

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

January 21, 2020

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a study session at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 21st day of January, 2020, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Bierman, Carter, Hall, Holman, Petrone, Scanlon, Scott, Mayor Clark

ABSENT: Councilmember Wilson

Item 1, being:

QUARTERLY UPDATE FROM BOB THOMPSON, CHAIRMAN OF THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION, OF THE COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS ON ITS TARGETED REVIEW OF THE CITY OF NORMAN CHARTER.

Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney, said City Council appointed members to the Charter Review Commission (CRC) in the summer of 2019, and directed CRC to hold monthly meetings open to the public, hold quarterly public hearings, and submit quarterly reports to Council on any recommendations proposed to be made.

Ms. Walker said the first item the CRC reviewed was an amendment to Article II, Section 1, Stipend Increase for Mayor and Councilmembers. She said currently the Mayor and each Councilmember receive \$50 per month, plus \$10 for each regular or special meeting attended provided the total stipend does not exceed \$100 per month. She said CRC is recommending a range for council to consider for the Mayor to receive an annual stipend of \$8,100 to \$11,700 payable monthly beginning with the Mayoral term that begins in 2022 and for Councilmembers an annual stipend of \$5,400 to \$7,800 payable monthly beginning with terms in 2022. The Charter Review Commission further recommended the Mayor, with the consent of Council, appoint a five-member Compensation Commission to determine and set appropriate monthly stipends based on the consumer price index, the City's overall budget, and other relevant factors. She said a Compensation Commission should be appointed every three years and any monthly stipend approved by the Commission should not become effective until the following Council or Mayoral (as applicable) term.

Mayor Clark asked why the stipend is a range of pay and Mr. Bob Thompson, CRC Chair, said the CRC felt more comfortable recommending a range based on the amount of time the Mayor and Councilmembers commit to their position. He said the primary idea was to make running for Council or Mayor more accessible to citizens no matter what their socioeconomic position. He said Council can determine an appropriate amount within that range if this item moves forward.

Item 1, continued:

The next item reviewed was an amendment to Article II, Section 1, Reimbursement for Cell Phone Expenses. She said currently, the Charter does not address reimbursement of cell phone expenses and the CRC felt it would be more appropriate for this item to be a policy change instead of a Charter amendment.

Article II, Section 2, Mayor and Councilmembers' Term Expiration. Ms. Walker said currently, Councilmembers serve two-year terms and the Mayor serves a three-year term and they are sworn into office the first Tuesday in July after the election. She said the CRC is recommending a three-year term for Councilmembers beginning in 2023 and every three years thereafter. She said beginning in 2024, Councilmember terms will begin on the first Tuesday following certification of the election results. She said elections for Mayor shall occur every three years and every third year thereafter beginning with the 2025 election with the term beginning on the first Tuesday following certification of the election results. She said the CRC is trying not to impact current terms or terms up for election in 2020 knowing it would take time to get this on a ballot.

Chair Thompson said the CRC's vote was six to five on moving forward with this item so it was a very tight vote because most Commissioners felt the current system is not broken and does not need to be fixed. He said the current system allows a rotation of a Mayoral election during odd and even numbered ward elections.

Councilmember Hall asked why the Mayor's term was not extended and Chair Thompson said the primary factor was the mathematics of it and one of the advantages of having three separate cycles is that when there is an election for Mayor all Councilmembers would be in a position to run for Mayor without having to yield their seat.

Councilmember Carter asked if the CRC discussed the budget process when reviewing the seating date because seating currently takes place after the budget is adopted in June. He asked if they discussed a new Councilmember being seated in February having to dive right into the budget process versus a seasoned Councilmember finishing the budget process. Chairman Thompson said when he was on Council, the biggest complaint he heard was about new Councilmembers being sworn in and immediately having to think about adopting a budget they had no participation in. He said changing the swearing in date to the first Tuesday following certification allowed for the budget process to be completed before new Councilmembers were seated and began the next fiscal year's budget process. He said unfortunately that has not been as advantageous as it has been problematic and can be confusing for citizens who think they elected a new Councilmember in February that is not seated until July leaving everyone in a type of limbo.

Councilmember Bierman said being elected in February and seated in July feels like a lifetime and no one understands that reasoning. She said if someone is running for a seat they should be paying attention to what is going on and have some knowledge of what is being currently discussed. She asked what Staff sees in terms of orientation, can Staff bring a new Councilmember up-to-date in a shorter period of time? Ms. Brenda Hall, City Clerk, said it can be done and Staff works with the candidate schedules for orientation purposes.

Item 1, continued:

Article II, Section 10, Resignation upon Filing for another Elected Office. Ms. Walker said the Charter does not currently require a Councilmember to resign upon filing for another elected office and the CRC made no recommendation to change the Charter.

Article II, Section 2, Requiring a person to reside in a ward for a minimum of 6 months in order to be a candidate for Council. Ms. Walker said current Charter language states, "For purposes of filing and election to the position of City Council, only persons who have been duly registered to vote in accordance with state law within the City of Norman for six months prior to the date of the municipal election and reside in the ward from which they seek election, on the date of their filing, shall be eligible to seek election to the City Council." She said the CRC did recommend requiring the candidate reside within the ward for which they seek election for six months prior to the date of the election. If the ward designation changes in the six months prior to the election due to reapportionment, then that durational residency requirement would be waived.

Article II, Section 11, Partisan Elections. Ms. Walker said current Charter language states, "No nominating notice nor acceptance thereof shall have upon it any party emblem, sign or designation, and there shall be nothing thereon to indicate the affiliation of the nominee or of any signer with any political party or any organization." She said the CRC did not make recommendations to change the language.

Article II, Section 22, Filling Vacant Council Positions. Ms. Walker said current Charter language states that vacancies in office are filled by a majority vote of the remaining members of Council. If a vacancy is not filled within 60 days, Council shall call a special election to fill the vacancy for the unexpired term. She said the CRC is recommending language that states, "Vacancies in office are filled by a majority of the remaining members of Council after appointment and recommendation of one candidate from a Selection Committee made up of five residents of the ward where this vacancy has or will occur. If a vacancy is not filled within 60 days, Council shall call a special election to fill the vacancy for the unexpired term." Ms. Walker said this language simply formalizes the current process of filling vacancies.

Article VII, Section 2, Appointment and Removal of City Attorney by City Council. Ms. Walker said currently, the City Attorney is appointed by the City Manager, subject to the approval of a majority of City Council and the City Attorney may be removed by the City Manager. Ms. Walker said the CRC recommended modeling the City Attorney appointment after the City Manager appointment language already in the Charter. The position would become an at-will position appointed by a majority of Council and could be removed with five votes of Council. Councilmember Scott said she was uncomfortable requiring the City Attorney be under Council's discretion for removal because employees need some type of job security protection.

The next item discussed was the creation of a position for a City Auditor subject to appointment and removal by City Council. Ms. Walker said current language for the position of City Auditor does not exist in the Charter and the CRC is recommending no changes be made to the Charter.

Item 1, continued:

Councilmember Hall asked why the CRC made no recommendation and Chairman Thompson said this item was difficult to discuss because the CRC was unclear on what Council intended as the role of an Auditor. He said the CRC would have benefited from a more specific description of what Council had in mind.

The next item discussed was the addition of consequences to the Charter for violations of the City's Ethics Ordinance. Ms. Walker said there is no language currently in the Charter and the CRC made no recommendations to add language.

Community Bill of Rights. Ms. Walker said there is no current language in the Charter and the CRC is not recommending changes or additions be made. She said the CRC felt this was something that would need a stand-alone committee to discuss if Council wants to pursue a Community Bill of Rights because it is such a big topic.

Requiring a vote of the electorate for any Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District. Ms. Walker said the CRC had a robust discussion about this item with a split vote of five to five on a proposal that would require voter approval of TIF's that pledge sales tax increments.

Councilmember Carter asked Chairman Thompson to summarize the compelling arguments from both sides and Chairman Thompson said there were Commissioners who felt the current difficulties with the University North Park TIF (UNPTIF) was overshadowing the value of TIF's in general. He said they felt it would be bad judgement to put too much weight on a public vote on TIF's because of the difficulty the City is having on one particular TIF. They felt TIF's are an important tool for economic development and economic development as a strategy, which can be complicated, and felt it would take a serious hit if put to a public vote. He said the CRC decided if there was going to be a public vote on TIF's, it had to be on every TIF instead of TIF's over a certain dollar amount because the CRC could not find a good rationale for what a threshold should be. He said the Commissioners that were not in favor of a public vote on TIF's were primarily trying to defend the validity and ease of access that comes along with the TIF in terms of economic development.

Chairman Thompson said those more favorable to a public vote felt something as large as a TIF falls in the category of an increase in sales tax or General Obligation (G.O. Bond) of which both require a public vote. Further argument was that if a public vote is required, then people proposing a TIF would have to be committed to doing something the entire public was favorable to and would perform for the entire public rather than a simple majority of the Council.

Ms. Walker said items remaining to be considered include requiring Council to consider a resolution calling for a vote of the electorate to increase City utility rates under certain conditions; increasing the number of members of the Norman Regional Hospital Authority from nine (9) to eleven (11); reviewing potential loopholes used to skirt the Open Meeting Act; reviewing executive session restrictions and providing recommendations on appropriate limits of use versus overly expansive such that it provides cover to skirt the Open Meeting Act; revising the relationship between the City and Norman Regional Hospital for equitability of benefit versus burden to the respective parties; and examining the ward boundary creation process.

Item 1, continued:

Councilmember Petrone asked if the CRC would be willing to take on more issues and Chairman Thompson said yes, the CRC would be happy to review further issues.

Councilmember Bierman asked the number of Charter changes that have ever been placed on one ballot and Ms. Hall said 20 or 26. Councilmember Bierman said she is concerned about placing a lot of substantive items on one ballot and cannot imagine 20 or more items on one ballot. Ms. Hall said some of the items in the past were simple clean-up language and were not big changes to how government worked.

Councilmember Scott said she would like the CRC to reconsider penalties for violations of the Ethics Ordinance. She would also like to require a vote of six Councilmembers instead of five to remove the City Attorney to add more protection for the position.

Chairman Thompson said the CRC felt there should be consequences for ethic violations and he does not want it to be misconstrued that the CRC did not discuss the issue thoroughly. He said the CRC had a discussion that was broadly about whether or not there should be consequences, but needed a clearer idea of the type of consequences Council has in mind.

Councilmember Scott said recusal is an appropriate discussion as well as promotion of business being a conflict of interest. She said there should be a consequence to these actions. Chairman Thompson said if a person's personal judgement is a matter of ethics, it can become difficult for the group to say that person is being unethical.

Councilmember Holman said ethic violations were discussed by Council a couple of years ago and Council could not come to an agreement about how violations should be administered or who would administer them. He said Council was concerned it could be, and has been, used as a sword by Councilmembers against other Councilmembers. He said being an employee of a business does not mean the Councilmember working for that business has a conflict of interest directly or indirectly. He said excluding anyone who has a job from voting on an item could negatively impact the residents of their ward.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Charter Review Commission Progress Update," presented by Mr. Bob Thompson, Chair

* * * * *

Item 2, being:

NORMAN TRANSIT SYSTEM UPDATE AND DISCUSSION.

Mr. Shawn O’Leary, Director of Public Works, said the City has operated the transit system for six months and tonight Staff will be presenting information on branding, the Transit Master Plan, fare structures, current challenges, and next steps. He said on July 1, 2019, the City was designated as a Federal Transit Authority (FTA) grant recipient; on August 5, 2019, EMBARK began operating the paratransit system known as EMBARK Plus; on October 1, 2019, the City assumed fleet maintenance responsibilities; on November 7, 2019, the route for the Norman Central Library was changed to accommodate the new library location on Acres Street; and on November 12, 2019, voters approved a 1/8% sales tax for public transit.

Mr. O’Leary said three mechanics have been hired for bus fleet maintenance and one of the biggest challenges for the City has been the fueling and cleaning of the buses because CART drivers performed those duties at the end of their day; however, EMBARK does not provide that service. He said the City found a University of Oklahoma (OU) student willing to clean and fuel 28 buses each night between 10:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. He said the student has to have a commercial driver’s license (CDL) in order to drive the buses to the fuel station and this is just an example of something the City was unprepared for when taking over the bus system.

BRANDING

Mr. Taylor Johnson, Public Transit Coordinator, said the buses transferred to the City of Norman had the Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART) logo, which were removed so the buses are looking pretty bare at the moment. He said Staff needs direction on what Council wants the logo to be and said the City and EMBARK have prepared a design for Council’s review. He said the proposed branding honors the City and regional transportation within the Transit Master Plan. He said the design is the same as what EMBARK uses in Oklahoma City; however, the word “Norman” has been placed below EMBARK’s name on all faces of the buses. He said “brought to you by the City of Norman” has been added below the Norman flag logo as well.

Mayor Clark said the City is in the process of discussing a new flag design and asked how much it would cost to change the flag if the City’s flag is changed. Does the EMBARK name have to be on the bus or can the name be EMBARK Norman? Mr. Johnson said Staff is seeking direction from Council on that, but the idea was to match the buses with Oklahoma City in preparation for regional transit. He said the City also wanted to ensure Norman’s name was on the buses as well and that is why the proposed design was created. Mayor Clark asked how much it would cost to change the flag design and Mr. Johnson said the cost should be minimal because it is just a decal on the bus window. Mayor Clark asked how much it would cost to put a wrap on the buses and Mr. O’Leary said some of the buses are painted and cannot be wrapped so repainting could be more expensive. Mayor Clark said she would like to wait to see if a new flag is approved and Mr. O’Leary said some of the buses are looking pretty shabby and that is why Staff brought this proposal forward.

Item 2, continued:

Branding, continued:

Councilmember Scanlon said the proposal looks fine; however, one of the things that would provide revenue is wrapping the buses with advertisement and this proposal forgoes that option. Mr. O'Leary said Staff is still working on an advertising agreement with Tyler Advertising and another company that provides wraps for buses. He said the typical wrap of a full bus is a \$5,000 or \$10,000 endeavor.

Councilmember Holman said he supports the current proposal as a basis that matches the buses in Oklahoma City, but would like to maintain the ability to do advertising wraps.

Councilmember Bierman said she would not support advertising wraps because she comes from a land of no billboards although she is okay with advertising inside the buses. She does not want to limit what the City can do with the buses based on marginal advertising revenue.

Councilmember Petrone said the proposed design reminds her of an updated Winnebago from the 1970's and believes the City can do a lot better. She would like the City's flag decal to be much larger than what is being proposed. She asked if the name EMBARK has to be on the buses and Mr. O'Leary said the City contracted with EMBARK to operate the system giving them control to operate the system as they do in Oklahoma City. Councilmember Petrone suggested the public be able to weigh in on what the buses should look like, but if the City is looking at an expensive paint job for a couple of arrows then she would prefer to wait.

Councilmember Scott said it would be great if the City could commission local artists to tag/graffiti the buses. She said the Norman Arts Council (NAC) may have some value to offer if the City were to move in that direction.

Councilmember Hall asked if this proposal is new artwork and Mr. O'Leary said no, it is EMBARK's adopted brand. Councilmember Hall said she likes the idea of public participation and definitely wants to incorporate the City's flag. She asked what contractual obligations the City has with EMBARK as far as what is put on the buses. Mr. O'Leary said Staff tried to balance EMBARK, the City, and regional transit in the branding proposal.

Mr. Michael Scroggins, Information Technology (IT) and Marketing Manager for Embark, said the agreements tie the City to EMBARK branding for the first year of operation. Mr. O'Leary said Staff can renegotiate the contract in June if Council desires. He said it will be a delicate balance to take a bus out of service for the time needed for branding.

Councilmember Hall said she would like to have a way to express the buses as Norman's buses, but she is proud the City is able to build a foundation for regional transit and there should be some claim to the regional aspect in the branding as well.

Councilmember Scott said if the City had creative authority, the City could ask local businesses if they would be interested in sponsoring artwork on the busses.

Item 2, continued:

Branding continued:

Councilmember Holman said best case scenario, the City will only be operating the bus system for potentially five years then the bus system becomes part of the metropolitan regional transit system and will be rebranded for the RTA. He said the City could potentially purchase advertising rights to a bus and put whatever they want on the bus. He said some of the buses do look a little rough and some of the bus stops still have CART signs so he would hate for that to be the standard for the next six months while Council is deciding what they want to do.

Councilmember Carter said he does not support waiting as he would like the buses to look professional and if he had to choose, he would choose free fares over no advertising on the buses.

Councilmember Holman said he would support painting the busses white then placing one EMBARK name on them, but not place the arrows on the buses yet. Mr. O’Leary said he can try to negotiate that with EMBARK, but the proposed brand is the EMBARK brand and they may insist on having it their way.

TRANSIT MASTER PLAN

Mr. Johnson said Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART) adopted a Long-Range Transportation Plan in 2008 that was based on a needs assessment undertaken in 2003. He said the plan produced improvement recommendations in phases; however, much of the implementation was not realized due to lack of funding. He said the City updated its Comprehensive Transportation Plan in 2014. He said the City created a Transit Subcommittee that recommended enhancements to update the 2008 CART Plan. The Transit Committee discussed local and regional needs and developed immediate ongoing short range, medium range and long range action items for transit. He said the transit updates incorporated the City’s Comprehensive Transportation Plan adopted in May 2014.

Mr. Johnson highlighted the Comprehensive Transportation Plan related action items as follows:

- Action items to be implemented as soon as possible
 - Adopt the updated CART Long-Range Transportation Plan – Completed
- Action items to be conducted on an outgoing or annual basis
 - Coordinate the Norman Thoroughfare Plan with the Norman Land Use Plan
 - Allocate a portion of the available local funds to all modes
 - Provide bus pull-over bays at bus stops and upgrade to Urban Arterial Streets - Lindsey Street
 - Actively engage in agency and public planning and promoting of intercity transit services – Regional Transportation Authority of Central Oklahoma
 - Monitor transit facilities and rolling stock conditions and implement needed maintenance
 - Annually assess the transit level of service and ridership on major streets in Norman
 - Accommodate pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access and mobility during public and private construction in public right-of-way (ROW)
 - Monitor transit usage barriers and implement mitigation measures

Item 2, continued:

Transit Master Plan, continued:

- Action items to be conducted on an outgoing or annual basis, continued
 - Seek Federal Transit Agency (FTA) funding for transit operations in Norman
 - Coordinate the planned commuter rail station with future land use planning, development controls, and incentives
- Short-Range action items (first five years)
 - Extend CART transit system service hours on five key routes – extended hours to 10:00 p.m. – not extended as long as recommended
 - Add Sunday service
 - Enhance CARTaccess service hours to match fixed route service
 - Maintain CART service frequency on Lindsey East and West routes year round – completed
 - Add a new Downtown/Campus Corner Circulator route
 - Pilot project to reconfigure Main Street route and supporting routes to create initial grid network
 - Enhance CART transit accessibility, safety, and amenities – completed/ongoing
 - Encourage the use of intercity transit services
 - Develop site planning and property development concepts for commuter rail station areas
 - Study the needs, methods, and implications of establishing a dedicated funding source – completed
- Medium-Range action items (by year 2025)
 - Reconfigure and add routes to create grid network
 - Update the CART Long-Range Public Transportation Plan
 - Create Hub facilities for coordinated area wide transit service
- Long-Range action items (by year 2035)
 - Add new bus routes to target key corridors and expand service areas
 - Identify and enter into agreements to secure the property and ROW for proposed commuter rail stations

FARE STRUCTURE

Mr. Johnson highlighted the public transportation services fare structure and said the last fare change was in January 2014 as follows:

- Fixed-route single trip - \$0.50 to \$0.75
 - Reduced fare - \$0.25 to \$0.35
- Sooner Express single trip - \$2.25 to \$3.00
 - Reduced fare - \$1.10 to \$1.50
- Monthly Pass - \$20.00 to \$25.00
 - Reduced fare - \$10.00 to \$12.50
- Paratransit Zone 1 - \$1.00 to \$1.50
- Paratransit Zone 2 - \$2.50 to \$3.50
- Paratransit Same –Day Urgent - \$2.50 to \$3.50

Item 2, continued:

Fare Structure, continued:

CART Reduced fares are available for youths 6 years old to 17 years old, seniors 60 years old or older, persons with disabilities, and Medicare cardholders. Persons under the age of 6 years old ride free.

Mr. Johnson said free bus fare has been extended to June 30, 2020, to give Council time to decide what the fare structure will be and implement that fare structure.

Mr. Johnson highlighted Embark’s fare structure as follows:

FIXED-ROUTE

	OU/CART	EMBARK
Fixed Route Single-Trip	\$0.75	\$1.75
Reduced Fare	\$0.35	\$0.75
Sooner Express Single-Trip	\$3.00	\$3.00
Reduced Fare	\$1.50	\$1.50
Monthly Pass	\$25.00	\$50.00
Reduced Fare	\$12.50	\$25.00
7 Day Pass	N/A	\$14.00
Reduced Fare	N/A	\$7.00
1 Day Pass	N/A	\$4.00
Reduced Fare	N/A	\$2.00

PARATRANSIT

	OU/CART	EMBARK
Zone 1	\$1.50	\$3.50
Zone 2	\$3.50	\$7.00
Zone 3	N/A	\$10.50
Same Day Urgent	\$3.50	N/A

Embark’s reduced fares are available for youths 7 years old to 17 years old, seniors 65 years old or older, persons with disabilities, and Medicare cardholders. Persons under the age of seven (7) ride free. Reduced fare riders must have a reduced fare card.

Mr. Johnson said estimated fare revenues include FY19 OU/CART Cash Fare - \$54,000; FY19 OU/CART Fixed-Route Pass Sales - \$6,000; FY19 OU/CART CARTaccess \$15 Punch Cards - \$19,000; and allocated (City) funds for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Bus Passes - \$35,000 for total estimated fare revenues of \$114,000. Estimated revenue with EMBARK fare structure includes a 50% increase over OU/CART Fare - \$153,500 and a 75% increase over OU/CART Cash/Pass Fare - \$173,250.

Item 2, continued:

Fare Structure, continued:

The cost of upgrading fare technology includes estimated cost of modern fare boxes - \$330,000 and estimated cost of fare collection infrastructure at facility - \$30,000 for a total estimated one-time upgrade cost of \$360,000. Total estimated ongoing annual costs include sublet repairs of electronic fare boxes - \$50,000 and estimated cost for a security company to transport fares - \$12,000 for total estimated ongoing annual costs of \$62,000.

Mr. Darrel Pyle, City Manager, said one of the values of fare boxes is data on ridership so how will the City know ridership numbers without fare boxes? Mr. Johnson said the buses use a vendor that provides automatic passenger counters using lasers above each door counting in and out flow. He said if the lasers are not working, manual counts can be made. He said modern boxes can count the money as well as passengers to ensure the cash balances to the number of passengers each night.

Mayor Clark said she read an article that Kansas City was the biggest metropolitan to offer free fares so it is a give and take. She said cities can miss out on revenues that can help increase and speed up routes. She said if the routes are efficient it does not matter if the fare is free.

Councilmember Bierman said she is not a fan of collecting fares and spending money on fare boxes when in five years the RTA may be implemented.

Mayor Clark said charging a fare makes financial sense, but what is the point of regional transit if the entire system is not the same from one city to the next?

Councilmember Holman said the City cannot afford to upgrade the fare boxes and lose money on them, but maybe in a few years the RTA would be in a position to upgrade the fare boxes and lose money on them. He said the City needs new buses, a new maintenance facility, and a new bus hub in downtown Norman. He said it will cost more money to collect fares than not collect fares.

Mayor Clark said she would like to see some hard numbers on costs and revenues and Mr. O’Leary said Staff will provide those numbers at the next Community Planning and Transportation Committee (CPTC) meeting.

