

Norman Board of Parks Commissioners  
August 4, 2022

The Norman Board of Parks Commissioners of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met on August 4, 2022, at 5:33 p.m., and notice and agenda of the meeting was posted at 201 West Gray Street, 24 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

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ITEM 1, being:

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Wright and Commissioners Davison, Isacksen, Moxley, Ross, Sallee, and Salmond

Tardy: Commissioner May

Absent: Commissioner Favor

City Officials

Present: Jason Olsen – Director of Parks and Recreation  
Mitchell Richardson, Recreation Supervisor  
Wade Thompson, Parks and Facilities Manager  
James Briggs, Park Development Manager  
Bethany Grissom, Park Planner  
Karla Sitton, Admin Tech IV

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ITEM 2, being:

APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 2, 2022 - REGULAR PARK BOARD MINUTES

Commissioner Isacksen made the motion, and Commissioner Salmond seconded to approve the June 2, 2022, Regular Park Board minutes. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chair Wright and Commissioners Davison, Isacksen, Moxley, Ross, Sallee, and Salmond

NAY: None

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ITEM 3, being:

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Sallee made the motion, and Commissioner Moxley seconded to approve the agenda. The vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Chair Wright and Commissioners Davison, Isacksen, Moxley, Ross, Sallee, and Salmond

NAY: None

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Commissioner May arrived at the meeting at 5:34 p.m.

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ITEM 4, being:

ANNUAL PRESENTATION FROM THE CLEVELAND COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Ms. Amy Pence, Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum, (MLHHM) gave an annual presentation to the Board. She said throughout the past year, the MLHHM welcomed 1,735 visitors (more than 2.5 times the number from the previous fiscal year) as well as had four exhibits and four micro-exhibits, seven events, two history camp series, two homeschool days, and two workshops. Ms. Pence said almost 400 people visited the MLHHM last month, stating it was likely due to a current exhibit called *Sundown: An Examination of Norman's History as a Sundown Town* which has been extended through October. Ms. Pence said there are many other exhibits and events, such as the Paranormal Investigation and Christmas in Oklahoma Territory. She invited the Board to attend one (or all) or come get a tour of the museum. Additionally, the MLHHM also provided 15 field trips, educational group tours, private workshops and participated in two outreach events. Ms. Pence said the MLHHM received two grants; a \$4,000 Operational Support Grant from the Norman Arts Council to assist in covering the costs of exhibits, educational programming, and necessary supplies and \$3200 ARPA Grant from the Oklahoma Department of Libraries to provide for computers, a scanner and a digital sign which allows better response time to inquiries.

Ms. Pence said Cleveland County Historical Society (CCHS) continues to offer photo and document archives as a free service available on the MLHHM website. She said the website also serves as a resource for those who are interested in submitting a research request and 15 requests have been provided over the past year.

Ms. Pence said admission to the MLHHM is free and most of the camps and workshops are priced at an affordable fee of \$5.00 per person for children's classes and \$15 per person for adult classes. She said the historic house can be rented out for small events as well as host Victorian tea party birthday party packages. The MLHHM and CCHS have sought out additional income sources to include the museum gift shop, grants, royalties on CCHS books and fundraisers.

Commissioner Sallee said the annual CROP walk is scheduled for Sunday, October 16, 2022, and said the "walk trail" is near the MLHHM. She asked whether the MLHHM is open on Sundays and Ms. Pence said no; however, with enough notice, she could open up the museum. Commissioner Sallee felt the MLHHM will get a lot of visitors if she opened and Ms. Pence agreed. Commissioner May asked when the next Paranormal Investigation would be and Ms. Pence said in October; but she would need to double-check the exact date. Ms. Pence said check-in would begin at 7:30pm and the tour is 8pm to midnight. Commissioner May suggested sending out event information to the local media, stating the Paranormal Investigation in particular would be a great October story. Ms. Pence agreed and thanked her for the suggestion.

Commissioner Isacksen asked about the expenditure approvals and Ms. Pence said she does not need Board of Directors approval on expenditure \$100 or less and/or the expenditures from the grant budget, since the Board approves the grant budget beforehand.

The Board acknowledged the report.

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ITEM 5, being:

ANNUAL PRESENTATION FROM PUBLIC ARTS BOARD

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Ms. Erinn Gavaghan, Executive Director, Public Arts Board (PAB), gave an annual presentation to the Board. She said the PAB is a joint committee of the City of Norman and the Norman Arts Council (NAC).

Ms. Gavaghan said NAC applied for a couple of grants to enhance and expand the MJ Alexander's NF Project at Andrews Park *In Their Words*, to include sound and movement elements to the project. She said the PAB has selected twenty-five poems for the Haiku Poetry Project from Norman Public School students from the 5<sup>th</sup> grade that are all about Downtown Norman. The poems will be turned into silhouette cutout designs and will be added to the street light poles in the Walker Arts District for the October 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday Art Walk. Ms. Gavaghan said PAB is also working on an implementation guideline for Artist Initiated Projects.

Ms. Gavaghan highlighted PAB's financials, stating as of June 30, 2022 the Fund Balance was \$62,032.26. She said PAB FY22 income via sponsorships and donations was approximately \$29,025.23 and the FY22 expenses were approximately \$40,803.57. She said the expenses obviously outweighed the income; however, there is still a sizeable fund balance for public art and some was used to cover additional expenses for the year.

Ms. Gavaghan highlighted several PAB FY22 projects, beginning with the Park Duck Project and said in the spring of 2021, three ducks were refurbished and repainted with new designs and restalled back into the parks in August, 2021. The new designs are *Vintage Circus Duck* in Reaves Park, *Strawberry Shortduck* in Sequoyah Park and *Monster Duck* in Andrews Park. Ms. Gavaghan said an additional eight bike racks were installed in the Bike Rack Project around the City between the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022. Chair Wright asked how many bike racks are located throughout Norman and Ms. Gavaghan said approximately 30 to 35. Ms. Gavaghan highlighted the *Gems* Project at Ruby Grant Park and said it was one of the larger art projects done by artist Nathan Pratt. She described the art as fireflies in the rafters of the pavilion located by the all-inclusive playground. Each firefly is cast out of bronze, except for the rear end, which lights up as it gets darker. Commissioner Sallee asked if the fireflies are battery-operated or solar-powered and Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation, said they are hard wired. Ms. Gavaghan highlighted the Artful Inlets Project at Lions Park which was a collaboration with the City of Norman Stormwater Division, PAB and NAC. She said this year's theme was "Cool Cats Keep it Clean" since it was in Lions Park and showed the Board pictures of the artist's sidewalk paintings.

Commissioner Isacksen asked whether PAB would continue the Bike Rack Program and Ms. Gavaghan said PAB is not sure yet, stating the Board comes together each year to evaluate what projects will continue, what projects need maintenance or move onto new projects.

Chair Wright asked how the maintenance on the Norman Forward public art and Ms. Gavaghan said when an artist is contracted with the City, they have to give a maintenance plan on the art. She said depending on where the art is located, City Staff will maintain the art, i.e., *Gems* Project falls under the Parks and Recreation Department to maintain. Commissioner Sallee asked for explanation of the public art portion of the Norman Forward initiative and Ms. Gavaghan said when Norman Forward was passed, one percent of the construction costs for each of the designated projects was to be set aside for public art which is specific to that project. She said public art has been installed at Westwood Park, Norman Public Library, Andrews Park and Ruby Grant Park and future projects include the Young Family Athletic Center, Senior Wellness Center, Reaves Park and Griffin Park. Commissioner Sallee said citizens can also donate to public art when paying their City utility bill and Ms. Gavaghan said yes; however, those donations have steadily declined over the years. Ms. Gavaghan said PAB is working on ways to develop marketing for ways citizens can contribute to the arts in Norman. The Public Arts Board made the decision that they would like to reform itself in a manner that separates it from the City of Norman. The

PAB feel as if this would facilitate fundraising and would provide more flexibility since they no longer would be required to follow the Open Meeting rules.

The Board acknowledged the presentation.

ITEM 6, being:

**DISCUSSION REGARDING LIBRARY PLACEMENT OF PARK BENCHES**

Ms. Lisa Webb and Ms. Caroline Dulworth, Pioneer Library System (PLS), gave a presentation to the Board regarding solar benches and requesting installation at three City parks. Ms. Webb said PLS has been thinking of ways to provide more connectivity to library curated collections of books, audiobooks, and magazines without constructing new libraries. She said library staff researched and found park benches that would extend access to WiFi locations and the PSL Board voted to purchase 12 benches to be scattered across the PLS service areas. Ms. Webb said the park benches are manufactured out of Houston, Texas and are solar powered, include an internet hot spot, and charging station.

Ms. Dulworth said PLS worked with the Parks and Recreation Staff and requested park benches at Colonial Estates Park, Ruby Grant Park and Frances Cate Park. She showed pictures depicting where the bench placement would be at each park.

Commissioner Salmond asked the cost of the park benches and Ms. Webb said approximately \$9,000 each. Commissioner Moxley asked what the hours of operation for the park benches and hours of operation for the City parks. Ms. Webb said the benches are available anytime and Mr. Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation, said the park hours are dawn to dusk. Commissioner Moxley said he was concerned about the benches being on and flashing after the park has closed. Commissioner May asked if the benches (screens) power down and Ms. Webb said no, they are solar powered and charge the battery for the charging station, but the screens are not backlit. Commissioner Moxley asked City Staff if the three proposed parks are the areas that the City is currently having homeless issues and Mr. Olsen said Colonial Estates might have homeless issues, but the other two parks would be fine. Commissioner Salmond said his concern would be vandalism of the benches.

Commissioner Davison asked the expected life-span for the benches and who is responsible for the maintenance of them. Ms. Dulworth said the benches are solar powered and have battery storage, but she does not know the life span. She said if the vender let PLS know about upgrades for the benches, we will upgrade them at that time. Ms. Webb said PLS is accepting all responsibility for maintenance, upkeep, reburishing, connectivity, etc. Commissioner Ross asked whether the technology for the charge station change from a "plug-in" type connecton to a magnetic type connection. Ms. Webb said those needs would have to be addressed as they come arise. Chair Wright asked when PLS wanted to install the benches and Ms. Webb said as soon as possible. Commissioner Ross asked if PLS has installed any benches in other areas yet and Ms. Dulworth said no. Commissioner Ross asked if they have any data on the cities that have already placed these benches and any potential problems they have ran into with vandalism, etc. Ms. Webb said no, that the benches are very new technology. Ms. Dulworth said all the proposed locations are very visible and PLS will address any issues, including vandalism, should they occur.

Commissioner Moxely said he would like the benches/charging stations to be shut down at night, when the park is closed and asked if that is a possibility. Ms. Webb said no, there is not an on-and-off switch. He said there is a router or something that runs the WiFi and Ms. Webb said the benches have a cellular hotspot for a wireless connection. Commissioner Moxley said he did not want the benches to encourage

people to go to the parks when they are closed and asked PLS to find out if the routers could be programmed to shut down when the parks are closed. Commissioner Ross said the GEMS art project at Ruby Grant Park lights up at dusk and could possibly encourage people to stay in the park after it is closed and Chair Wright agreed, stating the benches may need to be placed before we know what issues, if any, occur. Ms. Webb said it is really difficult to find the balance between the 5% that may be breaking the rules versus the 95% that are not being allowed access because of the 5%. She said PLS is trying to provide connectivity across the City in areas that really need it. Staff said a motion to recommend or reject the proposal of the placement of benches in three City parks is needed. Chair Wright asked if she had a motion. Commissioner Isacksen asked whether the placement of only one bench can be done in order to monitor it before all three are placed and Commission Salmond agreed. Staff said it is up to the Board to make a recommendation on the placement of one or three benches and said if the Board approves the recommendation, it would go to the City Council and/or City Manager for final approval. Commissioner Salmond felt more investigation is needed, first to see if the bench can be shut down when the parks are closed and only place one bench at one location at this time, however; he did not feel like the benches should be placed in any of the three proposed parks because of increased vandalism he has witnessed. Commissioner Ross asked if PLS has considered bench placement in other areas of Norman, such as downtown. Ms. Dulworth said there are several places downtown that a person (on foot) can get WiFi and she understands the vandalism concerns but felt other areas could experience vandalism as well.

Ms. Webb said she is hopeful that this mission can align and PLS and the City can work together, but the library is not about limiting access. She said if this is not a good fit, PLS can move forward and look for other partnerships.

Commissioner Moxley said he would like to make a motion that PLS gather more information and discuss at the next Park Board meeting. Ms. Webb asked what specific information and Commissioner Moxley said to see whether the bench could be put on a timer so people are not encouraged to go to the park after it has closed. Ms. Webb said the library is not interested in putting a timer on the benches and said she appreciates the suggestion but felt like there may not be any reason to prolong the discussion. Chair Wright asked if there was a motion to continue discussions at the September meeting and Commissioner Moxley said, no, not since PLS is not interested in putting timers on the benches. Staff said this is an action item and the Board will need to take a motion to approve or reject it.

Chair Wright asked whether there is a motion to accept or reject the placement of the solar benches in the proposed three parks and Commissioner Isacksen said did the Board not discuss/decide to only place one bench at this time? Commissioner Ross agreed and asked whether the placement of the other nine benches could be monitored before placing one in a City park. She said the benches seem to be a fantastic idea and does not want to reject the proposal. Commissioner Sallee asked whether the benches in other communities have been placed in their parks, which likely have a similar open/close time. She said she would like to research those to see how it is going.

Commissioner Sallee said she would like to make a motion to table this item until more information can be gathered about whether benches will be placed in other area parks and how if so, how is it going in those parks. Chair Wright said all in favor, say I; any oppose, same sign. Chair Wright said there were two opposed, correct and suggested taking roll call to get an accurate vote. Staff began re-reading the motion and Commissioner Sallee said she would like to rescind her motion. She said she did not want to oppose this item, but this is the first time it has been brought to the board and it is new technology. Chair Wright said she does not know Robert's Rule regarding the motion and rescinding the motion after the vote. Staff requested Heather Poole, City Attorney, to approach and assist.

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Ms. Poole said her understanding is there does not need to be a motion on tabling an item and that can be a call from the Chair. She said it sounds like there is a consensus to table the item and if someone wants to object, they can call for question and force a vote on the actual agenda item which is the approval of placement of three benches in City parks. Ms. Poole said a motion can and would need to be made in order to amend the agenda item to the placement of only one bench in a City park and a vote would need to be made.

Commissioner Isacksen made a motion to approve one solar bench to be placed at Ruby Grant Park and Commissioner Ross seconded the motion.

Ms. Poole said, point of clarification, she believes the Chair already mentioned that the intent would be to table the agenda item to the next Park Board meeting and Chair Wright said there is a motion to put one bench in Ruby Grant Park and then a second; she said all those in favor of the motion, say I; Opposed, same sign. Chair Wright asked for a roll call on the vote and the vote was taken with the following results:

YEAH: Commissioners Isacksen, May, Ross and Sallee

NAY: Chair Wright and Commissioners Davison, Moxley and Salmond

Staff said the vote was four votes for the approval and four votes opposing the item. Staff requested guidance from Ms. Poole and she said there is not a majority for the motion; therefore the motion failed.

Chair Wright tabled the agenda item to the next meeting scheduled September 1, 2022, and thanks PLS for the presentation. Mr. Olsen requested the Board to send any questions and/or suggestions to Staff prior to the meeting.

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ITEM 7, being:

**NORMAN FORWARD UPDATE**

Mr. Jason Olsen, Parks and Recreation Director, gave a Norman Forward Update to the Board as follows:

**Reaves Park**

Contractors continue working on the flex field, retaining pond, parking lot and parking lot lights, and the Reaves Park Road inside the park. He said the project should be completed by November or December; however, a ribbon-cutting will be scheduled in the Spring 2023, closer to the beginning baseball/softball season. Commissioner Ross said she attended the Fourth Fest and had a concern about the curbing along Jenkins Road (the road and grass). Staff said they would meet her at the Park so she can show them where specifically she is referring to, so it can be addressed before the next special event. Commissioner asked about the gates being locked near the field area and Staff said Ball Clubs of Norman has locked the area in order to keep people off the fields so they can properly be maintained.

**Griffin Park**

Griffin Park Phase V is nearly completed and the newly renovated three fields have been sprigged, which are being watered by the irrigation pond located in the park. Phase VI was approved by City Council on July 26, 2022, and includes eight fields, two concession/restroom buildings, one restroom-only building, and a new entry into the complex. Phase VI also includes an expansion of Robinson Street, which is still under design and will bid out separately. This project is scheduled to be completed in the Spring of 2023.

**YFAC**

There has been a lot of progress, beginning with a huge concrete pour a few days ago. There was over 100 concrete trucks that poured approximately 60,000 square feet (gymnasium area) which started on Monday at 8:00 pm and finished the next morning at 8:00 am. The concrete was poured during the night because it does not cure well in the extreme hot temperatures we are currently experiencing. Staff showed pictures of the concrete pour and the elevator that is being constructed in the clinic portion of the YFAC. The last (first level) concrete pour, not including the swimming pools, will be done at the end of August. The steel will start going up in a few days and take approximately four months to complete. There will be a topping out ceremony later in the year, along with a dedication of the new naming of the street, Trae Young Drive.

**Senior Wellness Center**

The contractor, Crossland Construction, is two weeks ahead of schedule and will be working on the utilities and pouring concrete within the next month. The project will take approximately 13 months to complete and should be finished the Summer 2023.

**Vineyard Park**

Work continues on the new two-level playground which includes a family slide, a first for the City parks! Once the construction area is cleaned-up and final grading and sod are complete, we will host a small ribbon cutting in September 2022, to celebrate our latest neighborhood park upgrade funded through the Norman Forward program.

**Rotary Park**

Dug-out shades were installed at the ballfield in July and largely paid for by several Rotary Clubs in Norman who raised and donated the money. This amenity is a wonderful addition to a very well used ballfield. Commissioner Ross suggested shade structures be installed at the Blake Baldwin Skate Park in Andrews Park and Staff said we were approved this fiscal year to prepare a Andrews Park Master Plan. The Andrews Park Master Plan will include a Park Board and public input process. Mr. James Briggs, Park Development Manager, said good news is, a shade structure will likely be installed at the skatepark independent and prior to the Andrews Park Master Plan.

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ITEM 8, being:

**DIVISIONAL UPDATES**

Mr. James Briggs, Park Development Manager, echoed the funds were requested and approved this fiscal year for a Andrews Park Master Plan and Staff feels like the current Amphitheater can be modernized with a cover over the stage to allow performances and shows. He said a master plan will help unify the design for Andrews Park while giving an overall plan to follow.

Mr. Briggs said Staff also requested and was approved for a Urban Forest Management Plan to help guide our Forestry Division. He said an outside group will be hired to assist with this plan as well help with a street tree inventory and ordinance review.

Mr. Briggs said Staff is currently mailing out surveys and receiving input from the residents of Summit Valley and Bellatona Additions for the future Bentley Park that will serve those neighborhoods. He introduced our new Park Planner, Bethany Grissom, and said she is spearheading this project. Mr. Briggs said after the survey input is gathered, Staff will present a design concept, inviting the residents of Summit Valley and Bellatona Additions, at a Park Board meeting.

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Mr. Briggs said the City purchased nuisance property at Carter and Alameda Street and Staff has recently started clearing and mowing the area where homeless camps used to be. He said Council approved \$1.5 million for a nature park project that will include educational elements. A fence will be installed soon around the entire area to keep it secured as it will take a couple of years to design and construct the park.

Mr. Briggs said Sunrise Park and William Morgan Park may be the Norman Forward Neighborhood Projects and Mr. Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation, said Staff will be bringing an updated Norman Forward Neighborhood Park 5-year implementation plan to the Board in the near future.

Mr. Olsen said the Westwood Family Aquatic Center (WWFAC) is hosting the Outdoor Movie Series this Saturday, August 6 at 8:30 pm with a dive-in movie at the pool. He invited the Board to come out and enjoy *Spider-Man, No Way Home*. The cost is \$7 per person or free to season pass holders.

WWFAC will be open for open swim on weekends only, 12 pm for season passholders or 1 pm for the public, when their back to school hours begins on August 6. Mr. Olsen said weekday morning programs will take place as scheduled, from 9am to 11am and the WWFAC will close for the season on September 6.

Mr. Olsen said the City had a Hydrant Party on Friday, July 29 at the Whittier Recreation Center from 1 pm to 2 pm, to celebrate Parks and Recreation Month. He said activities included games, free sno cones and tons of water fun! He gave a special thanks to the Norman Fire Department for helping with the event.

After-school programs will begin on Friday, August 19 when Norman Public School starts. Mr. Olsen said the 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Irving and Whittier Recreation Centers are filling up quickly. He said the City tries to keep those costs as low as possible and also accepts DHS.

Mr. Wade Thompson, Facility and Parks Manager, said Park Maintenance Staff have been mowing parks and adding mulch to the playgrounds, as well as doing mosquito monitoring, which have had very low counts since there has not been much rain. He said the Facility Maintenance Staff continues to move to their new site located at 1910 Research Park Blvd and has been busy keeping air conditioning running smoothly for the City buildings during the heat. Commissioner Sallee asked if the City was spraying for mosquitos and Mr. Thompson said no, Staff is only monitoring the counts at this time. He said we recently got approved funding for new mosquito traps to replace the 20+ year old traps. The new traps are battery powered (rechargeable) versus the 110 voltage that had to be plugged in at the resident's home (residents that are participating in mosquito monitoring program). Mr. Olsen said the new traps can also be placed at locations now that do not have outlets, such as parks or areas that we receive reports of a lot of mosquito activity.

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ITEM 9, being:

### MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

Commissioner May said there are two large dead trees in the median at Hwy 9 and 24<sup>th</sup> Avenue East, near the new hospital construction and Mr. Olsen said he would send Staff out to take a look and remove if on City property.

Commissioner Isacksen asked if Staff has been receiving a lot of citizen feedback from the park needs assessment surveys and Mr. Olsen said we are a few dozen away from making it a scientifically valid



survey. He said Staff should have an update next month and when it is completed, we will have ETC, the contractor conducting the survey, to make a presentation to the Board.

Chair Wright asked if Staff received an update on the Santa Fe Family Life Center Board of Directors, specifically to include Norman representatives on the Board. Mr. Olsen said the City Attorney's Office said the contract states the Board will have an ex officio seat and Santa Fe has made verbal commitments to have at least four board members from the Norman area. He said Santa Fe has indicated they may add/change the contract to reflect the Board "make-up" will be 1/3 Norman residents, 1/3 Oklahoma City residents, and 1/3 ADA, which is an inclusive community, to ensure all three parties are well-represented. Mr. Olsen said once the contract is lined out, Staff will bring it back to the Park Board for review.

Commissioner Moxely said the Andrews Park Master Plan needs to address the homeless situation at that park. He said he recently took his grandchildren to the park and witnessed a "turf battle" between two homeless groups and said he will not be taking them back anytime soon. Mr. Olsen said he has had recent conversations with the City Attorney's Office about the homeless issues in parks and they are scheduled to give a presentation to the Board next month about the legal options/avenues that are available. Commissioner Ross requested the City Attorney's Office also address what volunteers can and cannot do during clean-up events in City Parks, such as Sutton Urban Wilderness. Mr. Olsen said signage can be posted at City Parks giving notice to the homeless that are leaving their personal belongings in the park, that their belongings must be removed within 72 hours or Staff can get assistance from Norman Police Department (NPD) to remove. He said there are some instances where Staff or NPD would not want a volunteer to remove the belongings because of possible hazards or situations that could occur. Commissioner Moxley asked if the City had a Homeless Coordinator and Mr. Olsen said no, not at this time, but Staff works with outside agencies such as Food and Shelter, to get those who need help the assistance.

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ITEM 10, being:

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Wright adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Passed and approved this 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2022

  
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Kristi Wright, Chair