

CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE MINUTES

September 11, 2018

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a conference at 5:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 11th day of September, 2018, 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, Clark, Hickman, Holman, Scott (arrived 5:32 p.m.), Wilson, Mayor Miller

ABSENT:

Councilmembers Bierman and Carter

Item 1, being:

PRESENTATION FROM JASON SMITH, NORMAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COALITION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, REGARDING THE NEXT STEPS FOR THE STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN.

Mr. Jason Smith, Execution Director of the Norman Economic Development Coalition (NEDC), said about ten years ago communities and organizations began focusing on how to attract and retain talented young individuals. The primary leader of that movement, Mr. Richard Florida, wrote the book Rise of the Creative Class, which many cities used as the foundation in developing their policies. The whole concept of the movement was “people first, jobs follow people.” Historically, the consensus among community planners and economic professionals has been to recruit the jobs people will follow. Mr. Florida felt that was true in some ways, but in other cases that was reversed when there were skill gaps in high wage, high skill jobs. He said companies were locating to areas they normally would not want to locate because they might not be able to find the available talent; however, the companies understood they had to be where the talented people were locating.

Mr. Smith said NEDC has been working under an economic strategy developed in 1996 and the NEDC Board recently decided to move forward with a community-wide strategic plan to set goals and objectives for the Economic Development Program. NEDC partners appointed several representatives to serve on a committee that began meeting in July 2017, to employ a consultant and direct activities of community engagement and planning. The Committee reviewed consultants and Market Street Services (Market Street) was determined to be the most qualified company. He said Market Street presented their report to Council on July 24, 2018.

Mr. Smith said once all agreements are finalized with its partners, as far as duties and responsibilities, there will be a roll out of all the strategic initiatives and specific action items.

Mayor Miller said the City wants students to love Norman and live in Norman because Norman has lost students to other States. She said for several years, Oklahoma City (OKC) has actively visited the University of Oklahoma (OU) to recruit and match students with businesses. She said OKC does a great job of talking to young people and helping them understand that OKC would be a great place to live, work, and play. She said Norman will be in competition with OKC and needs to step up if they want to keep young professionals in Norman.

Item 1, continued:

Mr. Smith said according to NEDC's recent Business Conditions Report, 75% of Norman's top employers indicated they are having a hard time recruiting talent and it is affecting their growth. He said this has become a larger problem than infrastructure or facilities.

Mr. Smith said next steps will include informational events at OU's Campus with Norman Next as well as Second Friday Art Walk on October 12th informing students about employment opportunities in Norman. He said Norman Next will host a Live/Work/Play event in the spring of 2019.

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Item 2, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE TRANSPORTATION BOND PROGRAM.

Mr. Shawn O'Leary, Director of Public Works, said a presentation regarding the proposed Transportation Bond Program was made to the Community Planning and Transportation Committee (CPTC) who recommended the information be forwarded to full Council for input. He said Staff is seeking policy guidance from Council on moving forward with proposed transportation bond projects. Does Council want to proceed with a huge transportation bond issue and, if so, what would it look like and when would it happen? He said the timeframe is important as there is some urgency because the City's bonding capacity is \$72 million, but those bonds have to be sold by June 2019 in order to avoid a tax increase. He said Council has spent the last two years discussing stormwater and the need for a Stormwater Utility so how would Council want to speak to that relative to the Transportation Bond Program? Should they be on the same ballot or on separate ballots on different dates? Should core area projects, such as Porter Corridor and Main/Gray Street Two-way Conversion, be included? He said there could be a future problem with James Garner Avenue and Main Street, if the one-way to two-way conversion takes place so this would need to be addressed. Should sidewalk and multi-modal trail projects be included as a separate proposition?

Mr. O'Leary said critical next steps include finalizing a project list; developing detailed project scoping and cost estimates (by private consulting engineering firm); possibly blending federal/local funds; obtaining public input/community dialogue; establishing an election date; and providing needed staffing and resources for plan implementation.

Mr. O'Leary highlighted possible transportation bond election schedule options as follows:

FIRST READING	SECOND READING	NOTICE TO ELECTION BOARD	ELECTION DATE
January 8, 2019	January 22, 2019	January 31, 2019	April 2, 2019
November 27, 2018	December 11, 2018	January 3, 2019	March 5, 2019
November 27, 2018	December 11, 2018	December 13, 2018	February 12, 2019

Mr. O'Leary said there are two types of transportation bond issues, the Street Maintenance Bond Program, a five year program that targets basic maintenance of neighborhood streets (approximately 800 miles) and the Transportation Bond Program that targets principal and minor arterial roadways to reduce congestion, improve traffic safety, and preserve the City's transportation infrastructure backbone.