Mr. Johnson highlighted the pros and cons of free fares as follows:

	Adopt a Fare Structure	Operate Free Fare
Revenue	*	
No Fare Structure Capital and Annual Costs		*
Decrease Boarding Time and Improve On-Time Performance		*
Removal of Ridership Barriers		*
Utilize CDBG Bus Pass Funds Elsewhere		*
Rider Ownership	*	
Decrease in Non-Transportation Related Riders	*	
Increase in Operating Costs for Paratransit Service		*

Item 2, continued:

Councilmember Holman said he has received many calls regarding the non-transportation related rides and the number of the homeless population camping out on the buses and riding them all day due to the weather. He said one potential solution would be to implement a rule that riders can ride a full route, but then have to get off and wait for the bus to make the full route before riding again. He really did not know how that could be addressed effectively. Mr. Johnson said EMBARK has a one trip policy for paying passengers, which can be instituted for free fares as well, but the flip side of that is the passenger can ride a different route.

Councilmember Bierman said she does not begrudge someone wanting to be somewhere they feel more secure and going from bus to bus is at least a marginal compromise to someone camping out on one bus all day.

Mr. O'Leary said the City has not received the expected \$2 million in FTA grants funds yet because the FTA requires a great deal of administrative work, e.g. policies, etc., that has to be submitted before they release the funds. He said once all the paperwork has been reviewed, FTA will release the \$2 million hopefully before June 30th, but there are no guarantees.

Mr. O'Leary said when the City took over bus operations, Staff knew the City would be obligated to provide a facility to manage approximately 35 drivers for every shift, dispatchers, supervisors, etc., as well as the maintenance of buses. He said the City signed a contract with OU to lease part of their operation center, which has been extended to June 30, 2020, and on that basis, the City proceeded with the design of a new Bus Maintenance Facility at the North Base location. He said when OU transferred the system to the City they had to repay grant funds of approximately \$3.2 million, which the City is trying to obtain to use towards the construction of the maintenance facility. He said other options available may include extending the lease with OU, but OU has been very clear they have other plans for the facility and may not be willing to further extend the lease.

Mr. O'Leary said the buses are in desperate need of replacement so if Staff had to choose between new buses or a new maintenance facility, they would choose bus replacements.

Councilmember Petrone said she is concerned about jumping in on anything without knowing where the funds will come from. She suggested changing priorities in the Capital Fund Budget and asked Staff what projects could wait to give the Bus Maintenance Facility priority.

Mr. O'Leary said current challenges include stabilization of current operation and budget; General Fund and Capital Fund Budgets; FTA Grant Administration; Bus Maintenance Facility - \$6 to \$8 million currently unbudgeted; fleet replacements and upgrades; technology upgrades; branding; implementation of fare structures; and installation of modern fare boxes.

Mr. O'Leary highlighted Council priorities as service adjustments (restoring Saturday service and extending routes/stops); new Transfer Station; fare structure; ridership; and technology.

Next steps include finishing FTA documentation and program grant funds; discussing fare structures; completing construction of a Bus Maintenance Facility; reviewing FYE 2020 Budget

Item 2, continued:

and adopting FYE 2021 Budget; updating Long Range Transit Plan; developing and adopting operating policies as needed; occupying new maintenance facility; procuring fleet replacements; updating Long Range Plan; developing the FYE 2022 Budget; and adopting updated Long Range Plan.

Mayor Clark said she would like to see timelines for these meetings because she would like to start having these discussions as soon as possible including feedback from the public.

Councilmember Holman said one avenue for public input would be CPTC meetings held the fourth Thursday of every month at 4:00 p.m. He said Staff presents updates on the bus system at every meeting and encouraged the public to attend.

Councilmember Scott said she has a Ward Eight meeting scheduled for this Sunday at Fire Station No. 7 from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. and asked if Mr. Anthony Francisco, Finance Director, Ms. Kathryn Walker, City Attorney, and Mr. Taylor Johnson, Public Transit Coordinator, could attend to talk about the budget crisis and answer questions from constituents.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Norman Transit System Update and Discussion," City Council Study Session dated January 21, 2020

* * * * *

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor