

CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE MINUTES

August 13, 2019

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a conference at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 13th day of August, 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, Holman,
Petrone, Scanlon, Scott, Wilson,
Mayor Clark

ABSENT:

Councilmembers Carter and Hickman

Item 1, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE ASSESSMENT OF ONE-EIGHT PERCENT SALES TAX TO BE USED FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT (THIS WOULD BE A RENEWAL OF A PORTION OF EXISTING SALES TAX CURRENTLY DEDICATED TO CLEVELAND COUNTY).

Ms. Kathryn Walker, Interim City Attorney, highlighted the ballot language that restricts the proposed sales tax to one-eighth of one percent for public transit system related purposes only. She said she contacted Mr. John Sharp with the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) regarding ACOG's plans for their sales tax initiative for regional transit and he stated that within the next two to five years, ACOG will be asking cities within the region to adopt a sales tax dedicated to the Regional Transit Authority (RTA). She asked Mr. Sharp if regional transit was going towards rail transit only or would the plan include bus transit and Mr. Sharp said regional transit has to include bus systems because they will make regional transit work. She said she has created new language to address that, but did not include it in the original ballot language because she did not want to jeopardize the success of the initiative; however, if sales tax money will eventually be going to RTA for regional transit then the City will not need this proposed sales tax for transit. She said the language added for Council's consideration states:

"ONE EIGHTH OF ONE PERCENT (1/8%) SHALL BEGIN TO BE LEVIED
APRIL 1, 2020 AND SHALL END ONLY UPON SUCCESSFUL ADOPTION
AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A DEDICATED SALES TAX LEVY IN
FURTHERANCE OF THE PURPOSES OF THE REGIONAL
TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA."

Councilmember Wilson asked if the language "shall end only upon successful adoption" will tie the City's hands to end the sales tax if there are other funding sources for transit and Ms. Walker said a change in the sales tax rate would have to go to a vote of the people. Councilmember Wilson asked if this language allows the sales tax to end without a vote of the people and Ms. Walker said yes.

Councilmember Holman said “other lawful purposes” in the ballot language is not clear and asked for the meaning to be clarified because he knows that will be asked by the public. Mayor Clark said she was asked that very question when she made a presentation to the Chamber of Commerce; however, the language also states that the “other lawful purposes” are related to a public transit system. She felt the language could be more concise and asked if she is interpreting it correctly in that the sales tax must be used for public transit. Ms. Walker said that is correct and she will make that language more clear.

Mayor Clark said this sales tax will help the City obtain the future vision of a regional transportation system for Oklahoma that will benefit Norman, but if the proposition fails the City will still continue to provide its current public transit system services. Ms. Walker said the sales tax will help support the bus system until regional transportation is implemented.

Councilmember Wilson said she has heard feedback regarding rumors about ending the University North Park Tax Increment Finance (UNPTIF) District as it relates to this sales tax in particular and asked if there is any information that can be provided to the public to address these concerns/rumors. She said the public needs to stay informed on what is taking place with the UNPTIF. Ms. Walker said a Statutory Review Committee meeting is proposed to be held August 27th so the timeline is to end the UNPTIF as soon as possible, but there are still several steps to go through in the Project Plan amendment process. Ms. Walker said Staff hopes to have an update for Council by the end of September or first of October.

Councilmember Scott asked what the RTA sales tax rate will be and Ms. Walker said originally in 2014, RTA looked at one-half of a percent, but are currently considering five-eighths of a percent. She said part of the process over the next two to five years will be to review those numbers to ensure that whatever sales tax is proposed will be sufficient for regional transit needs. She said state statute allows them to request two percent, but feels that would be difficult to obtain. Councilmember Holman said state law mandates the RTA can only be funded with sales tax.

Mayor Clark said Mr. Marion Hutchison is the City’s delegate to the RTA Committee and regular meetings will be scheduled that she, Mr. Hutchison, Councilmember Holman, and Staff will attend and she plans to keep Councilmembers and the public updated on the process.

Mayor Clark said she likes the idea of a sunset clause and asked when Council will be voting on the ordinance and Ms. Walker said in a couple of weeks, but if there are any changes, she will email Council before First Reading on August 27th.

Items submitted for the record

1. Draft ordinance and Proposition and Version 2 Proposition

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The meeting was adjourned at 5:43 p.m.

ATTEST:


City Clerk


Mayor

