

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

June 18, 2019

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a study session at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 18th day of June, 2019, 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 Bierman, Castleberry, Clark, Holman, Scott, Wilson, Mayor Miller

ABSENT: Councilmembers Carter and Hickman

Item 1, being:

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CENTER CITY ADMINISTRATIVE DELAY AD HOC COMMITTEE REGARDING PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE CENTER CITY FORM BASED CODE.

Ms. Jane Hudson, Interim Director of Planning and Community Development, gave a brief overview of the Center City Form Based Code (CCFBC) process and said Council approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of Oklahoma (OU) on January 14, 2014; approved a contract on February 11, 2014; held a Center City Vision “Kick-Off” meeting on March 26, 2014; held a Center City Design Charrette on May 12 through May 16, 2014; posted the Charrette Summary Report on the City’s website in July 2014; held numerous Steering Committee meetings over the next two years; and concluded the process with Council adoption on May 23, 2017.

Ms. Hudson said Council met in a study session on January 29, 2019, regarding a possible temporary administrative delay for acceptance of applications for demolition and construction as well as rezoning applications from CCFBC to Center City Planned Unit Development (CCPUD) for properties located in the Center City Study Area. Following the January meeting, Council met in a special session and adopted the temporary administrative delay for a six-month period. She said the CCFBC Ad-Hoc Committee has met eight times to date since the administrative delay was approved by Council.

Ms. Hudson said there will be a pre-development meeting on June 27th; a special Planning Commission meeting on July 8th; a City Council meeting on July 9th; and a City Council meeting on July 23rd to consider the proposed amendments.

The goal of the Norman Center City Vision Project and Plan was to reset the conversation and provide guidance for future development and redevelopment in the Center City area. The CCFBC is intended to implement the purpose and goals of that Plan by providing strong implementation tools for the Center City area. The Form Based Code (FBC) is a zoning tool and provides a different way to regulate development to achieve a specific type of place that shapes the physical form of communities. She said current zoning tries to prevent uses, such as factories, being next to houses and other compatible scales of development, but sometimes having walkability means building small food markets or dental offices near residential areas within walking distance.

The CCFBC is composed of a Regulating Plan that provides a public space master plan with specific information on development parameters for each parcel and shows how each lot relates to the street space and surrounding neighborhood. Building Form Standards require buildings to have windows and welcoming entries that contribute to life on the sidewalk and they require the placement of parking to the rear of buildings to ensure that it does not get between buildings and pedestrians. These standards require that buildings support and shape the public spaces in our City.

Ms. Hudson said CCFBC challenges discussed and addressed by the Ad-Hoc Committee are as follows:

- Stormwater/run-off issues – proposal for 65% coverage;
- Lack of architectural guidance and disconnect of function and form; exemption of façade composition; and vision versus Code – proposed minor changes to the “Complete and Discrete” policy, i.e., variation of brick, colors, textures, etc.;
- Contradiction in side setbacks as required for construction of townhouses/small apartments at 100% of the Required Build Line (RBL) for the first 12 feet – proposed allowing administrative variance on a case by case basis or setbacks through a CCPUD;
- Evaluation of Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District incentives for development in line with Center City Vision – discussion continuing
- Parking impacts – one parking space onsite per bedroom for over three bedrooms;
- Street walls – requiring 100% RBL on corner lots can cause site and parking issues so the proposal is to have a 65% RBL on side of building (not front) and keep definition and requirements for street walls;
- Functioning street space entry – there is requirement for a street space side entry, but side streets are minimal making it difficult to have an entry so the proposal is no street space entry required if there is entry on street frontage and alley;
- Density – proposing a special use requirement for units that have more than three bedrooms, which gives Council the opportunity to closely monitor the density within the core area as well as stormwater and infrastructure impacts (there have been 12 applications with a total of 184 bedrooms);
- On-street parking – discussion continuing;
- Alley improvements – discussion continuing;
- Evaluation of residential on ground floor of Urban General – proposal to remove the three foot elevation required for residential use and allow construction under the commercial code for easier transition from ground floor residential to commercial use; and
- Townhouse/Small Apartment Frontage – proposal for a minimum of three units for single-family residential or stacked flats.

Councilmembers expressed concerns regarding the special use requirement for density and how that could be perceived as arbitrary. Ms. Hudson said the City wants density in Center City, but needs to make sure the area is not being negatively impacted by the wrong type of density.

Councilmember Castleberry said the City is trying to obtain investment in Center City so how does the City tell investors that although they meet the CCFBC guidelines, their project will not be approved because it is too dense even though there are similar projects in the area. Ms. Hudson said the special use requirements may not be something Council wants to adopt, it is simply a proposal from the Ad Hoc Committee.

Ms. Kathryn Walker, Interim City Attorney, said the primary concern of the City is infrastructure related so the issues of parking, stormwater, alleyways, etc., are legally defensible reasons for approving or denying special use requests. She said the City would have to be careful that these decisions are based on good, factual information.

Mayor Miller said the “kind” of density is the issue because what is currently being built is six to eight bedroom duplexes, which means multiple people with multiple vehicles and everyone knows that type of housing only targets one group, students. She said these are not the type of townhouses, small apartments, or larger apartments that meet the Center City area vision for diversity of students, small families, senior citizens, etc. She said the Ad Hoc Committee recommendations are trying to move that vision to one or two bedroom apartments, not just multiple bedrooms that really have one use and would require a lot of parking. She said this recommendation only applies to buildings with more than three bedrooms.

Councilmember Holman said a developer can build multiple units, but the Ad Hoc Committee is simply trying to find a way to limit the number of bedrooms in those units. He said three bedroom units will attract students, but will also attract young professionals, families, and senior citizens for a more diverse density; however, requiring a special use permit was a point of contention in the discussions and something the Committee debated extensively.

Ms. Hudson said the plan is a living document that can be updated or rewritten as conditions change, community priorities change, new issues arise, or assumptions prove to be inaccurate. She highlighted monitoring of the plan that includes evaluating the impact of density; assessing if Center City vision is being met; evaluating impacts on public infrastructure; evaluating impacts on adjacent properties; evaluating for inconsistencies; establishing a timeline for period review; and the Ad Hoc Committee’s continued review.

Councilmember Holman said as development occurs, one goal is to connect the Campus Corner area with Downtown Norman in a walkable/bike-able way and this Plan will help guide that goal.

Items submitted for the record

1. PowerPoint presentation entitled, “Center City Form Based Code – CCFBC – Resolution R-1819-75 – Administrative Delay – Center City Study Area,” dated January 29, 2019
2. Memorandum dated March 28, 2019, from Jane Hudson, Interim Director of Planning and Community Development, to Community Planning and Transportation Committee Members and Administrative Delay Advisory Committee Members, with CCFBC Certificate of Compliance Log
3. Center City Form-Based Code dated July 2017
4. Norman Center City Vision Charrette Summary Report dated July 2014

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The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor