

History of Norman's City Government

Norman was literally created with a gunshot—one that signaled the Oklahoma Land Run of 1889, which opened up the unassigned lands to settlers. A Santa Fe Railroad campsite already existed in the area that was to become Norman. The campsite took its name from one of the railroad employees, Abner Norman.

Provisional municipal government existed in Norman from April 1889 until May 1891. The Organic Act creating Oklahoma Territory established guidelines for bringing into being municipalities and Territorial Statutes added legality to the provisional city government set up earlier.

During the provisional period a mayor, four councilmen and a city clerk governed Norman. Norman was incorporated as a city in 1891 with five election districts, each choosing a councilman. The mayor was selected from among the councilmen. Voters also chose the administrative offices of clerk, treasurer, assessor, marshal and justice of the peace. City records show that in the early years appropriations were made for streets, parks, and public improvements. A city water well was dug in 1897, and sanitary sewer lines were laid in 1909.

By 1919 Norman's population had grown to 5000 residents. According to state statute it was large enough to become a "home rule" city. Voters approved a charter creating the offices of mayor and a four-member commission to be chosen from wards. The charter also provided for a council-manager form of government.

During the next three decades Norman experienced slow steady growth reaching a population of 11,429 in 1940. After the 1950s students at the University of Oklahoma were added to the census as Norman residents. The 2000 census places the population of Norman at 95,694.



Norman Municipal Complex

years. Council members representing even numbered wards are elected in even numbered years. Council members representing odd numbered wards are elected in odd numbered years. The mayor is elected for a three-year term.



Abner Norman
*Sculpture stands at the
entrance to
Norman's City Hall*

The city's boundaries have been expanded over the years. In the 1960s Norman annexed lands to the east to include Lake Thunderbird, a newly formed water source for the city.

Norman's current city charter was adopted in 1975 and revised in 1981. It provides for a city council of eight members elected from each of eight wards in the city. The term of office for a member of the city council is two