



Summary and Recommendations of the Inclusive Community Subcommittee

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Date: December 16, 2019

To: Mayor Breea Clark, Members of the Norman City Council

From: Inclusive Community Subcommittee of the Norman Human Rights Commission

RE: List of Recommendations

Cities around the country have been grappling with how their leadership can better reflect the makeup of their citizenry and how policy making, service delivery, and distribution of resources can better account for the different histories, identities, challenges, and needs of the people served. We are proud that Norman seeks to be a city where one's identity does not predict one's outcomes. This report seeks to describe the process employed by the Inclusive Community Subcommittee of Norman and the recommendations offered by this committee to the Norman City Council and the Mayor.

In August 2019, the City of Norman updated its Civil Rights Ordinance to include sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, and place of birth. With this change, Norman became the first city in Oklahoma to approve comprehensive nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ residents in employment, housing, and public accommodations. We appreciate that the Mayor took the opportunity to enter into a deliberate process to broaden and continue the dialogue of inclusion by initiating the creation of this Inclusive Community Subcommittee. We understood our task to reflect on how else we might increase inclusivity for our city and the value of equity rooted our discussions as we sought to develop a response. The Inclusive Community Subcommittee is a diverse group of city-wide community leaders and influencers, holding a diversity of views, many of them deeply and powerfully felt. This report aims to reflect the dialogue and considerations over the Inclusive Community Subcommittee's journey together.

Our charge was to discuss and recommend. Given this expectation, we remain concerned about the sustainability of this effort without the creation of an advisory board (see Appendix A). The Council will now have its own in-depth discussions to conceptualize what is possible. Throughout our time, we consistently reflected on the purview of the Council and its committees and are eager to see how these recommendations influence how the Council prioritizes, organizes, and operationalizes the recommendations herein.

We offer this report and the recommendations unanimously.

Facilitated by:
Rev. Tamara Lebak, CEO
Celebrating Difference

Human Rights Commission Liaisons:
Dan Dukes, Marjaneh Seirafi-Pour

Inclusive Community Subcommittee Members

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PROCESS AND PROJECT SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The Inclusive Community Subcommittee was formed by unanimous vote of the Human Rights Commission during a Special Meeting held on September 16, 2019, with the purpose of creating a list of proposed action items identifying ways the Mayor can continue to build an inclusive community. Mayor Breea Clark planned to present the recommendations at the Mayor's Annual Interfaith Breakfast on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Monday, January 20, 2020.

In total, 46 applications for the Subcommittee were received with 26 serving as members through the entire process. In addition, Human Rights Commission members, Dan Dukes and Marjaneh Seirafi-Pour, served as Co-Chairs. The first meeting convened for group orientation on September 23, 2019, and a survey was opened for public input from October 4 through October 11. At the conclusion of the survey, 288 responses were received.

The second meeting, held October 21, 2019, included explanation of the roles of the City Council, the Human Rights Commission, and various City Boards and Commissions. During the same time, data from the public survey was analyzed and the Subcommittee split into smaller working groups to focus on specific subjects and further dissect the data. These working groups met on October 30 and again on November 4, when each group produced a draft list of possible action items.

In a third meeting held November 18, 2019, action item lists were reviewed by the entire Subcommittee and additional input was sought from all members. A small writing group met on December 2 to consolidate working-group items into one cohesive document, and the fourth and final Subcommittee meeting was held on December 16, 2019, when the final list of recommendations was unanimously approved for submission to Mayor Clark.

CONSIDERATIONS

The Subcommittee dialogue was first and foremost grounded in the data collected from responses to the Subcommittee application, as well as the data collected through the public survey. Topics included an examination of historically advantaged and disadvantaged groups based on many of

the following variables: ***race/ethnicity/color, gender (identity/expression/biological sex), sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic class (by ward location and the specific subgroups of single caregivers, the homeless, and the formerly incarcerated), education level (including OU/Non-OU dynamics), immigrant status, native language, physical or mental ability, and age.***

Initially, a pattern emerged; many items suggested to improve the inclusivity of Norman either were not in the purview of the City Council or included items that the City is already actively addressing. This led to a conversation regarding the need for continued education regarding civic engagement, relationship building, and methods by which the City can better communicate with its diverse communities. We believe this Subcommittee was a good start. The community needs easily accessible information regarding all currently available services, programs, partnerships, civic actions, and opportunities. Communication between the City and the public, especially underrepresented groups, must improve dramatically in order for residents to be aware of issues that affect the community, what the City is doing to address those issues, and what they—the residents—can do to engage.

The Subcommittee researched what other cities are doing to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, including assessments and trainings used. The Subcommittee also examined programs that exist for the homeless and for reintegrating formerly incarcerated felons. After identifying cities in our region (including but not limited to Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio, TX; Lawrence, KS; Kansas City, MO; and Oklahoma City, OK) and across the country that are at various stages of implementing inclusive-community programs, we found that one thing these cities have in common is membership in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE). GARE promotes data-driven policy and program changes, builds organizational capacity, and implements racial equity tools to help municipalities realize racial equity, providing a framework and roadmap for building an inclusive community.

It seems that most residents are unaware of the sizeable homeless community in Norman. Norman provides services to our homeless community through the HUD-funded Continuum of Care (CoC) program, consisting of more than 40 agencies joining resources to help address homelessness within the City and Cleveland County. We were unable to obtain full details about all available services because the City did not respond. We were told that the primary barriers to improved services are inadequate staffing and funding. The fact that the holiday season (November–January) is the busiest time of year for mental-health and homeless-service providers may be one explanation for the lack of response to our requests for information. (Another reason is likely a shortage of staff—an issue we attempted, without success, to learn more about in hopes of including further details in our recommendations.)

In addition to this research and these survey results, the Subcommittee also reviewed the 2009 City of Norman Community Survey Final Report. The Subcommittee believes that a regular commitment to acquiring comprehensive and inclusive demographic data is essential in furthering the cause of inclusivity in Norman.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish an ongoing Inclusivity Advisory Committee to expand Council reach (see Appendix A).

- Creates initiatives and builds relationships with the community for leadership pipeline of underrepresented groups.
- Hire a City Equity Officer with duties to include:
 - Researching and developing a data-driven 5-year inclusive plan of action that examines policies, practices, and procedures of diversity, inclusion, and equity.
 - Offering regular and outcome-based diversity, equity, and inclusion training for City leaders that creates buy-in and develops understanding of underrepresented groups in Norman.
 - Collaborating with HRC and Inclusive Advisory Committee.
 - Operationalizing equity by supporting City department strategies.
 - Allocating dedicated funding for programs implemented by the Equity office.
 - Supporting diversity-training program initiatives for business owners.
 - Supporting the creation of historically accurate exhibits in public places (e.g., city libraries and local museums) reflecting the systematic disenfranchisement of marginalized people and the bitter truths of Norman's history.
 - Joining the Government Alliance on Race and Equity.
- Commit funding to improve public relations and information access for all residents, especially those of underrepresented groups, outlining opportunities available within the City of Norman (e.g., available social services, ward information, meetings, events, volunteer opportunities).
 - Increase social media and marketing visibility (i.e., website, Facebook, advertising).
 - Create a centralized online resource for available social services, nonprofits, and identity-based grassroots organizations.
 - Collaborate with Norman Convention and Visitors Bureau to create and maintain an active Norman community-events calendar, available and easily accessible on websites and social media.
 - Expand free WiFi to all City-owned spaces (e.g., parks).
 - Ensure that website and printed materials follow accessibility guidelines and reflect the diverse populations of Norman; place hard copies in well-traveled/frequented locations (e.g., Pioneer Library System, City of Norman Utility office, local businesses, churches, and nonprofits). Further promote public-relations efforts through utility bill inserts.
 - Increase awareness of ADA Citizens Advisory Committee for addressing issues related to ADA Compliance.
 - Expand availability of low sensory times and areas at City-sponsored events.
- Make City Council meetings and City-sponsored events more inclusive by expanding and providing captioning/translation services in ASL and Spanish and by providing or subsidizing child-care support for City Council Meetings by partnering with local non-profits for services (e.g., Center for Children and Families).
- Become a Sanctuary City.
 - Renegotiate current laws so that County jails do not detain individuals for civil violations of federal immigration laws.
 - Develop relationships with other sanctuary providers (i.e., churches, city services, and state non-profits).
 - Adopt a Family First Policy to keep immigrant families intact.

- Approve a Sundown Town Apology and Reconciliation Proclamation (specific suggestions offered in Appendix B).
- Make City transportation fully accessible to all Norman residents (factors to be considered are number and location of stops, hours of operation, accommodation of people of various ages and abilities, and accommodation and standing room for mobility items).
 - Continue to increase the number of bicycle lanes in Norman, researching best methods to increase safety and decrease accidents.
 - Increase sidewalks in areas that lack them, and improve maintenance of existing sidewalks and curb cuts.
 - Seek support from grant writers to provide the necessary additional revenue for better transportation services and many other aspects discussed by the ICS as a whole.
- Build relationships between youth and the City by placing School Resource Officers in all middle schools and elementary schools, partnering with Police, Fire, and other City agencies to promote after school programs, and strengthening the Norman Youth Council ensuring criteria for participation includes all students, making it more accessible to students from all backgrounds.
- Expand support within the Police Department to crisis support programs specific to the needs of immigrant communities (such as Unidos) and increase advocacy for victims of human trafficking and domestic abuse.
- Ensure every resident has equitable access to emergency services.
- Promote high-quality, affordable, accessible child care with after-hours availability to support parents throughout the community. Partner with local non-profits, religious organizations, and the like to increase options and keep costs minimal. Provide CDBG grants to nonprofits to assist in subsidizing the cost. Support a community-parent co-op.
- Increase funding for homeless services and explore avenues to support Norman's growing homeless population. Increase community awareness by educating residents about this issue and encourage involvement through volunteerism.
- Evaluate and improve accessible housing in Norman. Address the availability and affordability of accessible homes and promote enforcement of ADA compliance. Offer incentives to rental owners to lower rent cost. Implement "rent control" for existing properties.
- Re-evaluate City RFP bidding process for local, minority-owned businesses (e.g., increase transparency of process, create a minority-owned business conference and online business registry to connect with community).
- Build relationships and collaborate with OU international student organizations (e.g., street fairs, music festivals, and food festivals) to increase citywide inclusivity.
- Expand current park space in the same spirit as Tulsa's "Gathering Place" and update existing sites.
 - Expand and update Reaves Park Kidspace.

- Update/rename public spaces connected to the Land Run, to include signage outlining the history of the land theft, occupation, genocide, and broken treaties related to Sovereign Nations.

APPENDIX A

Inclusive Advisory Committee

1. This Advisory Committee would be composed of Norman residents who have direct experience and knowledge in the areas of inclusivity and justice and will provide guidance for the City Council as the Norman Inclusive Community Subcommittee's recommendations are mulled over and carried out.
2. This Advisory committee would differ from the Human Rights Commission in two key ways:
 - a. This committee will not seek to author and carry out proclamations.
 - b. This committee would hold City Council accountable to the recommendations of this Subcommittee and help the Council determine how to carry out the recommendations.
3. This Advisory Committee will help to foster a level of trust between the Mayor, the City Council, and marginalized communities throughout Norman. This will be done by including community leaders who are dedicated to these efforts and by providing a direct entry point of communication between the Council and the larger Norman community.
 - a. A major point of contention is Norman's lack of racial diversity in leadership. This Advisory Committee will allow for the cultivation of people who eventually will step into places of leadership to better speak for communities of color.
 - i. Creating initiatives related to leadership development for marginalized groups.
 - ii. Working towards larger-scale goals such as dedicated cultural centers for communities of color in conjunction with community groups working towards similar efforts like Norman Citizens for Racial Justice.
4. This committee will be a permanent placement showing Norman's commitment to these endeavors and allowing marginalized communities' voices to be heard.
5. The first cohort of this Advisory Committee will be decided through an open public application process. During this process the Norman Inclusive Subcommittee, the Human Rights Commission, the City Council, the Mayor, and other parties will be encouraged to intentionally recruit those who have a vested interest in the purpose of this committee within the Norman community.
6. A member of the Human Rights Commission and a member of the City Council would be on this Advisory Committee to ensure seamless communication between these groups and to make sure balance is upheld between them.
7. This Advisory Committee will be described as consisting of voices from varying marginalized groups (*race / ethnicity / color, gender [identity / expression / biological sex], sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic class [by ward location and the specific subgroups of single caregivers, the homeless, and the formerly incarcerated], education level [including*

OU/Non-OU dynamics], immigrant status, native language, physical or mental ability, and age).

8. To ensure the sustainability of this Advisory Committee, it eventually will become a part of the Charter of the City Council. One of the first steps this Committee will take is to propose this change to the charter.
9. The Advisory Committee will actively work with the City Manager, the Mayor, the City Council, the Human Rights Commission and the Norman community to bring an Equity and Inclusion officer to the City of Norman to continue sustaining and solidifying this Committee. The work of the Committee and this officer will not be mutually exclusive. The Committee is an entity that will continue the work of inclusivity while working to bring in this officer.

APPENDIX B

Sundown Town Apology and Reconciliation Proclamation

- The historical record clearly shows that Norman was a sundown town for 78 years, from April 22, 1889, to 1967. Under this practice:
 - African-American residents in Norman were unlawfully and racially cleansed after the Land Run of April 22, 1889, because of job competition, racism, and white supremacy. Later periods witnessed mob violence, terror, threats, the freezing out of services such as restaurants and motels, and real-estate practices that resulted in the refusal of sale of real-estate and homes to African-Americans.
 - Significant KKK activities in the early 1920s with “more than 100 influential [Norman] men as sponsors” called for no African-Americans residing, working, entertaining, or simply being in Norman after dark.
- The record shows no African American residing within the city limits of Norman from 1889 to 1967.
- The City of Norman expresses its revulsion and publicly apologizes for these events.
- The City of Norman is dedicated to honoring those individuals who were deprived of their basic human rights due to sundown practices.
- The City of Norman is dedicated to publicly updating the historical record related to the sundown events from 1889 to 1967.
- The City of Norman is dedicated to publicly commemorating those individuals who fought and struggled for human rights during the 78 years when Norman was a sundown town.
 - Included in this commemoration is the creation of historically accurate museum exhibits, erecting public markers in places such as public facilities and parks so all may understand the nature of these events.
- And declare that Norman is no longer and never will be again a sundown town. Rather, it will be a city firmly dedicated to inclusivity and justice for all residents.