



CITY OF NORMAN, OK CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE

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

Tuesday, September 12, 2023 at 5:30 PM

MINUTES

It is the policy of the City of Norman that no person or groups of persons shall on the grounds of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, place of birth, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, marital status, including marriage to a person of the same sex, disability, relation, or genetic information, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination in employment activities or in all programs, services, or activities administered by the City, its recipients, sub-recipients, and contractors. In the event of any comments, complaints, modifications, accommodations, alternative formats, and auxiliary aids and services regarding accessibility or inclusion, please contact the ADA Technician at 405-366-5446, Relay Service: 711. To better serve you, five (5) business days' advance notice is preferred.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Heikkila called the Meeting to Order at 5:30 p.m.

PRESENT

Mayor Larry Heikkila
Councilmember Ward 1 Austin Ball
Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler
Councilmember Ward 3 Bree Montoya
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 5 Michael Nash
Councilmember Ward 6 Elizabeth Foreman
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman
Councilmember Ward 8 Matthew Peacock

ABSENT

None

AGENDA ITEMS

1. DISCUSSION REGARDING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL SUBMITTALS FOR PROPOSED PROGRAMS TO BE OPERATED OUT OF THE CURRENT SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER AND REAVES CENTER.

Ms. Veronica Tracy, Recreation Manager for the Parks and Recreation Department, said Staff is working on two exciting projects for the current Senior Center and Reaves Park Garden Center (Reaves Center). She said two Requests for Proposals (RFPs) were sent out in June for both facilities and representatives from Center for Children and Families, Inc. (CCFI) and Mary Abbot House will present their proposals to Council.

Item 1, continued:

Center for Children and Families

Ms. Melissa Klink, Chief Executive Officer for CCFI, said Boys and Girls Club of Norman is a program under CCFI with a mission to heal children, empower youth, and strengthen families because every child deserves to grow up safe, nurtured, and loved. She said CCFI is the local family resource center for Cleveland County and beyond and is only one of three in the State. She said CCFI serves families with whatever they need and helps connect them to other vital resources in the community that include counseling services, prevention and education, a baby pantry, and the Boys and Girls Club of Norman.

Ms. Klink said the Boys and Girls Club of Norman is unique in that it is the only Boys and Girls Club in the State that operates within another agency (CCFI). The mission of the Club is to provide all young people, especially Norman's most vulnerable, with a healthy environment in which they can be empowered to reach their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible citizens. She highlighted areas of programming that include Health and Education; Health and Wellness; Sports, Recreation, and Fitness; Leadership and Service; and the Arts.

The Boys and Girls Club of Norman hosted summer camps for 79 adolescents with 74% being teens and that speaks volumes to the kind of services offered because teens could stay home alone playing video games or being on social media, but chose to attend summer camp. Ms. Klink said a Boys and Girls Club Teen Center at Reaves Park would host family-friendly park events in collaboration with the Family Resource Center. It would open after-school and summer programming space for an additional 40 plus teens, with dreams of adding a gym or multipurpose building to accommodate even more teens in the future. It would create access for teens to participate in social-emotional learning and interact with trained mental health professionals helping address the growing youth mental health needs that CCFI has witnessed since the pandemic.

The plan includes after school programming until 7:00 p.m., weekdays for Norman's middle and high school students with occasional evening and weekend events as well as summer camp. Benefits of this program include increased out of school time programming for Norman's youth and facility rental opportunities for community members and social service organizations. Ms. Klink said challenges include sustaining program funding while maintaining the low cost of \$20 per school year for families.

Ms. Klink highlighted outputs and outcomes that include serving 191 youths with an average daily attendance of 77 club members and serving 19,408 meals and snacks (served daily through partnership with Regional Food Bank). She said 88.73% of club members report a sense of safety and belonging; 94.24% of club members participated in Character and Leadership and Academic Success Programming; and CCFI hosted several family resource events including a holiday meal, end of school year celebration, and back to school bash.

Center for Children and Families, continued:

Ms. Klink said the program is outgrowing its current facility and CCFI would like permission to use the Reaves Center and move 40 middle school members into that facility with the goal to serve high school students in the future. She said being able to give teens their own space is crucial to the program. She said the University of Oklahoma (OU) is very close to the Reaves Center so members would be able to walk over to watch basketball games, use the pool, etc.

Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation, said the Reaves Center is not in the greatest shape and has not really been used for at least a decade. He said if the Boys and Girls Club of Norman is going to be a future user, City Staff will need to know more about how they plan to use the facility.

Councilmember Holman said he supports this use of the facility as well making improvements to make the facility more usable. He said he has used the facility for Ward meetings and it definitely looks like the 1970's.

Councilmember Schueler said she supports the proposal and asked about the contract requirements, i.e., who pays utilities, maintenance, etc. Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney, said most contracts with other agencies require occupants to pay the electric bills, but maintenance of any City owned building is the City's responsibility.

When asked about a timeline, Ms. Klink said a lot depends on the facility's condition, but would hopefully be available by next fall.

Current Senior Citizens Center

Ms. Tracy said the second RFP is for use of 329 South Peters, the current Senior Center. She said the facility will not be available for operations until the Adult Wellness and Education Center on Findlay Avenue is open. She said the Mary Abbott House was selected to potentially operate at 329 South Peters and introduced Ms. Andree Harper, Executive Director of Mary Abbott House. Ms. Harper said Mary Abbott House has been in the Norman community since 1996 and is a safe place for children to share their experience regarding sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect, as well as being a witness to a crime or in a drug endangered situation. She said their mission is preventing abuse, advocating for children, and fostering hope and healing. Their current facility is located at 231 Symmes Street with a Staff of ten people and this facility is small so it is difficult to expand programs.

Before Child Advocacy Centers (CAC's) like Mary Abbott House were established, child victims were subjected to a stressful, scary, and difficult journey through the criminal and civil justice systems, oftentimes having to share their traumatic experience of abuse and neglect to several different adult strangers. In many cases, this system of response added to the trauma the victim experienced.

Current Senior Citizens Center, continued:

Ms. Harper said the Mary Abbott House would like to move internet crimes against children to the facilities basement and expand the ALERT! Program, an innovative online safety program that teaches children to keep themselves safe online. They would also like to have a Training Center upstairs to be staffed by case investigators from Cleveland County, McClain County, and Garvin County, move mental health providers to South Peters, and add another Forensic Investigator and Case Manager.

Ms. Ronnie Roney, Director of Education and Outreach for Mary Abbott House, said Mary Abbott House provides some prevention and education to educate parents on how to recognize, respond, and report child abuse as well as teaching children how to keep safe online. With the new space, Staff will be able to expand education throughout communities. She said Mary Abbott House partners with CCFI for mental health issues as well as Department of Human Services, law enforcement, mental health providers, medical providers, and District Attorney's Office.

Mayor Heikkila asked about the impact on the kitchen and dining room operated by Aging Services for the Meals on Wheels Program and Ms. Harper said the kitchen and dining room will not be impacted by Mary Abbott House moving into the facility.

When asked about the timeline, Ms. Harper said Mary Abbott House employees anticipate moving into the facility around January 2024, or as soon as the Senior Center on Findlay Avenue opens and the building is vacated.

Councilmembers said they support the proposed use of the facility by Mary Abbott House.

Items submitted for the record

1. Boys and Girls Club of Norman flyer
2. Abbott House Child Advocacy Center brochure

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ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor