



CITY OF NORMAN, OK CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING

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

Tuesday, August 20, 2024 at 5:30 PM

MINUTES

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Study Session in the Executive Conference Room in the Municipal Building, on Tuesday, August 20, 2024 at 5:30 PM, and notice of the agenda of the meeting was posted at the Norman 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

PRESENT

Mayor Larry Heikkila
Councilmember Ward 1 Austin Ball
Councilmember Ward 2 Matthew Peacock
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

AGENDA ITEMS

1. DISCUSSION REGARDING THE RESOLUTION R-2425-34 POSTPONED IN CITY COUNCIL'S MEETING OF AUGUST 13, 2024, RELATED TO THE OKLAHOMA TURNPIKE AUTHORITY'S ACCESS PROGRAM.

Ms. Amy Cerato, Civil Engineer, recapped Oklahoma Turnpike Authority's (OTA) Access Oklahoma turnpike expansion. It is a multi-year statewide project, including routes affecting Norman's environmentally sensitive corridors. She emphasized the importance of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and additional environmental safeguards to preserve water quality in Lake Thunderbird and the Canadian River Corridor. She proposed that the resolution serve as a formal acknowledgement of the City's conditions (listed below) for allowing OTA to proceed.

- Full environmental review
- Stormwater mitigation
- Biodiversity conservation
- Commitment to minimizing hydrological and flood hazard impacts

Ms. Cerato highlighted some of OTA's history and shared that they have been non-compliant, defiant and have unfulfilled commitments; the City of Norman needed to understand this before Council considered a Resolution and said they should wait until the audit and studies are complete.

Item 1, continued:

Mr. Robert Norman, Cheek and Falcone, PLLC, followed with key resolutions and revisions. He outlined Norman's drinking water sources, noting downstream communities (Midwest City, Del City) would also be affected in case of contamination; highlighted recent flood modeling showing increased runoff risks if construction disturbed natural buffers; gave recommendations to Council including enforceable terms such as binding agreements on EIS scope, stormwater controls, native vegetation restoration, and monitoring requirements. Mr. Norman also suggested a conditional consent framework, where the City would allow OTA to proceed only after meeting these environmental thresholds.

Councilmember Nash submitted an amended OTA Resolution, which was the basis of Council's discussion.

Mayor Heikkila suggested adding a Preamble to Resolution R-2425-34 the OTA Turnpike Resolution. It reads, "The City of Norman does not welcome or endorse the intrusion of the turnpikes built by the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority into our community. We enter into this resolution because we are duty bound to comply with existing state law and Oklahoma Supreme Court rulings."

Councilmember Grant said it would not hurt to request the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) work with OTA to find the best protection for our water and said OTA should make homeowners whole when it came to the worth of their homes and costs associated with moving. She would also like to see the words "shall, must, and will" change to "request."

Councilmember Holman expressed his concern about adopting a resolution without knowing the details of the whole project. He said, "Why do we have to ask for frontage roads if they are building them anyway." Councilmember Ball agreed but questioned if the City of Norman would be bound by this Resolution.

Mr. Rick Knighton, City Attorney, clarified that a Resolution is simply the opinion and beliefs of Council, not an agreement or a binding contract.

Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager, stated OTA anticipates traffic on the East/West route of the turnpike by 2027. He also stated that where there are frontage roads, there will be five-foot sidewalks, and if it was Council's request to have 10-foot multimodal pathways instead, this would not require additional Right-of-Way. Councilmember Holman wanted to be sure of this so OTA would not take more property in the process.

Councilmember Holman said that interchanges would require signalization and a cost to maintain them just like Interstate 35, so this turnpike comes with additional costs to the City. He questioned, if OTA built frontage roads or structures Council did not ask for, would Norman be under obligation to maintain it?

Councilmember Montoya spoke in opposition for Ward three and expressed her concern for the 10-mile flats. She was in support of Councilmember Hinkle's amendments regarding no build zones and alternate routes.


Item 1, continued:

Council consensus was to rethink and revisit the Resolution during the Pre-Council Conference on August 27, 2024. Council also would like to shorten the Preamble to Resolution R-2425-34 the OTA Turnpike Resolution to read, "The City of Norman does not welcome or endorse the intrusion of the turnpikes built by the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority into our community." Council generally expressed support for a resolution that emphasizes environmental protection and local oversight in any future collaboration with the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority. There was consensus that any consent to OTA's Access Oklahoma Program must be conditioned upon comprehensive environmental review, enforceable mitigation strategies, and a commitment to preserve Norman's critical natural resources, including its drinking water supply and floodplains. Staff would revise the language in Resolution R-2425-34 accordingly and present it for formal consideration at the next regular City Council meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Heikkila adjourned the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

ATTEST:



City Clerk



Mayor

