

CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL SESSION MINUTES

October 17, 2017

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in Special Session at 5:35 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 17th day of October, 2017, 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 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT: Councilmembers Bierman, Castleberry, Clark, Hickman, Holman, Wilson, Mayor Miller

ABSENT: Councilmembers Allison and Karjala

Item 1, being:

PRESENTATION FROM HALFF ASSOCIATES OF THE REAVES PARK SPORTS COMPLEX MASTER PLAN.

Mr. Jud Foster, Director of Parks and Recreation, said the Reaves Park Ad Hoc Advisory Group was created in December 2015, after voters approved NORMAN FORWARD projects that included updating parks throughout Norman, especially parks that currently host sporting events. He said there have been a number of meetings regarding a master plan for Reaves Park which included a public presentation at the Parks Board meeting in August 2017. He said Halff Associates was chosen to prepare the Reaves Park Sports Complex Master Plan (Master Plan) and introduced Mr. Nate Clair, Regional Director of Park Planning with Halff Associates, and Mr. Lenny Hughes, Project Manager with Halff Associates (Halff).

Mr. Hughes said the Ad Hoc Advisory Group, as well as City Staff, provided Halff with a great deal of the background and input needed to develop the Reaves Master Plan. He introduced Mr. Clair who will be providing the Ad Hoc Advisory Group's recommendations to Council tonight. Mr. Clair said he believes Halff has developed a Master Plan that will be unique to Norman and will be more than just a sports complex; the park will be an iconic community park for citizens of all ages.

Mr. Clair said the Master Plan was a highly collaborative process that included participation by Lemke Land Surveying; Hornbeek-Blatt Architects; Terracon Geotechnical Engineering; Atkins Civil Engineering; Homer Associates Engineers, Inc.; and White & Associates. He said collaboration also included representatives from current sporting and festival event holders. He said Halff was tasked with developing a long range Master Plan for the entire park that would not inhibit future potential with current improvements as well as creating a premier park facility to stimulate economic growth. Key items of the NORMAN FORWARD initiative was included in the design and construction of 14 youth baseball and softball fields, restrooms, concession facilities, adequate parking, and adequate vehicle circulation.

Mr. Clair highlighted design goals as traffic and parking; improved connectivity (vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian); access; visibility; identity; character; drainage; playability (age appropriate); safety; amenities; consistent aesthetics; comfort; competitive to attract events; organizational; environmentally friendly; historical appreciation; and coordination with Griffin Park. He said Master Plan priorities and goals were divided into three categories 1) Primary Priority – elements that must be included in order to have a successful project from the beginning, 2) Secondary Priority – elements are desired but implementation will need to be delayed until additional funding is available, and 3) Future Priority – elements which are unable to be implemented at this time but should be included in the long term planning of the park.

Mr. Clair said primary priorities include a new drive improving circulation/ingress and egress; sports fields for 5 to 8 year old youths with restrooms and concession facility; sports fields for 8 to 16 year old youths with restrooms and concession facility; modification of nine sports fields for 9 to 12 year old youths with renovation of existing restrooms and concession facility; sports fields for 14 to 16 year old youths; new parking and renovation of existing parking for a total of 976 spaces; a retention/wet pond; renovation of existing restrooms and concession facility; and lighting for park drive and parking lot. He said amenities not included in the priority items consist of a large picnic area, splash pad, and additional festival space with a possible pavilion/stage. Secondary priorities consist of a ten foot trail on Jenkins Avenue and Constitution Avenue; pedestrian walkway lighting; re-establishing existing trails; playscapes; scorer's platforms; ornamental aluminum fence at gates;

batting cages; concession and restroom building for 13 to 14 year old youth sports fields; modified parking for 13 to 14 year old youth softball fields; maintenance building; and service road. Future priorities consist of complete renovation of 9 to 12 year old youth baseball complex with restroom and concession facility; renovation of Reaves Center with parking; event lawns/picnic grounds; Memorial Plaza; park restroom and pavilion; splash pad; parking; inclusive field; festival lawn; amphitheater/stage; fishing pier; and entry icons/gateways.

Councilmember Clark said Lawton, Oklahoma, has an inclusive field where wheelchairs can be used and asked if that is what Mr. Clair intends for the “inclusive field” in the priorities list and Mr. Clair said yes. Councilmember Clark said there is a sports league known as the Miracle League and asked if the City plans to create a Miracle League in Norman and Mr. Foster said possibly. Councilmember Clark said it would be exciting to have an organized Miracle League in Norman.

Mr. Clair said the overall project budget is \$10 million less construction costs of a new maintenance building at Griffin Park in the amount of \$2 million, \$962,800 for design, permitting, and materials testing fees, and \$351,860 for owner’s construction contingency leaving a total budget of \$6,685,340. He said primary priorities will cost an estimated \$6,663,432, secondary priorities will cost estimated \$3,376,417, and future priorities will cost an estimated \$7,087,672 for a total estimated project cost of \$17,127,521.

Mr. Clair said project sequencing will allow for the following:

- ...Removal of the existing maintenance building and two baseball fields during construction of four 5 to 8 year old youth baseball fields, entry drive, and retention pond;
- ...Removal of three adult softball fields for the construction of four 8 to 16 year old youth softball fields while maintaining the use of three adult softball fields; and
- ...Removal of three adult softball fields for the construction of two 13 to 14 year old youth baseball fields.

Councilmember Castleberry said the City will basically have a new park with new fields and concession stands with the exception of the modified fields, correct? Mr. Clair said that is correct, the internal core area will basically remain the same. Councilmember Castleberry said he would like to look at updating the modified fields’ restroom and concession facilities because the current ones are inadequate.

Councilmember Castleberry asked if there are safety provisions for the retention pond and Mr. Clair said there are no fencing requirements; however, the side slopes will not be steep enough that people could fall into the pond. Councilmember Castleberry asked if there will always be water in the pond or will the water flow elsewhere and Mr. Clair said there will always be water in the pond. Councilmember Castleberry asked if anyone has spoken to the University of Oklahoma (OU) regarding how overflow in the pond might impact their golf course and Mr. Clair said it is his understanding OU has an outlet for the release of water and will not be impacted by the retention pond. Mr. Clair said in the future, the retention pond is proposed to be a fishing lake with a pier/dock feature.

Councilmember Hickman asked if it was correct that the budget ends with the primary priorities and the secondary and future priorities are not funded and Mr. Clair said that was correct.

Councilmember Castleberry asked where the Medieval Fair will be located and Mr. Clair said they will be located in same area they are currently using, but will actually have a little more space.

Councilmember Wilson asked about the cost of the inclusive field and Mr. Clair said approximately \$200,000. Councilmember Wilson said it seems like the City is building a lot of things for kids that can run and play and do all the things an average kid can do, but the City does not have any parks that are inclusive so it would be nice to make that a priority. Mr. Foster said Ruby Grant Park will be totally accessible and Councilmember Wilson asked when construction on Ruby Grant will begin and Mr. Foster said 2018. Councilmember Wilson asked if there might be a way to raise private funds to construct the inclusive field and Councilmember Clark said the Rotary Club funds these types of projects sometimes. Councilmember Holman suggested prioritizing inclusive fields and inclusive play areas over a splash pad since the City has two splash pads.

Councilmember Hickman said he has visited similar complexes in other communities and the pictures shown tonight depict many trees around areas where fans would congregate and wondered if the plan is to plant relatively mature sized trees to provide shade. Mr. Clair said in order to get the most bang for the buck, mature trees will not be planted. Councilmember Hickman said he always looks for large trees near the sports fields to provide shade while coaching or watching events and while he understands the budget is tight, people remember events where there are trees that provide shade as well as the other benefits trees provide. He thinks the money would be well invested in planting some mature trees in the area. Councilmember Holman said existing trees on the west and north sides of the park are being preserved, but there are many mature trees throughout the entire park so he assumes the City will be preserving as many of those trees as possible through this design. Mr. Clair said yes, as many trees as possible are being preserved in the Master Plan.

Councilmember Castleberry asked how close the parking lots are to the fields in regards to foul balls hitting vehicles and Mr. Clair said Halff followed Little League guidelines to allow for enough distance although an occasional ball might reach the parking lot. He said planting trees as a barrier will help with that problem.

Councilmember Holman said parking on the edges of the park helps prevent people from having to walk through cross traffic to get to other parts of the park, but this plan has the playground area on the other side the ballfields so what type of traffic calming measures will be used? Mr. Clair said the Ad Hoc Group wanted close parking to the fields because people have a lot of sports gear to carry so the strategy was to minimize the distance from the parking lot to fields. As far as traffic calming, the roadway will be designed under residential standards to be narrower, which will help slow traffic. Also, the addition of street trees as vertical elements on each side tends to slow traffic down. He said the pedestrian connection from the roadway will be slightly elevated simulating a speed table so when people circulate there is no step up or step down from a curb. Mr. Hughes assured Council there will be a few traffic tables to help slow traffic in areas where pedestrians will cross into the play/event area.

Councilmember Castleberry said bleacher shade is a must in the primary priority, not as an add-on because it would be ridiculous to not have shade for the bleachers. He said when numbers are crunched that needs to be part of the equation.

Councilmember Hickman asked if existing structures will remain and Mr. Clair said the two existing playgrounds will remain, but an existing restroom building is proposed to be removed in the future.

Councilmember Castleberry suggested that all sidewalk concrete be thick enough for vehicles to drive on because even though that is not supposed to happen, it does happen during events where people want to pull in close to the event area to unload items.

Mayor Miller asked about the next steps and Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager, said a resolution will be scheduled in a future Council meeting to accept or adopt the Master Plan. Councilmember Castleberry asked if Council will have cost estimates before that happens and Mr. Lewis said Staff plans to bring more information to Council in the next two to three weeks. Councilmember Castleberry said he is uncomfortable approving Master Plan priorities without cost. Mr. Foster said Staff has detailed cost estimates for all the items in the plan and he will provide those to Council.

Councilmember Wilson would like the inclusive fields to be moved up in priority because that would be more important to her than some of the other priority items. Councilmember Clark said if the City reached out to the Rotary Club and raised the money would that move the project up in priority and Mr. Foster said yes, any private funding would go through the Park Foundation and could be earmarked for a specific project. Mayor Miller said that would need to be placed on the Rotary Club's agenda because they have other applications for funding, but an accessible field for children with disabilities would be viewed as a worthy project by the Rotary Club. Councilmember Clark felt that acquiring private funding would be the fastest way to get the project done and Mayor Miller said someone would need to do the paperwork for the request to the Rotary Club.

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Item 2, being:

CONSIDERATION OF ADJOURNING INTO AN EXECUTIVE SESSION AS AUTHORIZED BY OKLAHOMA STATUTES, TITLE 25, § 307(B)(2) TO DISCUSS NEGOTIATIONS CONCERNING EMPLOYEES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEE GROUPS.

Councilmember Wilson moved that the Special Session be adjourned out of and an Executive Session be convened into to discuss negotiations concerning employees and representatives of employee groups, which motion was duly seconded by Councilmember Hickman; and the question being upon adjourning out of the Special Session and convening into an Executive Session to discuss negotiations concerning employees and representatives of employee groups, a vote was taken with the following result:

YEAS: Councilmembers Bierman, Castleberry, Clark, Hickman, Holman, Wilson, Mayor Miller

ABSENT: None

The Mayor declared the motion carried and the Special Session adjourned out of; and an Executive Session was convened into to discuss negotiations concerning employees and representatives of employee groups.

The City Council adjourned into Executive Session at 5:56 p.m. Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager; Ms. Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney; and Ms. Gala Hicks, Director of Human Resources; were in attendance at the Executive Session.

Councilmember Castleberry left the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Mayor Miller acknowledged return to Open Session.

Thereupon, Councilmember Hickman moved that the Special Session be reconvened, which motion was duly seconded by Councilmember Holman; and the question being upon reconvening the Special Session, a vote was taken with the following result:

YEAS: Councilmembers Bierman, Clark, Hickman, Holman, Wilson, Mayor Miller

ABSENT: None

The Mayor declared the motion carried and the Special Session was reconvened at 7:30 p.m. in the City Council conference room.

The Mayor said negotiations concerning employees and representatives of employee groups were discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken and no votes were cast.

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ADJOURNMENT

The Mayor declared the meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor