



CITY OF NORMAN, OK
CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING
Municipal Building, Executive Conference Room, 201 West Gray, Norman,
OK 73069
Thursday, February 9, 2023 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 9th day of February 2023, at 4:00 p.m. and notice of the agenda of the meeting was posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and on the City website at least 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Lynn called the meeting to order.

PRESENT

Councilmember Ward 3 Kelly Lynn, (Chair)
Councilmember Ward 7 Stephen Holman

ABSENT

Councilmember Ward 2 Lauren Schueler
Councilmember Ward 1 Vacant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Mr. Kevin Foster, Chief of Police
Ms. Jane Hudson, Planning and Community Development Director
Ms. April Heiple, Food and Shelter Director
Mr. Stephen Ellis, Care-A-Vans
Ms. Karen Wallier Dodge, Chief of Client Services, Oklahoma Indigent Defense System, (OIDS)

AGENDA ITEMS

ITEM 1: DISCUSSION REGARDING SOBERING CENTERS

Mr. Kevin Foster, Chief of Police, provided information on sobering centers authorized under State Statute Title 43A, which gives the City the ability to take a consenting intoxicated person to a sobering center instead of processing and holding in jail.

The City of Norman Police Department does 500 to 600 public intoxication arrests a year. The charge for a public intoxication ticket is around \$100.00. It takes approximately one hour to process someone on the charge and take them to the county jail, where they will be housed, with the City of Norman paying the \$75 cost per day for their stay.

Oklahoma City currently uses the program and takes in 200 to 300 people a month on their contract. By going to the sobering center, police charges are not filed against the intoxicated person, helping keep their record clear for what may have been a one-time incident.

The cost to operate a sobering center is \$300,000 to \$350,000 per year. Oklahoma County saves \$450,000 in time and costs by using the sobering center. Participants are at the center for up to ten hours to sleep off the intoxication. The center is run by qualified volunteers who do the intakes, oversee the safety of the participants, provide them a meal in the morning and network them into another program when necessary. A contracted cab company will take them to a destination within 3 miles of the center upon their release.

By partnering and cost sharing with Moore, Cleveland County, OU, etc., it would be feasible to have a sobering center located in Norman. Program will have to be approved by Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, ODMHSAS, who oversees the program and the District Attorney's Office has to approve it annually.

Chairman Lynn asked Police Chief Foster to bring the item back to the committee next month with more information on the program, costs, operation, partners, etc., for further discussion prior to taking to council for approval.

ITEM 2: WARMING SHELTER UPDATE

Ms. April Heiple, Food and Shelter Director provided the Warming Shelter update for November 2022, December 2022, and January 2023.

The Warming Shelter opened on November 1, 2022 and have been at, near or over capacity every day since opening. Track through HMIS data system.

Ms. Heiple said she received a call at the end of December from the City Manager requesting something be done about the loitering around exterior of shelter. She said this loitering is in most part due to the practice that they empty out every morning and filled the beds on a first come first served basis.

ITEM 2: (continued) WARMING SHELTER UPDATE

In order to help reduce the loitering issues, guests were allowed to reserve their bed. This also gives staff time to provide more in-depth services to guests instead of doing intake paperwork on new daily guests.

In January, 11 people were moved into housing using Rent Assistance Program funds, (RAP), 14 people are now employed, two people have gone to inpatient drug treatment and two people have gone to live with family. Veterans Affairs comes to the shelter two times a week to assist veterans with their needs.

There are no shower facilities at the shelter and guests are taken to Food and Shelter for showers, etc. The last day of operation is set for the end of March 2023.

Age distribution shows the trend across the community of the people who are homeless. 30% of guests are women. Pets are not currently allowed in the facility as it is not set up to house them properly.

CLEET trained security staff on site, who can handle most incidents without calling for police intervention.

Mr. Stephen Ellis spoke regarding Cara-A-Vans transportation issues that may be compounding the loitering issue due to the number of people in wheel chairs and the limited transportation opportunities to get to and from the shelter in a timely manner, causing wheelchair guests to hang in the area for longer periods of time in hopes of receiving a bed.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:47 p.m.