



CITY OF NORMAN, OK
CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING
Municipal Building, Executive Conference Room, 201 West Gray, Norman,
OK 73069
Thursday, February 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 February 2024, at 4:00 p.m. and notice of the agenda was posted at 4:00 p.m., and notice and agenda of the meeting was posted 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 Schueler called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler (Chair)
Councilmember Ward 3 Bree Montoya
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman

ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 1 Austin Ball

OTHERS PRESENT:

Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney
Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney
Mr. Scott Sturtz, Interim Public Works Director
Mr. Taylor Johnson, Transit and Parking Program Manager
Ms. Shaakira Calnick, Internal Auditor
Ms. April Dosier, Food and Shelter Director
Ms. Lisa Webb, Admin Tech IV, City Clerk
Ms. Sandra Simeroth, Admin Tech III, City Clerk Office

AGENDA ITEMS

ITEM 1: EMERGENCY SHELTER UPDATE

Ms. April Dosier, Food and Shelter Director, presented the Emergency Shelter report statistics for January 2024 and let the committee know that 17 people, all women, were turned away after 6 pm the previous night due to reaching capacity limits.

Two people moved from A Friend's House to permanent housing
Two people received bus tickets and went to be with family and resources.

During the January cold winter event, no "friends" were lost outside in the freezing temperatures. Food and Shelter moved approximately 80 people with animals into motels and had 40 people sleeping inside the day shelter. The need is great for more overnight capacity for people with animals.

The 2023 Shelter report reflects the change to allow guests to save their bed from night to night. This has reduced the all-day gathering line for a bed and has helped guests to feel secure enough to use their day more productively and work without worrying about where they will sleep that night. This change in practice has allowed the case management team to do more in-depth work helping people get IDs, birth certificates and other documents needed for housing, employment, benefits, etc.

In 2023, the shelter saw 17,869 stays for 441 unique guests. 56 of the 441 guests were able to obtain permanent housing either through various programs or resources on their own.

173 Women
262 Men

204 were between age 31-50
110 were between age 51-61
35 were Veterans

Councilmember Holman asked how many people have gone on to be housed while staying at the shelter, how many veterans and/or disabled are currently staying in the shelter and who provides bus tickets for guests back to family and/or friends for support.

Ms. Dosier said over 100 guests obtained permanent housing the first year. At least 50% of the guests have some type of disability, 25% have jobs or some other kind of income. Food and Shelter funds 100% of the bus program.

Councilmember Grant asked about the number of women of domestic violence reported. Ms. Dosier said when the women's domestic violence shelter is full, A Friend's House is the second referral. Domestic abuse is the primary reason women experience homelessness.

Councilmember Montoya asked how they are tracking the women and handling their needs in order to determine if someone is progressing towards self-sufficiency. Ms. Dosier says they define supportive services as everything that is not the bed they sleep in. Person specific case management is done and steps taken to network the guests in meeting the needs to move them forward.

ITEM 1: (continued) EMERGENCY SHELTER UPDATE

Chairman Schueler asked how many of the guests are in need of supportive housing, like the cottages and/or other affordable housing options. Ms. Dosier said, of the 52 guests at the shelter last night, approximately 50% are in need of permanent, supportive housing to be successful.

Food and Shelter has cottages and some multi-family apartment complexes used for supportive housing that total about 70 units. There is a major need for more affordable housing units to address chronic homelessness, while a lot of the homeless need supportive housing because they cannot make it on their own due to physical or mental disabilities.

Chairman Schueler asked about transportation for the homeless population. Ms. Dosier said that transportation is not a huge issue at this time as Care-A-Vans or the public transit system can get the people from the overnight shelter and take them to one of three day shelters in Norman: Community Mental Health "HUB", Food and Shelter or Women's Sanctuary.

Councilmember Grant asked about the need for interim housing. Ms. Dosier said their housing options are not considered temporary housing as people get in and stay until they move to permanent housing. Councilmember Grant asked about transportation for education purposes to, which Ms. Dosier said there are a couple of students that stay in the cottages and Food and Shelter has had to work out transportation for them.

Councilmember Montoya asked, on a scale of 1-10, based on the needs and the gaps, how many partners are helping to meet the needs, are more for profit community partners needed to step up to meet the need. Ms. Dosier said a lot of people have a heart and desire to see this problem get addressed, while ten agencies are doing the work. More case managers are needed too, there are amazing programs doing great work, but more capacity and funding is necessary to assist the number of homeless in the area.

Councilmember Grant said she has come across mental health workers who all say rent assistance has pretty much dried up. Ms. Dosier said prevention of homelessness is much less expensive than housing the homeless. Councilmember Grant asked about additional ARPA funding being available to assist with this program. Ms. Dosier said that COVID was good for social service programs, but now the entire county gets \$200,000 funds from the Oklahoma Department of Commerce.

Councilmember Holman said he understands that the majority of the funds coming into Food and Shelter is 85% privately funded, with the City contribution being a small percentage of the funds to operate the program.

ITEM 2: DISCUSSION REGARDING THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE MOBILE CRISIS UNIT.

Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney, presented information on the Mobile Crisis Response Unit. The September 2020 Social Services Task Force final report recommended expansion to the hours of operation for the Central Oklahoma for Community Mental Health Center (COCMHC) Mobile Crisis Unit.

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TEM 2: (continued) DISCUSSION REGARDING THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE MOBILE CRISIS UNIT

Mobile Crisis means the provision of crisis intervention services by at least one professional at the location of a consumer who is not at the treatment facility (e.g., consumer's home, etc.)

The Mobile Crisis Unit (MCU) is used for Crisis Diversion, Crisis Intervention, or Crisis Stabilization when a person's mental health needs cannot be met over the phone ("988" hotline) and provides services in an environment most accessible by the individual (e.g., home, school).

"988" is the 24/7 hotline that connects callers with trained health professionals or the local Mobile Crisis Unit to respond to crisis in person when needed and is geared towards individuals seeking assistance.

The "988", voluntary services program was rolled out in Oklahoma the Summer of 2022. Council appropriated approximately \$1.3 million for the creation of the Norman program in the FYE 22 Budget. 92% of the funds were spent or re-appropriated for other uses, leaving a remaining balance of \$119,000.

Central Oklahoma for Community Mental Health Center (COCMHC), has been in operation prior to the "988" service and both McClain and Cleveland County "988" services are housed in Norman. "988" calls are routed to a Mental Health Professional (MHP) in the callers area based on their area code. If a MHP is needed, the COCMHC will contact the dispatch center, (based out of Arizona) and they will dispatch a unit. Both of the above procedures protect the privacy of the callers.

Red Rock Behavioral Health Services will be opening a Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) facility in Norman, (timeline unknown), which will also support a Mental Health Unit (MCU) response. Red Rock is not limited to "988" calls, but can take calls directly from community members who call the specified number that goes directly to Red Rock and their team.

"988" is a voluntary service and the individual must call the center for help. The Police Department can provide the information and the tools to call COCMHC while the individual is in custody. Dispatch is equipped to route calls directly to "988" without dispatching an officer.

This program needs to be thought of as a Police-Mental Health Collaboration involving Emergency Services, Behavioral Health Providers, Community Members.

There are four types of Mobile Crisis Models that Norman can design their program on.

Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) – Officer Only – fully trained officers respond to calls with a Mental Health component. Norman Police Department currently has this program in place and regularly provides CIT training to officers. Least preferred option by Clients and does not offer follow up.

Behavioral Health Team - Civilian Only Team – teams consisting of mental health professionals responding to mental health calls. Response time of the Mental Crisis Unit (MCU) can be long, based on urban or rural location. Most preferred by clients, avoids interaction with Police, unless absolutely necessary. COCMHC Service is currently providing this model in Norman.

ITEM 2: (continued) DISCUSSION REGARDING THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR THE MOBILE CRISIS UNIT

Co-Response – Civilian-Officer – mixed team of Law Enforcement Officers and Mental Health Professionals who respond to mental health calls. Option most preferred by clients and families, with a faster response time.

Case Management Team – This team follows up after the crisis situation, with person who recently interacted with law enforcement or emergency services. This is the least commonly offered option in Oklahoma.

Potential solutions for the City of Norman would be to leverage current services offered in Norman, with more intentional support and collaboration or expansion of current mobile crisis services available through a new City program/contract.

OPTION #1: Utilize transit van for use by an existing Mobile Crisis Unit (MCU). Least expensive option, easily implemented, uses the van and increases effectiveness of service in Norman.

OPTION # 2: Contract with a mental health provider to provide MCU services (Civilian or Co-Response model). The yearly cost is significant depending on level of service provided, but potentially gives the highest impact to meet needs. Requires a lot of front end work to design the program.

OPTION # 3: Strengthen partnerships with current MCU providers. Leverage partnerships to provide more services. Limited costs if any, with medium-high impact for needs. Norman is already expanding relationships with “988” through call diversion policies and procedures. This option does not duplicate services and allows existing van to be used for program leverage.

Alternatives: Things to Consider:

- Short/long term goals for Norman
- Expected volume of calls/referrals
- Service gaps
- What types of calls wanting to address (higher risk, lower risk, both)

Goals of Mobile Crisis Programs the Council is wanting to address.

Short Term Goals

- Stabilization of individual experiencing crisis
- Connection to resources
- Follow-up care and long-term care

Long Term Goals

- Reduce unnecessary hospitalizations
- Reduce Law Enforcement contact and/or arrests
- Increase effectiveness when Police Department responds.

Mr. Purinton asked for feedback on what goals or needs the committee has for the MCU. Councilmember Holman said he visualized a service that an individual person or a business owner can call other than the police. The “988” program will meet this need, through the crisis unit staff assessing the needs and providing the appropriate intervention.

Chairman Schueler said she feels this is a lot of information to digest and would like more time to review it and discuss further as a committee to determine the best option before moving forward.

Councilmember Grant asked if they went with Option 3, to strengthen partnerships with current MCU providers, could the van be used to transport homeless people back to their place of residence prior to their stay in a mental health facility in Norman or people discharged from the Norman or Cleveland County jail so they will not become homeless in Norman.

Chairman Schueler asked what option Mr. Purinton would recommend based on his research and he replied Option 3. Chairman Schueler asked Mr. Purinton to look into Option 3 more and provide additional information for committee consideration before moving forward with formal documents.

Chairman Schueler agreed it would be best to discuss more before moving forward with an RFP, etc. and allow the committee to build a more robust program.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:38 p.m.