

CITY COUNCIL
BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 4, 2013

The City Council Business and Community Affairs Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 9:00 a.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room located at 201 West Gray on the 4th day of April, 2013, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Jungman, Kovach, and Chairman Lockett

ABSENT: Councilmembers Spaulding and Williams

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Roger Gallagher, Ward One
Mayor Cindy Rosenthal
Ms. Tessa Beder, Norman Chamber of Commerce
Ms. Jayne Crumpley, 423 Elm Avenue
Mr. Michael Friedman, 2625 Atwood Drive
Ms. Maureen Hammond, Norman Economic Development Coalition
Mr. Harold Heiple, 218 East Eufaula
Ms. Joy Hampton, The Norman Transcript
Mr. Bob Thompson, 1905 Banbury Court

STAFF PRESENT: Mr. Jeff Bryant, City Attorney
Ms. Susan Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development
Mr. Ken Danner, Subdivision Development Manager
Mr. Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator
Ms. Leah Messner, Assistant City Attorney
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

UPDATE REGARDING POTENTIAL AND ONGOING CUSTOMER SERVICE OUTREACH ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS.

Mr. Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator, said on March 7, 2013, the Business and Community Affairs Committee (BACA) Staff presented preliminary research regarding the development and distribution of a customer service survey for customers who utilize City permitting, planning, inspection, and property development services. He said BACA requested further information and Staff researched the elements involved in utilizing a third party to implement a survey. Staff also outlined ideas to implement a *follow-up* survey that would be conducted by Staff after a building project is complete to gain additional information from users of the City's development services regarding their satisfaction with the services. The follow-up survey would include an area for suggested improvements or comments. Staff also outlined ideas to conduct a survey of former development services users.

Staff contacted firms that specialize in survey research to gather preliminary information about conducting a survey for general contractors, developers, trades, and engineering firms that utilize the City development services. Surveys are usually mailed with telephone follow-up four to five days after the survey is mailed. Surveys are generally four to five pages and generate an estimated 100 to 150 responses. A follow-up report with a detailed analysis is provided to the City once the survey is completed. The process to develop the survey and administer and prepare the final report can take an estimated 90 days to complete and can cost \$7,000 to \$8,000.

Mr. Floyd said using an independent firm to develop, administer, receive, and analyze the survey can often provide the best method to achieve statistically accurate and beneficial results. The use of an independent firm can also be beneficial in providing a level of comfort for those completing the survey, which can increase the likelihood of receiving pointed and detailed responses. The firm will work with Staff to design the survey and gather contact information for a representative survey sample as well as gather input from outside organizations during the development of the survey if requested.

Mr. Floyd said the survey could be implemented as part of the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) portion of building permits. When a final CO is issued to a business, the City's Development Coordinator will contact the general contractor or other representative to gather contact information and send the user a link to an online survey. This survey would initially focus on development services users, but could be implemented for those utilizing Public Works Engineering services as well.

Mr. Floyd said survey information could include the type of firm; years performing work in the City of Norman; which building permitting and inspections were performed; helpfulness of Staff; overall experience with the inspection process; inspection thoroughness; consistency of inspections; comments; and contact information for the Development Coordinator so that additional comments or concerns can be voiced and addressed. The information from the surveys would be utilized to identify areas in these departments that may need improvement, areas of success, and to gauge the effectiveness of changes made as a result of the City's efforts to enhance the development process.

Mr. Floyd said every six months a random sample of those who were surveyed can be selected and directed to an additional link for a detailed survey to gather more in-depth information regarding their satisfaction with development services utilized.

Mr. Floyd said BACA also expressed interest in conducting a survey of organizations that have not developed in Norman in the last three to five years. To conduct this type of survey, the Development Coordinator would work with Staff in the Public Works/Engineering and Planning and Community Development departments to identify commercial applicants, trade contractors, design professionals, and developers that have not obtained a permit or applied for platting/rezoning in the past three to five years. The Development Coordinator would also work with the Chamber of Commerce and the Norman Economic Development Coalition (NEDC) to identify former applicants for the survey. The former applicants would be sent a survey that will identify the capacity in which the former applicant utilized City services, gauge the satisfaction of their experience utilizing City development services, reasons for not obtaining a permit since their last use of City service, and questions gauging their interest in developing and working in Norman in the future. The survey could also include a comment section for applicants to give further information regarding their experience.

Councilmember Kovach said there are legitimate complaints and there are complaints because a developer or trades worker does not like a particular ordinance. He knew a developer who left Norman because the developer did not like the City's Fire Code. He asked if there is a better way to gather data that would give weight to the real problems. Mr. Floyd said the challenge is trying to glean through those types of issues and Staff is looking at other cities to see how they try to work through that information. He said if comments are encouraged, that might be a way to get to the reason they do not do business in Norman any longer. He said determining whether complaints are real or because someone does not like the Codes will be the root of the problem in the survey.

Councilmember Jungman asked if the question from Staff is whether or not to use a third party for the survey and Mr. Floyd said yes. He said the follow-up surveys are something that can be conducted in-house. Councilmember Jungman asked if Council had recently decided not to go forward with a broader community survey and Mayor Rosenthal said yes, that was taken out of the budget. Councilmember Jungman said he would like to consider both surveys together because all the interests are important to the community. He said you can

do a lot of hard work on a survey and end up with something that is not going to be helpful so it is important to construct surveys carefully, which is a good reason to hire a third party. Mr. Floyd said it may also be beneficial to utilize OU resources as many students conduct surveys as part of their academic research.

Mayor Rosenthal said the ongoing in-house process is something the City should definitely pursue because it provides monitoring data to allow the City to detect when something is not working right and a baseline can be established. She had concerns about using a separate survey of customers three to five years back because there is no baseline, but felt there are questions in that survey that should be included in the in-house survey. Councilmember Kovach agreed going back in time is not a good idea because a lot of changes have been made and the City wants a baseline of where we are today and not rehash the past.

Mayor Rosenthal did not believe an online survey would work well, especially for trades workers and asked for input from Mr. Bob Thompson, a general contractor and former Mayor. Mr. Thompson said he did not believe trades workers would participate in any type of survey for fear of retribution. He said the City would get a better response from developers and/or builders. He asked if the general population would be surveyed and what significance this would have. He was not sure the survey would get the information the City is seeking and felt working with developer/builders to understand the Code better would be a more effective way of garnering information from them. He understands wanting a third party to perform the survey, but feels it would be a waste of money and time. He said the biggest problem is that Norman has a reputation of being a hard community to build in and it is coming mainly from commercial builders because they experience more problems with inspectors. He said there may be some truth in that, but what the City needs is for Mr. Floyd to follow up with builders after a project to find out what problems they may have encountered. He said people that use the services and people that administrate the services need to work together. He said there are problems with Code changes, i.e. a project may be moving along then suddenly some inspector reads a little more detail about a certain issue in the Code and wants to enforce it basically bringing the project to a halt. He said this is where communication comes in. If the City is going to suddenly decide to enforce something in the Code, this should be communicated. Mr. Harold Heiple, attorney for the Norman Developers Council, agreed and said the owner of the project should be contacted as well because he has heard many owners say, "If I had known then what I know now, we would have built in Moore." He said subcontractors will not talk to the City at all and some general contractors may talk, but even then they have to keep working with the City so they will not say anything negative for fear of retribution on future projects. He said third party consultants that do these types of surveys come back with notoriously ineffective surveys. Councilmember Jungman said he sees two different activities 1) customer service and 2) surveys. He said a professional organization that has done surveys for other communities should be able to garner effective information.

Chairman Lockett suggested sending a letter to developers/builders asking them whether changes the City has made have been helpful to them and what other areas they would like the City to work on. She said this is a simple solution that lets people know the City is interested in working together without costing a lot of money.

Mr. Floyd asked if the Committee wanted Staff to hold off on seeking a third party and further research on implementation of the follow-up survey and Chairman Lockett said yes. Mayor Rosenthal said an in-house survey is more important and the larger community satisfaction survey is something that needs to be discussed.

Ms. Tessa Beder, Norman Chamber of Commerce, asked if there was a reason the City could not get the groups Mr. Thompson mentioned together to create the survey and still use the third party to send out the survey. She felt this would eliminate the "fear of retribution" issue.

Chairman Lockett said the third party survey needs further discussion, but the follow-up survey might give the City clues as to where to go with that. Mr. Floyd said he asked the firms how they incorporate questions and they said they would gather input from organizations outside of the City for the survey development, but ultimately,

the survey has to be approved by the City so there is some ability for the City to include specific questions on the survey.

Mr. Thompson said there are two types of builders, residential and commercial. He said residential builders feel good about the City being proactive by hosting brown bag lunches and talking through problems, but the commercial developers are a completely different animal with completely different issues and a generic survey is not going to capture both. He said the City might want to spend more time meeting with commercial developers/builders than residential.

Mayor Rosenthal suggested Staff contact commercial applicants that have not been active in Norman for the past three to five years. Chairman Lockett said it would be easy to go back two years on commercial building done in Norman. She said so many of the store chains, such as Walmart and Target, have their own builders and these builders talk to other builders from all over the United States. She suggested contacting some of them regarding their experience in Norman and what Norman can do to make the development process better. She felt reaching out would help Norman's reputation locally as well as outside of Oklahoma.

Mr. Bryant wanted to clarify that the Committee is requesting Staff to go back two years on in-house surveys of commercial projects, but go forward from here on residential, hold meetings with interested parties to develop survey questions, and address a third party survey at a later date and Chairman Lockett said that is correct. Mr. Bryant asked if BACA wanted the proposal to go forward to Council in a Study Session, with changes discussed today, or should Staff make changes and come back to the Committee for further review. Committee members said to move forward to Council.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated March 28, 2013, from Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator, to Council Business and Community Affairs Committee, with Examples of Development Community Surveys from other cities
2. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "City of Norman Survey Research and Customer Service Projects," Council Business and Community Affairs Committee, dated April 4, 2013

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Item 2, being:

MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION.

2009 International Building Code.

Mr. Floyd updated the Committee on other customer service projects. He said Staff has begun reviewing and researching changes from the currently adopted 2006 International Building Code (IBC) to the 2009 IBC. The State of Oklahoma adopted the 2009 IBC and cities are required to adopt this edition as part of their ordinances. He said Staff will hold meetings with stakeholders in late April and early May to discuss the changes.

Applicants New to the Development Process.

Mr. Floyd said the City is looking at implementing a program in which he would be forwarded a copy of the building permit of anyone who may be new to the development process. He would then contact the person, introduce himself, and be the point of contact for that person. He would try to establish contact with them every couple of weeks during the process to check on how things are going, see if there is anything he can do to help the process, and track the progress of the project. He said, at the point of their obtaining their CO, this could be

Item 2, continued:

a great opportunity to give them a follow-up survey. He said reaching out to those new to the process is the main criteria of his job.

Local Preferences.

Chairman Lockett said the Public Works Department gives percentage points of preference to local Norman companies for engineering services contracts, but the Utility Department does not. She would like to discuss preferences in a future meeting. Mayor Rosenthal said Council passed a policy a couple of years ago regarding local preferences on purchases and bidding. She would like discussion on how that has been implemented, how it is working, and what it would mean to implement it across the board. Chairman Lockett felt it would be helpful to see how other cities handle that.

Survey.

Chairman Lockett asked the Committee to think about ways the City can offer security to people who may have complaints about the City's processes, but are concerned about retribution.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor