

Item 3 being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING CITY COUNCIL MEETING TIMES AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES.

Councilmember Castleberry reminded Council of one of the [sic] goals from Council's Annual Planning Retreat was to consider changing the time of the City Council meetings to allow for more participation. He said the Mayor conducts the meeting and the purpose of the Council meeting is to conduct the City's business. He said a City Council meeting is not a public forum and limiting the public comment time in a meeting is not a violation of the first amendment.

He asked Councilmember Allison, Chairman of the Council Oversight Committee, who previously discussed this topic if he would like to share the Committee's review. Councilmember Allison said Councilmembers and citizens have approached him with concerns about the current start time of City Council meetings. He said many who have young children/families would like to get more involved in the meetings, but are not able to wait through long meetings, because they end too late in the evening. He said the Oversight Committee discussed moving one meeting to a daytime meeting, but that did not have consensus during the Committee meeting. He said the Committee also looked at several different start times for meetings in other cities. He said the Committee consensus was to move the regular Council meetings from 6:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and move study sessions and conferences to 4:00 p.m. or 4:30 p.m. depending on the length of the subject.

Councilmember Castleberry suggested a six month trial period to see if adjusting the meeting times would help accommodate citizens who would like to participate.

Councilmember Allison said based on information reviewed at the Committee meeting, Norman has the most committee meetings and study sessions compared to other cities in the metro and Big 12 communities.

Councilmember Wilson asked if the public could get the same supporting documents for agenda items that Council receives for the meetings. Ms. Brenda Hall, City Clerk, said the full packet is posted online for the public to retrieve, but at times the backup material may not be fully completed when the agenda gets posted. She said Staff is trying to do a better job of replacing those agendas with the full packets when the material is available, but there are times when that does not occur.

Councilmember Allison asked if it would be possible to televise Committee meetings and whether there had been further study on Facebook live streaming Council meetings. Ms. Hall said Staff has reviewed what would be needed for Facebook live streaming to be considered during this upcoming budget process. She said the [sic] initial estimate for the needed equipment is estimated at \$40,000 and the time limit for Facebook Live is four hours; many Council meetings go longer than that. She said Staff will continue to explore other options.

Councilmember Bierman asked who Staff had contacted regarding Facebook Live because Lawton has been doing it since 2016 and has been very successful so much so Lawton has suspended plans to do the website streaming. She said the website link is very difficult to maneuver and there are issues such as the link text is too small and the volume is not loud enough to hear. Councilmember Castleberry said every meeting should be available and Council is working towards that goal.

Councilmember Bierman said it also solves the back log of meeting minutes, which are often not posted for weeks.

Councilmember Holman said he likes the idea of starting meetings at 5:30 p.m. He said even though public forum comments are not required, he feels that one of the best things about Norman government is that citizens do have the ability to address their elected officials. He said if there is concern with moving the public comments to the beginning of meetings, a compromise could be to do the consent docket first then do miscellaneous comments and the non-consent items could be done last since it takes up most of the meeting time anyway. Councilmember Castleberry felt the public forum is an opportunity for citizens to address Council on issues, not to comment on the agenda items. He said there could be a public forum at the end of the meeting to address agenda items. Councilmember Holman said he would be okay with that idea.

Councilmember Wilson said she likes the idea of starting the meetings at 5:30 p.m., because she does not like daytime meetings. She said she also likes the idea of putting the miscellaneous comments at the beginning of the meeting. She suggested a display on the screen that provides citizens information about how the miscellaneous comments will be handled.

Councilmember Clark said she likes the idea of alternating one meeting a month to daytime. She said citizens have mentioned that CART stops service at 8:00 p.m. and some people rely on public transportation to get to the meetings, which keeps them from attending meetings after 8:00 p.m. Mayor Pro Tem Castleberry supported alternating on a trial basis to see if more people will participate that cannot participate now.

Councilmember Bierman felt daytime meetings would exclude more than include. Some members of Council expressed concern with making changes prior to Councilmember-Elect Joe Carter's input since he ran for office under different guidelines.

Councilmember Karjala said Ward Two is not supportive of the daytime meetings. She asked if Council has collected data on attendance for Finance and Oversight meetings that have taken place during the day. Mayor Pro Tem Castleberry asked if it would make a difference if public was watching the meeting live or through a recording. He said at the last Finance meeting, the public did not attend and the other two meetings four or five people attended.

Councilmember Bierman felt if Council is going to have these meetings, data should have been collected of past attendance for daytime meetings to provide evidence that changing to daytime hours makes good sense. Ms. Hall said staff does not typically keep records of audience attendees but could begin to track that going forward.

Councilmember Wilson said parts of Ward Five have limited technology and she is also concerned about the disengaged population that do not have Channel 20.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Ann Gallagher, Ward Six, 2513 Woodsong Drive, said making meetings convenient for Council and not the public is the wrong direction. It will make it more difficult for those who work until 5:00 p.m. or work out of town to attend meetings.

PUBLIC COMMENTS, continued

Mr. Stephen Ellis, 633 Reed Avenue, said in 2018 over 30% of meeting agendas do not have supporting documentation on the website. He said changing the meeting times will change the audience at the meetings.

Mr. Scott Martin, Ward Five, Chamber of Commerce President, was supportive of a daytime meeting. He said it can be challenging when you work a full day and then attend meetings until late in the evening. He said he has had many people at work, church and at the ball fields who tell him they cannot attend night time meetings due to conflict and primarily, those conflicts are family related not business related. He said they would like to have another option. He encouraged Council to consider one day time meeting a month on a trial basis and see what results you get.

Ms. Cindy Rogers, 633 Reed Avenue, said engagement is about people caring about and being interested in the issues and people can make arrangements to attend if they wish to attend a meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Castleberry said he did a quick review of miscellaneous discussion participants over the past three years and there are less than 10 people who participate in miscellaneous discussion that have spoken more than once in that time period.

Councilmember Holman asked what the average meeting time is over the past five years.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated February 15, 2018, from Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney, to Mayor and City Councilmembers
2. Draft ordinance
3. City Council Oversight Committee minutes of December 21, 2017

* * * * *

The meeting was adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor