

CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES

December 15, 2016

The City Council Oversight Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 5:07 p.m. in the City Council Conference Room on the 15th day of December, 2016, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Holman, Karjala and
Chairman Castleberry

ABSENT: Councilmember Allison

OTHERS STAFF PRESENT: Mayor Lynne Miller
Councilmember Hickman, Ward Four
Captain Lance Arnold, Police Department
Mr. Keith Humphrey, Police Chief
Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager
Ms. Jeanne Snider, Assistant City Attorney
Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative
Technician IV

Item 1, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING A RECOMMENDATION FROM THE ANIMAL SHELTER OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE TO ESTABLISH AN ANIMAL WELFARE CENTER GOAL OF “NO KILL OF ADOPTABLE ANIMALS” AND CHANGE THE NAME OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE ANIMAL WELFARE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.

Chairman Castleberry said there has been a recommendation from the Animal Shelter Oversight Committee (Committee) to establish a Norman Animal Welfare Center (NAWC) goal of adopting a “no-kill of adoptable animals” facility and to change the name of the Animal Shelter Oversight Committee to the Animal Welfare Oversight Committee.

Ms. Jeanne Snider, Assistant City Attorney, said the Animal Shelter Oversight Committee held several public meetings in 2011 in the hopes of building support for funding a new or expanded facility. During those meetings several citizens questioned why the NAWC was not already a no-kill facility. In response, citizens were told that Staff that the NAWC does all they can to avoid euthanasia of adoptable animals, but existing space limitations restrict the number of animals that can be housed at the facility as well as the length of time they can be held for adoption.

The Committee repeatedly discussed the pros and cons of establishing a no-kill facility and unanimously agreed the goal would increase community support for the NAWC and help reach the City’s goal of decreasing euthanasia. Since the inception of the Committee in 2005, Staff has provided a monthly summary reports of the facility’s intake and outcome statistics that includes the number of dogs and cats impounded, number reclaimed by owners; number adopted to the public; number turned over to rescue organizations; and the number euthanized each month. As an added

dimension to the report, Staff began providing a breakdown of the number of euthanized animals that were considered to be adoptable and non-adoptable.

Ms. Snider said adoptable animals are those that are healthy and have a reasonably good temperament in the presence of people and other animals. In contrast, non-adoptable animals are typically those that show signs of illness or behave aggressively toward people. The NAWC Staff has worked with great success to identify partnerships with breed rescue groups and local private animal welfare organizations to expand placement of adoptable animals.

The Committee recognizes the NAWC has made tremendous progress over the past decade in increasing adoption rates and reducing euthanasia and currently functions like a no-kill facility; however, the NAWC operates under several constraints that require euthanasia of some animals. Foremost among the constraints are space, staffing, and length of time an animal can be housed. Unlike a private animal rescue or welfare organization, the NAWC cannot refuse animals that are taken to the facility by residents and Staff regularly receives or picks up stray animals that are seriously ill or overly aggressive and cannot be placed into permanent homes. Because of these constraints, the Committee understands it is not feasible for the NAWC to be a purely no-kill facility.

The Committee believes the proposed resolution would help reinforce the no-kill goal to the public. The resolution also recognizes the name change of the Committee to the Animal Welfare Oversight Committee to be more in line with the name of the facility.

Mr. Mark Howery, Chairman of the Animal Shelter Oversight Committee, said Committee discussions took place prior to the bond election to expand and renovate the existing animal facility and a draft resolution was created at that time to build community support for the animal facility. The draft resolution was set aside during the bond election process; however, now that the expansion and renovation of the animal facility has been completed, the Committee would like to move forward with the resolution as a more formal recognition of the City's goal for no-kill of adoptable animals. He said the animal facility is close to that point and the number of cats and dogs euthanized is miniscule compared to what it was a decade ago.

Ms. Snider suggested "no-kill" be changed to "no euthanasia" because that terminology seems to sound more humane. She also suggested adding ordinance language that the City is now required to accept all dogs and cats, which sets the City apart from private organizations. She said there is also State language that could be added regarding standards from the Sterilization Act that deal with public health and welfare. She said there has been a lot of discussion about the word "adoptable" which means when space and/or medical issues exist. Councilmember Hickman said "adoptable" was a topic of discussion in which there was an agreement to disagree among animal groups. He said some people wanted to codify the definition of adoptable, but that was never done so it was essentially left to interpretation and implementation of Staff at the animal facility. Ms. Snider agreed and suggested adding language that the NAWC should evaluate the adoptability of animals based on circumstances of severe behavior, medical issues, or facility space. Chairman Castleberry felt that should be a policy issue instead of language in the resolution and Councilmember Hickman agreed. Councilmember Hickman said no-kill is a goal and everyone understands that no one wants to euthanize an animal, but under certain circumstances it is the more humane thing to do.

Mayor Miller said everything in the resolution basically states the City is working on protocols and practices to minimize the euthanasia rate. She does not believe a lot of additional language needs to be included on the resolution since it has more to do with policy procedures.

Chairman Castleberry asked if the Oversight Committee desires to change “no-kill” to “no euthanasia” and members concurred. Chairman Castleberry suggested the resolution be forwarded to City Council for consideration at the first Council meeting in January 2017. He did not want the item to be on the consent docket so public input could be part of the discussion. Mayor Miller said it would be helpful for Council to have some history about the reasons behind the resolution and suggested Mr. Howery give a short presentation to Council at that meeting.

Ms. Snider said she would make the discussed changes to the resolution and verify an agenda date with the City Clerk.

Ms. Joy Hampton, The Norman Transcript, said the resolution states, “Whereas, the Norman City Council supports the promulgation and implementation of practices and procedures at the Norman Animal Welfare Center designed to promote adoption rather than euthanasia of reasonably healthy animals of reasonably sound temperament.” She asked if there is a working definition of “reasonably” because animals cannot consent to long and painful medical treatment, although she is not implying the City would extend an severely ill animal’s life just because they could. Chairman Castleberry felt that definition should be left to the professional discretion of the animal veterinarian and Staff. Councilmember Hickman agreed and said the City has a “team” of people who currently make the decision of whether or not an animal is euthanized and there are checks and balances on how that determination is made.

Items submitted for the record

1. Letter dated May 18, 2016, from Mark Howery, Chairman of the Animal Shelter Oversight Committee, to Honorable Mayor Rosenthal and Norman City Council
2. Proposed resolution

ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor