CITY OF NORMAN, OK
CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING

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

Thursday, December 11, 2025 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, December 11, 2025 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

Chair Helen Grant called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chairwoman Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 1 David Gandesbery
Councilmember Ward 5 Brandon Nofire
Councilmember Ward 8 Scott Dixon

OTHERS PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 3 Robert Bruce
Councilmember Ward 6 Joshua Hinkle
Mayor Steven Holman
Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager
Ms. Shannon Stevenson, Assistant City Manager
Mr. Rick Knighton, City Attorney
Ms. Jeanne Snider, Assistant City Attorney II
Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation
Ms. Jane Hudson, Planning and Community Development Director
Ms. Janita Hatley, Code Compliance Supervisor
Ms. Heidi Smith, Thunderbird Clubhouse
Mr. Shawn Loyd, Senior Director of Homeless Services
Ms. Cathy Billings, Director of Food and Shelter
Ms. Katherine Griffith, Administrative Tech III, City Clerk

1. UPDATE FROM CITY CARE ON THE OPERATION OF THE EMERGENCY SHELTER.

Mr. Shawn Loyd, Senior Director of Homeless Services for City Care, provided an overview of shelter operations, including utilization data and observed patterns.

- City Care assumed operation of the emergency shelter on January 15, 2025.
- Since that date, City Care has provided a total of 16,942 shelter bed nights.
- This represents an average of approximately 51 individuals per day utilizing shelter services.
- Mr. Lloyd explained the Point-in-Time (PIT) Count, noting:
  - The PIT Count is a federally required process conducted by all providers.
  - It measures the number of individuals experiencing homelessness on a single night, typically in January.
  - The count provides HUD with a snapshot of homelessness in the community.
- The Point-in-Time Count for the current year was approximately 240 individuals.

Since January 15, City Care has served 397 unique individuals, reinforcing that point-in-time counts typically underrepresent the total population experiencing homelessness throughout the year.

City Care identified a shelter bottleneck, with approximately 50 individuals remaining in the shelter for extended periods. To address this, City Care implemented housing navigation and housing assessments.

- 186 housing assessments have been completed.
- These assessments measure the severity and duration of homelessness.
- 24 individuals (21 households) have been successfully connected to housing.
- Some individuals were reunited into shared households prior to housing placement.

Chronically Homeless is defined as*: Four episodes of homelessness within three years totaling 12 months, or one continuous episode lasting at least 12 months.* The demographic data presented was self-reported or identified through ongoing engagement with shelter guests and was collected from January 15, 2025 through the end of November 2025.

- 140 individuals met the HUD definition of chronically homeless
- 25 veterans have accessed shelter services.
- 6 veterans have been placed into housing since housing navigation began.
- Veteran representation now aligns more closely with national trends.
- 368 individuals reported mental health disorders.
- 154 individuals reported a physical disability (approximately 39%).
- 173 individuals reported experiencing domestic violence (nearly 50% of all guests).

RACE

- 253 individuals identified as White/Caucasian.
- 57 individuals identified as African American/Black.
- The African American population was noted as lower than typical national homelessness demographics.

1. (continued)

AGE

- An increase was observed in older adults experiencing homelessness, particularly first-time homelessness.
- City Care is prioritizing relationship-building to assist individuals with:
  - Assisted living placement
  - Adult care systems
  - Navigating gaps for individuals not yet eligible for Social Security but unable to work

Income and Housing Affordability

- Fair Market Rent for a one-bedroom unit in Norman is approximately $900–$990 per month.
- To remain housing-cost burdened at 30%, an individual would need $2,700–$3,000 monthly income.
- While some individuals technically meet rent thresholds, they lack sufficient income to cover other living expenses.
- Monthly Income Breakdown
  - 60 individuals: $500–$1,000/month
  - 26 individuals: $1,000–$2,000/month
  - 12 individuals: $2,000+/month
  - 271 individuals: $0 income

City Care is searching for affordable housing throughout Cleveland County and recently relocated two individuals to another county, housing together, to be able to afford an apartment.

Efforts include:

- Building landlord relationships
- Managing a Permanent Supportive Housing Grant
- Utilizing Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds to cover:
  - Security deposits
  - First month's rent

Challenges include:

- Obtaining identification documents
- Circular eligibility barriers (IDs required for waitlists, but funding limited until eligibility is confirmed)

Income Sources

- 51 individuals: Social Security Disability
- 47 individuals: Social Security
- 21 individuals: Earned income (employed)
- 6 individuals: SSI retirement
- 1 individual: Pension income

Medical care access is a priority due to its impact on emergency services usage.

- 154 individuals: Uninsured
- 211 individuals: Medicaid (state-sponsored)
- 61 individuals: Medicare (approximately 15%)

1. (continued)

Veterans entering shelter were generally not connected to VA services initially. City Care partners with a statewide VA service provider who:

- Meets regularly with shelter guests
- Assists with obtaining DD-214 documentation
- Connects veterans to:
  - VA healthcare
  - HUD-VASH
  - Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF)
- Tracking veteran healthcare enrollment in HMIS to enhance data collection discussed.

Indigenous Population and Healthcare Access

- 23 individuals identified as Native/Indigenous.
- Only 6 individuals were accessing Native healthcare services.
- Approximately 26% of Native guests were not connected to tribal healthcare.
- City Care assists individuals in:
  - Identifying their enrolled tribe
  - Working with navigators or case managers to initiate healthcare access
- Absentee Shawnee Tribe provides care access to Indigenous individuals regardless of specific tribal affiliation.
- Lack of service utilization is often due to engagement barriers, not lack of available resources.

Outreach

- Weekly veteran outreach services are provided.
- Specialized outreach teams conduct encampment visits.
- Mike Primo, a veteran outreach specialist, conducts direct engagement across Norman and surrounding areas.
- Success is dependent on individual eligibility and willingness to engage with services.

Statewide coordinated outreach efforts, like the street outreach teams, involve designated outreach days during which service providers collectively visit encampments, shelters, parking lots, and partner organizations to maximize visibility and enrollment in services.

- Outreach events have occurred twice during the year.
- Temporary service disruptions occurred due to federal-level issues; however:
  - Walk-in services remain available
  - Case management support is accessible via phone at any time

At the Committee's prior request, City Care presented baseline data on individuals entering shelter. This data was collected via a one-month survey period, primarily during October, involving 69 individuals.

State of Origin

- 55 individuals had lived in Oklahoma for most of their lives
- 1 individual was from Arkansas
- 13 individuals were from non-surrounding states ("Other")

1. (continued)

County of Residence Prior to Homelessness

- 42 individuals resided in Cleveland County
- 16 individuals were from Oklahoma City
- Smaller numbers came from neighboring counties

City of Last Residence

- 35 individuals began experiencing homelessness while residing in Norman
- 14 individuals were from Oklahoma City
- 3 individuals were from Moore
- 2 individuals were from Shawnee

A "resident of Norman" was defined as someone who lived in Norman prior to homelessness, whether through a lease, shared housing, family residence, employment-related relocation, or school attendance (e.g., University of Oklahoma).

The following data reflects where individuals stayed immediately prior to entering City Care shelter:

- 24 individuals: Unsheltered (street homelessness)
- 16 individuals: Housed
- 13 individuals: Another shelter system
- 2 individuals: County jail
- 1 individual: Hospital
  - Hospital discharge numbers may be underreported due to data category limitations
- 13 individuals: Refused to answer

Discussion confirmed that Salvation Army and Food and Shelter are the primary alternative shelter providers, with varying length-of-stay policies that can result in individuals transferring between shelter systems.

City Care outlined its advocacy activities, which include:

- Phone calls
- Transportation assistance
- Online service enrollment
- Documentation support

While detailed figures were included in the slideshow provided to the Committee, Mr. Lloyd highlighted that the highest concentration of advocacy efforts focused on:

- Housing navigation
- Identification and documentation

Both areas continue to face funding and eligibility restrictions.

Referrals represent direct service referrals, not general case management assistance. One individual may receive referrals in multiple categories but is counted only once per service type.

1. (continued)

Referral Totals *(Referral tracking began in April, following improvements to HMIS utilization)*

- 92 housing referrals
- 18 medical service referrals
- 36 mental health referrals
- 26 shelter-related referrals (e.g., Food and Shelter daytime services)
- 121 social service referrals (e.g., SNAP, benefits assistance)
- 4 substance abuse treatment referrals

Clarification on Referral Counts

- Referral counts reflect unique individuals per service category
- A single individual may receive multiple types of referrals
- Repeated referrals for the same service type are not counted multiple times
  - This ensures clarity between service volume and individual impact.

City Care tracks referral destinations to identify service utilization patterns. Key partners include:

- Oklahoma Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Norman Mental Health Center (42 referrals)
- Food and Shelter (25 referrals)

Food and Shelter were recognized for assisting clients with daytime services, case management, and documentation needs, including identification.

City Care continues to face challenges assisting clients with obtaining IDs due to:

- Restricted funding sources
- Eligibility limitations tied to housing waitlists

Mitigation efforts include:

- Partnerships with faith-based organizations
- Developing new community funding relationships

The reopening of the Norman housing waitlist was noted, with three individuals housed using vouchers, all of whom had been on the list prior to City Care assuming shelter operations.

The Committee discussed the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS):

- HMIS tracks referrals, service history, and client engagement
- Access is currently limited to agencies receiving ESG or Continuum of Care (CoC) funding
- Approximately five of twenty local agencies currently use HMIS
- Broader system adoption is a future goal to enhance coordinated care and data sharing

In response to questions regarding funding, it was clarified that:

- Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funding is federal funding that passes through the Oklahoma Department of Commerce (ODO) and is administered locally through the Continuum of Care (CoC).
- Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) funding is also HUD-funded and distributed through the Continuum of Care.
- These funds are federal in origin with local administration and oversight.

1. (continued)

Additional referral partners with fewer than five referrals were acknowledged, including McFarland Methodist Church, which has assisted with identification and documentation support.

- 14 individuals were referred to Veterans Affairs.
- 13 individuals transitioned directly from SSVF (Supportive Services for Veteran Families) into housing navigation and case management.

Committee members were encouraged to request clarification whenever acronyms are used. It was noted that acronyms commonly used in homelessness services include:

- **SSVF:** Supportive Services for Veteran Families
- **PSH:** Permanent Supportive Housing
- **HMIS:** Homeless Management Information System

Mr. Lloyd reported that discussions are ongoing and progress is being made toward collaboration with Rotary for identification assistance events.

No further questions were raised. Committee members expressed appreciation for the detailed data and transparency provided and thanked Mr. Lloyd for the presentation.

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2. UPDATE FROM THE HOMELESS COALITION ON THE HOMEBASE ACTION PLAN.

Ms. Lee Hall, (former Ward 4 2019-2022 Council Member), provided an overview of the Homeless Coalition, formed in September 2024 by Ms. Hall and Ms. Heidi Smith, to review, update, and annotate *Bridging the Gap: Action Steps to End Homelessness* (commonly referred to as the Home-Based Action and Implementation Plan). The original plan was presented to City Council in February 2022, following a homelessness gaps analysis funded by City Council in September 2021.

The Homeless Coalition consisted of 14 members representing diverse community sectors. The group met over 12 meetings to review all 47 action steps.

Members included representatives from:

- City Care
- Central Oklahoma Community Mental Health Center
- Norman Chamber of Commerce
- AIM Norman Housing Strategy Plan
- Norman Police Department
- McFarland Methodist Church
- Oklahoma Complete Health
- City of Norman leadership and staff
- Two members of the coalition had lived experience with homelessness.

The coalition identified six highest-priority action steps, ranked by consensus. These priorities were distributed via handout and highlighted in the report attached to the meeting agenda.

The top priority, unanimously identified, was establishment of one permanent, year-round shelter with both day and night services

2. (continued)

Ms. Hall congratulated City Council and City staff on the recent, successful acquisition of property for a permanent shelter and recognized the collaborative community effort involved.

The coalition's work is aimed to:

- Present a holistic view of current homelessness services
- Identify remaining service gaps
- Update and reprioritize action steps based on current community needs

While 40 of the original 47 action steps remain relevant, some were reprioritized or deemed less applicable due to changing conditions and community size. The coalition emphasized that homelessness response requires ongoing collaboration and adaptability.

Although the Homeless Coalition has concluded its work, members have transitioned into a new coordinating body, *"Home Together Norman"*, chaired by Dan Straughan, retired Director of the Oklahoma City Homeless Alliance.

The organization will support City Council leadership and coordinate across community sectors with a mission to address homelessness. *"Together, we will make Norman a community where everyone has a place to call home."*

Ms. Heidi Smith, with Thunderbird Clubhouse, reviewed the coalition's findings and explained that the document provided to Council contains more information than could be covered during the allotted time.

Key points included:

- The six priority action steps, with permanent shelter as the highest priority
- Recognition that some recommendations from the 2022 plan were not well-suited to a city of Norman's size
- Differences between Norman's resources and those of large urban areas such as Oklahoma City or Los Angeles

Ms. Smith noted that:

- Norman is neither urban nor rural, placing it in a unique service category
- Unlike larger cities, Norman lacks sufficient resources for formal diversion programs
- Diversion is currently limited to:
  - Veterans (through veteran services)
  - Survivors of domestic violence (through Women's Resource Center, due to data privacy requirements)

She further emphasized the importance of tailoring homelessness strategies to the community's scale and available resources.

Key Challenges Identified

- Limited funding for mid-sized cities like Norman.
- Loss of identification issuance pathways post-COVID.
- Insufficient street outreach teams and case management capacity.
- Shortage of affordable, all-bills-paid housing units.
- Barriers for landlords accepting Section 8 vouchers.

2. (continued)

Key Challenges (continued)

- Aging landlord population and declining participation in voucher programs.
- Growing first-time homelessness among seniors.
- Long and reopening Section 8 waitlists.

Current Resources & Programs

- City Care shelter operations and data collection through HMIS.
- Outreach efforts by Central Oklahoma Community Mental Health Center (COCMHC).
- Housing navigator role within Norman Housing Authority increasing Section 8-unit availability.
- Permanent supportive housing models with case management.
- Crimson Flats and other limited public housing developments.

Action Steps, Recommendations & Future Planning

- Develop permanent shelter capacity.
- Create a coordinated citywide outreach team (medicine, social work, behavioral health, housing navigation).
- Prioritize development of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing.
- Expand identification assistance and benefit enrollment services.
- Increase case management staffing.
- Implement a landlord mitigation fund.
- Conduct a community-wide education and engagement campaign.
- Utilize opioid abatement funds for outreach and coordination roles.
- Explore technology solutions for real-time capacity tracking across providers.
- Home Together Norman to lead education efforts through 2026.
- Potential bond issue related to shelter funding.
- Door-to-door outreach campaign proposed to build voter and community support.
- Affordable housing strategy supported by Pro Housing Grant.

Participants agreed that homelessness and housing are interconnected challenges requiring sustained funding, coordination, community education, and system-level support. Continued collaboration and resource expansion are critical.

Discussion continued regarding outreach to Salvation Army representatives concerning their shelter expansion plans. City leadership acknowledged recent staffing shortages and turnover at Salvation Army, with reports that staffing levels are now improving. Salvation Army has reportedly secured real property and architectural plans, and begun a capital campaign, with an aspirational goal of expanding to approximately 100 beds over multiple phases.

Staff are awaiting a return call from Salvation Army to set up a time to discuss their design and expansion plans with the City Manager, Mayor and City Council.

A discussion occurred regarding whether Salvation Army operates as a high-barrier or low-barrier shelter. Concerns were raised that identification requirements could constitute a high barrier to entry. Clarification was provided that low-barrier shelter generally allows access without extensive programmatic requirements, including sobriety, identification, or documentation, and without time limits. It was also noted that while shelters aim to be low barriers, certain exclusions may still exist due to criminal convictions, meaning shelters are not truly "no barrier."

2. (continued)

Council members expressed appreciation for the 19-page action plan document provided and thanked the committee responsible for its development.

In response, clarification was given that regional partners are participating at varying levels. Representatives from Moore occasionally attend Continuum of Care meetings and assist with the Point-in-Time count. It was noted that while Norman leads in the Contiuum of Care process, comparable efforts are made by Cleveland County and the City of Moore.

Council Member Dixon asked about potential impacts from anticipated HUD policy changes that would significantly reduce funding allocations for permanent supportive housing. It was explained that HUD is proposing a major shift away from the Housing First model toward a Treatment First philosophy.

Housing First prioritizes stable housing as a prerequisite to addressing substance use and mental health challenges and has been shown through evidence-based research to be more effective than Treatment First approaches used in the 1990s and early 2000s. The proposed policy shift represents a significant ideological reversal.

Concerns were raised regarding the short implementation timeline, with a 60-day funding window announced on November 14 and applications due January 14, creating substantial challenges for service providers. Additional detailed discussion was deferred, with an offer to provide further briefings in January.

HUD Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

- HUD withdrew its Notice of Funding Opportunity, after 21 states and two national organizations filed legal action to stop HUD from proceeding under the current framework, stating it intends to reissue it, potentially as soon as the following day.
- The proposed changes could divert approximately 70% of Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) funding away from housing-first models.
- Local representatives did not support this shift, especially during an election cycle.
- Community usage of housing funds is currently 97% allocated to housing.

Concerns About Treatment Capacity

- While the funding proposal suggests shifting resources toward treatment-first approaches, participants emphasized that treatment capacity does not exist to support this change.
- There is a reported $27 million shortfall in the local mental health system.
  - Even individuals with strong insurance coverage experience 45–120 day wait times for mental health intake appointments.
- Oklahoma, including Norman, has lost treatment capacity, including:
  - Loss of contracts with Virtue Center
  - Major contract reductions at Red Rock Behavioral Health
- The City of Norman receives approximately $1 million annually in CDBG funds, which is insufficient to establish or operate clinics.
- Shortages of qualified providers were highlighted, including psychiatrists and psychiatric-certified medical professionals.

2. (continued)

Impact on Rural Communities

- Participants expressed serious concern that rural providers would be severely impacted or destroyed by the funding changes.
- Anticipated consequence: increased migration from rural areas to urban centers, placing additional strain on city resources.

Point-in-Time (PIT) Count Announcement

- The PIT Count is acknowledged as a significant undercount but remains federally required for all Continuums of Care (COCs).
  - HUD staffing reductions and uncertainty make future funding formulas unclear.
- The annual PIT Count will occur during the last 10 days of January.
- Volunteers will meet at 4:30 a.m., with deployment beginning around 4:45–5:00 a.m.
- The count focuses on unsheltered homeless individuals in known encampments, parks, shelters, and service locations.
  - Couch surfing is not considered homelessness under HUD definitions.
- Coordination occurs with:
  - Police Department
  - Action Center
  - Local partners (e.g., KARA)
- Volunteers are never sent out alone; safety protocols are strictly followed.
- Opportunities to volunteer are available throughout the day and evening, not just early morning.
  - Staff will send RSVP requests and calendar invites for PIT Count volunteer opportunities.
  - Council members and attendees encouraged to participate or promote volunteer opportunities.
  - Continued advocacy at the congressional and federal level regarding HUD funding changes.
- Community members are encouraged to contact staff directly with questions, with the understanding that HUD's direction remains uncertain.

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3. DISCUSSION REGARDING POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS TO THE SHORT-TERM RENTALS ORDINANCE.

Ms. Jeanne Snider, Assistant City Attorney II, provided a comprehensive background and status update on the City of Norman's Short-Term Rental (STR) Ordinance, followed by discussion of potential amendment options.

Background and History

- Initial discussions on short-term rentals began in late 2017 following neighborhood concerns regarding a property on the west side of town.
- Formal council discussions began in February 2018, including:
  - Occupancy tax considerations
  - Estimated STR count of approximately 100 at that time

3. (continued)

- Throughout 2018, Staff and Council discussed:
  - Zoning districts
  - Minimum distance between STRs
  - Limits on the number of STRs per street
  - Whether STRs should be classified as a permitted or special use
  - Applicability within the Center City Form-Based Code
- In 2019, additional topics included:
  - Use of third-party monitoring services to identify STR activity
  - Inspections and neighbor notification
  - Ownership structures (individuals vs. LLCs/corporations)
  - Insurance requirements and inspection fees
- Monitoring data showed:
  - 171 STRs in August 2019
  - 206 STRs by March 2020
- The ordinance was finalized and approved by Council in July 2020.
- Licensing began in August 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Current Status

- As of the previous week, there are 429 identified and licensed short-term rental properties
- A review of ownership revealed:
  - Six owners hold four STR properties each
  - Some ownership structured through multiple LLCs
  - One multifamily complex exceeding four units under separate LLC ownership
- STRs are predominantly single-family homes:
  - Approximately 82–83% are main structures
  - About 5% are accessory dwelling units (ADUs)

Geographic Distribution

- GIS mapping was used to visualize STR locations by ward:
  - Heavy concentration in Ward 4, with 214 STR's
  - Limited presence in Wards 3, 6, 7, and 8
- Complaints related to STRs are relatively limited and often overlap with complaints regarding other rental properties.

Neighborhood Case Study: Old Silk Stockings Neighborhood

- The Old Silk Stockings neighborhood contains 17 licensed STRs.
- Ownership breakdown:
  - 9 owned by individuals
  - 6 owned by LLCs
  - 2 owned by trusts
- Neighborhood concerns include:
  - Perception of entire streets being dominated by STRs
  - Loss of long-term, family-occupied housing
- Benefits acknowledged:
  - Property renovation and improved maintenance
- Two illegal STRs were identified and corrected due to zoning restrictions (PUD/SPUD limitations).
- Staff emphasized the importance of verifying zoning and HOA restrictions prior to purchasing or converting properties to STR use.

3. (continued)

Policy Considerations and Discussion

- Council discussed the possibility of:
  - Geographic limitations on clustering of STRs
  - Caps or moratoriums on the total number of STR licenses
- Staff noted that implementing geographic caps would require additional GIS analysis and administrative resources.
- STR numbers fluctuate due to:
  - Owners exiting the market
  - Conversion to long-term rentals
  - Sale of properties
- Concerns were raised regarding impacts on:
  - Affordable housing
  - Older housing stock
  - Competition between residents, visitors, and investors

Definition of Short-Term Rental:

- Rental of a property for less than 30 consecutive days.
- Rentals of 30 days or more are classified as long-term rentals.
- STRs must:
  - Obtain a city license
  - Pay the required Transient Guest Room tax
- Some property owners reside in their homes and rent them intermittently, though this is not common.
- Most STRs are operated as full-time rentals rather than occasional use for event or game days.

Fees and Licensing

- Council requested clarification regarding:
  - Licensing costs
  - Whether a cap would create a high-value permit market
- Further details on fees will be provided at a future meeting.

Staff will continue evaluating geographic concentration impacts, feasibility of caps or limits to see if the data analysis supports potential ordinance amendments.

Fees, Inspections, and Revenue

- The short-term rental (STR) license fee is approximately $200, which includes an annual inspection.
- Every STR is inspected annually for renewal by staff.
- The inspections verify:
  - Smoke alarms in every bedroom
  - Window functionality and emergency egress
  - Fire safety and general habitability standards
- Inspection duties are managed by Planning staff, supported by four additional staff members with other responsibilities.

3. (continued)

Tax Revenue

- The Transient Guest Room tax was increased to 8% in 2023.
- Initial projections estimated approximately $30,000 annually in revenue.
- As of June 2025, STR Transient Guest Room tax collections totaled approximately $550,000.
- Some taxes remain uncollected; staff are exploring improved compliance strategies.
- Licensing fee revenue for the most recent full fiscal year totaled $77,400.

The City contracts with Deckard Technologies at a cost of approximately $25,000 annually.

- Services provided include:
  - STR identification and tracking
  - Complaint management
  - Notification and compliance letters
  - Tax monitoring support
- Staff emphasized that effective STR regulation would not be possible without third-party monitoring support.
- Deckard's customer service was described as responsive and reliable.

Licensing Fees and Potential Adjustments

- National comparisons indicate STR license fees typically range between $200–$350.
- Staff suggested consideration of a fee increase, noting:
  - STR nightly rates often exceed $200
  - Some high-end properties command rates exceeding $1,500 per night during major events
- Council discussed that a cap on STR licenses could increase permit value and market demand.

Housing Market Context

- Housing data provided by City staff indicated:
  - In 2024, 36% of home sales were under $200,000
  - Data was broken down by ward
- STRs increasingly operate in:
  - High-value homes
  - "Obtainable" housing stock (e.g., three-bedroom, two-bath homes)
- Concerns were expressed regarding impacts on:
  - Affordable housing availability
  - Long-term neighborhood stability

Comparative and Regional Review

- Review of SEC cities show:
  - Nearly all have adopted STR ordinances
  - Florida has eliminated STR permitting statewide
- Examples referenced:
  - Tuscaloosa, AL
  - Starkville, MS (currently developing regulations)
  - Galveston, TX, which has over 4,000 STRs
- Galveston's "*Good Neighbor*" brochure was highlighted as a potential model for Norman.

3. (continued)

Public Information and Outreach

- Staff proposed:
  - Updating the City's STR webpage
  - Creating a "Good Neighbor" guide addressing:
    - Quiet hours
    - Parking rules
    - Trash and sanitation
    - Emergency and complaint contacts
- Consideration was given to distributing information via:
  - Mailers
  - Online resources
  - Printable brochures for property owners and guests

Enforcement and Complaints

- The City maintains:
  - An online complaint submission system
  - A designated phone line
- All complaints are routed through the Assistant City Attorney's office and Planning staff.
- Police responses have occurred in limited cases, typically involving parties.
- Compliance is generally achieved before formal enforcement is necessary.

Fines

- Penalty range for violations: $50–$750
- Formal citations are rare due to proactive compliance efforts.
- Most issues are resolved through communication and corrective action.

Notification Requirements

- Current ordinance requires STR owners to provide courtesy notice to immediate neighbors:
  - Across the street
  - Adjacent properties
  - Behind the property
- Owners must designate a local contact able to respond to issues, even if the owner resides out of state.
- Council discussed strengthening or formalizing the notification process.

Potential Ordinance Amendments Discussed

- Geographic limitations on STRs, particularly in:
  - Areas with older or affordable housing stock
  - High-density clusters (notably Ward 4)
- Possible approaches:
  - Limits per street
  - Limits by neighborhood or ward
- Existing licensed STRs could potentially:
  - Be **grandfathered**
  - Phase out through non-renewal
- Staff cautioned that any geographic cap could generate legal challenges and public concern.

3. (continued)

- Staff will:
  - Work with GIS to develop more detailed ward-level cluster maps
  - Research regulatory approaches in comparable cities
  - Explore implementation options for geographic caps
- Further one-on-one discussions with council members to refine policy direction.

Discussion concluded with acknowledgment of the complexity of STR regulation and the need for additional data and analysis before drafting ordinance amendments.

Cap on Short-Term Rentals

- Council Member Bruce discussed the possibility of a cap on the number of short-term rentals (STRs), open to increasing licensing fees, but noted that:
  - A citywide cap may not effectively address the concentration of STRs in Ward 4.
  - The primary concern is not the total number citywide, but overconcentration in the core areas.
- Further analysis is needed before determining whether a cap is an appropriate solution.

Data Collection and Monitoring

- Staff discussed requesting additional data from the City's monitoring vendor regarding:
  - The number of STRs rented during high-demand periods, such as:
    - Football playoff weekends
    - Graduation weekends
- Staff indicated the vendor may be able to provide:
  - Weekend-specific occupancy data
- This information would help inform future policy discussions.

Neighbor Notification Requirements

- Council emphasized the importance of neighbor notification when STRs become operational.
- Current ordinance:
  - Requires owners to provide courtesy notice to nearby neighbors
  - Does not include a mechanism to verify compliance
- Staff indicated that:
  - Strengthening notification requirements would require an ordinance amendment
  - Notification could potentially be tied more formally to the permitting process
- Improved notification could:
  - Help neighborhood leaders proactively address issues
  - Reduce complaints related to parties and noise

Complaints and Public Awareness

- Staff reported:
  - Few formal complaints or municipal court cases related to STR parties
  - Complaints may be underreported due to lack of public awareness
- At recent ward meetings, many residents were unaware that:
  - An **online complaint system** exists
  - Complaints can be submitted directly through the City's website
- Increasing public awareness of complaint mechanisms was identified as a potential improvement area.

3. (continued)

Council and staff agreed that fee increases, improved notification enforcement, and better data collection warrant further review. Addressing geographic concentration remains a priority and Staff will continue evaluating options and return with additional information as requested.

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4. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CREATION OF A "RIGHT TO COUNSEL" PROGRAM FOR EVICTIONS.

Mr. Rick Knighton, City Attorney, introduced the agenda item concerning Right to Counsel in eviction cases. Mr. Mike Figgins, Executive Director of Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma, has experience administering right-to-counsel eviction programs in Oklahoma County and Tulsa County is present to assist with the discussion.

- Right to Counsel is a state or local policy guaranteeing tenants access to an attorney when facing eviction.
- In Oklahoma:
  - Eviction hearings are typically set within five days of filing.
  - If judgment is granted, tenants often have approximately 48 hours to vacate.
  - Full eviction processes generally conclude within 7–14 days.

Right to counsel programs typically serve low-income tenants in cases involving loss of housing (forcible entry and detainer).

Challenges in Eviction Data Collection

- Eviction cases are filed as small claims actions and tracked via Oklahoma Court Network (OCN).
- Limitations include:
  - Case documents are not uploaded.
  - Reasons for eviction (nonpayment, damage, other causes) are not visible.
  - Cases cannot always be geographically identified within Cleveland County.
- Manual review is extremely time-intensive and yields limited actionable data.
- Eviction consequences include:
  - Homelessness
  - Job loss
  - School instability and truancy
  - Long-term inability to rent due to court records
- Norman faces unique challenges due to competition between:
  - University students
  - Low-income households and individuals experiencing homelessness
- Landlords are more likely to rent to students without eviction records, reducing housing availability for vulnerable populations.
- Increased evictions place additional strain on:
  - Shelters
  - Social services
  - Educational systems

4. (continued)

- Early attorney involvement is critical due to:
  - Fast-moving eviction timelines
  - Legal decisions made early that may have long-term consequences
- Without counsel, tenants often:
  - Agree to unfavorable terms
  - Lack understanding of their rights
- Mediation is available but difficult for unrepresented tenants to navigate effectively.

Delivery Model and Legal Constraints

- Municipal attorneys cannot represent tenants, as:
  - City Charter limits representation to the City only
  - Outside representation would require malpractice insurance
- Legal clinics:
  - *OCU Law School* operates a tenant clinic but only represents clients in Oklahoma County
  - Clinics serve instructional purposes and have limited capacity
- Legal Aid Services previously provided eviction defense in Cleveland County using ARPA funds, employing:
  - Two attorneys
  - One legal assistant

Existing Right to Counsel Models

- Oklahoma County and Tulsa County programs:
  - Operates based on zip codes
  - Target areas with high truancy rates or problematic landlord activity
- Legal Aid sets up tables at courthouse eviction dockets to screen eligible tenants.

Presentation by Mr. Mike Figgins, Executive Director, Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma

- Mr. Figgins described evictions as a systemic issue requiring upstream intervention.
- Cleveland County experiences approximately 4,000 eviction filings annually.
- Evictions often occur for reasons beyond nonpayment of rent, including discrimination or administrative disputes.
- Eviction results in:
  - Loss of personal property
  - Mental health impacts
  - Credit damage
  - Educational disruption for children

Effectiveness of Legal Aid Intervention

- Legal Aid often resolves cases before court filings by:
  - Negotiating payment plans
  - Preventing vacancies and court costs for landlords
- Program evaluation showed:
  - 95% success rate in achieving client goals
- Legal Aid also assists clients by:
  - Accessing disability and unemployment benefits
  - Securing Earned Income Tax Credits
  - Resolving fines and fees
  - Enrolling clients in SNAP and health insurance

4. (continued)

Funding Considerations

- Estimated costs:
  - One full-time eviction defense attorney: $100,000 annually
  - Two attorneys plus one legal assistant: approximately $265,000 annually
- Five attorneys could handle approximately:
  - 100–200 cases per month
- Previous funding sources:
  - ARPA and emergency rental assistance programs (now expired)
  - Philanthropic support in Tulsa
- Funding options discussed:
  - General Fund allocation
  - Social and voluntary services funding
  - Voter-approved changes to the guest room tax (currently restricted to tourism uses)
- Council discussed the possibility of a pilot program:
  - Focused on Norman residents
  - Potentially funding one dedicated attorney
- Prioritization criteria could include:
  - Families with children
  - Seniors
  - People with disabilities
- A pilot could demonstrate cost savings, as studies show:
  - Every $1 spent on eviction prevention saves approximately $7.27 in downstream costs
- Council members asked about:
  - Attorney caseload capacity (approximately 5–7 contested cases per week)
  - Collaboration with law school clinics
  - Targeting services geographically or demographically
- Council expressed strong interest in:
  - Exploring a pilot program
  - Bringing the issue back to Oversight with additional analysis
- Staff will:
  - Develop additional information on pilot program structure
  - Identify potential partners
  - Explore funding mechanisms

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor