



CITY OF NORMAN, OK CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Municipal Building, Executive Conference Room, 201 West Gray, Norman,
OK 73069

Tuesday, April 04, 2023 at 5:30 PM

MINUTES

It is the policy of the City of Norman that no person or groups of persons shall on the grounds of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, place of birth, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, marital status, including marriage to a person of the same sex, disability, relation, or genetic information, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination in employment activities or in all programs, services, or activities administered by the City, its recipients, sub-recipients, and contractors. In the event of any comments, complaints, modifications, accommodations, alternative formats, and auxiliary aids and services regarding accessibility or inclusion, please contact the ADA Technician at 405-366-5446, Relay Service: 711. To better serve you, five (5) business days' advance notice is preferred.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Heikkila called the Meeting to Order at 5:30 p.m.

PRESENT

Mayor Larry Heikkila
Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler
Councilmember Ward 3 Kelly Lynn
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 5 Rarchar Tortorello
Councilmember Ward 6 Elizabeth Foreman
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman
Councilmember Ward 8 Matthew Peacock

ABSENT

None

AGENDA ITEMS

1. DISCUSSION REGARDING APPOINTMENTS FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AD HOC COMMITTEE.

Mayor Heikkila said Garver Engineering (Garver) was selected to lead Norman's 2045 Comprehensive Plan along with their partnering team from RDG Planning and Design (RDG). He said Norman's 2045 Comprehensive Plan is truly expansive and includes a housing market and affordability strategy; a Comprehensive Transportation Plan; Stormwater Master Plan; Sanitation Master Plan; Water Hydraulic Modeling update; and Wastewater Master Plan.

Item 1, continued:

On February 21, 2023, Council discussed appointments for the Comprehensive Plan Ad Hoc Committee and tonight is a continuation of that discussion. At that meeting, Councilmembers felt they needed more time to discuss who should serve on the committee because it is an important task that cannot be rushed. Mayor Heikkila agreed and said he chose applicants based on their skill and expertise, but Council needs to discuss which applicant is best suited for the committee.

Councilmember Peacock said he thought Council was going to circle back to this discussion in small group meetings, not in a public forum because he does not want to go through the list of names and start choosing or removing people from the list for the entire community to see. He was hoping to meet in groups of three or four to hash out the list of applicants then come back in a public forum with a revised list. Councilmember Tortorello said that was his understanding as well. Mayor Heikkila said small group meetings can be scheduled within the next two weeks.

Mayor Heikkila said he wanted to make sure there are no more than 20 voting members on the Committee as well as alternates that will be non-voting members, but have expertise on subjects being discussed. He said he purposely chose applicants based on their expertise on subjects within the Comprehensive Plan.

Councilmember Holman said expertise is good, but choosing people that have lived in Norman for many years and are very familiar with issues in their part of town is also important.

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2. DISCUSSION REGARDING CITY COUNCIL MEETING PROCEDURES FOR COUNCIL HANDBOOK.

Mayor Heikkila said he would like to discuss what to do with the consent docket and has been advised it would be better to make procedures a best practice versus a written policy. He believes in giving everyone a fair amount of time to give their arguments on an item, but Council meetings are business meetings and not a jam session. He suggested Council inform Staff by 4:00 p.m. on Monday before the Tuesday Council meeting that they want to take an item off the Consent Docket for public discussion and asked if that seemed fair to everyone.

Councilmember Holman said that seems reasonable for Council to inform Staff by end of business on Monday if they want to remove an item from the Consent Docket for public discussion. He said items that on the Consent Docket are a clear indication of Council consensus because if a Councilmember had objected to any item, it would not be on the Consent Docket. He did feel it was unreasonable to pull an item off at the start of the meeting.

Item 2 continued:

Councilmember Tortorello said sometimes citizens do not get a chance to speak on an item because it was on the Consent Docket, i.e., Warming Shelter lease extension, so it is a best practice to allow Council to remove an item 24 hours prior to the meeting. He would prefer 5:00 p.m. on Monday prior to the meeting. Mayor Heikkila said the 4:00 p.m. deadline allows Staff time to amend the agenda and Staff time to prepare for possible questions or comments from the public. Councilmember Tortorello said in order to give Staff time to amend the agenda and prepare, he is okay with the 4:00 p.m. Monday deadline.

Councilmember Peacock asked what would happen if Councilmembers seemed to have consensus, but changed their mind on the day of the meeting and wanted to remove an item on a Consent item to vote no, would they be able to do that? Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney, said saying an item on the Consent Docket cannot be removed is basically saying Council has to vote yes. She said Councilmembers have the right to change their mind up to the minute of the vote and that should not be predetermined.

Mayor Heikkila said he would like to stop Council and citizens from criticizing Staff or Council from the floor or dais. He said Councilmembers yelling at one another or calling each other names is not businesslike.

Councilmember Holman said he would not want to prevent citizens from being able to express their dissatisfaction with City government or services offered. He does agree calling out Staff by name is inappropriate for the meetings.

Ms. Walker said there are rules adopted in 2005, that include focusing on the issues, not making it personal, treating people with respect, not embarrassing or attacking others, etc. She said some language is printed on the agenda and a slide of rules is displayed on-screen before each meeting. She said using these existing rules may be all that is necessary.

Mayor Heikkila asked if public questions and comments should be limited to Norman citizens. Councilmember Tortorello said Midwest City recently made it a law that only Midwest City residents could speak at the Council meetings. He said as a City, is there an existing rule that would prevent a non-Norman resident from speaking at a Council meeting and Ms. Walker said no. Councilmember Tortorello asked how many times citizens from other cities have addressed Norman City Council and Mayor Heikkila said during discussions to decrease the Police Department's budget, 50% of the people speaking were from Oklahoma City. Ms. Walker said the City of Mustang recently ruled to allow non-residents to speak to an item if it is a matter that impacts them, but she is not sure how to measure that. Councilmember Tortorello asked if Staff could obtain a copy of Midwest City's language and Mr. Pyle said yes.

Item 2, continued:

Mayor Heikkila said the City does not have to allow miscellaneous discussion so that may be something for Council to consider. He said conversations in miscellaneous comments are not necessarily constructive. Councilmember Peacock said he would like to give citizens a chance to talk to Council, but miscellaneous discussion should not be a rehash of items already discussed. Councilmember Grant agreed, but said she appreciates hearing about things she may be unaware were taking place. Mayor Heikkila said Council meetings are business meetings and business meetings do not contain miscellaneous discussion. Councilmember Holman said some cities call miscellaneous discussion “new business” and Ms. Walker said the problem with that is discussing something that is not agenzized.

Councilmember Holman said sometimes when a citizen comes to the podium it is their last resort to get a problem resolved because they feel that no one in the City is listening or cares and this is their opportunity to get in front of a “captive audience” to express the problems they are having. He said an example is a family on Main Street who was having constant flooding issues at the roundabout and felt the City nor their Councilmember was responding to their pleas for help. He said it is harder to ignore someone at the podium on camera and this was the family’s last resort to get the City to listen and resolve their problem.

Councilmember Tortorello said citizens love being able to speak directly to Council about an issue so he would not want to deny them that opportunity.

Ms. Walker said she would update the 2005 Resolution for Council review and approval and Mayor Heikkila said that would be great. He said the idea of this discussion is to build a handbook that would be passed to future Councilmembers as guidelines to follow.

Councilmember Holman said he has never agreed with requiring citizens to sign up online prior to the meeting to be able to speak at the Council meeting and would rather allow citizens to sign up anytime during the meeting even while an item is being discussed. Over the years, he has seen the opportunity to speak at a Council meeting become more limited.

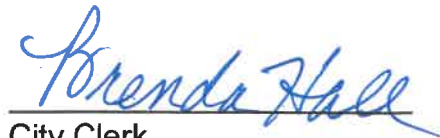
Mayor Heikkila said Council is a representative democracy, it is not a true democracy and the goal is to have a smooth meeting getting the work done for the citizens of Norman. He said every citizen has the opportunity to contact their Councilmember to champion their cause to get something done so there are other options than speaking at the Council meeting.

Mayor Heikkila said Staff on the dais has enough work keeping track of Council votes, keeping track of Councilmembers wanting to speak, and keeping track of citizens that signed up to speak. He said allowing sign up during a meeting on an item being discussed would be chaotic for Staff as well as chaotic to the flow of the Council meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:32 p.m.

ATTEST:


City Clerk


Mayor

