



CITY OF NORMAN, OK
CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING
Municipal Building, Executive Conference Room, 201 West Gray, Norman,
OK 73069
Thursday, May 8, 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, May 8, 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

Chairman Heikkila called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Chairman Mayor Larry Heikkila
Councilmember Ward 2 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman
Councilmember Ward 8 Scott Dixon

ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 1 Austin Ball

OTHERS PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 3 Bree Montoya
Mr. Rick Knighton, City Attorney
Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney
Ms. Brenda Hall, City Clerk
Ms. Shaakira Calnick, Internal Auditor
Mr. Shawn Lloyd, Director of Homeless Services for City Care
Ms. Katherine Hammans, Admin Tech III, City Clerk

AGENDA ITEMS

1. UPDATE ON THE EMERGENCY SHELTER OPERATION.

Mr. Shawn Lloyd, Director of Homeless Services for City Care, gave an update on the emergency shelter operations. The shelter is averaging 56 individuals nightly, with 216 unique individuals served since January 15, 2025.

Housing assessments have been completed on 76 individuals since the beginning of April. Fifty of the individuals have been in a Domestic Violence situation in the last six months. While the majority of the domestic violence individuals in the shelter are female, there is a mix of both male and female.

The shelter has 23 beds for women and 27 for men. Shelters traditionally house more men than women, but staff has seen a growth in the homeless population in the 35-64 age group. Of the people housed at the shelter 46 people have been in the 55-64 age group and 18 have been 65 or older.

Staff have increased efforts to assist Veterans in obtaining VA Housing support through the Housing and Urban Development - Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Program. HUD-VASH has not been put on hold at this time as it does not have the same regulations as regular housing vouchers. Four veterans have secured housing through the program and work is on track for a total of seven veterans to go into housing this month.

Staff have transported 16 people to apply for public housing as the office is only open during normal business operational hours and not shelter hours. Guests are also helped with setting up mail service with the post office and a person comes out to help with applying for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) claims.

The extreme weather resulted in ten fewer guests last month than the previous month. The cold, wet, and rainy weather led to an increased housing need, added 51 people to the wait list, bringing the total to 216, with 51 people turned away due to lack of available space.

Councilmember Holman noted, even with shelter guest turnover to housing, the wait list is still increasing. Mr. Lloyd said things are going to get worse and not better with the direction the economy is moving.

Norman Caravans is still transporting guests to the day facility, which allows day staff to clean up after night guests leave each day. Councilmember Grant said the goal is to have a 24-hour shelter, so people do not have to leave at 7:00 am.

On May 9, 2025, a ribbon cutting will be held for the new Day Labor van to be used for the participants in the new Better Way Program. This new program will provide employment opportunities and social services targeted toward individuals experiencing homelessness in Norman, Oklahoma.

1. (continued) UPDATE ON THE EMERGENCY SHELTER OPERATION.

Councilmember Grant asked if shelter guests are limited to where they can work and do felonies keep them out of the workforce. Shelter staff is working on a list of felony friendly jobs, but transportation is an issue. They were recently able to get employment for three different people, but there are some issues getting to the site and back as the bus stops running at 9:00 pm. Shelter staff accommodate those who need to come into the shelter after doors close due to employment end times.

Councilmember Holman asked how many of the shelter guests are in good health and can work, but choose to stay at the shelter. Mr. Lloyd said the majority of the 216 guests have some kind of disability or lack adequate income to obtain long term housing. Staff are focusing on assisting people obtain SSI who cannot work due to some type of disability.

Matching compatible housing partners to help secure housing for many is another area of assistance staff are providing. Norman Housing Authority gave the shelter until May 1, 2025, to get the unhoused onto the housing wait list before it closes. Mr. Lloyd said they have been able to access funds from Oklahoma City to help house a few of the Norman unhoused.

Councilmember Hinkle asked how many people assisted in obtaining housing come back into the shelter system. Mr. Lloyd said he will check with the HMIS, (Homeless Management Information System) provider to obtain the data, but he believes the participants are tracked for approximately six months and they are still in their housing unit at the time.

Councilmember Hinkle extended his appreciation to City Care for what they do to assist the shelter. Councilmember Holman said the community is more accepting of the shelter when they see housing is not the only thing done for the homeless, but people are assisted into sustainable housing and employment opportunities.

Councilmember Holman said the community needs to know the homeless exist and cannot be hidden. He further stated City Care has done a good job in reducing the "hanging out" around the shelter. Changing the main entrance to the east side and moving the guest congregate area to the side of the building has helped tremendously with the shelter perception in the community.

Chairman Heikkila thanked City Care staff for what they are doing with the shelter and the guests.

2. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE OPEN RECORDS REQUEST PROCESS FOR THE CITY OF NORMAN.

Ms. Brenda Hall, City Clerk, gave a presentation on the City of Norman records request process. An online software program was purchased and went online October 24, 2024, to handle requests smoothly and timely.

All requests come through the portal and are assigned to the appropriate staff and department for processing. There have been 248 requests since going online and Ms. Hall said there are only five open requests to date, with all others having been filled.

The most difficult record requests to process involve emails as the system does not search in phrases, but single words, and the number of emails pulled for legal to read are very large. Legal creates a spread sheet, minus confidential correspondence and juvenile information, to send the requesting party for review to refine their request prior to legal review and potential redaction. Ms. Hall said that a request can be denied if not relatively specific

This program makes it easier to run reports and upload into the system, without creating an additional document. The program is able to track staff time so accurate fees can be calculated for the request. All base fees are included on the Council approved charges and allows a deposit to be charged and received prior to fulfilling the request.

The Police Department has their own record request system and makes redactions when necessary, but most of their requests are for body cam footage. All other department requests are processed within the NextRequest program through the City Clerk's office.

Councilmember Grant said she was surprised at the number and type of record requests received and asked how upcoming legislation is going to affect the City of Norman's process and are we charging enough in fees. Ms. Hall said the new legislation allows charges for copies, not scans, even though it takes time to do all the scans.

Councilmember Grant asked if there has been an increase in request over the past two years. Ms. Hall said yes, a lot is due to having new requests for environmental information. The system has been very helpful in processing request quickly. When the system cross training is completed, everyone will be able to get into the system and process their department requests.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor