



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING
REGULAR SESSION
MONDAY, MARCH 1, 2021 – 7:00 PM
Via Teleconference**

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

David Eady – Mayor
George Holt – Councilmember
James Windham – Councilmember
Jeff Wearing – Councilmember
Laura McCanless – Councilmember
Avis Williams – Councilmember
Lynn Bohanan – Councilmember

APPOINTED/STAFF PRESENT:

Matt Pepper – City Manager
Marcia Brooks – City Clerk/Treasurer
Dave Harvey – Chief of Police
C. David Strickland – City Attorney

OTHERS PRESENT: Natalie Faulkner (Allen Memorial United Methodist Church), Mike Ready, Cheryl Ready, Art Vinson, Laura Gafnea (Oxford College), Anderson Wright, Steve Longcrier, Sarah Davis (Covington News)

1. The meeting was called to order by the Hon. David Eady, Mayor.
2. Invocation – Rev. Natalie Faulkner (Allen Memorial United Methodist Church).
3. **A motion was made by Jeff Wearing to accept the Agenda for March 1, 2021. Avis Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (7/0).**
(Attachment A)
4. **A motion was made by Jeff Wearing to accept the Consent Agenda for March 1, 2021. Avis Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (7/0).**
(Attachment B)
5. **Planning Commission Recommendations/Petitions**
None.
6. **Citizen Concerns**
Anderson Wright notified the City Council that he has been elected President of the Oxford Historical Cemetery Foundation. Alexa Devetter has been elected Vice-President. The other officers remain the same. Mr. Wright looks forward to meeting with the committee of the City Council working on the agreement with the Foundation. Mayor Eady stated that Lynn Bohanan is chairing the committee, James Windham is also on the committee, and Erik Oliver has also expressed interest in being on the committee.

7. **Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails Signage**

In 2016, the City of Oxford approved installing signage for the Georgia Civil War Heritage Trails program in three locations in the city. At the February 2021 Work Session, the City Council revisited the decision to install the signage. The City of Oxford Committee on Race was asked to provide a recommendation on the signage.

Mayor Eady asked Avis Williams to provide the Committee's recommendation. Ms. Williams stated the recommendation of the Committee is not to put up any additional signs, reimburse the organization for the expenditures of the signs that have not been put up including travel costs, and leave the existing sign in place.

George Holt made a motion to follow the recommendation of the Committee on Race. James Windham seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a majority (6/1). Jeff Wearing voted Nay.

Mayor Eady advised Steve Longcrier to follow up with Matt Pepper on the cost of printing the signs including customization based on the requests of the City of Oxford.

Mr. Longcrier stated he is aware that Oxford is a unique community in Oxford. With Oxford having no retail establishments, there is not any incentive for these signs from a tourism perspective. He has been aware because of the events that have occurred nationally recently that something like this might occur, but they have placed signs in 120 communities, and this is the first time that this type of action has been taken. His organization is prepared to work with Oxford and wants this to be a positive experience. He does not want it to be a divisive issue, but a unifying issue. He thanked the City Council for their consideration.

8. **Emory Street Sidewalk Project**

The FY2021 Capital Budget includes \$562,000 for a project to extend the sidewalk along the west side of Emory Street from Geiger Street to Moore Street. In 2019, the City Council awarded the contract to Tri Scapes, Inc. for \$561,751.13. Contract approval was received from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) in December 2020. Due to the extended amount of time that had elapsed since their bid was submitted, Tri Scapes, Inc. felt that they could not hold to their original bid. They are requesting a 7.5% increase in the total contract value, which amounts to \$42,131. With the increase, the new contract amount is \$603,882.

Matt Pepper stated that the issue for consideration of the City Council is whether to pursue the project given the increase in the contract price.

George Holt asked if the amount is non-negotiable. Mayor Eady stated that if the City rejects the bid, the contract must be rebid. Mr. Holt asked if the City can attempt to negotiate the price if the new bid is accepted. Mr. Pepper stated that the City would try to negotiate on the price.

Jeff Wearing questioned the appropriateness of spending the money for the sidewalk at this time, notwithstanding the price increase, given that the pedestrian bridge that was part of this project will not be built any time soon.

Mayor Eady asked for clarification from Mr. Pepper on the City's responsibility of the total of \$603,882. Mr. Pepper stated that the grant covers about \$450,000. There is a match from the City of Oxford of \$112,350. The price increase of \$42,131 would be added, as well as the cost of construction administration and materials testing, bringing the total to about \$190,000 that the City of Oxford would be responsible for.

Laura McCanless questioned the need for a redundant sidewalk leading to the bridge into Covington. There is a crosswalk at Oxford College for students. The investment of about \$200,000 required is a considerable amount of money that could be redistributed to other projects that are more critical.

James Windham and George Holt agreed with Mr. Wearing and Ms. McCanless. Mr. Windham further stated that there are other areas of sidewalk that are in dire need of repair. He also stated that the only reason the City was pursuing this project was as part of the pedestrian bridge collaboration with the City of Covington. He does not feel the City should pursue the sidewalk if Emory University is not going to pursue the pedestrian bridge.

Laura McCanless also pointed out that laying new concrete sidewalk is not environmentally friendly.

Jeff Wearing stated that this project is too far along to add conduit to the design. The funds allocated for this project can be used for conduit on the sidewalk project on the north side of Oxford.

Mayor Eady agreed that making any changes to the design at this stage would reset the project and would require another potentially protracted wait period for approval from GDOT.

James Windham made a motion to cancel the contract with Tri Scapes, Inc. and the project. George Holt seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (7/0).

Mayor Eady asked Mr. Pepper to inform the parties involved of this decision and stated the City Council will discuss how to reallocate the funds at the March Work Session.

9. **City Sidewalk Project**

The FY2021 Capital Budget includes \$800,000 for a project to extend the sidewalk on Emory Street from Soule Street to northern city limits. Previously, Keck & Wood completed a concept study for the section of sidewalk. In addition, they will be providing a cost proposal to prepare the engineering plans, the bid documents and contract, and provide construction administration for the project. They were expected to provide the cost proposal prior to the meeting, but it has not been received.

Mayor Eady advised Matt Pepper to add this issue to the March Work Session agenda with the expectation that the cost proposal will be received before the meeting.

10. George Street Park Fencing

Jeff Wearing advised that he met with Cheryl Ready, Chair of the Trees, Parks and Recreation Board. He proposes to replace twelve (12) posts and about forty-five to fifty (45-50) rails to make it presentable along the streets that it borders. He recommends screwing the rails into the posts. Where the walk comes across from George Street, there is a four-post fence with reflectors. The four posts and rails need to be replaced as well. He estimates the cost of materials to be about \$1,000.

Mr. Wearing will provide the equipment needed. He hopes to be able to complete the project in one day with the help of citizen volunteers. The posts he proposes are made of cedar, the same as the posts currently there. Mr. Wearing needs to be reimbursed for the rails, the screws, and the reflectors. He would like to put the information out asking for volunteers on the City's social media outlets and in the utility bills. Laura Gafnea agreed to also put the word out at Oxford College for students to volunteer.

George Holt made a motion to approve the plan proposed by Jeff Wearing for repairing the fence. Laura McCanless seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously (7/0).

11. Invoices (Attachment C)

The Council reviewed the invoices paid by the City of Oxford for \$1,000 or more in February 2021. Marcia Brooks advised the City Council that the item on the list for \$5,250 paid to Over and Under General Contractors for emergency repair of a power pole due to an automobile accident is being reimbursed by the driver's insurance company.

12. Executive Session

The City Council went into Executive Session at 7:33 p.m. to discuss real estate matters. The City Council returned from Executive Session at 8:33 p.m.

13. Adjourn

A motion was made by George Holt to adjourn at 8:33 p.m. James Windham seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (7/0).

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brooks
City Clerk/Treasurer