



CITY OF NORMAN, OK CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE

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

Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 5:00 PM

MINUTES

The City Council Conference of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Regular Session in the Executive Conference Room in the Municipal Building, on Tuesday, May 12, 2026 at 5:00 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.

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CALL TO ORDER

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Mayor Stephen Holman
Councilmember Ward 1 David Gandesbery
Councilmember Ward 2 Matthew Peacock
Councilmember Ward 3 Robert Bruce
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 5 Trey Kirby
Councilmember Ward 6 Joshua Hinkle
Councilmember Ward 7 Kimberly Blodgett
Councilmember Ward 8 Scott Dixon

OTHERS PRESENT

Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager
Ms. Shannon Stevenson, Assistant City Manager
Mr. Rick Knighton, City Attorney
Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation
Ms. Jane Hudson, Planning and Community Development Director
Ms. Lisa Krieg, CDBG Grants Manager
Ms. Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney
Mr. Clint Mercer, Finance Director
Ms. Jamie Meyer, Interim City Clerk

Ms. Amanda Sherf, Outreach Coordinator
Mr. Brent Barbour, Norman Police Department
Mr. Lee McWhorter, Norman Police Department

AGENDA ITEMS

1. DISCUSSION REGARDING ORDINANCE O-2526-66: AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA ADDING ARTICLE 12-VII TO THE CITY CODE CREATING PROCEDURES FOR THE CREATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF TAX INCREMENT FINANCE DISTRICTS; AND PROVIDING FOR THE SEVERABILITY THEREOF.

Presenter: Ms. Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney

Ms. Walker provided an overview of the proposed ordinance establishing formal procedures for the creation and implementation of Tax Increment Finance (TIF) districts within the City of Norman. She explained that current Oklahoma law automatically qualifies historic preservation, reinvestment, and enterprise areas for TIF eligibility without requiring a traditional “but for” analysis. The proposed ordinance would implement additional local standards and evaluation criteria, even in areas that are already statutorily eligible.

Ms. Walker reviewed proposed language requiring analysis of whether development and economic growth would be difficult, but possible, without TIF assistance and whether projects align with City goals. She referenced Griffin as an example of a property where development may occur without assistance but where TIF could support affordable housing, infrastructure improvements, and redevelopment consistent with community priorities.

Additional provisions discussed included evaluating whether TIF is the most appropriate financing tool, whether projects are expected to increase taxable value within five years, and whether projects would provide a positive net fiscal impact on the City. Ms. Walker also explained that the ordinance would establish enhanced economic and risk analyses, stakeholder review committees, and Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) review prior to proceeding through the statutory review process required by the Oklahoma Local Development Act.

Council discussed concerns related to preserving dedicated sales tax revenues and reviewed proposed language limiting sales tax capture to non-dedicated sales tax revenue only. Discussion also included concerns regarding small, project-specific TIF districts versus broader redevelopment areas, as well as comparisons to practices used in Oklahoma City.

Councilmembers discussed citizen involvement in the review process and the importance of stakeholder education and transparency. Additional discussion included the possibility of requiring a supermajority Council vote for future TIF approvals. Ms. Walker advised that such a requirement would likely require a Charter amendment rather than an ordinance change.

Questions were also raised regarding the extent of enterprise zone coverage in Norman, the role of third-party financial analysis, and whether other Oklahoma municipalities have codified requirements beyond those required by the Local Development Act.

Staff noted the ordinance was scheduled for first reading and could proceed to second reading on May 26, although Council retained the option to postpone further consideration if additional discussion was needed.

2. DISCUSSION REGARDING ORDINANCE O-2526-67: AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA AMENDING ARTICLE 12-V, TRANSIENT GUEST ROOM TAX, SECTIONS 12-501, 12-503 AND 12-504 OF THE CITY CODE TO CLARIFY CERTAIN DEFINITIONS AND PROVIDE A CLEARER PROCESS FOR DOCUMENTING EXEMPTIONS FROM THE TRANSIENT GUEST ROOM TAX; AND PROVIDING FOR THE SEVERABILITY THEREOF.

Presenter: Ms. Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney

Ms. Walker presented proposed amendments to the City's Transient Guest Room Tax ordinance intended to clarify definitions and improve procedures for documenting tax exemptions prior to the July 1, 2026, rate increase.

Ms. Walker explained that portions of the ordinance had become outdated and did not adequately account for modern lodging practices. Proposed revisions included changes to the definition of "hotel" and removal of outdated language related to bedroom counts that historically tied into inspection requirements and zoning provisions.

Additional discussion focused on clarifying exemptions for government employees, nonprofit organizations, and permanent residents. Ms. Walker explained that confusion had arisen regarding how residents demonstrate eligibility for exemptions and noted that the current ordinance language from 1980 required exemption certificates from the Finance Director, which is no longer practical in an online reservation environment.

Staff explained that hotels currently utilize reporting forms documenting all exemptions claimed and that the updated process would require guests to provide proof of exemption at the point of sale, such as identification showing a Norman address, government payment documentation, or nonprofit exemption documentation.

Council discussed concerns from residents who reported hotels refusing to recognize exemptions. Staff stated that residents have been directed to contact either the Finance Department or the City Action Center to resolve those situations. Councilmembers also suggested placing explanatory information regarding exemptions on the City's website to improve public awareness.

Questions were raised regarding the impact of the ordinance changes on local bed-and-breakfast establishments. Ms. Walker stated that staff did not anticipate any substantive impact on existing operations and indicated the changes were primarily clarifications and cleanup items.

3. DISCUSSION REGARDING HOMELESS CAMPS IN PUBLIC PARKS.

Presenter: Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager

Mr. Pyle led a discussion regarding homeless encampments in public parks, specifically addressing conditions at Francis Cate Park following the clearing of the encampment behind Food and Shelter.

Mr. Pyle explained that the City's current ordinances prohibit overnight stays in parks, creating enforcement challenges for both Code Enforcement and the Norman Police Department. He also noted that Francis Cate Park is located on leased state-owned land that is required to remain a municipal park under the terms of the lease agreement, raising concerns that continued encampment activity could jeopardize the City's leasehold interest.

Item 3, continued

Staff discussed ongoing efforts to address homelessness through outreach and shelter expansion rather than repeated enforcement and cleanup operations. Mr. Pyle stated that the City is currently engaged in a continual cycle of removing encampments, cleaning sites, and seeing camps relocate elsewhere without a long-term solution.

Discussion focused on the recently approved permanent shelter project funded through the voter-approved \$8 million bond authorization and the approximately 18-month timeline anticipated for construction of the new facility. Staff presented the possibility of temporarily expanding capacity at the existing shelter site as a more practical short-term solution.

Council discussed several potential options, including temporarily relocating encampments to City-owned property near the future shelter site, partnering with private landowners, working with churches and faith-based organizations, and establishing additional outreach resources. Staff advised that the City-owned shelter property is expected to enter active surveying and utility work soon and that sewer infrastructure issues and DEQ concerns may make temporary encampments at that location unsafe and impractical.

Councilmember Grant discussed House Bill 3985, the “Safe Neighborhood Act,” recently signed into law, which could expose municipalities to legal liability related to homeless encampments. Discussion also included the lack of available housing resources, long waiting lists for Section 8 housing assistance, and federal funding limitations impacting local housing agencies.

Staff introduced Amanda Sherf, the City’s new Outreach Team Coordinator, and discussed ongoing coordination with nonprofit partners, the Continuum of Care, and the Norman Police Department’s PACE team. Staff emphasized the importance of outreach and relationship-building efforts but acknowledged the continued difficulty of balancing humanitarian concerns, public safety, infrastructure limitations, and current City and State legal requirements.

Councilmembers expressed interest in continuing discussions regarding long-term sheltering solutions, coordinated outreach efforts, partnerships with community organizations, and future winter-weather emergency planning.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:34 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor