



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING
WORK SESSION
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2024 – 6:32 PM
CITY HALL**

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

David Eady - Mayor
George Holt – Councilmember
Jim Windham – Councilmember
Laura McCanless – Councilmember
Jeff Wearing – Councilmember
Mike Ready – Councilmember
Erik Oliver – Councilmember

STAFF PRESENT:

Marcia Brooks –City Clerk/Treasurer
Bill Andrew – City Manager
Mark Anglin – Police Chief
Jody Reid – Supervisor of Maintenance and
Utilities
David Strickland – City Attorney

OTHERS PRESENT: Art Vinson, Laurie Vinson, Nick Cole, Johnny Lyons (Bureau Veritas) Laura Gafnea (Oxford College)

Agenda (Attachment A)

1. Mayor’s Announcements

Mayor Eady announced that he has been selected to represent the Newton County mayors on the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission’s Council.

2. Committee Reports

- a. **Trees, Parks, and Recreation Board** – No report.
- b. **Planning Commission** – No report.
- c. **Downtown Development Authority** – Mike Ready provided the report.
- d. **Sustainability Committee** – No report.
- e. **Old Church Committee** – To be discussed during meeting.

3. Resolution to Amend Fee Schedule for Planning, Development, Review, and Inspection (Attachment B)

Bill Andrew stated he added some fees to the resolution that he feels are critical, such as a land disturbance permit, which the City does not currently have a fee for. However, he did not add any

fees to the schedule.

Laura McCanless stated she would like to see the word “repair” removed for siding and decks so as not to disincentivize normal repairs. Bill Andrew stated a permit would not be required unless the changes are structural. Johnny Lyons added that any changes to the floor system must be inspected.

Jim Windham reiterated his concern that the fee schedule does not provide much detail on the requirements. He does not think anything should be left open to interpretation. Mayor Eady asked if the table could be annotated with definitions and/or thresholds. Mr. Windham suggested clarifying that structural repairs for siding and decks must be permitted.

Erik Oliver asked about remedies for noncompliance. Mr. Lyons described the process of notifying the homeowner of any non-compliance issues when something is or should be permitted and giving them two chances to come into compliance. If the homeowner fails to comply, a citation will be issued directing the homeowner to appear in the City’s Municipal Court. If it is not a matter that requires permitting, the notification should start with Bill Andrew or Chief Anglin to initiate the process.

A discussion was held about the definition of a fence and when a permit would be required.

Jim Windham stated his belief that the City is involving itself in matters that do not concern it, creating liability issues. David Strickland stated that cities have varying levels of requirements, and some have more stringent requirements than others. Mayor Eady stated that the City Council can amend the requirements in the code of ordinances at some point, but at this time a permit is required for a fence in the code.

Erik Oliver suggested that if the fence permit requirement is going to remain in the schedule, the fee should be dropped from \$200 to \$100, which is the current fee for this type of permit. Mr. Lyons confirmed that \$100 would cover Bureau Veritas’ costs for this specific permit.

Laura McCanless stated that any fees the City is currently covering should be added to the schedule.

A discussion was held about grubbing vs. mulching.

Bill Andrew will revise the table to bring in the critical items for the regular session. If any Councilmembers have comments they should be forwarded to Mr. Andrew.

Erik Oliver requested clarification of the cost for residential renovation. He suggested making the threshold clearer in the table.

4. Old Church Renovation Proposal and THE Event, LLC General Contractor’s Agreement (Appendix C)

Mike Ready spoke on behalf of the Old Church committee. He stated that they see no need for having the event management company manage the general contractor responsibilities.

Laura McCanless wanted to know what credentials THE Event, LLC does have in the area of general contractor management.

Bill Andrew stated that THE Event, LLC needs to be comfortable with the modifications being made in accordance with their ideals and their vision to make the building functional, and working with the contractor hired to do the work. They also would take on the responsibility of bidding out the work, which the City would otherwise have to do.

Ms. McCanless recommended referencing the previous agreement for the scope of work in phases one and two in the contract approved at the last meeting in Services Provided – Old Church Renovation. She is also concerned about the phrase “complete autonomy,” in the contract.

Jim Windham stated he thinks the purpose of the wording is so the City cannot go tell the contractor performing the work what to do. He asked Mr. Strickland if he has any issues with the agreement. Mr. Strickland stated he wants to see it with all the blanks filled in. The copy being reviewed was provided by the vendor and is incomplete.

Ms. McCanless stated phases two and three need to come out. She also asked if the City is expected to consider the other bid.

Mr. Windham suggested the contract should be filled in with details and reviewed by Mr. Strickland and signed off on or modified as appropriate.

Art Vinson suggested that the City should require a performance bond from the vendor.

Erik Oliver observed that he does not think using a third party to handle contracting for the work is efficient. Also, discussing everything in committee about the contract then rehashing it in City Council meetings is not efficient. He does not understand why this contract is being discussed in the Council meeting when other contracts are not handled this way.

Mr. Windham pointed out that this contract is different because the City is relying on the vendor to handle the RFP.

If Mr. Andrew is able to send a contract in final draft form by the date of the October regular session and there is a comfort level with voting on it, the City Council will move forward with voting. Mr. Andrew will work with Mr. Strickland on getting the draft finalized.

5. Task Order from AtkinsRealis for Preliminary Site Analysis for Old Church Parking (Attachment D)

- Jim Windham – in favor of pursuing low impact options
- Jeff Wearing – in favor or pursuing low impact options
- Erik Oliver – in favor of waiting to do any work until a threshold is reached indicating it is needed
- Laura McCanless – in favor of waiting to do any work; opposed to the volume of activity proposed
- Mike Ready – in favor of waiting to do any work until a threshold is reached
- George Holt – does not believe there will be any increase in activity

- Jeff Wearing – does not think the volume proposed will benefit the community
- Mayor Eady – is not opposed to continuing the status quo. What he heard from community members was not their concern with parking directly but with the volume being discussed. Their question is more what the purpose of Old Church is – a community event location or a place to have nice weddings.
- Erik Oliver – There is nothing in our ordinances or fee schedule to prohibit renting the facility out every week.
- Nick Cole – suggested changing the name to a commercial building.

6. **Asbury Park Camera Upgrades** (Attachment E)

Chief Anglin requested that the City Council approve the purchase of the cameras in the Verkada quote. This recommendation came from Covington/Newton County 911. The Flock cameras are great but are more expensive, and they would not be purchased. The cost of the 10-year contract with Verkada is included in the FY 2025 Capital Projects budget.

Laura McCanless advocated purchasing the 10-year contract from Verkada from the SPLOST 2023 fund rather than from Capital Projects. The other City Councilmembers concurred.

Marcia Brooks will provide a budget amendment at the October regular session to move the funds from Capital Projects to SPLOST 2023.

7. **Fanning Institute's Proposal for Community Discussions/Proposal on Next Steps for Removed Historical Signs** (Attachment F)

- George Holt – will support getting the history correct but is not personally interested in any of it.
- Mike Ready – the public should be allowed to voice their opinion and the City Council should follow their recommendations.
- Laura McCanless – a couple of people have asked her what happened to the signs. She explained to them that the City still plans to decide what should be on the signs and restore them. She believes they should be put back with accurate information.
- Mayor Eady – wants to put the signs back with accurate information and be more intentional about getting input from community members. The proposed contract with the Fanning Institute would accomplish this.
- Erik Oliver – There are very few people left in the community who know any amount of history about Oxford. There are other signs still up around the City that have inaccurate or irrelevant information and they should be taken up. Signs always become incorrect over time. He is not in favor of putting physical signs back. He suggests using social media to keep this information up to date and is not in favor of hiring Fanning Institute to facilitate the discussion. There are many other things that would promote the history of Oxford that money could be spent on.
- Jim Windham – agrees with Erik Oliver.
- Jeff Wearing – is in favor of anything that promotes the history of Oxford.

Mayor Eady stated he does not sense that there is a consensus to move forward with the facilitated sessions at this time.

8. Task Order from AtkinsRealis for Whatcoat Street (Attachment G)

- Laura McCanless is opposed to creating new parking on the North side of the street because it will destroy nearby trees. If additional parking is required, she believes it should stay on the rink side of the street.
- Mike Ready does not feel any changes are needed to the previous drawing.
- George Holt agreed with Mike Ready.
- Erik Oliver does not want to spend any City money on changes. The college or developer should pay for additional spaces if they want them.
- Jeff Wearing and Jim Windham agreed with Erik Oliver.

The task order will not be executed. The contract will be approved with no changes to the parking arrangements.

9. Request for Proposals for Grant Management Services for the 2025 Community HOME Investment Program (CHIP) (Attachment H)

Due to pending deadlines, Bill Andrew asked if the RFP could be released after the Work Session if the City Council is interested in pursuing the grant. It is administered by the Georgia Dept. of Community Affairs (DCA) and is part of the CDBG grant program.

Laura McCanless asked if there is a group of properties the City would target if the grant is awarded. Mr. Andrew stated that applicants would not be identified until the grant is awarded, so no specific addresses would be chosen until then. However, the distressed census tract in Oxford is below Soule Street. If points are desired for focusing on the distressed census tract, the properties outside of it would need to be excluded. Ms. McCanless asked how the City would promote the opportunity. Mr. Andrew advised the City would use various methods to publicize the opportunity, including direct mailers, an open house, etc.

Erik Oliver expressed concern about using taxpayer dollars to write and administer a grant that would benefit a small number of people, and he feels the grant application could be written by staff. He would support a more general neighbor-helping-neighbor type of program such as Operation Roundup.

Mr. Andrew stated that even if the City gets the grant, it will be difficult to find people to accept the money.

The consensus was to release the RFP, with the caveat that the City Council may decide not to go forward once the proposals are received and reviewed.

10. GEFA Loan Funding for Lead Service Line Inventory Project (Attachment I)

The consensus was to authorize Mayor Eady to accept the terms of the loan from GEFA on behalf of the City of Oxford.

11. Proposal and Contract for Space Planning and Audio-Visual Upgrades for Oxford City Hall (Attachment J)

City Councilmembers had several questions that were addressed by Bill Andrew. The consensus was to proceed with the contract.

12. Review of DRAFT Landscaping Plan for City Hall (Attachment K)

Mayor Eady stated that the vendor can do all of the implementation or whatever parts we want them to. They advised that implementation of the full plan could cost around \$150,000.

- Erik Oliver – would rather put up the awnings that were part of the original design of the building than plant trees in front of it. Plantings, trees, mulch, etc., have never been adequately maintained on City property due to lack of personnel. He does not recommend adopting any of the suggestions that would require complex maintenance. Mayor Eady advised the vendor did offer to initially sustain anything that was completed for an additional cost.
- Jim Windham – agrees with Mr. Oliver. Also suggested asking the vendor about heat gain issues on the front of the City Hall building. He would like to see other suggestions for design elements besides gardens, such as hardscapes. The Ballard family was willing to contribute some money to recognize Don Ballard with a space named for him. He suggested approaching them again about this. Bricks could also be sold to memorialize or honor people.
- Laura McCanless – agrees with Mr. Oliver and Mr. Windham. Trees would take a very long time to provide any shade. She would like to see the awnings installed. She does not want a meadow in front of City Hall. The focus should be on trees and shrubs on the sides of City Hall.
- Mike Ready – the plan is too busy. He also agrees with the others about not putting trees in front of City Hall. He is also concerned about installing more landscaping without adequate irrigation. Jody Reid advised that someone is coming to look at the cistern, and once it is repaired there should be adequate irrigation for the area.
- Jeff Wearing – the design is too crowded. A simpler plan could be developed by a landscaper.
- Erik Oliver – if some type of design for memorializing people is installed, it would require ADA access and should develop organically over time. Using fallen branches for edging is high maintenance. A fire pit would be a nice addition as long as only the City uses it.

13. Request from Chief Anglin for Use of SPLOST Funds (Attachment L)

Chief Anglin would like to use SPLOST 2023 funds to make changes to his office space to accommodate the new Police Administrative Assistant.

Mike Ready expressed concerns about making changes that would be recommended for changes again in the space analysis. Erik Oliver suggested waiting to make changes such as painting until the space analysis is completed. Jim Windham agreed.

The consensus was to allow purchase of the equipment and furniture and wait on painting any walls, installing carpet, or making any other changes that may require rework as a result of the space analysis.

14. Other Business

15. Work Session Meeting Review

16. Executive Session

None

17. Adjourn

Mayor Eady adjourned the meeting at 9:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brooks
City Clerk/Treasurer