



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 11/13/2025

REQUESTER: Norman Police Department

PRESENTER: Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION, REJECTION, AMENDMENT AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF ORDINANCE O-2526-16: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA AMENDING SECTION 20-109 TO ADD MASSAGE THERAPY ESTABLISHMENT TO THE FEE SCHEDULE FOR LICENSES; AMENDING SECTION 20-202 TO CLARIFY DEFINITION OF "ADULT ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS"; ADDING DEFINITIONS AND LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS FOR "MASSAGE THERAPY ESTABLISHMENTS" TO CHAPTER 20; AND DELETING THE DEFINITION OF "MASSAGE PARLOR" AND SEXUAL ENCOUNTER CENTER" FROM SECTION 36-101 OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA; AND PROVIDING FOR THE SEVERABILITY THEREOF.

BACKGROUND:

The Massage Therapy Practice Act (the "Act") was adopted by the Oklahoma Legislature in 2016 and established standards and licensure requirements for massage therapists operating in Oklahoma. Under the Act as adopted in 2016, cities were only permitted to regulate zoning and occupation license fees. Senate Bill 644 was adopted during the 2025 session and amended the Act to ensure it does not affect zoning or licensing requirements that may be enacted by cities.

In recent years, Norman Police have noticed an uptick in establishments locating in Norman that purport to be massage therapy establishments but are instead cover for prostitution, trafficking and other activities. With Senate Bill 644, the City can now implement licensing requirements for massage therapy establishments that will help the police and customers know whether a business purporting to be a massage therapy establishment is legitimate. It also provides additional tools to the police for enforcement to address illegal activity.

In reviewing the City's existing code, it was noted that the zoning ordinance currently allows special uses to be granted for certain adult entertainment uses. The definition of "adult entertainment uses" has not been updated since the 1980's and includes massage parlors and sexual encounter centers, both of which, as defined, include payment of consideration or gratuity for certain sexual contact. This runs afoul of 21 O.S. §1029 and §1030, which defines and criminalizes prostitution.

DISCUSSION:

Ordinance 2526-16 establishes a new business license for Massage Therapy Establishments and sets forth requirements for such establishments, aimed at ensuring a safe environment for patrons and therapists of such establishments. Beginning April 1, 2026, consistent with other occupational licenses in Norman, all massage therapy establishments will be required to be licensed. Licenses will not be issued if the applicant has a particular criminal background, has made any false or misleading statements in its application, or has had a license denied, revoked or suspended in other cities in the previous 5 years.

Massage therapy establishments must meet certain requirements to receive, retain or renew a license, including standards related to sanitation, prices, operating hours, advertising, required clothing, and employment of only licensed massage therapists for therapy services. Indecent conduct is defined in the ordinance and is prohibited.

Finally, Ordinance O-2526-16 amends Section 36-101 of the zoning ordinance to eliminate “massage parlors” and “sexual encounter centers” from the definition of “adult entertainment uses”, which are currently allowed in certain zoning districts with the grant of a special use. Staff have confirmed there are no outstanding special uses granted for these activities.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that Planning Commission recommend to City Council that Ordinance O-2526-16 be adopted upon Second and Final Reading.