



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING  
WORK SESSION  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 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  
Jody Reid – Utility Superintendent  
Dave Harvey – Police Chief

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Laura Gafnea (Oxford College), Mike Ready, Mike McQuaide

**Agenda** (Attachment A)

**1. Mayor’s Announcements**

None.

**2. Dried Indian Creek Corridor** (Attachment B)

The City of Oxford Sustainability Committee is working on a project to protect the Dried Indian Creek Corridor and connect it to other habitats in the City of Covington and Newton County. This project is tied to a grant from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) that the City plans to apply for next year. Collaborating with the City of Covington and Newton County in a partnership for this initiative will strengthen the likelihood of approval of the grant application.

The City of Oxford FY2021 Capital Budget includes \$50,000 allocated for Dried Indian Creek Corridor protection. The City will likely spend some of that money to get some of the things done in preparation for applying for the grant. He also anticipates utilizing the services of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) to complete the application and some of the preliminary planning work at a cost \$2,000-\$4,000.

Mayor Eady shared some of the concept information he has discussed with the Sustainability Committee related to this initiative. The initiative covers the entire length of

the river corridor, but Oxford is focused on the segment north of I-20. The City of Covington has already identified a couple of areas along the corridor south of I-20 that would be suitable for green/park areas, and the idea would be for Oxford's portion to link to those areas.

The Dried Indian Creek Corridor has become degraded over time due to development and other causes. Through land acquisitions, donations, and recommendation of best practices to landowners, the hope is to protect the creek from further degradation and restore its ecological structure and functions. Ideally it would have public access as a low-impact multi-use trail that would connect with the trails and parks established by the City of Covington. There is already a sewer easement along the length of the portion within the City of Oxford, which the trail could run along. This initiative also creates an opportunity to share the history of the creek and the surrounding area.

Mayor Eady shared a list of tasks that need to be accomplished in the near future related to this initiative, including working with the University of Georgia on a concept plan. They will expect a donation in exchange. He will bring any proposed expenditures before the Council before proceeding on them.

Mike McQuaide expressed his appreciation to Mayor Eady for creating the committee and stated they are actively meeting twice per month with the goal of bringing recommendations to the City related to sustainability of the Oxford community.

Laura McCanless expressed some reservations about the tightness of the timeline in terms of the concept plan being done next summer with the grant application due in September. Mayor Eady explained that the University of Georgia role with the concept plan would be to produce "pretty pictures" depicting what the corridor would look like after the work is done. These would be completed by the middle of August and would be the finishing touches for the application.

Jeff Wearing applauded Mayor Eady and the rest of the committee for its work.

### 3. **Emory Street Sidewalk Replacement Project** (Attachment C)

At the August work session, a plan for replacement of the sidewalk from the city-owned greenspace to Soule Street on the west side of Emory Street/SR 81 was discussed. Staff was asked to have the plans updated to include installing conduit for pedestrian lighting. The revised plans were presented.

Mayor Eady also advised that since the August work session, the issue of which material to use had come up, with the City discussing alternatives to Portland cement. Laura McCanless obtained some information and a sample of a material made from post-consumer recycled rubber tires. She stated that it is considered permeable. Mayor Eady explained that it is made of small pebble-sized pieces of the rubber material that is shaped into blocks using a binding agent.

An estimate has been provided by a contractor to demolish the existing sidewalk and replace it with this material for \$136,000. The next step would be to release an RFP and

seek bids for the project. The RFP would request a bid using traditional Portland cement and a bid using the rubber material so that the two can be compared.

George Holt asked if this would result in sidewalks throughout the City being composed of different materials, and in particular the sidewalk being installed from the I-20 bridge to Moore Street. Mayor Eady stated that if the City is satisfied with this material, it would be the City's intention to use it going forward in City sidewalk projects, but that it is likely too late to change the material of the sidewalk from the I-20 bridge to Moore Street.

Laura McCanless stated that in addition to this material being permeable and utilizing post-consumer recycled materials, it also eliminates the carbon footprint of Portland cement, which has one of the heaviest carbon footprints of construction materials.

Jeff Wearing asked if there are any towns where the sidewalk has already been installed that the City could talk to about this material. Ms. McCanless stated that the City of Locust Grove is currently installing this type of material. The company she has been talking to is very new to the Georgia market. She can check with the company about references the City can talk to.

Mr. Wearing stated he would like some more information about the longevity of the material as well as provisions for expansion and whether plants grow through it. Ms. McCanless did ask about botanical growth and was told that does not occur with this material, and that because the material is resilient, it is continuously laid and does not need breaks for expansion. She does encourage contacting some other places that have used the material to get their input.

Mayor Eady stated the website can be provided to the Councilmembers which has information about locations they have installed the material.

#### **4. Water Main Replacement Project**

The City of Oxford was not selected to receive a CBDG grant this year for replacement of a section of the City's water system in the area of Oxford Road, Keel Street and Perry Circle. The City now has the option to work with the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) to shore up its application and submit it again next year for the grant or to utilize existing funding from capital projects funds and complete the project sooner. At the October 5<sup>th</sup> Regular Council Meeting, a decision on the timing of this project was tabled.

Mayor Eady asked if any Councilmembers had additional questions or comments. Mr. Wearing stated he had researched the issue of the rock the current line is resting on increasing the cost of the project significantly. He believes \$60,000 instead of \$11,000 as the estimate had recommended would be a more realistic expectation for this cost. It is impossible to tell for sure until the work is done. Jody Reid had advised him that there is a material that could be laid on top of the rock to protect the pipe. However, due to grades and other issues, it may still be necessary to remove some of it. He wants to caution the City Councilmembers that the current estimate could be as much as \$100,000 low.

Mayor Eady stated the City can ask the engineers to amend the estimate if Mr. Reid believes that is appropriate.

**5. Sustainability Committee**

Several months ago, Mayor Eady exercised his authority regarding committees to establish a Sustainability Committee for the City of Oxford. Melissa Hage is the chairperson of the committee. Laura McCanless is the City Council representative. Mike McQuaide, Dave Huber, and Daniel Parson are also members. Mayor Eady is planning to add some additional representatives to diversify the perspectives. He is seeking recommendations from City Councilmembers. He asked Gwen Green if she was interested, but after further reflection she determined she is unable to serve.

The purpose of the committee is to provide recommendations to the Oxford City Council on ways it can advance on the ideals it has established of becoming more sustainable. A previous ad-hoc committee established by Mayor Roseberry made some recommendations which have become the foundation for the work of the new committee. Mayor Eady wants to take the City Council through a process to ensure a shared vision of the City's priorities in terms of sustainability for the Oxford community.

**6. African American History Committee**

Mayor Eady discussed his intention to create a committee to determine how the City can memorialize the contributions of African Americans in Oxford including enslaved African Americans. He stated that the City has not done enough to acknowledge their contributions, which have been very important to the community. The Committee would also be responsible for reviewing existing markers in public spaces in Oxford to determine if they need some revision.

As an example, he mentioned Kitty's Cottage, the history of which has been romanticized in the past. He is not sure the current plaque in front of the cottage considers the full complexity and richness of the history of the cottage and the story of Catherine Boyd. He also mentioned that the City has not made any proactive effort to engage minority-owned businesses for the projects that are contracted out by the City. He has asked Avis Williams to chair the committee. He plans to meet with her on October 20<sup>th</sup> to come up with an initial list of people to invite to be on the committee. He also plans to talk to Laura Gafnea, Lyn Pace and Anthony Mize about selecting a representative from Oxford College for the committee.

Avis Williams expressed her approval of the City Council being even more culturally sensitive to everyone in the community and recognizing the contributions of individuals that previously have not been recognized. She looks forward to engaging with the community to make sure that happens.

George Holt, Laura McCanless, Jeff Wearing and Jim Windham commended Mayor Eady for his efforts in establishing this committee.