Item 2, continued:

In 1992, voters approved a \$7.3 million Transportation Bond Program; in 2005, voters approved a \$20 million program; and in 2012, voters approved a \$42 million program. He said in 2012, there were eight (8) bond projects that consisted of improvements to Cedar Lane Road; Franklin Road Bridge; Lindsey Street; 12th Avenue S.E.; Main Street Bridge over Brookhaven Creek; 24th Avenue East; 36th Avenue N.W.; and Alameda Street. He said the 2012 Transportation Bond Program was the largest transportation bond package in Norman's history with total costs of \$89,502,690 with \$46,927,680 coming from federal funds and \$42,575,000 from bond funds. He said the City is matching more than dollar per dollar in federal funding. He said some projects have not started because federal funding has not been received; however, design is complete and the City is ready to begin the projects once funding is received. He said the City averages \$7 million per year in federal funding, but needs \$11.5 million for 36th Avenue N.W. so the City will do that project in two phases.

Mr. O'Leary said Staff is proposing a Transportation Bond Program for 2019 or 2020 in the amount of \$70 to \$75 million and there is a deadline for a bond election in 2019 that would not require raising property taxes. He said the projects being proposed include congestion mitigation and development, stormwater related to bridges, special corridors, and trails and sidewalks. He said the City received approximately \$13 million in transportation funds on Lindsey Street to improve stormwater issues. He said Staff often joked that Lindsey Street was a "stormwater project with a street on top" and because the stormwater system was under Lindsey Street, federal funds could be used for the entire project not just the street itself, which is a rare opportunity. In Oklahoma, some projects require 60% voter approval instead of 50%. He said in 2005, four of the propositions passed and one proposition for sidewalks failed because of the voter percentage.

Mayor Miller said it is important to think about how long it takes to do projects because the City is still working and waiting on the eight 2012 bond projects and now Council is discussing 21 bond projects for 2019 or 2020.

Councilmember Clark asked how creative the City could get with sidewalk funding, such as recoupment or deferral type projects. Mr. O'Leary said that conversation needs to take place and he believes one of the subcommittees will be discussing that idea soon. He said this could be one approach to knocking off several million dollars' worth of sidewalk projects. Councilmember Clark said it may not be the answer to all the sidewalk issues, but if the City can come up with creative solutions for undeveloped areas there could be a higher bond passage rate. Mr. O'Leary agreed and felt sidewalks and trails should be a separate proposition because if mixed together the road improvements would need a 60% vote.

Item 2, continued:

Councilmember Castleberry said the City has a Trails Master Plan and asked if Staff is planning to fully or partially implement the Plan and Mr. O'Leary said the City currently has a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) that has a robust sidewalk gap program and these projects could be combined as long as the projects are identified and placed on the ballot. He said sidewalk projects tend to be missing gaps, fringe areas, or core areas where sidewalks need to be replaced. Councilmember Castleberry asked if the replaced sidewalks are standard width or ten foot width and Mr. O'Leary said the Trails Master Plan does more with widening, but sidewalks could be widened as well. Councilmember Castleberry would be in favor of extending Legacy Trail and Mayor Miller said she likes the suggestion of extending Legacy Trail.

Item 2, continued:

Councilmember Wilson asked how much it would cost to build out sidewalks and Mr. O'Leary said in 2005, the cost was approximately \$4.5 million and it would be easy to spend \$5 million on sidewalks. Councilmember Wilson said \$5 million would not be enough for every sidewalk project needed within Norman and Mr. O'Leary said that is true, that would be a much larger figure, but \$5 million would take care of priority locations. Councilmember Wilson said as much as she likes the trail system, it does not seem to be well supported in her Ward. Mr. O'Leary said the Greenbelt Trails Master Plan (GTMP) is probably a \$20 million plan so if trails are added the \$5 million would need to be increased, but this is the kind of feedback Staff needs. Councilmember Wilson would advise against trail projects at least until the City has more funding for other needed infrastructure.

Councilmember Hickman asked if the trail and sidewalk projects could be tied to the American with Disabilities (ADA) Study to target sidewalks/trails that need to be filled in or upgraded? Mr. O'Leary said yes, the City could combine the CPT, Trails Master Plan, and ADA Plan; however, any trails or sidewalks built now must be built to be ADA accessible. He said the question will be finding the priority locations that need to be fully accessible. He said for the first time in Norman's history, the sidewalks on Lindsey Street are fully accessible from OU to the west side of I-35.

Mr. O'Leary highlighted the criteria for developing the projects, which begins with the adopted CTP. He said development drives transportation, but sometimes development and transit move at different rates, which causes the City to do some catching up. He said recent activity in platting has taken place near Interstate I-35 and Indian Hills Road although there has not been much development to date. He said Staff began to worry a few years ago that 36th Avenue N.W. may not be ready to accommodate new development in the area so that is how 36th Avenue N.W. ended up on the project list.

Mr. O'Leary said Norman is currently working with the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) on the I-35 Corridor Study. Councilmember Castleberry said ODOT recently adopted their eight year plan and asked if the Indian Hills bridge is on that plan and Mr. O'Leary said yes it is six years out, but just for replacement of the bridge only. He said the Indian Hills Interchange is the oldest and worst interchange in Oklahoma and several holes have been patched in the deck of the bridge over the years so that bridge needs to go. He said ODOT recognizes the bridge is in dire need of replacement, but there is no interchange in that plan; however, Staff is hoping ODOT will increase the budget to include an interchange in addition to the bridge.

Councilmember Wilson asked if the City is receiving impact fees on development that may take place in the area and Mr. O'Leary said with each platted area there will be a traffic impact analysis that determines the traffic impact fees, there will be deferred road costs, and occasionally a recoupment project. He said these fees will be paid to the City when Council approves the final plat. He said deferral fees can only be used if there is not enough bonding authority to pay for roads so if Council decides they want Indian Hills Road in the bond package and there is enough bond money to build the road, the City would refund the deferral fee. He said deferral fees pay 30% or 40% of the arterial road costs.

Councilmember Holman said he drives on the Indian Hills Road Bridge frequently and that whole interchange is a mess and is controlled by a series of stop signs. He does not see how ODOT can build a new four lane bridge without reconstructing the interchange attached to it. He said there is no other interchange within two miles so it seems like this would be a primary project. Mr. O'Leary said because the interchange falls between Moore and Norman, it kept being left out of the plan, but it would be silly to build a bridge and not update the interchange at the same time.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. O'Leary said 21 projects are being proposed for the bond issues that include improvements to:

- Jenkins Avenue – Imhoff Road to Lindsey Street;
- Porter Avenue/Acres Street – Porter Corridor;
- 36th Avenue N.W. – north of Indian Hills Road to Moore city limits;
- Indian Hills Road – 48th Avenue N.W. to I-35;
- 12th Avenue N.W. – Rock Creek Road to Tecumseh Road;
- Tecumseh Road – 12th Avenue N.E. to Hollister Trail;
- Cedar Lane Road – east of 24th Avenue S.E. to 36th Avenue S.E.;
- 36th Avenue S.E. – Cedar Lane Road to State Highway 9;
- 24th Avenue N.E. – Rock Creek Road to Tecumseh Road;
- Tecumseh Road – Hollister Trail to 24th Avenue N.E.;
- 48th Avenue N.W. - Phase II – Rock Creek Road to Tecumseh Road;
- 48th Avenue N.W. – Phase IV – Franklin Road to Indian Hills Road;
- 48th Avenue N.W. – Phase I – Robinson Street to Rock Creek Road;
- 48th Avenue N.W. – Phase III – Tecumseh Road to Franklin Road;
- Tecumseh Road Railroad Grade Separation;
- Main and Gray Streets two-way conversion;
- James Garner Avenue Special Corridor – Phase II – Acres Street to Duffy Street;
- Lindsey Street Special Corridor – Pickard Avenue to Jenkins Avenue;
- Constitution Street – Jenkins Avenue to Classen Boulevard;
- Traffic Management Center (TMC) (a control center for monitoring the transportation network);
and
- Rock Creek Road – Queenston Avenue/Bruckner Drive to 24th Avenue N.E.

Mr. O'Leary said project construction costs total \$102,441,148 with total costs being \$177,919,436 and \$76,728,288 proposed in bond funds.

Councilmember Wilson said Cedar Lane and 36th Avenue S.E. is a very dangerous intersection and the construction of Walmart and Destin Landing have added traffic to Cedar Lane so what funds did the City receive from these developments? Mr. O'Leary said Walmart paid traffic impact fees and deferral fees in the 2012 bond package and Destin Landing will contribute to the current proposed bond package when developed. Councilmember Wilson asked if the grade at the Cedar Lane and 36th Avenue S.E. intersection will need to be raised and Mr. O'Leary said yes, early engineering design shows the grade of the intersection would be raised 20 vertical feet, which will be a tremendous undertaking. Mayor Miller said that is the only location in Norman where hills come down to the intersection on all four sides.

Mr. O'Leary said Staff needs suggestions from Council on what projects are important to them because Council sets priorities on bond projects. He said his top priority would be Jenkins Avenue between Lindsey Street and Imhoff Road because the OU just opened a large residential campus area and in a couple of years the City will open Reaves Park Sports Complex and the street will not function well for the traffic these facilities will draw. Councilmember Wilson asked if OU paid an impact fee when they built their big new residential complex and Mr. O'Leary said no, OU is exempt from zoning, platting, impact fees, etc.

