



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 10/13/2026

REQUESTER: Jason Olsen

PRESENTER: Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF CONTRACT K-2627-80: BY AND BETWEEN THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA GIBBS COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE (GCA), IN THE AMOUNT OF \$82,500 FOR THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW OPEN-AIR PAVILION IN REAVES PARK FOR THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT AND APPROPRIATION OF NORMAN FORWARD FUND BALANCE. (WARD 7)

BACKGROUND:

The Norman Forward Program of voter-approved, tax-funded projects included multiple Quality of Life construction projects, such as the construction of the Westwood Family Aquatics Center and Indoor Tennis facility, the Young Family Athletic Center, development of Ruby Grant Community Park, renovation of Griffin and Reaves Parks, new library buildings, neighborhood park renovations, construction of the new skatepark in Andrews Park, recreational trail design and construction, and new neighborhood park construction. Those projects were approved for funding through a ½% sales tax collection for 15 years; beginning in 2015-16. Most of the projects have been completed through bond-funding, which is paid back by the tax collection, except for a few that were exclusively described as Pay-Go projects that would be done only after the tax each year had been collected. As we approach the end of the 15 year collection period, the projected ending fund balance for the Norman Forward program will be larger than the original projected costs for the projects. A list of possible additional work on the original list of projects has been presented recently to the Board of Park Commissioners and at a City Council Study Session. Guidance was given on how to proceed with spending the over-collection on continuing work on some of the original project pieces that were not done during the now-completed first phase of each project. One of the proposed continuation projects presented was to do more work on the Master Plan for Reaves Park. In particular, the Parks and Recreation Department has proposed to use some of the available Norman Forward Fund Balance to help fund a project to replace the Kids Space playground with a completely new community-build project in the same location as one built in 1999, which has reached the end of its functional lifespan. This project will also include improvements to the area around the playground, such as picnic shelter, site furniture and landscape improvements.

Earlier this year, the City of Norman was notified that it had been awarded a Built Environment Grant from the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET), which staff applied for in the amount of \$600,000 to support the Kids Space replacement project. The total project costs will be over \$1,000,000; with the city's share of the construction costs to the playground replacement coming from the above-mentioned Norman Forward Fund Balance, approved earlier this year by City Council. That project will begin in October of this year, with a public "Last Play Day" event before the old playground is scheduled to be demolished to make way for the new one. There will be a community-build process for the new playground components that will be coordinated as the project continues into next year. Our partners with TSET will help coordinate the project and track their funding disbursement along the way.

Any work beyond the playground-specific project will be managed solely by the Parks and Recreation Department. One of those items of work will be design and construction of a new large open-air pavilion near the playground.

DISCUSSION:

The University of Oklahoma Gibbs College of Architecture (GCA/OU) has approached the Norman Parks and Recreation Department about becoming partners in an annual design + build project for their senior design and construction students. The two-semester project would be directed by professors who are licensed architects, and the work will be completed by the students, acting as the general contractor for their designs. They have done these types of projects for several years with other public and private organizations. While working out the details of a partnership, the idea of producing a new open-air picnic pavilion next to the new Kids Space playground was identified as a project that would be ideal for both the students and the City. The pavilion and a proposed budget was recently presented to the Board of Park Commissioners and the City Council at a study session. Upon approval by each entity, we now want to proceed with a contract with GCA/OU to get the funding put in-place for their team to do the work they have described and presented. The total amount includes all construction costs for materials, labor and subcontractors, as well as a 10% administrative fee for GCA/OU. The total amount for the project is \$82,500, as described in Contract K-2627-80, attached. Funding is being requested from the Norman Forward Reaves Park Improvements Project via additional funds being transferred into it from the Norman Forward Fund Balance discussed above. No new project is being proposed for this work as it is part of the identified work in the original Reaves Park Master Plan which has guided all of the work in that park.

The work by GCA/OU will start as soon as the site is cleared by demolition of the existing playground and surrounding features to make way for the new open-air pavilion. The final location and orientation of the pavilion as it relates to the new Kids Space will be closely coordinated with the Parks and Recreation Department and the design team for the playground. Their work is scheduled to proceed through the fall and winter, with a completion scheduled for no later than May 31, 2027. The goal is to have it completed at the same time as the major portion of the Kids Space playground project is also completed in the spring of 2027.

RECOMMENDATION 1: It is recommended that City Council approve Contract Number K-2627-80 with The University of Oklahoma Gibbs College of Architecture, for the Open-air Pavilion in Reaves Park, as further described in "Exhibit A" attached to the contract.

RECOMMENDATION 2: It is further recommended that the Norman Forward fund balance be appropriated in the amount of \$82,500 and allocated to the Norman Forward Reaves Park Improvements Project (NFB006, Account 51792205-46101).