

## CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

October 5, 2021

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a study session at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Executive Conference Room on the 5th day of October, 2021, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT:	Councilmembers Foreman, Hall, Holman, Lynn, Schueler, Studley, Mayor Clark
ABSENT:	Councilmembers Peacock and Tortorello

Item 1, being:

UPDATE ON CAPITAL PROJECTS: TRANSIT/PUBLIC SAFETY AND PARK MAINTENANCE FACILITIES, HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE FACILITY, AND THE DEVELOPMENT CENTER.

Mr. Shawn O’Leary, Director of Public Works, introduced Mr. Paul D’Andrea, Capital Projects Engineer, who has been helping with projects being discussed. He said North Base, located at North Flood Avenue and Da Vinci Street, is home to the Fleet Maintenance Division and the City’s Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) Facilities and will be the future home for the Transit/Public Safety and Parks Maintenance Facilities. He said the Transit/Public Safety Facility is under construction and will consist of a 20,000 square foot facility to house the transit operations and maintenance activities as well as maintain heavy duty public safety equipment. A new 16,000 square foot facility is planned to house Parks Maintenance, which will be relocated from Reaves Park. He said he hopes to be able to build a vehicle wash facility in the near future because buses are washed, cleaned, and sanitized every night.

Mr. O’Leary highlighted the following timeline:

- October 2015, voters approved the NORMAN FORWARD initiative including Reaves Park improvements, which requires a new home for the Parks Maintenance Facility
- July 2019, the City began operating the Norman Public Transit System partnering with EMBARK out of Oklahoma City (OKC);
- August 2019, the design contract was amended to provide for the design of a new Transit/Public Safety Maintenance Facility and Parks Maintenance Facility to be located at North Base;
- August 2020, City Council formally authorized \$5.1 million of the Federal Transit Authority (FTA) CARES Act Grant to partially fund the construction of the Transit/Public Safety Maintenance Facility;
- October 2020, a contract was awarded to Flintco, L.L.C., for construction and a groundbreaking ceremony was held; and substantial completion and move in date is anticipated to be in November 2021.

Item 1, continued:

Mr. O'Leary said the current funded project budget is \$10,667,451.22 with current projected costs being \$10,659,021.25. Funding is being provided as follows:

- FTA Grant (CARES Act) - \$5,057,371
- Transit/Fire Facility (Capital Budget) - \$2,662,385
- Fire Apparatus Storage (Public Safety Sales Tax [PSST]) - \$870,000
- Reaves Park (NORMAN FORWARD) - \$2 million
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Building and Parks Evaluation - \$750
- Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG)/FTA Electric Vehicle Bus Grants - \$76,945.22.

All buses are washed as well as cleaned and sanitized every evening and a wash facility is desperately needed. Mr. O'Leary said OU is allowing the City to utilize their wash facility, but Staff is actively searching for funding for an onsite wash facility because driving the buses to OU every day is time consuming and uses more fuel. He said this would be a citywide wash facility for all City vehicles.

Mr. Chris Mattingly, Director of Utilities, introduced Ms. Michele Loudenback, Environmental and Sustainability Manager, who is overseeing the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Facility process.

Ms. Loudenback said beginning in April, 1999, the City began hosting one day HHW events beginning with a budget of \$75,000; however, actual costs were \$96,228.72. The events were staffed with volunteers who were given one hour of training before the event. The first event served 1,367 cars and 1,500 households who brought their pollutant products that equaled more than 63 tons of chemicals and included 126,512 pounds of combined chemicals, 958 tires, and 600 pounds of batteries. She highlighted the amount of pollutants removed over the last 20 years as 2,225,404 combined chemicals, 13,773 tires, 8,354 batteries, 484,535 E-waste products, and 370 gallons of pharmaceuticals (since 2013). She said the volunteers are really not well educated in handling dangerous chemicals so Staff began discussing a HHW Facility to be operated by the City of Norman.

City Council approved a contract with Studio Architecture on July 9, 2019, in the amount of \$206,700 for the design of the facility and approved a construction contract with Landmark Construction Group, L.L.C., on January 12, 2021, in the amount of \$1.4 million.

Ms. Loudenback said Staff applied for and received a 2020 Large Equipment Grant in the amount of \$55,000, which was used for the purchase of a bulb crusher, paint can crusher, and forklift with charger. She said Staff applied for and received a 2021 Large Equipment Grant in the amount of \$25,301, which was used for the purchase of spill containment equipment, aerosol disposal system, sharps kiosk, and the ability to hold two E-waste events (spring and fall)

The vision is to have a safe, consistent method for the collection, reuse, and disposal of HHW and the plan includes 30-minute appointment slots; year round collection opportunities; open Monday through Friday and every other Saturday (closing Sunday and Monday when open on Saturday);

Item 1, continued:

customers drive into the facility and employees remove the pollutants; a soft opening for City employees in mid-December; training, technical assistance, transportation, and ultimate disposal facilitated by the contractor; and the continuation of hosting annual e-waste events.

Ms. Loudenback said an E-Waste Event (electronics) will be held October 23rd in Reaves Park from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and a Paint Event will be held November 13th in Reaves Park from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Councilmembers expressed their approval and excitement about the progress being made on these facilities.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "City of Norman Transit/Public Safety and Parks Maintenance Facilities, North Base Complex – Phase I Project Update," dated October 5, 2021
2. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Household Hazardous Waste Facility Update," dated October 5, 2021

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Item 2, being:

**PRESENTATION FROM HOMEBASE ON THE GAPS ANALYSIS PORTION OF THE STRATEGIC HOMELESS PLAN.**

Ms. Michelle Evans, Homeless Program Supervisor, introduced Ms. Carolyn Wylie, Homebase Deputy Director, Ms. Julie Silas, Homebase Directing Attorney, and Mr. David Dirks, Homebase Senior Staff Attorney.

Ms. Wylie said Homebase is a non-profit organization that has been working with homelessness for over 30 years. She said Homebase is mission driven; works at federal, state, and local levels; is customized and community specific; focuses on successful plan implementation; addresses equity as an integral part of evaluation and planning; and honors local expertise, especially People with Lived Experience of Homelessness.

Mr. Dirks provided an overview of the Strategic Planning Process, which is divided into two parts. Part One is Understanding Needs/Building Consensus that included an environmental scan, data gathering, community engagement (over 20 interviews, more than 500 surveys, and five focus groups), analysis, and an upcoming report with recommendations. Part Two is Developing Strategies and Recommendations that include a broadly shared Gap Analysis Report; community engagement to prioritize recommendations; developing an Action Plan; beginning preliminary implementation by building support for the Action Plan, helping with marketing materials, and providing strategic guidance for action step implementation, as needed.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. Dirks said the reason Homebase conducts a gap analysis and Action Plan is to establish a shared understanding of gaps and needs, align stakeholders and resources in support of shared objectives, and establish greater community-wide collaboration. He said a gap analysis provides an overview of homelessness in the City of Norman and Cleveland County that helps to provide a response system and recommendations for gaps or needs.

Ms. Silas said the City of Norman has a shortage of affordable rental units – seven out of ten housing units have more than three bedrooms; less than ten percent of housing units are one bedroom; and only one-third of housing units are renter occupied. She said these statistics are due to OU and the high desire for student housing that is not seen as much in other communities. She said most units are not affordable because no more than 30% of income should be spent on housing, but almost one in three households in Norman/Cleveland County pay more than 30% of their income on housing and more than one in two Black or African American households pay more than 30%.

Ms. Silas said a majority of the homeless in Norman/Cleveland County are adults with a small percentage being children. She said some homeless are sheltered, which means they may be in an emergency shelter, but if they are unsheltered, they are living in areas unfit for human habitation, i.e., car, streets, sidewalks, parks, etc. She said there are more unsheltered homeless (55%) than sheltered (45%).

Ms. Silas said the Point in Time (PIT) Count is a ritual that occurs every year and for one day, volunteers, City Staff, and service providers go into the community to identify how many people are experiencing homelessness. It does not measure how many people experienced homelessness throughout a year, but it is a snapshot that Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses to identify the number of people experiencing homelessness. She said from 2015 to 2019, there was a slight growth in homelessness over time. She said another area Homebase looked at is how homelessness divides by race and in Norman, most of population is white and that is reflected in statistics. What is not obvious is that Asians and White populations are significantly under represented in the homeless community as compared to the general population while the opposite is true of Native American, Black, or African American population.

Issues that contribute to homelessness include disability status (one in three have a mental health condition and one in ten have a substance use disorder); lack of sufficient income (six in ten have no source of income and one in two have no source of non-cash benefits, such as food stamps, etc.); lack of health insurance (one in two have no health insurance); domestic violence (one in four experience domestic violence); and chronic homelessness (more than one in five). She said chronic homelessness is defined as a disability as well as being homeless more than a full year or at least four times within a three-year period.

Ms. Silas said housing needs are greater than total beds available. In the January 2020, Housing Inventory Count when the number of beds were counted there were 259 beds available and at the same time when the PIT Count was done, there were 146 people unsheltered most of whom were chronically homeless. More recently in June 2021, there was a waiting list for permanent housing (approximately 76 qualified individuals) or rapid rehousing (31 qualified individuals).

Item 2, continued:

Ms. Wylie highlighted the strengths of the Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) that includes a very engaged, collaborative CoC with generally good internal communication; a strong partnership with the Norman Housing Authority; a crisis intervention program through the Norman Police Department (NPD); a low-barrier emergency/winter shelter and warming center providing support services; support for sub-population in the region (a youth program, day shelter and other programs for families with children, specialized housing and services for those fleeing domestic violence, and targeted outreach, housing and services for veterans); and an active CoC lead – the City of Norman.

Key priority areas for intervention include opportunities for safe and affordable housing; low-barrier housing and day services; supportive services; transportation to employment, services, and shelter; coordinated prevention assistance; utilization of Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and data analysis; and coordination and communication to ensure effective use of limited resources.

Ms. Wylie said opportunities for safe and affordable housing include the need for affordable units; increasing the number of landlords willing to rent to People with Lived Experience of Homelessness; affordable housing for people with a criminal background; and removing other barriers to housing.

Recommendations for the need for affordable housing include

- Policy and Planning – establish a five-year countywide housing development pipeline and require set-asides for all new development dedicating a proportion of units for extremely low-income households; and
- New/Creative Development – prioritize the development of single-room occupancy buildings; and Incentivize Development – identify potential sites, provide land, expedite development, and offer incentives for permanent supportive housing (PSH) development.

Recommendations for landlord engagement include developing a landlord engagement campaign; addressing barriers for tenants; incentivizing landlord participation; and building positive relationships with landlords.

Recommendations for housing assistance include designating a countywide housing navigator; creating a flexible funding pool to supplement traditional funding streams and address barriers to housing; and expanding the successful one-stop programs to provide ID documents and mainstream benefits connections.

Ms. Wylie said low barrier housing and day services include limited capacity in emergency shelter and no permanent full-service 24-hour facility; need for more low-barrier, housing-focused shelter and services; need for improved focus on housing first implementation; and reported trend of criminalizing homelessness in the region. Recommendations for low-barrier and day services include establishing a permanent year round, low-barrier housing-focused shelter with day and night services; providing voluntary wrap around services and connections to key resources at all

Item 2, continued:

overnight and day services; reducing existing barriers to entry in the housing programs that are currently available in the region; and promoting use of best practices, such as motivational interviewing, trauma-informed care, and harm reduction.

Ms. Silas said supportive services include key gaps (mental health services, substance use treatment, and intensive case management); individuals with higher acuity conditions with less education and/or with more intense service needs have more difficulty navigating the system without help; and street and encampment outreach. Recommendations for supportive services include increasing the availability of drug treatment and mental health services; ensuring provider staff are trained on housing-focused approaches and that housing navigation is available countywide; expanding intensive case management support for individuals with high needs; and strengthening coordination with mainstream resources. Recommendations for outreach include expanding countywide street and encampment outreach; developing a peer support program with outreach component; creating interdisciplinary outreach teams (consider using a mobile outreach van with those teams); and ensuring existing outreach teams provide access to housing-focused case management, community engagement, public benefits enrollment, and other resources.

Ms. Silas said transportation to employment, services, and shelter are key challenges. Nearly 100% of people experiencing homelessness identified this as a top need, which creates a barrier to accessing services, finding and maintaining employment, finding housing, utilizing child care, and utilizing appointments. Services and housing options in the region are concentrated in certain parts of the county with limited transportation available countywide. Recommendations for transportation include developing a comprehensive transportation strategy in partnership with local transit authorities; providing visible, easily accessible information about transit schedules that does not require a smart phone or access to the internet; consider developing a subsidized ridesharing program or creating a van service; working with health care providers to set up transportation to and from medical appointments; creating a program that provides a discounted fare or free transit on public transportation; and setting up locations where personal belongings and service animals may be stored while people utilize transportation access services.

Mr. Dirks said in regard to coordinated prevention assistance, many people come from households on the economic margins who routinely face choices between housing and meeting other basic needs. Prevention programs are under-resourced given the level of need and each year, individuals and families are continuing to become homeless for the first time. Despite having limited, or in some case, no resources, some programs are effectively preventing homelessness. Recommendations for coordinated prevention assistance include:

- Enhancing System - emphasizing established prevention protocols for identifying, prioritizing, and serving at-risk households and providing regular training for all stakeholder partners in problem solving conversation techniques;
- Building Collaborative Partnerships – involving philanthropy, the faith community, and service organizations in supporting critical initiatives and strengthening partnerships to avoid discharges into homelessness; and
- Increasing Stability – increasing support for formerly homeless households with intensive service needs to attain long-term housing stability and expanding access to income, including employment and benefits.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. Dirks said there is a growing need for access to reliable, valid data and gathering accurate, timely data within the homeless system of care is challenging. The HMIS System Administrator has HMIS policies and procedures in place in conjunction with the CoC process and structures, but many agencies report they do not have adequate resources to participate in HMIS or meet the standards. It appears there is not a shared commitment toward data quality among CoC members nor is there any common understanding about fundamental aspects of HMIS and HUD reporting requirements. Recommendations for a robust data collection and analysis include a Data Quality Plan to create new engagement and accountability; evaluate and address disparities within the system; conduct more robust data gathering; implement appropriate incentives; and establish a monitoring structure.

Ms. Wylie said there are wide variations in feelings about the existing structure and efforts to address homelessness and no consensus among CoC stakeholders about how to work best with the broader community. There is a need for better outreach to individuals and families experiencing homelessness and improvement of education and engagement efforts with the public is needed. Recommendations for coordination and communication include developing and distributing current accessible resource materials; creating a publicly facing dashboard showing progress toward identified goals; creating form mechanisms to support transparency about the CoC to the broader community and enhancing communication; establishing a lived experience advisory board comprised of people currently experiencing homelessness or with recent lived expertise; promoting dialogue with external entities; and creating a communication campaign to improve public understanding of homelessness and to promote dialogue and collaboration.

Mayor Clark asked about the status of 718 North Porter (proposed 24-hour shelter with services) and Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager, said Staff is trying to accelerate the occupancy of 718 North Porter separate and apart from the re-platting of the current Porter Campus footprint.

Councilmember Hall said Council has been concentrating on what to do for the homeless in Norman, but this issue is really a Countywide plan and she is looking forward to having additional conversations with the County. She is also looking forward to engaging other partners throughout the County to address some of the issues. She said the City has to address affordable housing, not only for the unsheltered, but those on the verge of homelessness. Other important issues include addressing a 24-hour shelter and community outreach.

Councilmember Studley asked the status of getting everyone at the table, i.e., community partners, faith based partners, other government agencies, providers, etc. Mr. Pyle said that process has begun and Staff is looking at some blueprints for similar activities identified through social service agencies, faith based partners, local business owners, etc.

Councilmember Studley asked the status of a homeless database and Ms. Wylie said Ms. Evans has a report on how other cities are collecting data, which will help the City in deciding the best options for data collection.

Councilmember Studley asked what an environmental scan entails and Ms. Wylie said Homebase looks at everything housing and homeless related within the community, which gives Homebase a context for an analysis.

Item 2, continued:

Councilmember Studley said she wants to move forward with the Mobile Crisis Unit immediately because the new 988 System is not going to be able to fill some of the gaps related to homelessness and outreach.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "City of Norman Gaps Analysis," by Homebase dated October 5, 2021

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The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

ATTEST:

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City Clerk

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Mayor