

Norman Board of Parks Commissioners  
September 5, 2024

The Norman Board of Parks Commissioners of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a Regular Session in the Executive Conference Room of the Norman Municipal Building, on the 5th day of September 2024 at 5:30 p.m., and notice of the agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and on the City website at least 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Sheriff and Commissioners Davison, Isacksen, Ross and Wright

Absent: Commissioners Sallee and Usry and Two Vacancies

City Officials

Present: Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation  
James Briggs, Park Development Manager  
Bethany Grissom, Park Planner  
Mitchell Richardson, Interim Recreation Manager  
Wade Thompson, Parks Manager  
Karla Sitton, Administrative Technician IV

---

ITEM 1, being:

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, REJECTION, AMENDED AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF  
MINUTES FROM THE MAY 2, 2024, PARK BOARD MEETING

Commissioner Isacksen made the motion, and Commissioner Davison seconded to approve the Park Board minutes on May 2, 2024. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chair Sheriff and Commissioners Davison, Isacksen, Ross, and Wright

NAY: None

---

ITEM 2, being:

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, REJECTION, AMENDED AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF  
PREVIOUSLY APPROVED COUNCIL ACTIONS

Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation, highlighted the previously approved Council actions pertaining to the Parks and Recreation Department as follows:

- Donation in the amount of \$23,855 for a mural to be painted on the south exterior wall at the Norman Firehouse Art Center.
- Contract K-1920-133 with Crossland Construction Co., Inc. decreased the contract amount by \$103,321 for the Building C Portion of the Municipal Complex Renovation Project and Final Acceptance and Payment.
- Contract K-2324-125 with Happy Playgrounds LLC for the Sunrise Park Playground Project and Final Payment of \$220,000.
- Donation of \$30,610 for a Kitchen Renovation at the Reaves Park Building.
- Contract K-2425-42 with Multisports LLC in the amount of \$272,842 for the YFAC Outdoor Pickleball Courts Construction Project.
- Contract K-2425-43 with Performing Arts Studio in the amount of \$50,700 to assist with the operation of the Santa Fe Train Depot and the provision of hospitality services to the Community.

---

ITEM 3, being:

CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, REJECTION, AMENDED AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF THE REQUEST FROM DEBRA GOIT TO INSTALL A “TELEPHONE OF THE WIND” IN RUBY GRANT PARK

Ms. Bethany Grissom, Park Planner, said in December 2023, the Board recommended the Parks and Recreation Department begin requiring citizens and local groups to submit applications for requests and/or proposed projects to be installed in City parks. She said in July 2024, Ms. Debra Goit approached the Parks and Recreation Department with a project application to install a *Telephone of the Wind*.

Ms. Goit said the purpose of the *Telephone of the Wind* is to give people a place where they can commune with and remember loved ones who have passed away. She said the *Wind Phone* will never ring and is for all who grieve someone they love. Ms. Goit said signage would be placed at the location stating anyone could pick up the phone to share memories, say I love you and/or I miss you and let the wind take their words. She showed pictures depicting the phone and wooden bench that was etched and donated by friends. She said Ruby Grant Park, near the disc golf course, was selected in memory of her son-in-law, who passed in August 2023, and for his love of disc golf. Ms. Goit said *Telephones of the Wind* are all over the country, and this will be the first of its kind in Oklahoma. She said she would register the *Wind Phone* to include it on a United States interactive location map. Ms. Grissom said to staff the bench would be placed between (disc golf) holes 15 and 16 and will not interfere with trail runners. She told staff has been working with Ms. Goit on project refinement and will assist with the installation to ensure it meets departmental standards.

Chair Sheriff asked who would maintain the *Wind Phone* if routine maintenance was needed and/or is vandalized, and staff said as part of the agreement, Ms. Goit would take care of any maintenance issues. The Board loved the proposed project and thanked Ms. Goit for bringing the project to Norman.

Commissioner Wright motioned, and Commissioner Ross seconded to approve the *Telephone of the Wind* project at Ruby Grant Park. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chair Sheriff and Commissioners Davison, Isacksen, Ross, and Wright

NAY: None

---

ITEM 4 being:

ANNUAL PRESENTATION FROM SOONER THEATRE

Ms. Jennifer Baker, Executive Director of the Sooner Theatre, gave an annual presentation to the Board, and a written report to include financial information was provided to the Board before the meeting. Ms. Baker said more than 15,000 audience members attended Sooner Theatre events in person during FY2023 and spent an average of \$44.21 per person in our community, with an economic impact of \$670,000. She said 1,137 people enrolled in camps and classes at The Studio of The Sooner Theatre, which was up 18% from the previous year, and \$38,160 was given in scholarships for tuition to 230 students who could otherwise not afford to participate. Ms. Baker said the total earned revenue for FY2023 was \$813,610.

Ms. Baker said the Sooner Theatre strives to provide diverse programming in all aspects and highlighted the programs to include Be My Buddy and Fabulous Friday, classes for special needs students. Ms. Baker said the 2022-23 season shows included Little Shop of Horrors, The Wizard of Oz, and The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam Spelling Bee. She told the Sooner Theatre students who attended the

Junior Theatre Festival in January 2022 in Atlanta that they had been awarded Outstanding Ensemble in their pod.

Ms. Baker said she is on the AIM Norman Parks Sub-Committee and is excited about being involved with bringing forward an incredible Park Master Plan. She felt the proposed plan would help facilitate future park projects, including a possible Norman Forward 2 initiative.

The Board acknowledged the report.

---

ITEM 5 being:

**ANNUAL PRESENTATION FROM CLEVELAND COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM**

Ms. Amy Pence, Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum (MLHHM), gave an annual presentation and provided financials to the Board before the meeting. She said MLHHM welcomed 1,600 visitors and benefitted from the assistance of 21 volunteers. Ms. Pence said MLHHM is cutting back on exhibits but adding more micro-exhibits and events, including Wicked Tea, Trick or Treat, Annual Christmas Open House, Whiskey Tasting, and 7 Paranormal Investigations.

Ms. Pence highlighted the camps and educational workshops at MLHHM and said the projected income for the FYE 2024-25 budget is \$78,403. She said \$13,500 in grants will be used for advertising and paying the teachers.

Mr. Jason Olsen said a very detailed painting job began 4 weeks ago at the MLHHM and already looks beautiful. Ms. Pence agreed and said she is hopeful a Norman Forward 2 initiative will help secure more parking at MLHHM.

The Board acknowledged the report.

---

ITEM 6 being:

**NORMAN FORWARD UPDATE**

Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation, highlighted the Norman Forward projects.

**Bentley Park**

Mr. Olsen said the Bentley Park grand opening/ribbon cutting on August 17, 2024, was a massive success, with 100-200 people in attendance. He told Bentley Park is dedicated in memory of Lionel K. Bentley for his outstanding service to the City of Norman, including being the Director of Parks and Recreation Department. Mr. Olsen said the park features large areas of native prairie plants, a perimeter walking trail, playgrounds, a tennis court, a half-court basketball court, a picnic shelter, and the first stand-alone pickleball court in Norman Park.

**Saxon Park**

Mr. Olsen said Saxon Park 60% of the drawings are complete and will go out to bid towards the end of the year. He said we are making good progress on the plans for all utilities needed at the park, including work with the Utilities Department and Public Works Department to coordinate the installation of a public water line stub-out in the park as part of the construction of the road segment that will connect the current John Saxon Boulevard that intersects with State Highway 9 to the Saxon Park Drive that intersects with 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. He said the \$2 million project will begin in the Spring 2025.

**Neighborhood Parks**

Mr. Olsen said William Morgan and NE Lions Parks are the following neighborhood parks to be renovated with new play equipment and park furniture. He said staff will send out neighborhood surveys soon for a new proposed park on the land that was dedicated years ago and is adjacent to the Links apartment community. Mr. Olsen said that based on the feedback received, staff will design a park constructed with a combination of Norman Forward and Park Development Funds collected when the Links community building permits were issued. He said the park design will be presented to the Park Board early next year, and construction should begin in the Summer of 2025.

Mr. Olsen said staff would close the Griffin Park and Adult Wellness & Education (AWE) Projects at the September 10, 2024, City Council meeting.

---

ITEM 7 being:

**DIVISION UPDATES**

Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation, reminded the Board that the AIM Norman Comprehensive Park Sub-Committee would like to present the proposed Park Master Plan at a joint meeting scheduled on September 10, 2025. He encouraged the Board to attend the meeting/workshop and give their input.

Mr. Wade Thompson, Parks Manager, said the recent heavy rain the City received a few weeks ago damaged the tot playground at Lions Park and the mulch and trails at various city parks. He said Park Maintenance will continue working on cleaning the parks and replacing the mulch.

Mr. Mitchell Richardson, Recreation Manager, said Westwood Family Aquatic Center (WWFAC) is winding down the summer season and said hours will change to mornings only on September 27th. He said WWFAC will host an adult night on September 6<sup>th</sup> and a Scooby-doo dive night on September 13<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Richardson said Parks & Recreation is partnering with Norman Public Library to host a Celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month at Andrews Park on September 13 and invited the Board to enjoy music, art, and traditions that make Hispanic heritage so unique and exciting. He said Brewtoberfest is on September 20<sup>th</sup> at Reaves Park, and Westwood Golf is hosting the United Way Golf Tournament on September 27<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. James Briggs, Park Development Manager, said staff sent an RFQ for a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). We held a kickoff meeting with them and representatives from the Norman Fire Department, GIS Division, Legal Staff, City Manager's Office, and Environmental Services Division to establish goals and meeting schedules as the project progresses in the coming months. A CWPP not only exists as a document the city can use to plan for how to respond to wildfires, but it also is a key component used when applying for larger grants and funding that can be used to implement the recommended mitigation strategies that the plan includes that will reduce the likelihood and severity of wildfires.

Staff continues to work with DAVEY Resource Group to create an Urban Forest Master Plan, which will guide the next 10-plus years of projects that the Forestry Division will conduct to help maintain and expand Norman's Urban Forest. A Steering Committee of interested citizens will be approved at the December Park Board meeting, and they will help create a community survey and review the process and progress of DAVEY throughout the project, which should be completed in the summer of 2025

---

MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION

None.

---

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

---

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Sheriff adjourned the meeting at 6:47 p.m.

Passed and approved this \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ 2025

---

Sherrel Sheriff, Chair