**7. Resolution to Adopt Native Plantings List (Attachment D)**

The City Council had a first reading to amend Chapter 38 of the City of Oxford Municipal Code related to Vegetation. The purpose of the amendment is to require native vegetation

on all city-owned property. The amendment includes a provision for adopting an approved plantings list by resolution. The resolution will be voted on in the November City Council Regular Session on November 2, 2020 along with the second reading of the ordinance amendment.

Laura McCanless added that at the end of the list there is a section for invasive, undesirable plants that are not approved for use. These plants are blacklisted by the University of Georgia and the federal government.

Mayor Eady expressed appreciation to Ms. McCanless for working with the State Botanical Garden at the University of Georgia, the Georgia Native Plants Society, and the City of Oxford Trees, Parks and Recreation Board for working with them to compile the list.

Mr. Windham mentioned that a citizen's property on Wesley Street is being invaded by kudzu from property owned by Oxford College. He asked if Mayor Eady could discuss this issue with Dean Hicks. There also seems to be a continuing use by the college of some type of harmful fertilizer at the Dean's residence and on dorm property. A sign is displayed in these areas stating it may be harmful to pets and children. He believes these are issues the Sustainability Committee should address.

Mayor Eady stated that he would follow up with Laura Gafnea on these issues. Several years ago, the college did clear much of the ground cover on the aforementioned property, but it has grown back. The Sustainability is also reviewing ways to eradicate invasive species of plants, grasses, etc.

### **Other Items**

- A pilot is being conducted to establish a budget billing option for citizens to allow them to smooth out the peaks and valleys in their monthly utility bills and allow them to have more stability in their personal budgeting. The pilot will implement the option on a very small scale to ensure that there are no unanticipated problems with it. Once the pilot is concluded it will be offered to any customer who has at least a twelve-month history.
- Marcia Brooks is conducting research on how to make it easier for customers to pay their utility bills using credit cards at City Hall and online.
- Mayor Eady met with several members of the Oxford Cemetery Foundation board concerning grounds maintenance at the cemetery. They were pleased with the state of the grounds compared to its state in the past. Mayor Eady advised them that there needs to be agreement as to what the standard expectation is for how the cemetery will be kept. He walks through it everyday and considered its state substandard, but others may be happy with it. He will work with Matt and Jody to come up with a standard which will be shared with the City Council and the Foundation and it will be let out for bids.

Once it is known how much a vendor would expect to be paid for the work described in the bid, it may be necessary to adjust the expectations of what the standard should be. Matt

Pepper asked for an estimate from Great Estates Landscaping, and they stated an annual cost of \$50,000. The current contract is an annual cost of \$20,000.

George Holt asked if the current contract includes workers' compensation. Mayor Eady was not sure and did not have it in front of him. Mr. Holt observed that at one time it was a separate item in their financial report.

Mayor Eady stated that it was a good conversation, but he advised the Foundation that the City Council is not satisfied with the current state of the grounds. He advised them the City would work with them to come up with an agreement of what the standard would look like, then see what it would cost.

Mr. Windham asked if the maintenance contractor has to meet all requirements that a contractor with the City would be required to meet. They do not have large financial resources, so an attorney would look to the City if litigation ensued. He recommends that the City take a long hard look at this relationship. Mr. Wearing agreed with Mr. Windham.

Mayor Eady stated that it would be necessary to have the City attorney review the agreement with the Foundation. The Foundation has about \$500,000 in principal and use the interest to pay for the maintenance, but the City always supplements their maintenance budget because the interest they earn is not adequate to fully fund the maintenance, and Mayor Eady does not anticipate that situation changing. If the Foundation were no longer responsible for the maintenance, they would be required to turn these funds over to the City to be held in public trust.

- Jeff Wearing and George Holt praised the staff report being distributed by Matt Pepper each month.
- Mike Ready stated he likes the direction Mayor Eady is going in.
- Mike McQuaide expressed his appreciation to everyone that serves the public.

Mayor Eady adjourned the meeting at 7:34 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brooks  
City Clerk/Treasurer