

STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: October 12, 2023

REQUESTER: Jeanne Snider

PRESENTER: Jeanne Snider

ITEM TITLE: CONTINUED DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CITY'S BOARDS,
COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

Background

Kathryn Walker, City Attorney, has made several presentations regarding the City's Boards, Commission and Committees. Before we discuss the specific Proposals, below is a review of definitions of each governing body.

Discussion

Cities appoint citizen boards, commissions and committees to advise their legislative bodies on a wide range of policy issues. Some of these boards are designated by statute for a specific purpose, such as the Norman Housing Authority and the Central Oklahoma Master Conservancy District. Others are designated by Ordinance such as Board of Adjustment, Board of Appeals, Environmental Control Advisory Board, Historic District Commission, Human Rights Commission, the Norman Library Board, Social and Voluntary Services Commission to name a few. Others are designated by Resolution or in the City Charter. See Attachment 1, Summary of Boards, Commissions and Committees.

The terms "boards" and "commissions" are synonymous and are used interchangeably to refer to independent bodies authorized by ordinance or statute to perform a particular function in local government. Boards and Commissions are established for the purpose of reviewing information and making recommendations to City Council on city policy issues. There is no difference between a board and a commission. Each has their own specific duties and functions. However, Boards, Commissions and Committees are generally defined as follows:

Boards. A group of persons having managerial, supervisory, investigatory or advisory powers.

Commissions. A group of people entrusted by a government or other official body with authority to do something. They are usually composed of experts, professionals or individuals with relevant experience in the subject matter.

Committees. A group of people delegated to consider, take action on, or report on some matters. Committees may be permanent or ad hoc (temporary) and their members are appointed based on their relevant skills, knowledge or experience.

There are four different types of boards, commissions and committees. Recommendatory is not binding and is to advise or suggest a course of action. Oversight is to watch over and direct in order to ensure a satisfactory outcome or performance. Advisory is having the power to make recommendations but not take action enforcing them and quasi judicial is a proceeding conducted by an administrative or executive official or organization that is similar to a court proceeding or hearing.

Discussion of Proposals

1. Consolidating the Greenbelt Commission and the Planning Commission and make Planning Commission appointments ward specific. After discussion, there was no support or consensus to consolidate the two Commissions, but there was support for making Planning Commission appointments ward specific. Attachment 2 is a draft requiring appointments to the Planning Commission being ward specific.
2. Consolidating the Tree Board, Bicycle Advisory Committee and the Board of Park Commissioners. There was no support or consensus to consolidate the three committees, but there was support to consolidate the Tree Board and the Board of Park Commissioners. Attachment 3 is a draft to consolidate the Tree Board and the Board of Park Commissioners, adding qualifiers to the appointment to the Board of Park Commissioners to ensure adequate representation for tree concerns. The current Tree Board in 2-346 will be repealed. It is recommended the next vacancy on the Board of Park Commissioners be filled with an applicant with interest or expertise regarding urban forestry.
3. Codifying the Animal Welfare Oversight Committee to make it a permanent committee with term limits and requiring some rural representation. Currently, there are no terms or term limits for the Committee because it was created by resolution. There was support for this Proposal. Resolution 0203-111 would need to be repealed. See Attachment 4.
4. The Children's Rights Coordinating Committee was repealed during recodification of the municipal code.
5. Increase membership on the Board of Adjustment from five to seven members with three year terms and the concurring vote of three members of the Board to four members necessary to reverse any other order, requirement, decision or determination of the administrative official, to decide in favor of the applicant on any matter upon which it is required to pass under this ordinance, or to effect any variation in the application of the ordinance. There was support for this Proposal. See Attachment 5.
6. Increase committee membership on the Norman Election Commission from five to seven members. There was support for this Proposal. Attachment 6 is a draft increasing the membership from five to seven.
7. Create new committees Senior Issues Committee, Youth Advisory Committee, Transportation Committee, Budget Committee and Core Norman Development Committee. After discussion,

members felt the suggestions for new committees were not necessary, except there was consensus to redefine and rename the Norman Youth Council.

8. Change every board, commission and committee appointment in Chapter 2 to three year terms with a three year term limit. There was support for this change. See Attachment 7.

Summary

The proposed changes have been discussed a number of times by Council and are now presented with draft Ordinance changes. Because the Animal Welfare Oversight Committee was appointed by resolution, with no terms, a transitional period may be implemented to allow for a gradual phase-out of the current Animal Welfare Oversight Committee members. During this period existing committee members may continue to serve until a process to appoint members of the new Animal Welfare Oversight Committee has been determined. The terms of members of the current Tree Board will be terminated upon approval by the Council combining the Board of Parks Commission and the Tree Board.

Staff is seeking guidance on any concerns or suggestions on how to proceed with the suggested changes, especially with advising the Animal Welfare Oversight Committee and the Tree Board of the impact on currently serving members.