



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING
WORK SESSION
MONDAY, AUGUST 17, 2020 – 6:30 PM
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

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

APPOINTED/STAFF PRESENT:

Matt Pepper – City Manager
Marcia Brooks – City Clerk/Treasurer
Melissa Pratt – Associate Clerk
Jody Reid – Utility Superintendent
Dave Harvey – Police Chief

OTHERS PRESENT: Art Vinson, Laurie Vinson, Mike Ready, Nick Cole, Barbara Cole, Mike McQuaide

Agenda (Attachment A)

1. Mayor’s Announcements

None.

2. Discussion on Farmer’s Market (Attachment B)

Associate Clerk Melissa Pratt presented several drafts documents for review by the City Council: Operating Policies, Application, and Vendor Acknowledgement COVID Guidelines. She also provided copies of the city ordinances for non-licensed sales and for signs. She explained that she based her drafts on the procedures of the Freedom Farmers’ Market in Atlanta, which was recommended by Daniel Parsons.

Laura McCanless provided feedback on a typographical error. She also stated she would like to see accidental injury and theft added to the hold harmless section. She has several questions concerning specific operations for Oxford. Ms. Pratt stated that she has flags and marking paint to lay out an area for parking.

Ms. McCanless noticed that our proposed schedule is not consistent with Oxford College’s preferred day of the week in previous years. She wants to ensure that we do not shut them out since they have been our only consistent vendor. She also feels it may not be appropriate to charge until we build up the vendor base. Ms. Pratt understood Ms. Ms.

McCanless' concerns. She did want to make the points that the location has a lot of traffic and she has a list of vendors she will be contacting to invite to participate. Most vendors expect to pay a fee for an event such as this, and charging a small fee sets a minimum standard. She also feels it is important for the market to pay for itself.

Lynn Bohanan feels the fee should be charged from the beginning because it will be harder to justify it if it starts off free. One possible option would be for the first month to be free.

Jeff Wearing asked what type of marketing plan Ms. Pratt has for the vendors and customers. Ms. Pratt stated there are many vendor registries where the farmer's market can be listed including the Georgia Department of Agriculture. She plans to call vendors she is aware of, place information on Facebook, and send out press releases as well. Mr. Wearing suggested a sign saying, "Welcome to the Oxford Farmer's Market," with the hours, and another sign for parking. Ms. Pratt stated her plan includes marking an area for parking for customers and a separate area for vendors. She also stated updating Google Maps will help promote it as well.

James Windham suggested having the City Attorney review the procedures, particularly the hold harmless section. The type of signs allowed need to meet minimum standards. Also, all the information in the documents needs to be consistent without any contradictory information. He believes the problem with the market in the past has been failure to market it. He has concerns about overwhelming potential vendors with procedural requirements. He also has concerns about vendors trying to sell produce from other areas in the market. He does not have reservations about including artisan products. He does believe the documents need to be combined into one cohesive document. Ms. Pratt stated each vendor would receive an application package

Mr. Windham asked how rigid Ms. Pratt will be with the requirements, and how she intends to police it. Ms. Pratt advised she plans to walk the market and inspect the property if there is any doubt about a vendor's products. She also will have a list of what is "in season." It will be monitored whenever open. This was one of the reasons for reducing it to two days per week. Mr. Windham reiterated that Thursday has always been the best day for Oxford College. Ms. Pratt agreed to check with Daniel Parsons at Oxford College to determine if Thursday is still best for him. Mayor Eady stated there is also another vendor who participated regularly whose schedule should be consulted.

Mr. Windham suggested that Ms. Pratt speak with Kay Lee who in the past had organized a farmer's market in Covington. He and Ms. McCanless both commended Ms. Pratt for the effort she has put into this initiative.

Mayor Eady asked that all Councilmembers review the documents and provide specific recommendations to him and Matt Pepper in an email. Adjustments identified based on the feedback can be incorporated into the documents and discussed at a future meeting.

3. **Amendment to City Mask Resolution** (Attachment C)

At the August regular session, the City Council discussed amending the City Mask Resolution to include all city properties with the possible exception of city streets and trails. The resolution currently in effect applies only to City Hall and the Maintenance Facility.

All Councilmembers were in favor of the changes to the mask resolution. Mayor Eady will work with Matt Pepper to make the changes to exempt city streets and trails and have David Strickland review it. He scheduled a special called meeting for August 24, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. to vote on the amended version.

4. **Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Funds Discussion**

The City of Oxford is eligible for reimbursement-based funds of \$122,807.67 from the CARES Act. Matt Pepper and Marcia Brooks have attended meetings and training regarding guidance for proper use of the funds. The phase 1 funds must be spent by September 1, 2020.

Matt Pepper discussed the City's plans for optimizing the use of the funds. The main purpose of the Round 1 funding is to make cities and counties whole for the unexpected costs of dealing with the COVID-19 epidemic. Many cities have spent part of the funds on personal protective equipment (PPE), installed plexiglass shields at their customer service counters, and contracted with professional cleaners to disinfect and sanitize their buildings.

He stated that we can claim 100% of our public safety personnel expenses for the months of March through August for Round 1 of the funding. Staff believes the best use of the Round 1 funds would be to submit requests for reimbursement of our public safety funds, and plan to use future phases of funds on community response plans, assuming such use will be allowed. No guidance or details concerning the other phase(s) has been released yet.

Mayor Eady stated one possible option for using the future phase(s) is to provide resources to establish a location for working parents to leave their school-age children in a safe environment while they are working. Other ways the city may help this impacted group are by working with non-profits, faith-based organizations, and the schools to help provide a structured environment for completing their schoolwork, access to high-speed internet, and access to computer equipment. The school board has said they will provide Chromebooks and hot spots as needed, but there may be a gap the City of Oxford can help fill. The other immediate need in the community is individuals facing possible eviction due to inability to pay their rent because of the pandemic.

George Holt asked for clarification on the Round 1 funding. Specifically, he asked if enough expenditures have been identified to submit for the full amount (\$122,807.67) before the deadline of September 1, 2020, and if the community response ideas are for the future. Mayor Eady confirmed that his statement was correct. The City has already met payroll and paid for COVID-19 supplies and equipment. We can choose to funnel the reimbursement money directly into these projects or allow the General Fund to absorb the

immediate reimbursements and wait for further guidance on the future rounds of funding before committing them.

Ms. McCanless stated the current rules permit the types of assistance Mayor Eady mentioned. She indicated the guidance had specific requirements about private loans. Mayor Eady agreed that such loans must be administered in close cooperation with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) and the State Office of Planning and Budget (OPB). She would like to see outside WIFI hotspots installed permanently in a couple of places in Oxford, and she also suggested small business loans and/or grants for residents of Oxford who may be struggling with their businesses.

Mr. Wearing suggested that each Councilmember could submit several ideas that could be placed in a listing and prioritized. Mayor Eady agreed and asked all Councilmembers to email three to five ideas to Matt and copy him and prioritize them within each submission.

5. Emory Street Sidewalk Replacement Project (Attachment D)

The FY2021 Capital Budget includes \$100,000 to repair the existing sidewalk on the west side of Emory Street /SR 81 from the city-owned greenspace to Soule Street. Due to the condition of the current sidewalk, staff recommends replacement rather than repair of this section of sidewalk. The sidewalk is located within the Georgia Department of Transportation's (GDOT) right-of-way, so a special encroachment permit must be obtained from GDOT before the project is started.

Jordan Engineering has completed the attached draft plans for this work which would be submitted with the application for the permit. Matt Pepper anticipates the permit process will be relatively simple given there is an existing sidewalk. The width of the current sidewalk varies between just under and just over four feet. The plans call for increasing the width to five feet standard. The concrete would be four inches except where it crosses driveways, in which case it would be six inches. Some minor signage may be moved but little disruption is expected because the additional foot can be pushed onto the GDOT right-of-way on the East side of the sidewalk.

Mr. Holt asked if this work is for the East and West side of the street. Mayor Eady stated this project is only for the West side from the U.S. Post Office to Palmer Stone School.

Ms. McCanless asked if the \$100,000 is for the replacement and increase to five feet. Mayor Eady stated that was the amount budgeted for repairs. Bids will have to be obtained to determine the cost to replace the sidewalk and increase the width.

Mr. Holt asked if some of the \$100,000 was used for the study for the sidewalk from Soule Street north to the city limits. Mayor Eady stated some of it was used in FY 2020 but \$100,000 was also allocated for FY 2021.

Mr. Wearing mentioned that the Council had previously discussed installing lighting along the sidewalks. He asked if it would be feasible to lay conduit as part of this project. He did

not think it would be expensive to add the conduit to the plans. Mr. Holt and Mr. Windham agreed it would be better to include the conduit now if lights will be added at some point.

Ms. McCanless expressed reservations about replacing functional sidewalk in a financially conservative time given that the East side of Emory Street North of Soule Street does not have sidewalk at all. Mayor Eady stated the cost for that sidewalk project was around \$1 million, and the concept study included lighting. Grant funding is being sought for this project, and the portion to be paid by the City of Oxford was included in the Capital Budget for FY 2021. Realistically it probably will not begin in FY 2021. The sidewalk replacement currently being considered is a priority for Mayor Eady because it is a safety hazard. Replacement of this section will tie in with the new section on the North side.

Mayor Eady advised the plans can be updated to include the conduit for the lighting. Keck & Wood was also asked to provide a proposal for a lighting design plan for the East side of Emory Street from Soule Street to the I-20 bridge. Their proposal for the design is about \$24,000. The work itself will cost about \$.5 million. Mr. Holt stated the proposed TSPLOST tax could pay for that project in the future.

6. Bid for 101 Longstreet Circle Lot (Attachment E)

At a previous City Council meeting, the Councilmembers agreed to advertise a city-owned lot at 101 Longstreet Circle for bids. One bid was received from Mr. Hurenza Lewis for \$15,000. He would like to build a new house on it. The last time the City advertised for bids, one bid was received for \$6,000. The bid was accepted by the City, but the deal fell through.

Mr. Holt and Mr. Wearing stated the bid should be accepted. Mr. Windham disagreed. Ms. McCanless wanted to know the fair market value for the lot and also whether a home can feasibly be built on the lot. Mayor Eady stated there was previously a house on the lot that was built in the 1980s and was similar to one diagonally across from it. A house built on the lot now would have to comply with current building requirements.

Ms. McCanless feels it is unfair to sell the lot knowing the intent is to build on it without confirming it will be compliant with the Oxford Zoning Ordinances. Mr. Windham agreed with Ms. McCanless. Mr. Holt recommended having Mr. Lewis submit plans for his house to the City Council.

Mr. Windham stated that all lots in Oxford are taxing around \$20,000. Marcia Brooks stated that the assessed value for the lot is \$12,000.

Mr. Windham asked why Oxford would want development in that neighborhood if it is not desired behind Orna Villa. He feels Oxford should determine what it wants to be and make decisions congruent with that strategy. Ms. McCanless agreed with Mr. Windham and indicated she is fine with leaving the lot in a natural state.

Mr. Holt pointed out that a house had been on the lot before. Mr. Windham stated that does not mean one should be there now. Green space needs to be spread out over the entire City and not just particular areas in the City.

Ms. McCanless stated the Trees, Parks and Recreation Board recommended leaving it as a natural space, with perhaps a bench. They did not recommend putting a park there.

Mayor Eady stated the City Council decided at a previous meeting to put the lot up for bid. If the majority of the Council does not wish to sell the land the offer can be declined, but it was agreed that it would be put out for bids. Ms. McCanless recalled that it was discussed and agreed that bids would be considered but did not have to be accepted.

Mr. Windham stated the Trees, Parks and Recreation Board recommended a park in the spot, which people interpreted differently. It was never intended to have basketball courts, a playground, or other such equipment. It was intended to be a natural place for relaxation for the neighborhood. Ms. McCanless stated the residents of the neighborhood were asked if they wanted a park and they said they did not, so the Board recommended a natural space, or pocket park.

Mayor Eady stated the Planning Commission can be asked if the lot is buildable. If the majority of the City Council wants to keep the lot, the Trees, Parks and Recreation Board can be asked to develop a landscaping plan for it. Mr. Wearing stated he thought the City Council already voted not to develop the lot at all. Mr. Holt agreed with Mr. Wearing but acknowledged the Council can vote again on it. He believes the City should get rid of it. Mr. Wearing agreed with Mr. Holt and indicated he believes Mr. Lewis did his due diligence or he would not have bid \$15,000.

Ms. McCanless asked Mayor Eady if he could review the zoning ordinances to verify if the lot is buildable. She does not want there to be a request for a major variance with the City Council divided on the disposition of the property. Mayor Eady agreed to do so and report the information back to the Councilmembers. Mr. Holt and Mr. Wearing can make a motion and second at the September Council meeting if they wish and the Council can vote on it.

7. **Right-of-Way Survey** (Attachment F)

The City of Oxford contracted with Jordan Engineering to survey the rights-of-way in the City and identify any encroachments. The original scope of this work was completed. In the process they have collected additional information and verified some additional parcels and streets that should be added.

Mayor Eady, Matt Pepper and Jody Reid have spoken with Jordan Engineering to determine what would be required to complete the survey for the additional properties in the northwest quadrant of the City so that the complete dataset can be turned over to the Newton County GIS Department to update the City's tax records. The estimate from Jordan Engineering to complete this work is \$1,760.00.

Mr. Holt asked if the additional properties are within the City of Oxford, as the original contract was to survey the properties within the City. Mayor Eady stated the original contract was to survey the streets and rights-of-way in the City. Mr. Holt stated they missed some locations in their original work and now want to charge the City for the locations they missed. Mr. Holt asked if the streets and rights-of-ways in the proposal are within the City of Oxford. Mayor Eady stated they are not streets and rights-of-way; they are privately owned easements. Mr. Windham requested to see the contract.

Mayor Eady advised that Jordan Engineering determined the portion of W. Richardson Street owned by the City ends at Hull Street, and beyond that there is an access easement going down the dirt part of the road until it terminates at the quarry. Jordan Engineering reached a similar conclusion about Stagecoach Road North of W. Richardson Street. Most of the properties along these easements are within the City of Oxford.

Mr. Holt asked how the City of Oxford would benefit from this additional survey work. Mayor Eady stated it would complete the dataset for the boundaries of the City of Oxford. Mr. Holt stated that should have been included in the original contract. Mayor Eady stated the matter can be tabled until another meeting. The contract, invoices for the actual work and minutes from the meeting when the contract was approved can be provided to the Council for review. He added that one benefit would be an accurate determination of which properties fall within the City of Oxford if the fifty acres nearby were sold to a developer and homes were built on it.

Ms. McCanless stated the research should be done, but the amount proposed is a worthwhile cost if it provides the City with accurate information for planning purposes. Mr. Windham stated that if it is determined that the properties along these easements are within the City but the easements are not, quit claim deeds should be obtained from the property owners.

Jody Reid stated Newton County Transportation Department has been maintaining the dirt portion of W. Richardson Street. Mayor Eady advised Jordan Engineering could not find any evidence that the dirt portion was ever deeded out of private hands to Newton County or the City of Oxford, but it has been maintained like a county road.

Mr. Windham and Mr. Wearing requested that they be sent the documents (contract, invoices, minutes) for review. They also requested that this issue be discussed with the City Attorney. Mayor Eady advised this information will be sent to all the Councilmembers.

8. Monthly Invoice Approval

Matt Pepper explained that this discussion has arisen in the past few months because financial policies have changed in recent years. Mr. Holt used to chair the Finance Subcommittee and routinely reviewed and approved invoices. However, since the City is now under a manager-council form of government, this need has decreased. The Council approves invoices \geq \$1,000, but many of them have already been paid on jobs and projects previously approved by the Council. The Council has asked that the staff determine a way to inform the Council and public of the finances for the previous month but

not ask the Council to approve the same expenditures multiple times. Staff propose providing the information on the agenda or as an attachment for the community's benefit and as an accountability measure but not asking the Council to vote on the listing.

Mr. Windham asked if the City of Oxford has appropriate safeguards and policies in place to avoid the type of situation that has recently occurred in the City of Porterdale. Mr. Holt stated he began reviewing the finances because the auditors suggested implementing procedures to improve the separation of duties between accounts receivable and accounts payable, and to have better oversight to know that the items being paid for were actually ordered and received.

A system was implemented requiring a purchase order for each purchase with approval, and sign-off was required that items were received. He continued reviewing the purchases before they were paid even after the first City Manager was hired. When Stacy Mullen began paying invoices, she became accustomed to the questions he asked and was prepared when he asked them. It became unnecessary to continue approving all payments. Mr. Holt confirmed to Mr. Windham that there is adequate separation of duties now that he feels comfortable with staff handling these responsibilities.

Matt Pepper added that the current staff has a culture of transparency, and any Councilmember or the public who wants to see any documentation needs only to ask. Mr. Windham agreed with Matt and commended the staff for the job they do. He only had concerns from the perspective of avoiding any issues such as occurred in Porterdale recently.

Mayor Eady stated the listing of payments will have some additional details about the payments to make clear what they are for.

Mr. Windham asked if there is a reason the City's budget is not on the website. Mr. Pepper stated he will add the budgets and audits on a separate page on the website.

The Councilmembers agreed to start including the invoice listing as a separate attachment rather than in the body of the Council Meeting agenda.

9. Annual Mayor and Council Retreat

Mayor Eady stated that due to the risks inherent with meeting in person, he and Mr. Pepper have discussed some ways they can make use of the time usually dedicated to the strategic planning meeting held in October of each year. This year his thoughts are to have the standing committees and boards present their activities over the past year and goals for the future. They also discussed trying to find ways to involve the public more actively in the City's strategic planning process. The meeting this year will be held virtually and will last no more than half a day.

Mr. Windham stated he feels the tone and feel of the City Council completely changed with the last election. There are a lot of new ideas and thoughts of what the Council should be, and he would like to get those ideas solidified so that Council decisions fit within that

alignment. Mayor Eady stated that when the zoning ordinances were passed about twelve years ago, an infill overlay was added. If the Council wants to take a new look at its land use policies, it would be an extensive discussion. Mr. Windham suggested discussing these issues at the retreat.

10. September Regular Session Meeting

The regular Council meeting for September will be moved to September 14, 2020 due to the Labor Day holiday falling on the Council's normal monthly meeting night.

11. 2nd Little Library

Mayor Eady expressed appreciation to Nick and Barbara Cole for their work on the first Little Library. He entertained discussion on placement of a second Little Library. Ms. Cole stated that there are already plans to place another one on the Oxford College campus. She would like to place another one in a different location for the public. Mayor Eady asked the Councilmembers to include their ideas for locations in the same email when they send their ideas about CARES Act Funding.

Mayor Eady adjourned the meeting at 8:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia Brooks
City Clerk/Treasurer