



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 08/08/2023

REQUESTER: Shawn O'Leary

PRESENTER: Joseph Hill, Streets Program Manager

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF ADOPTION, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF ORDINANCE O-2324-5 UPON SECOND AND FINAL READING: AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, AUTHORIZING THE CALLING AND HOLDING OF A SPECIAL ELECTION IN THE CITY OF NORMAN, STATE OF OKLAHOMA (THE "CITY"), ON THE 10th DAY OF OCTOBER, 2023, FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUBMITTING TO THE REGISTERED QUALIFIED ELECTORS OF SAID CITY THE QUESTION OF THE ISSUANCE OF THE BONDS OF SAID CITY IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED THE SUM OF FIFTY MILLION DOLLARS (\$50,000,000) TO BE ISSUED IN SERIES TO PROVIDE FUNDS FOR THE PURPOSES OF CONSTRUCTING, RECONSTRUCTING, REPAIRING, IMPROVING, AND REHABILITATING BRIDGES IN THE CITY (INCLUDING LIGHTING, SIDEWALKS/BIKEPATHS, LANDSCAPING, RELATED DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS, DRIVEWAY RECONSTRUCTION, AND OTHER RELATED IMPROVEMENTS); AND LEVYING AND COLLECTING AN ANNUAL TAX, IN ADDITION TO ALL OTHER TAXES, UPON ALL THE TAXABLE PROPERTY IN SAID CITY FOR THE PAYMENT OF THE INTEREST AND PRINCIPAL ON SAID BONDS; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

BACKGROUND:

The City currently has 80 nationally registered bridges within the City of Norman. The Federal Highway Administration requires that all off-system bridges be inspected biennially. The City Council adopted its first dedicated annual budget for Bridge Maintenance in FYE18, beginning with an annual allocation of \$100,000. Recognizing the need for additional resources in this area, the FYE23 budget included \$750,000 in funds and in FYE24, the budget included \$1,000,000 in funds for bridge maintenance. Since 2018, \$2,050,000 has been spent on bridge maintenance.

Of the 80 bridges in Norman, 5 bridges were identified as structurally deficient and 15 bridges were identified as being at risk for becoming structurally deficient during the most recent inspection cycle completed in 2021. Since 2016, the City has experienced three bridge failures that resulted in serious safety hazards, closures and expense. Load limits have been implemented on other bridges to reduce the safety hazard as a result of their condition.

Staff proposed a bridge maintenance bond program to Council at its Community Planning and Transportation meeting in October 2022. Additional discussions by the full Council were held in January and June of this year. A survey of Norman residents was conducted in June and the results were presented to Council earlier this month. Staff was directed to bring forward an ordinance calling a special election for October 10, 2023 for a \$50 million, 10-year construction schedule program.

DISCUSSION:

Ordinance O-2324-5 authorizes the calling of a special election on October 10, 2023 for the purpose of asking the voters to approve \$50 million in indebtedness to provide funds for the purpose of constructing, reconstructing, repairing, improving, and rehabilitating bridges in Norman and other related improvements. Article X, Section 27 of the Oklahoma Constitution requires that the City identify projects for at least 70% of the bond proceeds. Norman's practice in previous street maintenance and construction bond programs has been to identify 100% of the proceeds; however, it is proposed that some of the bond funds in this program be made available for emergency bridge repairs or replacements at unspecified locations, or cost overruns on the listed projects. Due to our recent experience of bridge failures and potential for rapid changes in bridge condition and priority, this program recommends that some emergency funds be included. If funds are not needed for an emergency repair or replacement after the specific projects are completed, Staff will use the funds to move down its rank ordered list of high priority bridge replacement and rehabilitation needs and identify additional projects to complete with the available funding.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of Ordinance O-2324-5 upon Second and Final Reading. A separate vote for the declaration of emergency will be necessary in order to provide timely notice of the election to the Cleveland County Election Board.