

NORMAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION MINUTES – SPECIAL MEETING
CITY OF NORMAN

May 3, 2021

The Human Rights Commission of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met via video conference and in the Municipal Complex located at 201 West Gray Street on May 3, 2021, at 5:30 p.m., and notice and agenda of the special meeting were duly posted 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

Item 1, being: ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Commissioners Sage Mauldin (Chair), Marjaneh Seirafi-Pour (Vice-Chair), Jackie Farley, Chris Nanny, Ellen Kraft, Christina Owen, Samuel Woodfork

ABSENT: Cathy Billings

STAFF PRESENT: Chief Diversity and Equity Officer Cinthya Allen, Assistant City Attorney Anthony Purinton, Legal Admin Tech Sarah Encinias

OTHERS: Officer, LGBTQ Liaison to City Executive, and PFLAG Norman Chapter President Michael Robertson
Norman Pride President Nathaniel Smith
Norman Pride Vice-President Pixie Quigley

Sarah Encinias called roll and announced a quorum.

Item 2, being: CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATION, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF ORDINANCE O-2021-45; AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, AMENDING SECTION 7-103 CHAPTER 7 OF THE CODE OF CITY OF NORMAN ADDING THE DEFINITION OF CONVERSION THERAPY; ADDING SECTION 7-111 PROHIBITING CITY FUNDS TO BE USED TO SUPPORT THE PRACTICE OR OFFERING OF CONVERSION THERAPY; AND PROVIDING FOR THE SEVERABILITY THEREOF.

Guest speaker, Michael Robinson, began by talking about how doctors and psychiatrists not only oppose the use of conversion therapy but that children in particular need to be protected from this harmful practice. Guest speaker, Nathaniel Smith, then displayed a slide-show presentation that described the history of conversion therapy and how it is used to on children to try and dissuade them from being comfortable with who they are. The practice has proven to be physically and mentally harmful to those that are subjected to it. Additionally, the 2009 American Psychological Association found it unlikely that the use of the practice would change a person's orientation.

At this time, only 20 states ban the use of conversion therapy but if the City of Norman adopted the ban, it would be the only city in Oklahoma that bans the practice. Guest speaker, Pixie Quigley,

spoke during the slide presentation to point out research that was performed to get an indication of various places in Norman that don't recommend the therapy, those that don't talk about it at all, and those that actually refer people to others that perform the practice.

Anthony Purinton then referred Commissioners to their packets which contained a draft of proposed ordinance changes and a corresponding memo that he plans to present to City Council in order to recommend adoption. After researching the subject, Mr. Purinton found that the states of Rhode Island and Connecticut disallow the use of public funds for any receiving agency that allows or participates in the practice of conversion therapy. Although this kind of ban wouldn't reach as many people, he believes it would be a good start with less of a chance that the courts or state legislators would strike down the ban.

Commissioner Nanny expressed concern that this option for the ban wouldn't reach far enough to make a measurable difference. Mr. Purinton noted that while the ordinance may not reach organizations who are currently practicing conversion therapy, especially since the practice usually performed by religious organizations, other States such as Utah have seen non-regulated entities adopt favorable position statements after enacting legislations. Commissioner Kraft asked if religious institutions were allowed to apply for city funding. Mr. Purinton stated that a religious organization who is receiving City funding would not be impacted by the ordinance, as the ordinance only applies to licensed mental health providers. Commissioner Owen asked if conversion therapy is conducted by licensed professionals or facilities or is it usually through churches, and Chair Mauldin said it is usually practiced by unlicensed spiritual advisors in churches.

Commissioner Seirifi-Pour asked why outlawing the practice entirely couldn't be implemented and Mr. Purinton explained that the ban would have to involve a punishment and a criminal sanction was more likely to be invalidated or pre-empted by state law. Ms. Quigley said although the proposed ban seemed minimal, it would be seen as a significant and sincere gesture by the City to create a safe space for all members of the community.

Commissioner Owen asked if the City could also issue a proclamation or resolution to call attention to the issue and Chair Mauldin said a Resolution denouncing the practice was previously issued by the City on February 26, 2019. Commissioner Nanny said this proposed ordinance change could be considered a gateway to eventually making a stronger ban at a later time and that work should continue on this subject, to which the other Commissioners agreed.

Motion was made to submit the ordinance amendments for recommendation to City Council for adoption. A roll call was taken with the following results: all approved, and none opposed. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Item 3, being: ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:19 p.m.