

CITY COUNCIL
BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MINUTES

August 9, 2013

The City Council Business and Community Affairs Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 8:30 a.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room located at 201 West Gray on the 9th day of August, 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 Griffith
ABSENT:	Councilmembers Castleberry, Heiple, and Williams
OTHERS PRESENT:	Ms. Tessa Beder, Norman Chamber of Commerce Mr. Harold Heiple, Attorney representing builders Mr. Sean Rieger, representing Builders Association of South Central Oklahoma (BASCO) Mr. Ross Robinson, Director of Technology Development, Norman Economic Development Coalition Mr. Bob Thompson, Norman Builders Association 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. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING CONDUCTING A CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY FOR DEVELOPMENT SERVICES.

Mr. Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator, said on March 7 and April 4, 2013, the Business and Community Affairs Committee (BACA) discussed a creating a Customer Service Survey for customers who utilize City permitting, planning, and inspection services for non-residential projects. He said BACA explored the option of hiring a third party to develop and distribute a comprehensive development survey; however, BACA opted to develop an in-house survey that could be sent to developers, contractors, and others associated with building permit projects upon their completion. He said options for surveying those that have completed the platting/property development process may be explored at a later date.

Mr. Floyd said using BACA's input, Staff began working on the development of a "follow-up" survey to be conducted after a building project has been completed utilizing information that will include 1) identifying areas for improvement 2) areas of success and 3) to gauge the effectiveness of changes that are made as a result of the City's efforts.

Mr. Floyd said the reasons for conducting a Customer Service Survey include assessing needs; gathering targeted input; building goodwill; creating awareness or excitement for a topic; monitoring performance; program evaluation; policy exploration/study; and measuring survey participants knowledge, attitudes, intentions, skill, and behaviors.

Mr. Floyd highlighted items included in surveys from other cities, large and small, that includes the type/role of survey participant (tradesworker, owner, contractor); friendliness/accessibility/knowledge of Staff; Staff promptness to customer inquiries; consistency of Staff review/interpretation; timeline for review; suggestions for improvement; contact information (optional); overall satisfaction; additional comments section; and use of a rating scale.

Mr. Floyd discussed how the survey would be implemented. He will contact the general contractor or other representative(s) involved in utilizing inspection and permitting services after a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is issued to gather contact information and distribute the survey. He said the survey will be issued online or sent in an interactive portable document format (pdf) via email, which will minimize costs. He will then review survey results and share them with management Staff in the appropriate departments as well as the City Manager for evaluation.

Mr. Floyd said the survey will initially focus on permitting and inspections portions of non-residential projects and be later implemented for residential and platting/property development projects. He said input will be sought from the Norman Chamber of Commerce, Norman Developers Council, Norman Economic Development Coalition (NEDC) as the project begins so an assessment of topics that are of interest to owners, contractors, trades, and developers are identified and incorporated into the survey. He said implementation of the survey could begin following finalization of survey topics.

Chairman Griffith said in the assessment of other communities and the draft that was developed, were there questions unique to Norman or did Mr. Floyd amalgamate what was found and Mr. Floyd said he amalgamated what he found as it seemed these survey questions were relatively common among other communities. He said there may a few things that could be added and that is why he looking at the development community for input.

Chairman Griffith said if the City takes a proactive approach in emailing, which would be the most efficient way to distribute, will that improve response and Mr. Floyd said he believed those surveyed would be more apt to respond electronically. Chairman Griffith felt it would be beneficial for developers to be able to save and modify the survey so they could revisit it at another time and reassess their answers.

Mr. Ross Robinson, Director of Technology Development, NEDC, asked if the City had a mechanism for follow-up on those people that have procrastinated and not responded. Mr. Floyd said without delineating who has responded and keeping it anonymous, he did not know if that would be possible. He said he could distribute the survey to a cluster of names then follow-up with a general email stating he received X number of responses to that survey and would appreciate feedback from those who have not yet responded. Mr. Bob Thompson, Norman Builders Association, said if the email is supposed to be anonymous how would the developer be protected if they emailed back since their name would be on the email and Mr. Floyd said that would be one of the challenges and it may not be possible to do it that way.

Mr. Thompson asked if Survey Monkey, a provider of web-based survey solutions, would cost more than mailing and is it anonymous. Mr. Sean Rieger, Builders Association of South Central Oklahoma (BASCO), said Survey Monkey is anonymous and Mr. Thompson suggested the City use Survey Monkey. He said somehow, especially in the trades, the City has to keep the anonymity or they will not answer the survey because they will fear repercussion. He said if the City receives 5% response from tradesworkers, they have struck a homerun.

Mr. Floyd said there may be people with a trade permit that have not done a project in Norman for years so setting up a link to Survey Monkey in an email would seem to be the most anonymous method to utilize.

Mr. Heiple said he read the list of survey questions to developers at their last meeting and they thought the City covered everything admirably. He said the format looks good and the concept targeting non-residential projects is truly needed. He said the brown bag lunches the City has been hosting for residential builders has accomplished the task of clearing up problems within the residential phase of building. He said if the City only sends the survey to the person that obtains the CO then it is not really going out to subcontractors, which is important. He said if Survey Monkey is too expensive, then put language in the email that the survey response will go directory to the Development Coordinator so it is kept private or they can mail it back to the City anonymously.

Chairman Griffith asked if anonymity among developers and builders is really that important and Mr. Heiple said to some, it is very important. Mr. Rieger said it is really important and, no offense to the City, it is real because the City will not find a builder or a subcontractor who will submit anything if there is the slightest risk of their identity being known. If they do not feel there will be actual retribution, they certainly fear it so if it is not anonymous they will not respond. Chairman Griffith asked if having the Development Coordinator as the only contact point would raise any angst among developers or subcontractors and Mr. Rieger said they would probably prefer answering on Survey Monkey. Mr. Heiple said if they really want anonymity they can fill out the survey and mail it in and Mr. Rieger said many of them will not take to time to do that. Mr. Thompson said many of the tradeworkers do not have a computer as most work out of their trucks. He said the City is making progress, but the fear of retribution is out there, especially among subcontractors.

Mr. Thompson said the survey is a step in the right direction and is a good way for the City to open communication with the development community. He felt the survey itself was pretty good and did not require much tweaking, if any, and suggested waiting for some responses before tweaking. Chairman Griffith agreed and said he was excited about encouraging dialogue to get feedback on improving City services. He suggested developers or owners be encouraged to include comments from subcontractors. Mr. Thompson felt that would be good, but said the real problem is there are general contractors that build commercial buildings all over the United States for XYZ Company and everything is the same until they start to build in Norman then suddenly things are not the same. He said if the City could get feedback from those developers it would paint a completely different picture from answers by local builders.

Mr. Rieger felt the survey was a great start and said he will circulate the survey questions at the next BASCO meeting and submit feedback to Mr. Floyd. Mr. Rieger said in the last couple of years, the City has vastly improved communication through hosting the brown bag lunches to changes made to the comprehensive ordinances. He said things are heading in the right direction and if we can all keep pulling on the same rope it will make for a better community. He said senior Staff officials have been working very hard to try to do this very thing. Chairman Griffith said he is excited to hear how much progress is being made in making the development process friendlier and more expedited. He said the survey is another step in moving that forward so those changes, instead of being tortoise like, can be more exponential in its implementation.

Mr. Thompson suggested adding a question at the end of the survey asking if the building/owner/developer would mind if the Development Coordinator contacted them directly to discuss concerns and give them the option to put their name and contact information on the form. He felt that would add a lot to the credibility that the City is taking the survey seriously. Chairman Griffith agreed and said he has often seen that option on surveys. Mr. Heiple said he would start gathering information from builders regarding the anonymity aspect as well as reaching out when there are concerns.

Chairman Griffith said he would like to see how quickly this can be implemented. He asked how this could be communicated to the entire Council on where the City is on this process and if any of them have any angst about moving forward with this tomorrow. Mr. Steve Lewis said most of these changes are administrative in nature and do not necessarily have to be discussed in scheduled meeting with Council. He said if Council wants to move forward, Staff can put together a comprehensive memorandum and can plan to move forward within 30 days after feedback from stakeholders.

Chairman Griffith said he would like to move forward as quickly as possible.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated August 1, 2013, from Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator, through Steve Lewis, City Manager, to Council Business and Community Affairs Committee, with Attachment A, Draft Customer Satisfaction Survey for Development Services Division
2. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "City of Norman Development Services Survey Research," Council Business and Community Affairs Committee, dated August 1, 2013

Item 2, being:

MISCELLANEOUS DISCUSSION.

None

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 a.m.