



CITY OF NORMAN, OK CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

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

Tuesday, September 06, 2022 at 5:30 PM

MINUTES

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CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT

Mayor Larry Heikkila
Councilmember Ward 1 Brandi Studley
Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler
Councilmember Ward 3 Kelly Lynn
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 5 Rarchar Tortorello
Councilmember Ward 6 Elizabeth Foreman (arrived 6:23 p.m.)
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman
Councilmember Ward 8 Matthew Peacock

ABSENT

None

AGENDA ITEMS

1. UPDATE FROM DR. DAVID MCLEOD, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, REGARDING THE POLICE USE OF FORCE AND SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS.

Dr. David McLeod, Associate Director of the University of Oklahoma (OU) School of Social Work, said he began working with the Norman Police Department (NPD) approximately four years ago. His research area is forensic psychopathology and prior to that, he was a police detective before becoming a forensic social worker then a researcher. He has been involved in police work from many different angles.

Item 1, continued:

Dr. McLeod said when he began working with NPD, he was researching mental health services and how police departments deal with mental health crises. At that time, he was looking for ways to utilize existing reporting techniques to try to route people to mental health services, then COVID-19 came along and everything changed. He said as the pandemic began winding down and people started getting back to their normal daily lives, he started working on use of force data as well. He said NPD wanted to have a better understanding of where this was happening all over the country, not just Norman, and what they needed to do to ensure they were policing in a way that is equitable and represented the community.

The NPD Technical Support Officers provided exact data sets given to the Center for Policing Equity (CPE) and he began researching where, why, and how this phenomenon is happening. He already knew that findings would show there is a disproportionate number of people involved in use of force scenarios. He met with CPE regarding the model they use, which is a very specific regression model that helps to understand that based on population there should be a variation in data sets that looks like the variation in the community and when variation is not seen, can that be explained with other variables. There were a few things CPE could explain using other variables, i.e., economic variables, but there was also a piece of the puzzle that could not be explained using other variables.

Dr. McLeod said he wanted to identify the context of where use of force is actually happening, is it at the officer level? He broke down different demographic characteristics of officers involved in use of force reports using officer's age, amount of time on the job, officer gender, officer race, etc., but these characteristics did not appear to be statistically significant contributors to the disparity. He then looked at calls of service where use of force was happening and this was a particularly important variable because there is a reality in the way police departments respond in the community. Some activities are officer initiated and other activities are dispatch initiated so as he broke the data down he found the three types of calls where there was racial disparity that was statistically significant that included fight calls, disturbance calls, and suspicious person calls.

The two more significant areas were fight and disturbance calls. An important thing to understand with this data is that multiple "truths" were found with one being that use of force does not happen in our community with near the volume that citizens might think. The vast, vast, vast amount of police/citizen interactions do not culminate in a use of force scenario. When use of force does happen, there was an overrepresentation of people of color more than what should be seen; however, that does not mean most use of force was involving a person of color. It just means that within our community, people of color are a relatively small portion of the population and are seen more than mathematically expected.

Councilmember Studley asked how many fight and disturbance calls did not result in use of force and Dr. McLeod said out of 145 fight calls and 500 disturbance calls only one of those calls resulted in a use of force scenario. He said there are approximately 50 to 60 use of force incidents out of 75,000 calls per year on all levels of service.

Item 1, continued:

Councilmember Grant asked for clarification on what use of force is and Dr. McLeod said use of force can be a wide spectrum of activities that could include body slams, use of pepper spray, use of Tasers, etc. He said there were higher levels of mental health issues, substance abuse issues, observations of agitation, etc., at a majority of disturbance calls.

Councilmember Schueler asked if there were outcomes from the study that would suggest that NPD should gather the data in a different way and Dr. McLeod said the data research has already inspired multiple changes. He met with administration of NPD about changes currently taking place and changes that could be beneficial in the future in helping people get the broader picture of how these things unfold in the community. He said NPD could learn a lot more if they had the resources to hire someone to devote the time and attention to the data that it deserves in order to support a police force that is as healthy as possible so officers are able to engage in high crisis, high stress situations.

Dr. McLeod said data is pointing towards youth diversion and discussion needs to occur on diverting youth. Councilmember Studley felt youth diversion should probably be handled by social services with police being the last resort.

Councilmember Grant asked if School Resource Officer (SRO) data was also in the data set and Dr. McLeod said yes, the data includes all NPD activities, but he has not specifically researched data in schools yet.

Councilmember Studley said she would like to see data on any tickets issued to students and Dr. McLeod said he has not done much research on that data, but in preliminary research, there were few incidents with students.

Councilmember Holman asked if a student arrest generally equates to use of force and Dr. McLeod said not at all.

Councilmember Schueler asked if SRO data is the same as the data collected for all police calls and Dr. McLeod said he was not sure, but data should include basic call information plus an extra level of more specifics on the incident. Police Chief Kevin Foster said NPD collects data based on the agreement with what Norman Public Schools (NPS) wants to see, but NPD also collects data beyond that for NPD uses. He said NPD is working with NPS on more diversion options to keep kids out of the system.

Dr. McLeod said a recent report from the Incidents of Justice looked at different SRO Programs and there were a couple of common threads that tend to correlate with SRO Programs that contribute to young people transitioning into the carceral system. He said that is most usually focused when the school district and police department are using the police and their presence in schools as part of their disciplinary cycle of the school and when there is a dependence on police to be the rule enforcers inside the schools. The agreement with NPS is set up in a way that SROs are not part of the disciplinary process.

Item 1, continued:

Councilmember Studley understands the agreement with NPS is not to use SROs for the disciplinary process; however, it is a reality that teachers and faculty may use SROs as rule enforcers. She said it is important to identify learning and growing opportunities for youth and know when it is appropriate for police interaction. Mr. McLeod agreed and said this is something that needs to be solidified and formalized to continue to make very, very clear what the expectations are for SROs. He said SROs should be trained to be approachable in a way that a young person can confide in them with concerns and building good relationships between SROs and students while at the same time making safety at the school a priority.

Councilmember Foreman asked if the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NPS could be updated to address the role of SROs and Chief Foster said yes.

Councilmember Studley asked if NPS calls the 988 mental health crises hotline and Chief Foster said he thinks the school uses a school representative, such as a Counselor, but that person may not be a mental health professional. Councilmember Studley asked if the City can include mental health responses with SROs and Chief Foster said the school has options other than using police, but if SROs are in the school, they will intercede if appropriate.

Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager, said the 988 System is fairly new so it would be interesting to determine how many calls for service include the school system, what kind of call volume is being seen, what those calls for service look like, how often NPD gets involved after 988 has been called, and how many 988 calls request police response. He said he will try to locate 988 data to determine what they collect data on and how that data is collected.

Mayor Heikkila thanked Dr. McLeod for the update.

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2. STATUS REPORT ON THE PURCHASE OF 1210 WEST ROBINSON STREET AND THE POSSIBLE ACQUISITION OF PROPERTY LOCATED AT 309 NORMAN CENTER COURT.

Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney, said the City started its due diligence period on 1210 West Robinson Street, which is 60 days with a 30 day extension, if needed. He said some initial inspections and walk-throughs have taken place, but no information has been submitted to the City. He said some of the walk-throughs included City employees with heating and air, electrical, and plumbing knowledge. He said an environmental assessment has been completed and survey work is currently being performed. He said asbestos testing vendors have walked through the building in order to give an estimate on costs of testing for asbestos. He said a roof inspection is being scheduled as well as additional heat and air system inspections.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. Purinton said the City recently learned of an alternative offer on the location after the property owner entered into a contract with the City. That alternative offer was made by the Office of Veterans Affairs (VA) who want to renovate the building for a VA hospital/clinic to be operated in what used to be a specialty hospital facility. He said the City can terminate the contract at any time for any reason prior to the end of the inspection period, which is October 22, 2022, or extend the contract November 21, 2022, and still be able to terminate the contract and keep the \$25,000 of earnest money. He said the VA is willing to reimburse the City for any out of pocket expenses for inspections currently being done by the City if Council decides to terminate the contract and allow the VA to purchase the building. The City will also receive all inspection reports well before the contract time is over.

Mr. Purinton said a new opportunity has presented itself for property located at 309 Norman Center Court. He said the property is a vacant hotel listed for \$3.75 million, which was built in 1995 and is 30,000 square feet (10,000 square feet less than the Robinson Street property) with 61 rooms. He said if Council is interested in this property for affordable housing, some rooms could be combined for a total of 40 beds that could be converted into 20 one-bedroom units and 20 efficiency units. He said it is a smaller hotel facility that has been on the market for 18 months and located near a bus stop with quite a bit of undeveloped land around the property. The nearest residential area is 1,100 feet from the building. He said Staff has started the process of obtaining an appraisal and anticipates having to spend less money on renovating the property than the Robinson Street property. The Norman Center Court property will need to be rezoned to a possible Planned Unit Development (PUD) or Simple Planned Unit Development (SPUD).

Councilmember Lynn asked if the property includes furniture and appliances already inside the units and Mr. Purinton said yes. Mr. Pyle said this furniture can be utilized immediately versus trying to purchase furniture for the Robinson Street location that would have included disposal of several hospital beds, etc.

Mr. Pyle said the City is working with the Norman Housing Authority (NHA) to make sure the Norman Center Court property meets all the elements for Section 8 Housing.

Councilmember Tortorello asked about the types of renovations needed as well as costs and Mr. Pyle said there are some suites with adjoining rooms that could be easily converted to one-bedroom units as well as adding more extensive kitchen areas in each unit. He said some bathroom work would be needed to convert bathtubs into showers and develop the appropriate number of Americans with Disabilities (ADA) accessible units. He said renovation for the Robinson Street property was anticipated to cost \$3 to \$5 million and this location would cost half that amount.

Councilmember Schueler said no supportive services will be available on-site and asked how that compares to other Section 8 Housing and Ms. Lisa Krieg, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)/Grants Manager, said support services are available in the community and on-site Staff will be able to lead residents to those services.

Item 2, continued:

Councilmember Studley said she is somewhat concerned about not having on-site services and asked if there is a conference room that could be converted for on-site services and Ms. Krieg said there is really no additional space except at the front desk. Mr. Pyle said there is an indoor pool and fitness center that have been well maintained and Council could discuss converting those to additional Staff space. He said some space could be converted to laundry facilities for residents use as well.

Councilmember Foreman asked if on-site Staff will be available 24/7 and Ms. Krieg said yes.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor