



Tuesday, December 09, 2025 at 5:00 PM

MINUTES

The City Council Conference of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Regular Session in the Executive Conference Room in the Municipal Building, on Tuesday, December 09, 2025 at 5:00 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

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Mayor Stephen Holman
Councilmember Ward 1 David Gandesbery
Councilmember Ward 2 Matthew Peacock
Councilmember Ward 3 Robert Bruce
Councilmember Ward 4 Helen Grant
Councilmember Ward 5 Brandon Nofire
Councilmember Ward 6 Joshua Hinkle
Councilmember Ward 7 Kimberly Blodgett
Councilmember Ward 8 Scott Dixon

AGENDA ITEMS

1. BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION REGARDING A RESTORATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA AND BARBOUR ENERGY CORPORATION REGARDING THE PLUGGING OF THE NORMAN OIL WELL 1-18 WELL IN ACCORDANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAW AND REMEDIATION OF THE SURFACE FOR FUTURE USE BY THE NORMAN UTILITIES AUTHORITY.

Ms. Beth Muckala, Assistant City Attorney, provided background on a proposed remediation and restoration agreement related to the Norman Oil Well 1-18, drilled in 1967 prior to enactment of the Oklahoma Surface Damages Act. She explained that prior to the Act, operators were only responsible for damages beyond reasonable use and that no surface damages agreement existed for this well.

Harbor Energy, the long-time operator, recently plugged the well in accordance with Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) requirements. Staff confirmed through OCC records that all applicable forms were filed and that the OCC oversaw the plugging. Harbor Energy coordinated with the City's oil and gas inspector, Jeffrey Poteet, to ensure acceptable surface remediation.

Item 1, continued

The site is located on property utilized by the Norman Utilities Authority. Environmental and Sustainability Manager Michele Loudenback oversaw the remediation process and required additional corrective work when initial results were not satisfactory. The operator corrected the work to the City's satisfaction.

The proposed one-page agreement acknowledges that the City accepts the site in acceptable condition and confirms compliance with applicable OCC regulations. The City intends to incorporate the site into its network of ecological and community-use properties.

2. DISCUSSION REGARDING POSSIBLE AMENDMENTS TO THE GUEST ROOM TAX ORDINANCE.

Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation, and Ms. Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney, highlighted potential amendments to the Guest Room Tax Ordinance, including a possible increase in the tax rate and inclusion of recreational vehicle (RV) space rentals.

Mr. Olsen provided an overview of Parks and Recreation assets, including parkland acreage, playgrounds, community parks, recreation facilities, cultural centers, trails, greenbelts, and beautification responsibilities. Current operations and maintenance are funded through an annual budget of approximately \$4.5 to \$5 million, while capital improvements rely on Guest Room Tax revenues, capital funding, and limited impact fees.

Norman's current Guest Room Tax rate is 8%. Mr. Olsen noted that Oklahoma City and Midwest City have increased their rates to 9.25%. Various scenarios were presented showing potential additional revenue if Norman increased its rate to 9.25% or up to 10%, with discussion focusing on dedicating portions of any increase to parks capital needs.

Ms. Walker explained current allocations of the Guest Room Tax among Visit Norman, Norman Arts Council, Parks and Recreation, and sports tourism, noting that distribution is handled by contract rather than ordinance. She said adding RV rentals would require ordinance amendments and any change to the purpose or distribution of the tax would require voter approval. Draft ballot language was provided for discussion purposes, with a proposed effective date of July 1, 2026, if approved by voters in April.

Council discussed increasing the tax to 10% to remain competitive and avoid future ballot measures. Several members supported dedicating a portion of the increase to parks capital improvements. Discussion included potential use of a portion of the increase for General Fund purposes, including code enforcement, short-term rental impacts, administrative costs, or possible right-to-counsel initiatives, noting that such uses would require voter approval.

Council emphasized maintaining existing allocations to tourism partners and considering dedicating only the incremental increase.

Item 2, continued

Consensus emerged to continue developing language for a potential April 2026 ballot, with further discussion planned before formal action.

3. CONTINUED DISCUSSION REGARDING ENTERING INTO A CONTRACT WITH THE CLEVELAND COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COALITION (CCEDC).

Ms. Walker provided comparative information on economic development structures used by other cities in the metropolitan area, including Oklahoma City, Broken Arrow, Yukon, and Edmond. Funding mechanisms, staffing levels, and governance models were reviewed. She noted CCEDC leadership expressed willingness to segregate and separately account for City of Norman funds, subject to CCEDC board approval, allowing for City audit review.

Discussion highlighted the potential for Guest Room Tax revenue as a growing funding source for economic development and its relationship to tourism and economic growth. Council discussed the value of maintaining a seat at the countywide economic development table. Members emphasized transparency, accountability, and tracking of Norman-specific expenditures.

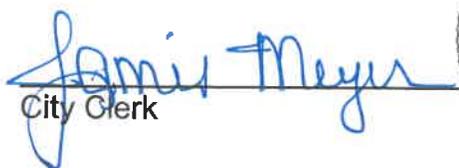
Discussion included the importance of diversifying economic development efforts, including technology, aviation, incubator spaces, infill development, and retaining university-generated innovation. Several members expressed support for a one-year contract with CCEDC, paired with exploration of creating an internal Norman-focused economic development function.

Council consensus expressed general support for proceeding with a one-year agreement, contingent upon contract language providing for separate accounting and audit of Norman funds, with annual review.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

ATTEST:


City Clerk




Mayor