Item 2, continued:

Mr. O'Leary highlighted the criteria for developing the projects, which begins with following the adopted Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP). He said development drives transportation, but sometimes development and transit move at different rates, which causes the City to do some catching up. He said recent activity in platting has taken place near Interstate I-35 and Indian Hills Road although there has not been much development to date. He said Staff began to worry a few years ago that 36th Avenue N.W. may not be ready to accommodate new development in the area so that is how 36th Avenue N.W. ended up on the project list. He said Norman is currently working with ODOT on the I-35 Corridor Study. The Indian Hills Interchange is the oldest and worst interchange in Oklahoma, which Staff believes should be the top priority. He said there have been holes patched in the deck of the bridge and the interchange is 50 years old, but that interchange is an ODOT issue not a City issue.

Councilmember Castleberry said the Tecumseh Road Grade Separation Project could be at the bottom of his list because it is not an urgent need and eight to ten years out. He was not sure he wanted to plan road construction ten years out and the City could forego that federal funding in order to complete other projects faster. Why not take this project out and put that money towards Indian Hills Road Bridge and Interchange? He asked if doing that would encourage ODOT to move the project up the list and Mr. O'Leary thought that idea would be well received by ODOT.

Councilmember Hickman said he understands the City averages \$7 million per year in federal funding, and with projects already in the pipeline so it is important to be aware that these projects could go on for 15 years and not start until 2022 or 2023. He said projects on this list will receive federal funds and be fully funded in 2038 so it is concerning to him to take on such a big list of projects gambling that over next the next 15 years the City will continue to receive \$7 million per year in federal funds. Mayor Miller said Staff has given Council the option of blending federal and capital funds in order to move ahead with projects such as James Garner Avenue because that impacts so many other programs or Jenkins Avenue that is such a critical need. Mr. O'Leary said to assume the City will receive \$7 million per year over the next seven to ten years is not realistic; however, the City does need another bond issue and needs to keep the program going.

Mr. O'Leary said the CTP identifies the concept of special corridors that are designed with complete streets principles and context sensitive solutions, but there are corridors in Norman that do not fit that mold. He said additional special corridor project considerations include Lindsey Street between Berry Road and Jenkins Avenue; Porter Avenue between Alameda Street and Robinson Street; Flood Avenue between Main Street and Robinson Street; James Garner Avenue/Jenkins Avenue between Boyd Street and Robinson Street; and Berry Road between Imhoff Road and Robinson Street. He said James Garner Avenue's connection to Flood Avenue will have significant impacts on three of the special corridors and the City needs to wait until the project is complete to reassess impacts on the design concept of these three corridors and the two-way conversion of Main Street and Gray Street in the downtown area. He said these corridors are very unique with challenges that include land issues, right-of-way issues, utility issues, non-conventional four to five lane candidates, etc. He said if the James Garner Corridor is as successful as the CTP thinks it will be, it will carry 17,000 vehicles per day and when those 17,000 vehicles hit Main and Gray Streets that were converted to two-way the City will have gridlock.

Mayor Miller said she loves the idea of two-way Main Street, but the idea of all those vehicles with 32 trains running through Norman every day she just does not see how that would work. She said James Garner Avenue is not even built-up, but there are already vehicles coming and going from City Hall, the Post Office, Library, etc., that are currently backing up on that street. Mr. O'Leary said 3,000 to 4,000 vehicles currently travel on James Garner Avenue.

Item 2, continued:

Councilmember Holman cautioned about making vehicles and their conveniences the priority through the downtown area where most people in this community walk, bike, and push strollers. Saying the City needs to prioritize the traffic flow of James Garner Avenue over the priority of pedestrian movement and businesses is not the right step to take. He thinks James Garner Avenue and its relationship to Main and Gray Streets is going to function however the City allows it to. If the City keeps Main and Gray Streets one-way and build James Garner Avenue then a traffic pattern will prevail, but coming back years later trying to convert to two-way will be harder. If the City worked on the two-way first then builds out James Garner Avenue the City would be controlling how that traffic movement develops. He said two-way traffic will also move slower and businesses will become more visible.

Mr. O'Leary highlighted next steps that include establishing a bond issue schedule; finalizing the project list; establishing local/federal mixed funding; approving contract with engineering firm to develop detailed project scoping and cost estimates; and developing strategy for public input and community dialogue.

Councilmember Hickman suggested a public meeting be held in October before making final decisions on the project priorities. Mayor Miller agreed and would like to request the City look at the possibility of cutting projects, such as the Tecumseh Road Railroad Separation Project, and using local money for Jenkins Avenue and James Garner Avenue. She would also like to look at what the City could do with \$30 million of stormwater projects. She said whatever the City decides to do there need to be some polling before final decision is made.

Mr. O'Leary said before the bond issue is approved by voters, the Public Works Department will need more staff for implementation and the ability to contract with an engineering firm for program management. He said the project management costs could be built into the bond issue.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Future Transportation Bond Issue," dated September 11, 2019

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The meeting was adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor