



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING  
WORK SESSION  
MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2022 – 6:30 PM  
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

**ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

David Eady – Mayor  
George Holt – Councilmember  
Lynn Bohanan – Councilmember  
Laura McCanless – Councilmember  
Mike Ready – Councilmember  
Jim Windham – Councilmember  
Jeff Wearing – Councilmember

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Marcia Brooks – City Clerk/Treasurer  
Stacey Mullen – Deputy City Clerk  
Bill Andrew – City Manager  
Mark Anglin – Police Chief  
Jody Reid – Utilities/Maintenance  
Supervisor

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Cheryl Ready, Art Vinson, Anderson Wright, Alexa Devetter, Laura Gafnea (Oxford College)

**Agenda** (Attachment A)

**1. Mayor's Announcements**

Mayor Eady welcomed Mark Anglin, who began his duties as Chief of Police on January 10, 2022.

**2. Committee Reports**

- a. Trees, Parks, and Recreation Board – Cheryl Ready reported that trees for the Emory Street Restoration Project have been ordered. They should be picked up next week, so planting will start soon. The board needs to have a few more discussions about bids for invasive species before finalizing their recommendation. Arbor Day will be recognized at the next City Council Meeting. The Tree City USA program of the Arbor Day Foundation has authorized cities not to have full-blown Arbor Day celebrations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- b. Planning Commission – The Planning Commission did not meet in January. Mayor Eady noted that there has been increased interest in undeveloped properties in the City. As a result of this interest, it is likely that the Planning Commission will see an increase in requests for rezoning of these properties.
- c. Downtown Development Authority (DDA) – Mike Ready reported that the Authority did not meet in December. They will have several RFP submissions to review at their meeting next week.

Mayor Eady stated that Jim Windham and Jeff Wearing were appointed in December to attend DDA meetings as liaisons from the City Council along with Laura McCanless to have a continuing free flow of dialogue between the City Council and DDA. They will be attending the meeting on January 25, 2022.

- d. Sustainability Committee – Laura McCanless reported that she and Melissa Hage had a successful meeting with the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC), Bill Andrew and Mayor Eady to identify projects to work on other than the DNR GOSP Grant. In a month or so they will be working on the complete streets and trails plan with the Trees, Parks and Recreation Board.

Mayor Eady shared that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) will check to see if a safety audit has been completed on Emory Street. If not, the City of Oxford can initiate one to determine a baseline for improvements needed. GDOT advised that there has been no guidance yet on the infrastructure funding, but the money may come directly from the federal government. GDOT recommended that the City of Oxford work closely with the Cities of Covington and Porterdale so that there is a unified voice regarding the future of State Highway 81. They did not indicate a lot of promise for using the cattle tunnel as a throughway for a path. It would be very expensive because another hole would have to be bored under the interstate, as the present one is not sufficient.

Jim Windham thanked Mayor Eady for pursuing this option to its engineering conclusion.

Ms. McCanless asked Mayor Eady if he showed the cracks in the revetment to GDOT. He advised that he did, and they did not think they were structural cracks. However, they did indicate that the bridge will probably need to be replaced within five-ten years.

Mr. Windham commented that Oxford College should be included in discussions about the bridge. They may have some clout that the City does not have, and they also should have a vested interest since they only allow a certain number of vehicles on campus. Mr. Windham also commented that replacement of the bridge should include discussions about the realignment of the Geiger Street/Emory Street intersection.

Mayor Eady stated that they also discussed whether to pursue a pedestrian bridge separately, or to include it in the replacement of the bridge. The Geiger Street/Emory Street intersection as well as the North Street/Emory Street intersection might also be included with the project to replace the bridge. GDOT recommended that the cities and the county work on a unified request that includes everything that is wanted. They are open to the ideas if the funding can be obtained.

Jim Windham stated that pedestrians, bicyclists, and others who use pedestrian paths usually want to be separated from vehicle traffic, and he does not think the pedestrian bridge should have to wait for the replacement of the I-20 bridge. Mayor Eady acknowledged Mr. Windham's points as valid. He would like to see if the infrastructure funding can be leveraged to take on the whole project sooner than five to ten years out. GDOT stated that the bridge will probably have to be raised when it is replaced.

Mayor Eady also stated that they discussed the rerouting of State Highway 81 looping around Oxford and Covington. GDOT indicated that there is a section between State Highway 36 and Flat Shoals Road that is county-owned. It will have to be evaluated to determine if it meets State Highway standards, and if not, it will have to be brought up to those standards before it can be designated as a state route. The cities of Oxford, Covington, and Porterdale would have to be in agreement on this approach.

- e. Committee on Race – Avis Williams, who chaired this committee is no longer on City Council. Mayor Eady would like to reconstitute this committee and change it to a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. He would like for this committee to focus on some broader issues like the committee at Emory University is looking at. Examples include more accurate signage for landmarks and memorials and ways to acknowledge the role of enslaved persons in the history of Oxford. He requested names of potential people to lead this committee.

### 3. **Discussion on Next Steps for City Signage** (Attachment B)

The City Council has shown recent interest in developing a sign and wayfinding plan for the City of Oxford. The sign recently installed for the Oxford Farmers Market has been well-received and kick-started these discussions. Bill Andrew provided a handout to help facilitate the conversation. He advised he had contacted the vendor for the farmer's market sign. They asked what size a new sign near City Hall would need to be, which he did not know the answer to. It may be worthwhile to engage with a company to help the City come up with a plan. He has identified two such companies in the Atlanta area.

Mayor Eady stated that parking for the farmer's market and for court is a challenge. The standardized signs that many cities use to designate public parking may be helpful. Another example is there is no sign in front of Old Church. Mr. Andrew added that there is no sign for Asbury Street Park. There is also no address for the park on GPS applications.

Jim Windham stated that "Street" could be dropped from the Asbury Street Park designation. The round farmers market sign is a round sign that would go a long way toward the City of Oxford distinguishing itself from Oxford College. A similar sign could be used for Old Church and for the Park, and street signs could be smaller versions of it. He does not feel that it's necessary to engage with a company to come up with a plan.

Jeff Wearing stated that before a sign plan is developed, a listing of where signs are needed should be developed. He will be glad to assist with this effort. Mr. Wearing advised a listing was compiled at one time and it used to be on the City's website.

George Holt stated that a wayfinding map was already developed with Kay Lee about five years ago.

Mayor Eady asked those who were on the City Council then to see if they can find any of the documentation.

Mr. Windham asked that the DDA look at the signs at the corner of West Clark Street and Emory Street as it is becoming an area of sign pollution. It is visually unappealing and confusing.

**4. Livable Cities Initiative with the Atlanta Regional Commission (Attachment C)**

Jared Lombard with the Atlanta Regional Commission spoke to the Council at the retreat in October 2021 about applying for a grant through the Livable Cities Initiative (LCI). The LCI application is due on February 28, 2022. The cost of the study is estimated to be around \$185,000. At least 20% of this cost (\$37,000) would need to be matched by the City.

Mike Ready stated that at the retreat, all City Council members were in favor of it and were just waiting to find out the cost. He thinks the City should move forward on it.

The proposal will be prepared by Mr. Andrew and voted on at the February Regular Session or at a called meeting during the February Work Session.

**5. Next Steps for the Yarbrough House**

During the retreat in October 2021, there was discussion regarding requesting proposals to move or dismantle Yarbrough House. Since that time, at least one Council member has expressed reservations about getting rid of Yarbrough House and would like to see if there is any interest in rehabilitating the building for a commercial or community purpose.

One option is the proposal from Melvin Baker's committee to make minor repairs to the building and lease it to the Oxford Historical Society. It could also be a meeting facility. Another option is to put out a request for proposals to have a business there with a lease arrangement.

Laura McCanless appreciated that this item was placed back on the agenda, and she does not feel that the City has seriously pursued marketing the building's potential as a commercial site. She recommends working with the Chamber of Commerce to determine if there is any interest from anyone looking for a place to open a business in the area.

Mike Ready commented that the City has discussed the options several times, and he agrees that the site has not been adequately marketed. His thought is there should be an attempt to find out if there is any interest, and if there is none, the City should move forward with removal of the structure from the property.

Lynn Bohanan stated if there was a commercial commitment from someone, it would make her more inclined to support a larger investment in rehabilitation of the structure. She supports putting out a request for proposals to gauge interest.

Art Vinson asked if the Oxford Historical Society is interested in using the facility. Mayor Eady stated they are interested in having a place where people can come to learn about the history of Oxford. Ms. McCanless stated she would support this type of use of the structure. She feels the old houses and buildings are part of the identity of Oxford.

James Windham pointed out that the historical significance of the structure is not what it once was thought to be, and old for the sake of old is no better than new for the sake of new. The only architecturally significant feature of the structure is possible the floor-to-ceiling windows. Previously the City Council had allotted a large amount of money to work on the structure before they knew the structure did not have the historical significance once thought. A large amount has already been spent on it, and he does not agree with throwing good money after bad.

Mr. Vinson asked if there is a vision, or problem statement, or goal of the town for Yarbrough House. Mayor Eady stated that ideas have been shared but there is not a grand vision on paper for the property. The fundamental question being discussed is whether the City wants to use it as a public facility or a commercial facility. He has heard someone mention that a survey was done but he does not have any information about that survey.

Jeff Wearing, George Holt, and Jim Windham, all feel it will cost several hundred thousand dollars to repair it, and they do not feel that it is worth it.

Marcia Brooks advised she has begun working on a request for proposals, and also has a couple of contacts at the Chamber of Commerce she can reach out to.

**6. Cemetery Association Agreement and Landscape Maintenance (Attachment D)**

A discussion is needed regarding the renewal of the agreement with the Oxford Historical Cemetery Foundation and a decision as to whether the City of Oxford or the Foundation will be responsible for landscape maintenance going forward.

Anderson Wright and Alexa Devetter from the Foundation were in attendance. Mr. Wright reported that the Foundation is in the process of getting a new contractor for landscape maintenance due to the complaints received regarding maintenance by the previous contractor. The previous contractor's agreement expired this month. They received three bids for annual maintenance from Roger Ross, Naturescapes Landscape Services, and Great Estates Landscaping. Roger Ross is the low bidder. He has

already been doing the maintenance in January, and the improvement is noticeable. The Foundation would like to renew the five-year agreement with the Council and would also like to award the contract for maintenance to Roger Ross.

Mayor Eady stated that there had been some discussions by the City Council regarding whether renewing the agreement with the Foundation was desired or necessary, in part because of frustration with previous grounds maintenance and repeated communication about it without any resolution. There was some belief that there may be more direct accountability if the grounds maintenance was handled directly by the City. All other aspects of management of the Cemetery, such as marking of graves, selling burial rights, and opening graves for burial are already handled by the City. If the City took over grounds maintenance, the question would be what role the Foundation would play – would they still retain ownership of the contributed funds and proceeds from sales of burial rights and contribute each year to the maintenance cost, or would they dissolve their 501(c)(3) and turn all their funds over to the City?

Laura McCanless observed that based on the most recent agreement, it appears that the Foundation is the caretaker of the cemetery's legacy and history as well as grounds maintenance. She wanted to know who would take care of that aspect if the agreement were not renewed. She also asked if the agreement is still necessary if the City contracts directly for grounds maintenance.

Mr. Wright stated that he would like to have an opportunity with the new contractor for the Foundation to continue managing the grounds maintenance at the cemetery. He believes Roger Ross can be relied upon to perform the maintenance duties correctly. He and Rev. Johnson recently completed mapping of the graves where there are no markers. They have a map at the wellhouse where families can look up specific plots to easily locate them. They also get questions such as permissibility of seats or other items within plots.

George Holt stated that the reimbursement to the Foundation started during an economic recession. Prior to that, the Foundation was making enough money to fund the maintenance costs, but since the recession, the City Council has been supplementing their maintenance costs each year. He also stated that the City would have to hire one or two more staff members to perform the work.

Mayor Eady stated that the question was who would hold the contract. The City cannot take on the maintenance of the cemetery by employees. He commented that he believes Mr. Ross will do a great job, and he lives in Oxford. He also mentioned that he believes the City paid for the ground-penetrating radar to map the graves and the data is stored in a computer at City Hall to be converted to GIS at some point so that it could be accessed by the public online.

Mr. Wright agreed that the City paid for the mapping project, but the Foundation came up with the numbering system to be used to designate the plots.

Jeff Wearing stated he would like to continue the arrangement with the Foundation because he feels that management of the grounds maintenance contractor by the City would put too much of a burden on Public Works staff.

Jim Windham suggested renewing the agreement with the Foundation for one year and reevaluating the grounds maintenance contractor's performance at the end of the one-year term.

Mr. Wright asked if the Council members who have been working with the Foundation could continue to do so. This would give the Council some participation in oversight of the grounds maintenance.

Alexa Devetter stated that she understands Mayor Eady's perspective. She knows there was a long-term relationship with the previous vendor. That vendor did an excellent job for a number of years, but their performance started falling off. She expressed sympathy for the staff who have been fielding the complaints as well as for Mr. Wright who has been hearing the complaints. She believes Mr. Ross will do an excellent job and feels like they are back on track. She concurs with a one-year agreement if that works for everyone else.

Mike Ready suggested adding a 30-day termination clause to the contract with Mr. Ross. He feels a one-year contract is in the best interest of both parties.

Mr. Wright stated they do have that clause in the contract. He clarified that even though Mr. Ross provided the lowest bid, that is not the only reason they selected him. He also has relatives buried in the cemetery, so he has a vested interest in maintaining it adequately.

Ms. McCanless stated that she liked that the Council is "shopping locally."

A vote will be taken at the February regular session to authorize Mayor Eady to sign a new one-year agreement with the Foundation. The Foundation can move forward with the contract with Mr. Ross.

#### **7. Increase in Compensation for City Staff to be Considered (Attachment E)**

A proposal by Mayor Eady to raise the City's minimum salary to \$31,200/year or \$15.00/hour and to raise all other salaries by the same proportional amount of 14.1% has been presented to the City Council for consideration. The goal with this proposal is to give employees of the City of Oxford a livable wage. Since the last work session, Mayor Eady has provided additional data and supporting documentation for the data he provided in the last meeting. His analysis demonstrates that the proposed increase brings all the positions up to the range of the comparable positions at other cities and counties within the area. Marcia Brooks also provided a spreadsheet showing the fully burdened cost of labor if all employees were to take advantage of health and life insurance offerings at the baseline and adjusted salary amounts. Also provided was an

analysis of the projected costs for the remainder of FY 2022 at the baseline amount and adjusted salary amounts.

George Holt stated that he is not against giving employees raises. Last year he worked with Matt Pepper to analyze whether it was possible to have the City's pay start at \$15 per hour. Mr. Pepper was unable to find a way to do this without it having too much of a ripple effect. They came up with some job description changes and increased the lowest-paid employees to over \$13 per hour. He mentioned at that time that the appointed positions also needed to be reviewed for increases.

The City went through the same compensation and classification study with the University of Georgia (UGA) in 2006 that a contract has been signed for this year. He has conducted his own research using the materials Mayor Eady sent out. They interviewed employees and they reviewed and evaluated job descriptions. They concluded that the system used to classify the jobs in the City of Oxford was an adaptive version of the evaluation system which was developed by the Civil Service Commission, which is now the Office of Personnel Management of the federal government, which is considered to be the state-of-the-art system in personnel administration. He is very familiar with this system due to his background with the federal government.

UGA made a chart for the City of Oxford and classified the employees. Some wage adjustments were made at that time because some employees were not being paid at the level they were placed on the chart. UGA advised that in order to keep the schedule up to date, the City needs to consider an annual cost-of-living adjustment to the chart.

Mr. Holt stated that the current chart is not 14% off. Every year the City has looked at the cost of living and made adjustments to the chart. He has reviewed the amounts the positions at paygrades 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 23 were paid beginning in 2007. In 2007, paygrade 11 was \$22,000. In 2021, the same position was \$27,443. On the GS scale for federal government, someone who was paid \$22,000 in 2007 is now being paid \$27,184 at the same level. He reviewed each paygrade and found that the City of Oxford pay chart has increased more than the federal pay chart over the last fourteen years. He reiterated that the City of Oxford pay chart is not 14% off. He also stated that he reviewed the materials sent out by Mayor Eady, and the City of Oxford is not off compared to any City that is comparable to the City of Oxford.

In 2006, UGA advised that police officers should be on paygrade 14, which was \$25,513. At that time, James Windham raised the question of increasing police officer pay. A survey was conducted of the cities of Covington, Conyers, and other nearby jurisdictions. Based on this survey, police officers were moved to paygrade 17 with starting pay of \$29,587. Now police officers are being paid \$40,591.

In conclusion he stated that if Mayor Eady wishes to increase the pay chart by 14.1% that's fine, but not to provide documentation claiming that it supports the proposal, because the information provided does not support it. The City of Oxford has increased



its salaries 24% since 2007, and the federal government has increased its salaries 19% since 2007.

Mayor Eady stated that he provided comparables, source data for the comparables, and a spreadsheet that could be used to create an alternative spreadsheet so that the Councilmembers could see where each position falls relative to those various items.

Mr. Holt stated that when one compares cities that are comparable to the City of Oxford across the board, Oxford is not that far off. He does not see why it is necessary to pay UGA to conduct the study again. It is not possible that they are going to recommend increasing the chart by 14%.

Art Vinson asked if there is a caveat at the end of 2022 based on findings from UGA. Mayor Eady stated that is what Mr. Holt is referring to. Part of that study is to benchmark the City's positions against the market without telling the City what each position should be paid.

Mr. Holt contended that UGA will tell the City in the study how each employee should be classified on the chart, which will determine how much they will be paid. Mayor Eady agreed.

Mr. Vinson asked if any change made now would be subject to being altered at the end of the year. Mayor Eady stated that the City does not know how the study will impact the proposed changes. This discussion started with the fact that the City of Oxford is not paying its lowest-paid employees a livable wage. Raising the lowest paid employee to \$15 per hour raises their hourly wage by 14.1%. From there, the issue becomes one of parity for other employees, hence the proposal to make an adjustment across the board of 14.1%. The documents distributed show what the impact of that would be. In his opinion, the proposed salaries fall within the range for all employees at the City of Oxford when looking at the comparables.

James Windham stated that the incumbents in the appointed positions have advantages over the lowest paid employees, have negotiating skills, and have their ears to the ground. Discussions of parity do not equate across the board to include these positions with those paid under \$30,000. He can support raising the wages of those making under \$30,000 but cannot support raising them across the board for those already making a lot more. However, he does understand that a few higher-paid positions may need to be looked at.

Mr. Holt stated that he was not even considering the appointed positions because the previous UGA study stated they were not included, and the City's charter states they are not employees for the purpose of this discussion. This would include the City Clerk, City Manager, and Police Chief. Mr. Windham stated he was referring to the spreadsheet sent out showing the impact of the increases.

Mayor Eady agreed that those positions are not on the chart and are exempt employees. Mr. Holt stated that whenever the chart has been increased, the City Council has always looked separately at increases for the appointed positions. Mr. Eady stated that he is recommending increases for the appointed positions, but if the City Council wants to focus on the pay of the employees on the chart and look at the appointed positions separately, that is fine with him. He does stand by the numbers that suggest that the City of Oxford is not paying its people aligned with the market.

Mr. Holt stated that if one looks at the numbers hard enough, he does not see how it works out to what Mayor Eady is saying. Mr. Windham agreed. He stated that someone making \$85,000 a year is making a living wage. He added that 14% of \$85,000 is a lot more than 14% of \$27,000. Mr. Holt added that when the minimum wage increases, the manager wages do not increase. Only a few people making below or just a little above minimum wage have their wages increased. He agrees that there is some rippling effect, but not 14.1% across the board.

Mayor Eady asked Mr. Holt what he proposes. Mr. Holt stated that it cannot be determined in two work sessions. He has been working on his analysis for four days. UGA used the federal pay scale as their model for developing the City of Oxford pay scale and assigned employees to where they should be on that scale in 2006.

Mayor Eady stated that the University System of Georgia itself is conducting a compensation study and looking at changing their pay scale based on changes in the market. Many organizations are looking at changes to their compensation structure. The UGA study for the City of Oxford was conducted seventeen years ago.

Mr. Holt stated that normally an organization should look at the cost-of-living index annually to make adjustments to their scale. This was UGA's recommendation when they conducted the study in 2006. The City of Oxford has done this.

Mayor Eady stated that there are CPI-adjusted increases and there are merit increases. People don't typically just ride out the annual steps in their pay scale. They jump in the pay scale to stay on pace with their qualifications.

Mr. Holt stated that the salary information for the cities used as comparables comes from each city's pay chart. Adjustments are made to that chart based on the cost of living. Mayor Eady concurred and stated that he provided information from cities not only that are comparable in population levels, but also cities that are in the same market area. He calculated averages based on population levels and averages based on market area.

Mr. Holt stated that when he takes the information provided by Mayor Eady, some of which is different than at the last meeting, he still does not come up with a 14.1% difference.

Mr. Windham proposed that those making less than \$30,000 per year or \$15 per hour should get an increase up to \$15 per hour at this time. Since the new UGA study will be available in December, he proposes that they wait until the outcome of the study to determine how much those in other positions should get. If all positions are increased now, then the UGA study says a position's pay is too high, there is no way to get it back. Getting people up to a living wage is how this conversation started.

Ms. McCanless agreed with Mr. Windham because a chunk is being invested in the UGA study, and it is supposed to be quite comprehensive and definitive. It would be nice to use the study to make data-driven decisions.

Bill Andrew asked what the use of the pay chart is. The steps should be 2.5% but they are only 1.25% and they are being done every other year instead of every year. He does not understand why Mr. Holt says that the City is not 14% off – it is at least 16% off. He also stated he advised Mayor Eady earlier today that he wants his name taken out of consideration so that he does not become a lightning rod for this situation. He also said that if only those under \$15 per hour receive raises, the effect will be that they are pitted against people who have been with the City longer, and they may leapfrog those people in some instances, which is not fair to the longer-term employees.

Mr. Holt stated that was exactly what he and Matt encountered when they tried to get employees to \$15 an hour last year. They made some adjustments on a couple of levels above the lowest level because of that ripple effect. He stated that an employee does not have to move up the chart every year.

Mr. Andrew stated that UGA's intention was that employees move up each year. Mr. Holt stated that was not mentioned anywhere in the UGA study from 2006. He also mentioned that a few years ago it came to the City Council's attention that employees were not moving across the chart, so a move across every other year was started. Mr. Andrew stated he has worked with UGA with these charts in the past and they will tell us an employee should move across the chart each year if they are asked.

Marcia Brooks stated there are two different kinds of increases. Moving across the chart is an increase based on performance. Cost of living increases result in a change to the entire chart. Mr. Holt stated moving across the chart is not for employees that do not come to work half the time. He reiterated his comment from earlier that this discussion is only for employees who are on the chart, not for appointed employees.

Marcia Brooks stated that she has concerns with stopping at \$30,000 because she has one person in her office who would not get a raise under this plan and is afraid it could cause some animosity between employees.

Mr. Holt stated that it is impossible to stop at \$30,000, and much more time is needed to research the issue.

Mayor Eady stated that this matter was first brought before the City Council one month ago, and data was provided a couple of weeks ago. He is not trying to rush a decision, but he is sensitive to the fact that the City is trying to rebuild its Police Department. There is currently one officer plus the Chief. If the City is not paying its officers competitive wages, Chief Anglin will be challenged to find qualified officers. The City is losing people because it is not paying a livable or competitive wage. He is not as interested in looking at the GS schedule or the state schedule as he is looking at the schedules of the City's competitors. He believes something must be done in the shorter term.

Ms. McCanless stated that she agrees with Mayor Eady's approach of looking at market forces that don't necessarily follow a chart. It is obviously a complex situation.

Jeff Wearing stated that there is a crunch for labor everywhere. The rate of inflation has everyone concerned and worried. The trends are not going to stop for a long time and the City has to do something. He stated he is in agreement with George looking at the charts. However, he contended that the charts need to be thrown out the window. The rate of inflation and labor force are at unprecedented levels. He agrees with Mayor Eady's position. The City has to attract qualified police officers and has to give its employees a living wage so they are not struggling daily. The economic situation is a disaster. He believes something needs to be done fairly quick. He contends that a 14.1% increase is not going to kill the City.

Mike Ready stated that a 6% cost of living adjustment was just made for Social Security. Increases before this were never over about 2%. So there is already a big jump that the federal government has had to accept. The City has lost people year after year over the last five years over \$1 or \$2 per hour to another city. Now, COVID-19 has thrown any chart for all companies out the window. When a raise is given to non-exempt employees, it has to be given to all employees for it to flow correctly. He strongly disagrees with capping the raise at \$30,000. If the lowest paid employee is raised to \$15, which is 14.1%, then all non-exempt employees should receive that same proportional increase. This needs to happen sooner rather than later, and the exempt employees can be reviewed after the new study by UGA is completed.

Lynn Bohanan asked for clarification on exempt employees – are they the appointed positions and are they the ones Mr. Ready is suggesting waiting on until December for increases? Mayor Eady advised that is correct. Ms. Bohanan advised that Mr. Ready's comments most closely align with her thoughts. She agrees with considering the appointed positions for raises separately.

Mr. Holt advised that the appointed positions can be considered anytime for increases – they do not have to wait until December.

Mayor Eady asked if there is consensus on increasing all non-exempt employee wages by 14.1%.

Mr. Holt stated that the lowest paid position and a few above it are different from what they were last year. The lowest paid position was on paygrade 10 last year but is now at 11. Ms. Brooks stated those changes were part of Mr. Pepper's realignment of positions that were effective for FY 2022. Three levels were adjusted up in her office, but Stacey Mullen's pay grade did not change. Also, a couple of positions changed in this way in Public Works.

Mr. Holt commented that there is already \$30,000 difference between the beginning salaries for the lowest paid person's paygrade and the highest paid person's paygrade. He reiterated that just because the lowest paid person is getting a raise to get them up to a living wage does not mean the highest paid person should also get a raise. However, he does recommend consideration of a raise for the City Clerk.

Mr. Windham commented that Stacey Mullen has been short-changed in the past when she received a 2.5% increase rather than being paid for the work she was doing. He wanted the appointed employees to know that he is not criticizing them and feels they have been and will do a great job. He just feels it is not the same issue with them.

Mark Anglin stated that he is fine with not including the appointed employees or considering them separately for an increase. He feels that everything the City Council has talked about tonight is important, and he is focused on attracting highly qualified police officers and believes including them in the pay increase is a good incentive to get officers to come to Oxford rather than to work for other law enforcement agencies. He has not taken offense to anything said.

Mr. Holt stated that the City needs to make sure that it pays so that it can get highly qualified, decent police officers.

Ms. Bohanan asked if it would be possible to revisit individuals after a 14.1% increase for the full pay chart is approved. She is asking specifically in relation to Ms. Mullen's position. Mayor Eady stated that UGA will be looking at each position and will be asking employees what they actually do. They will be providing recommendations for how specific positions should be classified, and their study may result in some changes. That being said, individual positions can always be reviewed by the City Council. She reiterated that she is in favor of the 14.1% increase for non-exempt employees and would like to come back and look at some positions individually.

Ms. McCanless stated she will support a 14.1% increase for all non-exempt employees and reassessment of the appointed positions when the UGA study is completed.

Mayor Eady asked if there is a consensus vote if the issue is placed on the agenda for the February regular session, or if further discussion is needed. There was no comment. Mayor Eady stated the appointed positions can be considered separately, as well as looking at any other positions the Council wants to review.

Mr. Holt stated that the City Council should look at the appointed positions prior to the results of the study, since they are not included in it anyway.

Marcia Brooks expressed her support for the proposal of increasing the non-exempt employees' wages by 14.1% and has no issues with considering the appointed positions separately.

Ms. Bohanan reiterated her support for this proposal. She commented that the City has a good team, and it would be a shame to lose someone because the City is not willing to help them.

Mr. Holt stated that the City Clerk's salary needs to be reviewed by February 1, because if all non-exempt employees receive a 14.1% increase, someone in her office will end up making more than her if she does not receive an increase.

**8. Other Business**

None.

**9. Work Session Meeting Review**

- a. Search for wayfinding information compiled by Kay Lee and form a committee to review and provide recommendations
- b. Work on LCI application which will be presented to the City Council before submission
- c. Actively and aggressively seek proposal for use of Yarbrough House that would be the basis for deciding whether to proceed with any activities related to the property
- d. Vote on 1-year agreement with Cemetery Foundation in February regular session
- e. Vote on 14.1% increase for all employees on the pay schedule in February regular session

**10. Executive Session**

None.

**11. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Eady at 8:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brooks  
City Clerk/Treasurer