

CITY COUNCIL  
BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MINUTES

June 6, 2013

The City Council Business and Community Affairs Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 9:05 a.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room located at 201 West Gray on the 6th day of June, 2013, 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 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT:	Chairman Lockett
TARDY:	Councilmember Williams
ABSENT:	Councilmembers Jungman, Kovach, and Spaulding
OTHERS PRESENT:	Mayor Cindy Rosenthal Councilmember Robert Castleberry, Ward Three Mr. Don Wood, Director, Norman Economic Development Coalition Mr. John Woods, Director, Norman Chamber of Commerce
STAFF PRESENT:	Ms. Susan Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development Mr. Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager Ms. Leah Messner, Assistant City Attorney Mr. Shawn O’Leary, Director of Public Works Ms. Kathryn Walker, Assistant City Attorney Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

UPDATE REGARDING PROGRESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES AND PROJECTS THAT WERE PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED BY THE BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS (BACA) COMMITTEE DURING THE LAST FISCAL YEAR.

Chairman Lockett said when she was elected to Council there was a perception in the building community that Norman was not business friendly although, in her opinion, that was a misconception. She said since the Business and Community Development Committee (BACA) began discussing ways to streamline the development process, progress has been made in changing that perception.

Mr. Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator, highlighted topics discussed by BACA in FYE 2013 as follows:

- Economic Development Advisory Board and Economic Development Policy
- Streamlining the Development Process
- Review of Development Permit Fees
- Monitoring Customer Service Processes and Improvements
- Information Technology (IT) Performance Audit
- Information Technology (IT) Enhancements
- Retail Recruitment
- International Building Code (IBC)

Mr. Floyd said BACA adopted the City's first Economic Development Policy, created the Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB), and discussed various methods of incentivizing economic development in Norman.

Mr. Floyd said from December 2012, through February 2013, BACA discussed ways to streamline the development process that included extending the validity of a preliminary plat to five years and adding an administrative approval process for a plat extension; review and approval of final plats by City Council, eliminating Planning Commission approval; allowing pre-development and Planning Commission meeting submittal in the same application cycle; and allowing Certificate of Survey (COS) pre-development meetings to be optional if development is over 40 acres.

In March and April 2013, BACA discussed the development and distribution of a customer service survey for customers who utilize City permitting, planning, inspection, and property development services through an outside firm with a follow-up survey that would be conducted by Staff after a building project was complete. They also discussed surveying former development service users. Committee members preferred utilizing the follow-up survey that would include the type of firm; years performing work in Norman; which building permitting and inspections were performed; helpfulness of Staff; overall experience with inspection process; inspection thoroughness; consistency of inspections; and contact for additional comments or concerns. Members felt surveying former development service users would not be useful since there is no baseline established in which to compare results. Mr. Floyd said the survey will focus on the permitting and inspection portion of a project, but will possibly branch out in the future to include the development process as a whole.

Mr. Floyd highlighted additional customer service projects that have come out of the development streamlining discussions. He said since February 2013, a monthly "brown bag meeting" has been held between Development Services Staff and the Builders Association of South Central Oklahoma (BASCO) to discuss residential inspection details in regards to electrical, plumbing, building, and mechanical issues. He said the meetings have been very beneficial and will continue on a quarterly basis to discuss additional items of importance. He said Staff is working to centralize the information and subsequent actions as a result of these meetings into a designated section of the City's website.

Mr. Floyd said he is currently implementing a program designed to make contact with smaller commercial and industrial applicants as well as first time commercial/industrial applicants to introduce services and provide additional assistance during project construction.

In May 2013, BACA reviewed the process and method involved in selecting professional services consultants in the Public Works and Utilities Departments and current ordinances and resolutions related to local vendor preference. Staff provided BACA information regarding the percentages of firms from Norman and the State of Oklahoma that received contracts with the City along with a list of contracts awarded in the Public Works and Utilities Departments since 2005.

Mr. Floyd updated the Committee on additional projects underway that include:

- A proposal for thematic directional signage for motorists to assist businesses affected by the I-35 Overpass Reconstruction Projects
- Public meetings to discuss changes and amendments for the upcoming adoption of the 2009 edition of the IBC
- Click2Gov web software being utilized by contractors and trades to schedule inspections and review inspection results
- New field technology upgrades (laptops with integrated inspection software) implemented and being utilized by inspection Staff
- Consideration of hiring a management audit of IT services

Mayor Rosenthal asked about the time frame of the I-35 directional signage and Mr. Steve Lewis, City Manager, said Staff has received a proposal and initiated contact with the Norman Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) for comments on the proposal as well as possible joint funding. Mayor Rosenthal felt it would be important to have the signage in place before the annual "tax free weekend" event prior to school starting. She is concerned about the amount of sales tax revenue being lost at businesses such as Sooner Mall and felt the City needed to be sensitive to those timeframes when people come into Norman to shop. She felt there were other things the City could be doing to make people aware these businesses are still open such as public service announcements (PSA). Chairman Lockett said the City of Moore has police officers directing traffic during heavier shopping periods and suggested Norman do the same. Mayor Rosenthal said outreach could go beyond CVB in terms of collaboration on PSA's.

Mr. Don Wood, Director of the Norman Economic Development Coalition, said the City needs to also be aware that when people have their shopping patterns changed, they tend to continue with those patterns and need to be converted back to former patterns. He said the City will need to be very pro-active in changing those patterns once the projects are completed. Mr. John Woods, Director of the Norman Chamber of Commerce, said the west side Wal-Mart reported they are seeing an 8% decrease in sales per week since construction began. He said many of those customers may be going to the Wal-Mart in the City of Moore, which is the closest Wal-Mart on I-35. Chairman Lockett suggested reviewing traffic patterns and finding alternative routes to those affected businesses. Mr. Lewis said Staff is currently working on a comparison analysis of major stores at Sooner Mall and has not seen anything near an 8% decrease.

Mr. Floyd said Click2Gov software is currently being fully utilized and gaining momentum among developers. Ms. Susan Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development, agreed and said the program is working well for developers and inspectors.

Mr. Floyd said Staff is looking for meeting ideas for future consideration and Mr. Lewis said a Council Retreat will be held in August to discuss issues Council may want a Committee to review moving forward. He said the I-35 signage issue will be a part of the Retreat discussion.

Councilmember Castleberry would like a review of development fees to determine if they are appropriate and if the City is properly charging for its services. He would like to know what the services cost to provide and whether or not customers are being overcharged or undercharged for those services.

Mayor Rosenthal said in a previous meeting Councilmember Kovach had suggested that money being set aside for sidewalks, that will most likely never be built, be utilized for other projects. Councilmember Castleberry said in some developments there are always a few lots that take longer to be developed or are never developed so there are no sidewalks on those lots, which leaves gaps between sidewalks. He asked how that could be addressed and if the City can request developers to construct temporary sidewalks.

Mayor Rosenthal said some type of ongoing measure or monitoring of the effectiveness of the Development Coordinator should be done. She said there needs to be benchmarks, goals, and accomplishments to show the community what value was added from that position.

Mr. Woods said he would like Council to receive occasional updates on the Click2gov progress. He suggested the City track turn-around time on inspections and compare that to turn-around time prior to the software being used. He would like the Click2Gov process to be as easy to understand and coordinated as possible. He would also like the brown bag lunches to continue to meet monthly instead of quarterly and Ms. Connors said BASCO felt the City had addressed all the major issues and felt quarterly meetings would be sufficient for occasional updates.

Mr. Wood said Norman is on the short list location for a company everyone is familiar with and other than the University North Park Tax Increment Finance District (UNPTIF) the City has no tools to compete with Oklahoma City. He asked what the City can do and what they are willing to do to get a business to locate in Norman. Councilmember Castleberry said the City has the Norman Economic Development Authority (NEDA) and although there is no funding at this time, there are tools that can be utilized. He said if a project came forward there is a process in place to review possible incentives.

Chairman Lockett said many people do not understand how businesses work and why sales tax is so important. She felt the BACA meetings regarding economic development have helped to change attitudes or at least make people aware there is another side to business and they are not all big corporate monsters. She said the City has to take care of existing businesses especially when they have been good corporate citizens giving back to the community. She said education on what businesses do will be valuable to the Committee and community.

Chairman Lockett said she has heard people say that if it were not for the UNPTIF the City would have plenty of sales tax, but they do not understand that if not for the UNPTIF the City would not have any of that sales tax. She said cities have to bring people in to spend money and if Embassy Suites was not in Norman, where would all those conventions and conferences go? She said the City has not done a great job on publicizing the benefit of the business world. Being willing to support business and what they do will not only help Norman, but will help bring in more businesses.

Mayor Rosenthal would like to review policies related to storm response, public shelters, requiring builders to offer shelters in new construction, retrofits, etc. She said the positive outcome of these discussions will be that the City of Norman can advertise they are "storm ready" and prepared. Chairman Lockett felt BACA would be a good Committee to oversee those discussions because the business world needs to be engaged in the issues. She said the City of Moore is doing an extensive study on the different types of storm shelters, which should be completed in July. Mr. Wood asked if Norman has a program for registering storm shelters and Mr. Lewis said yes, through the Fire Department or online. Mayor Rosenthal said someone sent her a national press release article criticizing the City of Moore's residential structural standards by not requiring basic safety features. She said the City of Norman has more stringent inspections. Councilmember Castleberry asked if Norman has stricter inspectors or higher regulation standards and Ms. Connors said Norman inspectors are often criticized for being too stringent and there is a higher level of inspection requirements than surrounding communities; however, all communities in Oklahoma follow the State's currently adopted International Building Code (IBC). Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, said cities can make amendments to the IBC and those amendments vary. Ms. Connors said Norman does not have many amendments for commercial construction as residential, but that can be discussed as the City moves forward in adopting the current IBC. Ms. Connors said more shelters are being permitted and inspected and citizens are inquiring why they need an inspection so Council may want to review that issue as well. Councilmember Castleberry said he would like to see a map showing where registered shelters are located to have a visual on whether or not there are particular areas in which citizens are registering their shelters. Mr. Wood said the reason some people do not register their shelter is because they do not want anyone to know they have one. Chairman Lockett agreed and said that is information a lot of people do not like to share and that is why there are a number of shelters not permitted as well. Councilmember Williams said if a permit is obtained does the City use that as a record of the shelter even if it is not registered and Mr. O'Leary said no, registration is voluntary so the City does not keep a list of permitted shelters. Chairman Lockett said the purpose of registering the shelter is so someone will know you have one to check on you after a storm in case debris falls on the shelter and traps you inside. Mr. Wood said many people who have lived in their homes for thirty years or more may not even know they can register their shelter. Mr. Lewis said Staff would provide a geographical pin map of registered shelters to Council.

Mr. Lewis said Council will need to revisit closing public shelters because during the last storm there were initially 100 to 150 people in the public shelters, but when sirens were sounded that number surged to 500 to 600 people in each shelter. He said the City has a huge public education effort ahead of them and there are a lot of issues regarding above ground shelters versus underground shelters. He said there are a lot of mixed messages circulating. Mayor Rosenthal said there is also confusion regarding the sirens. Some people were wondering if the signal that is sounded twenty minutes after the first is an all clear signal. She said the University of Oklahoma (OU) has been educating students and faculty on where to take shelter on campus.

Councilmember Castleberry said Norman Public Schools has an “app” (notification program) to notify parents if the schools are closed or for other notifications and asked if the City has an “app.” Mr. Lewis said the City does not have one, but Staff has looked at the “blackboard system” and the cost is around \$100,000. Mr. Wood said the school system sells advertisements on the apps, which recoups the cost of the app. He said advertisers like the system because it goes out to a lot of people as well as a targeted audience and suggested Staff meet with the school system to discuss the possibility of coordinating with their system. Councilmember Castleberry said advertisers may be interested in targeting a particular location in the City versus the entire City. Chairman Lockett said people need to understand that when the siren sounds it is not the time to start gathering your family and traveling to a shelter, by then it is too late. She felt citizens in Norman are fairly educated about storms, but some people do not take them seriously because many times Norman has been surrounded by areas struck by a tornado, but not hit directly. She said this gives people the false impression that a tornado will not hit Norman. She said education can save a lot of lives.

Chairman Lockett said she would like to have the Norman Economic Development Authority board members selected as soon as possible, preferably before she leaves Council in July, but she realizes that process will not be done by then. She asked BACA members for suggestions on candidates for the board or to at least contact someone and encourage them to apply. Mayor Rosenthal said, at this time, there are five applicants and she wants a very diverse pool of applicants. She and Brenda Hall, City Clerk, will be brain storming names of possible candidates and contacting them regarding serving on the board. She said she would forward the applications and a list of possible candidates to Councilmembers for their review, but she does not expect the selection process to begin anytime soon. Chairman Lockett suggested Councilmembers try to find someone from their Ward to serve and Mayor Rosenthal reminded the Committee that the selection process is not Ward specific.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated May 30, 2013, from Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator, through Steve Lewis, City Manager, to Council Business and Community Affairs Committee
2. PowerPoint presentation entitled, “Update Regarding FY 12/13 BACA Activities,” Council Business and Community Affairs Committee, dated June 6, 2013

Item 2, being:

MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION.

None

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 a.m.