During the department's first month of operation, staff focused on:

- Developing departmental structure and operating procedures.
- Establishing policies and processes.
- Rebuilding and strengthening community partnerships.
- Supporting outreach efforts alongside the Police Department and Action Center.
- Responding to homelessness-related community concerns.
- Assisting with encampment response efforts throughout Norman.

Ms. Scherf reported the Frances Cate Park encampment was a primary focus when she began employment with the City. The encampment population was estimated to be approximately 45 to 50 individuals at its peak. Community Outreach staff, the Norman Police Department, and Central Oklahoma Community Mental Health Center conducted daily outreach activities that included:

- Wellness checks.
- Resource referrals.
- Transportation assistance.

Ms. Scherf reported that staff were not notified in advance of Oklahoma's Operation SAFE (Swift Action for Families Everywhere) and therefore were not present during that operation. Available information shows approximately 20 homeless individuals were present at the location, no outreach activities occurred during the operation and individuals dispersed from the area subsequently.

Upon learning that a property owner intended to clear a river encampment site for property development, Ms. Scherf said outreach teams conducted daily visits beginning shortly after Memorial Day. Individuals at the encampment received approximately six to seven days' notice prior to clearance activities occurring.

Item 2, continued

Participating organizations included:

- City of Norman Community Services staff.
- Norman Police Department.
- Central Oklahoma Community Mental Health Center outreach staff.
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF).

Outreach efforts focused on:

- Resource referrals.
- Transportation assistance.
- Housing and shelter options.
- Mental health and substance use treatment referrals.
- Distribution of contact information for future assistance.

Ms. Scherf noted that May statistical data is basic as formal tracking systems are under development during the department's startup phase, but reported activity includes:

- 25 Action Center inquiries related to homelessness.
- Approximately 73 unduplicated contacts with individuals experiencing homelessness.
- Three documented transports to treatment services.
- Approximately 15 referrals to community resources and service providers.

Ms. Scherf clarified the 25 Action Center inquiries represented homeless-related concerns reported by Norman residents through the City's Action Center, many of which involved encampments or park-related concerns. Staff typically respond within hours of receiving an inquiry and work to provide updates or resolutions whenever possible.

Referral categories include:

- Housing assistance.
- Mental health services.
- Substance use treatment.
- Insurance enrollment.
- Social Security assistance.
- Clothing and basic needs resources.

Funding was recently approved to modify the department's mobile outreach vehicle into a mobile office and assessment space. The upgraded vehicle will significantly improve outreach effectiveness by providing a private and professional setting for assessments, service coordination, and treatment referrals. It was also noted that the Norman Police Department tracks mental health and substance use transports in its regular reporting and this data may help provide a broader picture of community service activity.

Staff have established or renewed relationships with six organizations during May, including:

- Adult Protective Services (APS)
- Volunteers of America
- Period OKC
- Cleveland County Disability Coalition
- OU Southwest Prevention Center
- Oklahoma City Homeless Programs

Item 2, Continued

As part of these renewed relationships, staff have been in ongoing discussions with Oklahoma City staff regarding homeless response strategies and program development.

Ms. Scherf outlined several priorities for the coming months:

- Finalize departmental operating procedures and policies.
- Update and expand the City's homelessness information webpage.
- Continue developing community partnerships.
- Increase outreach and educational presentations for neighborhood groups, businesses, and community organizations.
- Enhance public awareness regarding available homelessness response resources.
- Complete modifications to the mobile outreach vehicle.
- Explore hiring an intern to assist with outreach activities, improve staff safety during encampment outreach activities, while giving practical field experience.

When asked for an estimate of the number of case managers and outreach workers needed within the community, Ms. Scherf and community partners indicated staffing needs significantly exceed current capacity. Discussion points included:

- Outreach and case management caseloads are frequently too large to provide intensive services.
- Effective case management generally requires caseloads below 20 clients per worker.
- Community providers are experiencing staffing shortages.
- Additional funding is needed to support outreach workers, case managers, peer support specialists, and housing navigation staff.

Representatives noted that the Point-in-Time (PIT) count identified approximately 238 individuals experiencing homelessness immediately following the annual count period and that available staffing resources remain insufficient to adequately serve that population.

Participants also emphasized the need for homelessness prevention and diversion funding, noting that relatively small amounts of financial assistance can often prevent individuals from becoming homeless altogether.

3. UPDATE ON CLEVELAND COUNTY HOME BASE ACTION PLAN AND DISCUSSION ON BEST PRACTICES FOR MANAGED ENCAMPMENTS.

Ms. Heidi Smith, Director of Operations, Thunderbird Clubhouse, highlighted accomplishments since the original Home-Base study was done.

- Development of new affordable housing projects.
- Progress toward permanent supportive housing.
- Approval and development of a permanent shelter site.
- Expansion of outreach services.
- Better coordination among agencies and community partners.

Homelessness is a long-term systemic problem, but measurable progress is occurring. The shelter expansion would likely be utilized immediately as the existing shelter regularly turns people away and maintains a waiting list.

Item 3, continued

- Estimates suggest approximately 8–15 people are turned away on many days.
- Additional shelter beds would likely fill quickly because unmet demand already exists.

Are sanctioned or managed encampments a solution to the homeless issue? A managed encampment is not simply providing land for tents, but functions more like an outdoor shelter program requiring substantial resources. Concerns raised included:

- High operating costs.
- Need for security, sanitation, water, showers, laundry, food, and case management.
- Difficult to find a qualified operator.
- Lack of strong evidence that encampments improve housing outcomes.
- Concerns that many people who avoid shelters may also avoid a managed encampment because it would still involve rules and oversight.

Homelessness is a complex, long-term challenge driven by broader state and national factors. While there was no consensus about specific approaches such as managed encampments, there was broad agreement on the importance of long-term solutions including:

- Affordable housing.
- Permanent supportive housing.
- Diversion and prevention programs.
- Mental health services.
- Case management and outreach.
- Continued coordination among service providers.

Crisis responses alone do not reduce homelessness unless they are connected to long-term housing strategies. Some of the main themes include:

- Diversion vs homeless services: (helping people before they enter the homeless system vs serving people already experiencing homelessness).
- More affordable housing units needed in Norman.
- Coordinated Mental health response: (mental health professionals, crisis services, police).
- State and Federal governments should provide greater funding for social services and homeless programs.
- Home Base Action Plan- meaningful progress has been made since plan's adoption.
 - New affordable housing projects.
 - Development of supportive housing.
 - Approval of permanent shelter.
 - Expanded outreach capacity.
 - Planning for inclement-weather sheltering.
- Case management shortages: (case managers, load, burnout, funding constraints).
- City of Norman's new outreach and case-management positions is a better way to connect people with services.
- Recognition of service providers: (local staff, nonprofits, volunteers).

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:01 pm.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor