

CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE MINUTES

January 27, 2015

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 27th day of January, 2015, 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, Heiple, Holman, Jungman, Lang, Miller, Williams, and Mayor Rosenthal

ABSENT:

Councilmember Allison

Item 1, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING A REQUEST FROM NORMAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO EXCHANGE PROPERTY OWNED BY NORMAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS LOCATED NEXT TO 12TH AVENUE RECREATION CENTER FOR PROPERTY OWNED BY THE CITY OF NORMAN ADJACENT TO IRVING MIDDLE SCHOOL AND WHITTIER MIDDLE SCHOOL.

Mr. Jeff Bryant, City Attorney, said representatives from Norman Public Schools (NPS) approached City Staff regarding a potential land swap. NPS proposes to exchange 1.14 acres of land owned by the school system located near the 12th Avenue Recreation Center for the two tennis courts owned by the City of Norman located adjacent to Irving Middle School and Whittier Middle School, a total of 1.08 acres.

Mr. Nick Migliorino, Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services for NPS, provided an overview of the properties stated above. He said a \$126 million dollar school bond passed in 2014, and as a part of that bond, wrestling rooms are to be constructed at Irving and Whittier Middle Schools as well as additional parking lots. He said there are City owned tennis courts at the schools, which are the only locations the wrestling rooms and parking lots can be constructed. NPS owns land directly behind 12th Avenue Recreation Center that is not being used by NPS and this land is similar in size to the two tennis courts. He said the tennis courts are rarely used and have to be maintained by the City and it makes sense for NPS and the City to come to an agreement to exchange the properties. This will allow NPS to move forward with construction to help the schools look aesthetically pleasing and be more functional for faculty, students, and parents. It will also allow the City to further develop the 12th Avenue Recreation Center in the future, as needed.

Councilmember Castleberry asked if the wrestling rooms would be just for wrestling or used as gymnasiums as well and Mr. Migliorino said they would only be used for middle school wrestling.

Mr. Migliorino said a dirt road behind Whittier Middle School is a fire lane and if NPS obtains the land, NPS will pave the entire fire lane as well as add additional parking. He has been working with Mr. David Riesland, Traffic Engineer, on options to lessen traffic impact to neighborhoods. The additional parking will lessen the impact in adjacent neighborhoods and also help traffic flow move more fluidly.

Mr. Migliorino said there is a security issue at Whittier Middle School where the recreation center abuts the school. The school has to leave the back door to the school wide open and cannot lock down due to fire egress. NPS would like to construct another door in the recreation center so the school building can be locked appropriately while maintaining safe exits for everyone, but that is a conversation for another time.

Councilmember Castleberry asked if NPS is interested in obtaining Whittier Recreation Center and Mr. Migliorino said yes and no. He said what the City does at the recreation center is incredible and NPS could never start that conversation unless the City continued to run the current programs because the programs are so crucial to the community. He said during the school year, NPS uses the recreation center 80% of the time and during the summers and evenings there are community activities going on that are needed and, in fact, more of those activities are needed in the City. He said NPS cannot invest money into the building at this point. Councilmember Castleberry said he hopes those discussions will continue because he feels NPS should own these recreation centers and the City needs to construct new recreation centers. Mr. Migliorino said it would be nice if NPS and the City could work together to share facilities equally.

Mayor Rosenthal asked what the total amount of property is at the 12th Avenue Recreation Center and Mr. Jud Foster, Director of Parks and Recreation, said currently there is a little over 2 acres and acquiring the NPS property would increase it to somewhere between 3 to 3.5 acres. Mr. Foster said the Parks Master Plan contemplates an expansion of the 12th Avenue Recreation Center, specifically the development of outdoor play areas, play fields, or other facilities to complete the center. He said the only way to expand the center is through the property currently owned by NPS. Councilmember Lang said the City needs to upgrade the 12th Avenue Recreation Center because it is well used and showing its age.

Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager, asked Mr. Foster to highlight the Parks Master Plan priorities and Mr. Foster said the Parks Master Plan's highest level priority is to build a new recreation center and proposes several potential sites. He felt the best site would be Ruby Grant Park, which would give the City a westside presence and 12th Avenue Recreation Center could be expanded for the eastside presence. He said this land swap can make that possible.

Councilmember Castleberry felt the land swap is a good deal because the tennis courts are not being used and NPS is not using the land near 12th Avenue Recreation Center.

Councilmember Miller said since the land NPS wants to trade with the City is land that will help with expansion of 12th Avenue Recreation Center and the land the City owns at the schools is not necessary to the City, the land swap seems to be an easy solution.

Councilmember Holman said he has a sentimental attachment to the tennis courts at Irving Middle School because he played basketball there during his middle school years, but the tennis courts were in bad shape at that time. He felt the land swap would be good for the City and NPS and frees up the money spent on maintaining the tennis courts for other needs.

Mr. Migliorino said NPS is planning to change the look of Norman High School on Main Street because Main Street is the center of Norman. When people exit I-35 and drive down Main Street, NPS wants them to see Norman High and say, "Wow!" NPS will change the stature of the building, the depth, and the oval with lots of glass elements and bold high school colors. He said there will be six tennis courts added so Norman High will have a true athletic complex that includes a tennis complex, softball complex, baseball complex, and basketball complex. He said Norman North High School will also undergo similar changes.

Mayor Rosenthal asked about the next steps and Mr. Bryant said City and NPS Staff will finalize the real estate purchase contracts or transfer contracts, which will be brought back to Council the latter part of February. Tonight's meeting was needed to allow Staff to receive feedback from Council. Mr. Migliorino said he cannot take the contract before the School Board until the City has accepted the swap because NPS Staff will combine that Board action with approval of the construction plans and NPS cannot construct something on land they do not own. He hopes to begin construction this summer.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated January 23, 2015, from Jud Foster, Parks and Recreation Director, to Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers
2. Location maps of 12th Avenue Recreation Center, Irving Recreation Center, and Whittier Recreation Center
3. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Norman Public Schools (NPS) – A Cooperative Proposal to better utilize parcels currently held by the City and NPS," Norman City Council meeting, January 27, 2015

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The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor