



CITY OF NORMAN, OK
CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING
Municipal Building, Executive Conference Room, 201 West Gray, Norman,
OK 73069
Thursday, August 8, 2024 at 4:00 PM

MINUTES

The City Council Oversight Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Regular Session in the Executive Conference Room on the 8th day of August 2024, at 4:00 p.m. and notice of the agenda was posted at 4:00 p.m., at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and the City website at least 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Heikkila called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Chairman Mayor Larry Heikkila
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman
Councilmember Ward 8 Scott Dixon

ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 1 Austin Ball

OTHERS PRESENT:

Ms. Shannon Stevenson, Assistant City Manager
Mr. Rick Knighton, Interim City Attorney
Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney
Ms. April Doshier, Food and Shelter Director
Ms. Katherine Hammans, Admin Tech III, City Clerk

AGENDA ITEMS

ITEM 1: PRESENTATION OF EMERGENCY SHELTER STATISTICS FOR THE MONTHS OF JUNE AND JULY 2024.

Ms. April Dosier, Food and Shelter Director, presented the Emergency Shelter report for June and July 2024.

JUNE 2024

Three guests were given bus passes to return home where family support was available.
Two guests were moved to permanent housing in Norman.
10 people average turned away, (does not include those who had animals in their care)
Two police interventions

JULY 2024

Two guests were given bus passes to return home where family support was available.
Three guests were moved to permanent housing in Norman.
10 people average turned away, (does not include those who had animals in their care)
Zero police interventions
City Care Staff visited the facilities and discussed program operations with staff.

Mayor Heikkila said the Nation as a whole is seeing a shift in age of patrons due to higher housing costs, lack of funds or household changes.

Councilmember Holman asked why the number of women increased, to which April replied it is due to domestic violence causing them to lose their place of residence and they go to "A Friends House" out of desperation. Councilmember Holman asked how many people who came to the shelter in November 2022 are still at the shelter. April said there has been no one who has been at the shelter the entire time.

Councilmember Holman asked how many guests have income from employment, Social Security (SS) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and can't afford housing, whether due to lack of available income, have an issue with the required deposits to obtain housing or have an eviction preventing them from getting housing. April said that 27 of the 93 guests in July have income.

Councilmember Holman asked if the shelter staff are able to connect guest with additional resources during the check in process. Do they check for sex offenders, are they turned away?

April said there are Caseworkers at the shelter to work with the individual needs of the guests. The City of Norman's registered sex offenders list is used to screen out sex offenders and there have only been two times other housing options had to be found for homeless registered sex offenders.

Chairman Heikkila asked if "A Friends House" staff sense that the general population of housing is seeing more sex offenders. Does the check in process ask for the guest's original address and where they lived before becoming homeless?

April responded by saying police have told her they are seeing a lot more violent incidents with everyone, not just the homeless population.

Chairman Heikkila said the visible gather of the homeless is what keeps the issue on people's minds. April said if the day and night shelter and supportive services were closer together the issue would be less visible.

Councilmember Dixon asked how many of the people who are given a bus ticket home return to Norman, what is the longest continuous stay in the shelter and are the guests required to get assistance to stay in the shelter? He also asked if the shelter staff is CLEET certified?

April said she does not see many returns after people get a ticket home. Guests are not required to get assistance unless they are getting housing assistance. Shelter staff are not CLEET certified, they only receive training Food and Shelter provides to all their staff.

Councilmember Grant asked what is the outlook of housing options for shelter guests. April said at the Continuum of Care meeting they were told there are no more housing vouchers for this year and Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) has put a hold on new applications as there is currently a three year wait for assistance.

Mayor Heikkila asked about hotel vouchers, to which April said the Emergency Food and Shelter (EFS) Program annual funds are \$10,000 and at \$400 per week for one room it does not go very far.

Councilmember Grant asked if people are able to seek housing options in Oklahoma City. April said the city released information that they are out of funds. Communities are having to get creative to address the need, some are acquiring existing housing and looking at shared housing options to help meet the housing needs of the homeless population.

Chairman Heikkila said there is confusion in the community about, who are the people, where are they coming from, how can an affordable solution be funded? People run by fear and communication to the community needs to be improved.

Councilmember Dixon said just the sight of the homeless on the street brings out fears. It would help if the homeless did not block the sidewalks and make it difficult for people to use them.

April said these people are usually those who do not have a bed already, are wheelchair and walker users and non-mobile people. She said she will reinforce the need to stay off the sidewalks and to not impede use by others.

Councilmember Grant asked if there is a way to set a shade area, out of view for the homeless to set in shade. First Baptist Church offered an awning for shade. Maybe if they had a shade area they would not congregate on the side of the shelter building.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.