

## CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE MINUTES

November 26, 2013

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a conference at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 26th day of November, 2013, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at 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 Castleberry, Griffith, Heiple, Holman, Jungman, Kovach, Miller, Williams, and Mayor Rosenthal

ABSENT:

None

Item 1, being:

### DISCUSSION REGARDING THE 2014 CITY COUNCIL ELECTION DATES.

Mayor Rosenthal said Council previously discussed election dates and the possibility of coinciding those dates in conjunction with a vote on renewing the Public Safety Sales Tax (PSST).

Ms. Brenda Hall, City Clerk, said the Cleveland County Election Board requires a 60 day notice for a special election unless it is on the same ballot as a State election, which requires a 75 day notice and there are no State elections until June 2014. She said the City of Norman Charter requires Council to adopt a resolution in November establishing spring election dates. She highlighted potential election dates for City Council elections as February 11, 2014, March 4, 2014, April 1, 2014, and June 24, 2014.

Mayor Rosenthal felt the PSST renewal should be considered when setting the Council election dates. She said Council will consider adoption of the resolution setting the dates of the Municipal and Run-off elections at tonight's regular Council meeting.

Councilmember Miller felt the only clear choice is April 1st with a run-off on June 24th. Councilmember Holman felt March 4th would be best date with a run-off on April 1st because the idea of a two or three month run-off could be daunting. He also felt it would be better to have the City Council election on the same month every year.

Mayor Rosenthal said she is concerned the PSST ballot language will not be ready for a March election. Councilmember Kovach said an alternative would be a March-April election with the PSST on the ballot in April allowing Council enough time to prepare PSST ballot language for first reading in January. Mayor Rosenthal said April 1st is also the School Board run-off, but there is no guarantee there will be a run-off for the School Board or Council leaving Council open to public criticism for choosing a low voter turnout election date for placing the PSST on the ballot.

Councilmember Williams said when he was elected, the long period between the general election and run-off had him constantly knocking on doors to keep him in the voter's minds and it was difficult. He had constituents who told him not to knock on their door again. He said it also creates more opportunity for negativity between campaign opponents. He agreed with Councilmember Holman that elections need to be held in the same month year to year or as close to the same month as possible and Council should begin setting that precedence.

Ms. Hall said established dates used to be in the Charter for March and April and that was changed in 2011 due to the changes in State law relative to improving the voting rights of military personnel. She said the dates were removed because the City had to amend the Charter two years in a row based on State level changes so instead of paying for an election to change the Charter every time the City had to comply with State law, the Council decided to leave the dates open. Councilmember Williams said that does not stop Council from scheduling the election around the same month each year. Councilmember Kovach said if Council holds the election on June 24th, new Councilmembers would be seated the first week of July and not many people have the luxury to take off work for a week for Council orientation. He said Council has to consider the possibility that there will be a run-off.

Ms. Joy Hampton, The Norman Transcript, said there are other items such as a stormwater utility fee and Charter amendments that will be going to a vote of the people in 2014, and asked if any of those will be on the ballot with the PSST. Ms. Hall said tonight Council is only discussing setting the election dates for the Council races in 2014, not setting the election calendar for the entire year for other elections they may call. Ms. Hampton asked if that means there will be a bunch of different election dates instead because people will say they just voted on a sewer rate increase and will ask why the City did not vote on a stormwater utility fee or Charter amendments at the same time. Mayor Rosenthal said those proposals are not ready. Councilmember Castleberry said there is no reason Council cannot have more than one question on the ballot in March or April, but the agenda tonight is limited to Council race election dates.

Councilmember Griffith said he would settle for April-June. He does not see a huge problem with orientation not being done before a Councilmember is seated. He said a lengthy run-off period can be stressful, but a well-planned run-off campaign would be well suited for that timeframe.

Councilmember Castleberry preferred a March-April election. Mayor Rosenthal said the Council will take a lot of criticism if the April election has no run-off and the PSST is on the ballot alone for that election. Councilmember Kovach felt there would be equal criticism of holding an election in June when so many people are out of town or on vacation.

Councilmember Jungman said he is not a fan of a lengthy run-off, but the greatest harm is the PSST vote failing because Council put it on the wrong day. He said the vote will be won by a margin so if you make someone mad about the timing you have lost votes over procedure and not policy. He is against having the PSST on a ballot alone when there is no run-off so the election should be April-June.

Mayor Rosenthal said there seems to be more support for April-June at this time. Councilmember Holman felt March would be a good date for a Council election, but April would be a good date for the PSST. Mayor Rosenthal asked why he believes March would be a good date for a Council election and Councilmember Holman said because there would only be one month before the run-off, not two or three months. Councilmember Castleberry said if there is no run-off, the PSST will be on the ballot alone, but in June there will be a State primary so the PSST could be placed on the ballot for June. Mayor Rosenthal said a June election also pushes the PSST that much closer to the stormwater election, which she believes is somewhat problematic as stated earlier by the press.

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Mayor Rosenthal said the resolution will be voted on in the regular Council meeting following the Conference with the specific dates included in the motion.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated November 21, 2013, from Brenda Hall, City Clerk, to Mayor and City Councilmembers with Potential Election Dates for 2014

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The meeting adjourned at 5:53 p.m.

ATTEST:

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City Clerk

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Mayor