

CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE MINUTES

April 27, 2021

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a virtual conference at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Council Chambers on the 27th day of April, 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 Bierman, Foreman, Hall, Holman, Nash, Peacock, Petrone, Mayor Clark

ABSENT:

None

Item 1, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY THE NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIANCE.

Ms. Lisa Krieg, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Grants Manager, introduced Ms. Georgie Rasco, Executive Director of Neighborhood Alliance of Central Oklahoma (NACOK), and Ms. Ana Herrera, NACOK Community Organizer. Ms. Herrera said the mission of the NACOK is to create safe, attractive, and healthy neighborhoods. NACOK believes that you do not have to move in order to live in a better neighborhood, but you do have to make a personal effort for sustainable change.

NACOK is a non-profit organization established in 1977 as a tool lending library, which allows citizens to individually enhance their neighborhood making the neighborhood safer as well as providing community outreach through training and organizational assistance. NACOK has a strong and diverse Board of Directors and financial records are audited by a third party for accountability.

Ms. Rasco said NACOK helps with neighborhood organization by assisting interested neighborhoods by creating voluntary associations; assessing and understanding the diverse needs of every neighborhood; assuring neighborhoods know how and where to advocate for their needs; providing avenues for neighbors to be socially connected; and offering monthly neighborhood organizing and officer training. NACOK can also help with neighborhood coalition building, which reaches beyond the borders of just one neighborhood and encapsulates several neighborhoods while encouraging them to work together for the greater need in their larger combined areas. Multiple coalitions will integrate their neighborhoods, business districts, schools, churches, and parks into one coalition for the benefit of all.

NACOK hosts over 50 workshops a year on varied topics that include Code Enforcement 101; Photovoice-Diversity of Neighborhoods; Communicating with the City and Neighbors; Introducing Art in the Community; and holding town hall meetings for City and Police Community Engagement.

NACOK also provides Homeowner Association (HOA) support at a minimal cost that provides guidance on legal issues for HOAs (taught by an attorney); teaches citizens how to maintain private roads and waterways; HOA Officer Role responsibilities; and other specialized guidance as needed.

NACOK holds a seven-week leadership class that graduates 30 new leaders each year providing speakers from City Hall, Police Department, Fire Department, Neighborhood Leaders, and many others. These leadership class graduates have gone on to be elected to municipal and State offices, serve on municipal boards and commissions, organize neighborhood improvement projects, and serve as neighborhood officers.

NACOK partners with the Oklahoma City Police Department through a yearly contract for the Safe Neighborhoods Program, which is a decades old program that equips neighborhoods with the tools necessary to make their homes and neighborhoods safer through curriculums that include Neighborhood Watch, Crime Patrol Training, City-Wide Police Forums, Town Hall Meetings, Specific Neighborhood Crime Statistics Reports, and Neighbors Night Out.

Ms. Rasco said over 600 neighborhoods are registered that have impacted over 225,000 households. She said 3,500 leaders have been trained and there have been 6,000 volunteer hours with over \$140,000 worth of community clean up and social services provided this year alone. NACOK has also provided \$2.25 million in neighborhood improvement projects over the last nine years. She said good neighbors make great neighborhoods and great neighborhoods make a great city.

Ms. Rasco said the total program budget is \$99,357, which would be used to hire a person specific to Norman for 30 hours per week. NACOK wants to hire and supervise someone that lives in Norman and has the ability to be a community organizer. She said NACOK will be committed to fundraising for the Norman Program to be able to do more for neighborhoods than the budget would provide. She said people do not realize the time and patience it takes to organize a grassroots organization and HOAs are all grassroots. She said it could take three to four years of discussions and educational meetings with groups in neighborhoods before the group consents to register for the program and NACOK stays active in the neighborhood so interest will continue through the years and not be lost. It is up to the neighborhood to decide if they are interested in creating an HOA; it is not forced onto them.

Mayor Clark said she appreciates NACOK's willingness to fundraise because giving can make a difference in people's lives, which is what Council envisioned when they imagined how they could support the community. She asked how soon NACOK could begin work in Norman and Ms. Rasco said NACOK has been reaching out University of Oklahoma (OU) professors to see who would be interested in participating in the program as early as July 1st.

Councilmembers said they support this type of program in Norman.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "NACOK Neighborhood Alliance of Central Oklahoma"

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor