



CITY OF NORMAN, OK CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

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

Tuesday, February 4, 2025 at 5:30 PM

MINUTES

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in the Executive Conference Room of the Norman Municipal Building on the 4th day of February, 2025, at 5:30 p.m., and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT

Mayor Larry Heikkila
Councilmember Ward 1 Austin Ball
Councilmember Ward 3 Bree Montoya
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 5 Michael Nash
Councilmember Ward 6 Joshua Hinkle
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman
Councilmember Ward 8 Scott Dixon

ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 2 Matthew Peacock

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mayor Heikkila.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. PRESENTATION OF THE NORMAN PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT.

Mayor Heikkila welcomed attendees and noted that the purpose of the meeting was to receive the Norman Public Safety Report from Matrix Consulting Group. Council was asked to hold questions until designated portions of the presentation.

Mr. Robert Finn, Senior Manager, Matrix Consulting Group, was Lead for Fire Project and Mr. Richard Brady, President, Matrix Consulting Group, Overall Project Manager, and Lead for Police Project

Mr. Brady explained that the study encompassed nearly 400 pages of analysis regarding both the Fire and Police Departments. The work, conducted over six to seven months, included data analysis of call volumes, staffing, and operations; interviews and surveys with department staff; comparisons to national best practices; and projections for staffing and facility needs over the next 10 years.

Item 1, continued (Fire)

Matrix emphasized the value of an independent, objective review and noted their extensive experience with more than 400 police and 400 fire department studies nationwide.

Fire Department Findings – Presented by Mr. Robert Finn

Key Findings:

- *Public Perception:*
 - A citizen survey showed a strong desire for rapid response times.
 - 47% of respondents felt service levels and response times have declined in the past three years.
 - Slight improvement noted in urban areas; declines in suburban and rural areas.
- *Call Volume:*
 - Increased by 79% since 2014, from ~11,000 calls to more than 19,000 in 2024.
 - Majority of calls are medical assist-related.
- *Response Force Needs:*
 - Effective response for a single-family fire: 16 personnel required.
 - Large/higher-risk structures (e.g., hotels) may require 50 personnel.
- *Facilities:*
 - Stations 1, 2, and 5 require significant renovation or replacement.
 - Station 5 identified as the first for replacement and relocation.
- *Response Times (3-year averages):*
 - Urban: 6 min 35 sec (above best-practice target of 5 minutes).
 - Suburban: 6 min 41 sec (within acceptable range).
 - Rural: 9 min 27 sec (within 10-minute target).
- *Call Concurrency:*
 - 62% of the time, multiple calls occur simultaneously, causing delayed responses when the closest station is already on a call.

Recommendations:

Operational/Staffing:

- Improve call processing (target: 1 minute, 90% of the time).
- Improve turnout times (target: 1 min 30 seconds).
 - Establish formal response standards of five minutes (urban), six minutes 30 seconds (suburban), and 10 minutes (rural).
- Add staff to reduce cross-staffing issues and ensure adequate personnel for aerial and specialized apparatus.
- Increase staffing at Stations 8 and 9 and ladder companies.

Facilities:

- Add Station 10 (southern region).
- Relocate and rebuild Station 5.
- Plan for future stations 11 and 12 as growth occurs.
- Relocate Fire Prevention Division to improved facilities.

Administration and Support:

- Add staff for training, prevention, health/safety, and administrative functions.
- Create a succession planning and career development program.
- Add a Public Information Officer to improve outreach.
- Invest in data analysis capabilities to monitor performance and inform decision-making.

Item 1, continued (Fire)

Training and Safety:

- Expand health and safety programs, including proper exhaust systems in stations.
- Add instructors for fire and EMS training.
- Establish risk-based inspection frequencies for commercial properties.

Long-Term Considerations:

- Monitor growth from turnpike projects and university expansion.
- Plan for aircraft rescue and firefighting (ARFF) improvements at Station 7.
- Acquire foam suppression equipment for future apparatus, with emphasis on environmentally safe materials.

The University of Oklahoma maintains prevention personnel for inspections but does not provide emergency response services.

- Fire Station Infrastructure Needs:
 - Exhaust Systems (PL Systems): Equipment to remove vehicle exhaust gases in truck bays is deteriorating due to high maintenance costs and lack of funding.
 - Gear Washers: Additional gear washers are needed in stations to ensure firefighter health and safety, particularly for cancer prevention. Installation will be complex for older stations without appropriate plumbing.
 - Overtime Challenges: Staffing minimums continue to require reliance on overtime. Difficulties persist in finding personnel willing to work additional hours, adding strain to operations.

Council expressed support for prioritizing modernization efforts, focusing on health and safety upgrades (exhaust systems, gear washers) across stations in priority order, but emphasized the importance of balancing public safety staffing with other safety improvements such as infrastructure investment.

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Police Department Findings - Presented by Mr. Richard Brady

Key Findings:

- Overall Conclusions:
 - Field Services (Patrol): Needs restructuring to balance reactive calls with proactive engagement.
 - Investigations: Current caseload exceeds capacity, limiting ability to properly follow up on crimes.
 - Civilian Support Roles: Communications and professional staff positions have lagged, creating strain on sworn personnel.
 - Future Growth: Population and development growth over the next decade will increase demands on police services.
- Call for Service Analysis:
 - Top 10 call types (domestic disputes, disturbances, alarms, traffic incidents, etc.) represent 40% of calls.
 - Norman's busiest periods are 12:00 AM to 3:00 AM and late afternoons/early evenings—an unusual pattern driven by university, nightlife, and casino activity.
 - Response times are extraordinary compared to national standards, with high-priority calls averaging 6.5 minutes and even low-priority calls under 20 minutes.

Item 1, continued (Police)

- *Patrol Staffing and Proactive Time:*
 - Officers currently have 60% proactive time, which is unusually high compared to other cities. However, this time is unevenly distributed, with gaps during peak nightlife hours and weekends.
 - Officers engage in significant self-initiated activities (21,000 annually), but tracking inconsistencies limit full accounting.
- *Recommendations for Patrol:*
 - Restructure deployment to reduce reliance on 94 current patrol staff.
 - Maintain effective coverage with 70 officers, redeploying 24 positions into a new, expanded Community Services Section.
 - Community Services officers would be flexibly deployed to hotspots, special events, university liaison work, and proactive community outreach.
- *Investigations:*
 - Need for six additional detectives (primarily in property crimes, some in person crimes).
 - Addition of one lieutenant to manage caseload supervision.
 - Expansion of civilian staff: one investigative analyst and one crime analyst to support both investigations and patrol.
 - Additional staff needed in victim advocacy, forensics, and narcotics.
- *Emergency Communications:*
 - Staffing shortages remain a challenge, consistent with national turnover rates (20–30%).
 - Nine additional dispatch staff plus one supervisor are recommended to stabilize operations.
- *Animal Welfare:*
 - Recommendation for an additional position, a veterinary technician, and cross-training to better balance shelter and front desk responsibilities.
- *Recruitment, Training, and Wellness:*
 - Recruitment has become more difficult post-2020; broader outreach and applicant-friendly processes (remote interviews, online testing) are recommended.
 - Employee development plans and succession planning are emphasized.
 - Establishment of a health and wellness coordinator role is recommended, focusing on officer support and family outreach.
- *Community Outreach and Specialized Roles:*
 - Additional staff needed in the Traffic Unit (two investigators, one lieutenant).
 - School Resource Officer program requires a lieutenant to manage increased staff.

Growth Projections and Long-Term Needs

- Population Growth Impact: Anticipated 10% increase in service demand over 10 years.
- Sworn Staff Projections: +16 staff recommended over 10 years (mostly in investigations/support, not patrol).
- Professional Staff Projections: +19 staff in the short term, with five more needed over time, particularly in communications.
- Facilities and Technology:
 - Current facilities are functionally obsolete.
 - A facilities needs assessment is required to plan for centralized or decentralized police services.
 - Technology investments recommended: public cameras, video feed integration, and social media monitoring tools.

Item 1, continued (Police)

Facilities Needs and Long-Term Planning

- Council discussed the importance of maintaining a downtown police presence, even if future headquarters facilities are relocated or decentralized. Alternatives considered included a downtown substation or storefront model similar to practices in other cities.
- Current Police Headquarters (HQ) Facility:
 - Municipal Court and Dispatch have relocated from the existing headquarters, leaving excess space.
 - Discussion centered on whether to remodel the existing building (costly, extensive retrofits required) or construct a new facility designed for modern policing standards.
 - Matrix Consulting confirmed that the current HQ is not a viable long-term option, though the site remains valuable.
- Fire Stations:
 - Council requested a clear assessment of fire station conditions, identifying which require full replacement versus renovation.
 - Matrix noted that planning for Stations 9, 10, 11, and 12 is further along than for police facilities.
 - Cost estimates: \$7 million per new fire station, with updated designs incorporating lessons from COVID (individual dorms rather than open bunk rooms).
- Police Facilities:
 - New police HQ projected at \$25 million, with construction timelines estimated at six to eight years even if fully funded.
 - Considerations for centralized vs. decentralized models:
 - Central HQ allows consolidated command, administration, and IT security.
 - Substations require additional command/administrative staff and present technology/security challenges.
 - Facilities needs assessment to be included in the upcoming budget cycle (\$100,000 estimated cost).

Financial Considerations and Next Steps

- Funding Outlook:
 - Budget development will include consideration of staffing, facilities, and equipment needs.
 - Sales tax revenue instability noted, especially following the State's recent change in grocery sales tax collection.
 - Rising pension obligations (+\$400,000 annual cost) further strain resources.
 - Discussion of potential for property tax revenue to support 24/7 public safety operations, particularly in rural areas where sales tax revenue is limited.
- Integration with Comprehensive Plan:
 - Public Safety Report findings will be incorporated into the broader Comprehensive Land Use Plan, aligning future infrastructure expansion with projected population growth.
 - Higher-density development recognized as more efficient for fire response; lower-density areas increase response times.

Councilmember Ball left the meeting prior to the executive session.

2. CONSIDERATION OF ADJOURNING INTO AN EXECUTIVE SESSION AS AUTHORIZED BY OKLAHOMA STATUTES, TITLE 25 §307(B)(3) TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBLE PURCHASE AND/OR APPRAISAL OF REAL PROPERTIES LOCATED ON TRIAD VILLAGE DRIVE.

Motion made by Councilmember Ward 6 Hinkle, Seconded by Councilmember Ward 4 Grant.

Voting Yea: Mayor Heikkila, Councilmember Ward 3 Montoya, Councilmember Ward 4 Grant, Councilmember Ward 5 Nash, Councilmember Ward 6 Hinkle, Councilmember Ward 7 Holman, Councilmember Ward 8 Dixon

The City Council adjourned into Executive Session at 7:09 p.m. Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager; Ms. Shannon Stevenson, Assistant City Manager; Mr. Rick Knighton, City Attorney; Mr. Anthony Purinton, Assistant City Attorney; and Ms. Shaakira Calnick, Internal Auditor, were in attendance at the Executive Session.

Motion made by Councilmember Ward 8 Dixon, Seconded by Councilmember Ward 3 Montoya.

Voting Yea: Mayor Heikkila, Councilmember Ward 3 Montoya, Councilmember Ward 4 Grant, Councilmember Ward 5 Nash, Councilmember Ward 6 Hinkle, Councilmember Ward 7 Holman, Councilmember Ward 8 Dixon

The Executive Session was adjourned out of and the Special Session was reconvened at 7:38 p.m.

The possible purchase and/or appraisal of real properties located on Triad Village Drive was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken, and no votes were cast.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

ATTEST:



City Clerk





Mayor