



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING
WORK SESSION
MONDAY, January 27, 2020 – 6:30 PM
CITY HALL**

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

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

APPOINTED/STAFF PRESENT:

Matt Pepper – City Manager
Marcia Brooks – City Clerk/Treasurer
Stacey Mullen – Deputy City
Clerk/Elections Superintendent
Jody Reid – Utility Superintendent
Dave Harvey – Police Chief
David Strickland – City Attorney

OTHERS PRESENT: Chris Madden, Erik Oliver, Hoyt Oliver, Theresa Eady, Juanita Carson, Peggy Madden, Judy Greer, Nick Cole, Barbara Cole, Cheryl Ready, Louise Eady, Dave Huber, Melissa Hage, Mike McQuaide, Art Vinson, Laurie Vinson

Agenda (Attachment A)

1. Mayor's Announcements

Mayor Eady explained the purpose of this meeting as a less formal session. Audience members are welcome to ask questions.

2. Yarbrough House Renovations (Attachment B)

Mayor Eady provided a brief history of the city's actions regarding the Yarbrough House (107 West Clark Street) since its purchase by the City of Oxford. The City of Oxford has made repairs to the roof and shored it up to prevent any deterioration while the city decides how to use it. A committee of the Council came back with recommendations to use it as a history center/community center. Erik Oliver also provided recommendations related to the history of the house and concurred with the committee's recommendations. A second committee worked to come up with some recommendations for renovation. The attachments include three design options. All three options include modifications to bring the facility into ADA compliance. The first option retains the current layout. The second and third options include modifications to the layout to create different sizes of rooms and a different number or location of bathrooms. The third option involves extensive wall removal.

Mr. Holt commented that it would be more economical to have bathrooms located in the same area.

Ms. Williams asked if we have an official recommendation from the committee. Mr. Eady advised the committee recommended Option C. Mr. Wearing advised the committee's recommendation is based on facilities they saw in other cities. The goal was to create an open area to display items for the city, such as pictures of historical locations. A bookcase is also included in the plans for selling books and other items for meetings. The building could also be used as a meeting facility for various civic groups.

Mr. Wearing clarified that the structural integrity of the building still needs to be evaluated. They only took steps to make it safe enough to walk through while determining how to use the building.

Ms. Bohanan expressed concern that Option C takes away from the charm of the interior and compromises the historical integrity of the house. As an example, she referenced the built-in woodwork next to the fireplaces that would be removed if the walls come out. Taking the walls out makes it more like a contemporary floor plan. Mr. Wearing commented that the fireplaces are coal fireplaces and are not original to the house.

Ms. McCanless agreed that the historical integrity is retained in Option A and removed in Option C. She also noted that the footprint of the original bathroom remains the same with Option A. She feels there are more options for use of the facility in Option A, as well as more charm with this option.

Ms. Bohanan asked if the doors are ADA compliant. Mr. Eady advised they are all 35 or 36 inches, which is ADA compliant except for one bathroom door.

Ms. Barbara Cole asked about the historical significance of the building. She expressed concern about spending \$500,000-\$600,000 on this building when we could have built a new building that would be energy efficient and meet all the city's needs.

Mr. Eady clarified that the City of Oxford has spent about \$250,000 on the house thus far and has \$350,000 reserved in this year's Capital Budget for the renovation. It is not known at this time if that much will be spent on the renovation. The purpose of the discussion is to determine which direction to go in so that the cost for renovation can be determined.

Mr. Erik Oliver provided a history of the house and its significance to the City of Oxford. It is the only historic home left from the original era of Oxford that will provide access to the public. It is also where Atticus Haygood, perhaps Oxford's most famous resident, boarded when he went to Emory College before any dorms were built, and where he met his future wife.

Mr. Oliver advised that the Oxford Historical Society recently met to discuss plans for the building. It is the consensus of the Oxford Historical Society that the integrity of the house is critical to telling the story of Mr. Haygood and helping people understand how life was during the early era of Oxford (this house dates from about 1850). The group also wants to limit the amount of money spent on renovations, given the amount already spent on the house from taxpayer money. They feel the core integrity of the house as a 4-room with a dogtrot needs to be retained. There is no need for another large meeting space, nor is there a need for a large kitchen. Also, they need walls in order to display the kinds of items they want to display.

The Oxford Historical Society is very glad to work with the City of Oxford to curate displays in the facility. They feel it is more important to make it useful for now while the actual use of the building for the long-term is determined.

Ms. Bohanan asked if the City of Oxford had explored a grant for this project. Ms. Williams indicated she is in favor of keeping the house the way it is. Mr. Oliver indicated he had researched grant options and identified several possible options. One option is for structural renovations, but it is usually granted to much larger projects, and he did not feel that an application for this structure would be competitive, especially since the City of Oxford has the capacity to complete the renovation as opposed to some other cities whose fiscal positions are not as stable. The Oxford Historical Society also has the ability among themselves to raise money for minor changes to the interior.

Ms. Williams stated she agrees with Option A to keep the structure historic. She agrees with Ms. Cole that we could build a new building if we just want another space. But we want to keep the integrity of the building, tell its history and have a place to share. She also wants to make the outside pleasant so that people attending events can enjoy using the deck and moving between the deck and the interior. Keeping the historical integrity of the building lends itself to having simple events, which is how things were during the era the house was built.

Mr. Holt advised he is in favor of Option A.

Mr. Windham advised he does not have any specific comments.

Mr. Hoyt Oliver feels that what we have will be attractive to visitors. The Oxford Historical Society has rich resources that he would like to see included. A book was written to commemorate the 175th anniversary of Oxford, which he hopes can be reprinted. They also have a website that includes a great deal of information. He would like for a computer to be available for visitors to view the website information. Several citizens have donated historic artifacts that can be displayed. He does not feel that another meeting space is needed. He believes attracting people to historic Oxford is more important.

Mr. Wearing inquired about the number of bathrooms. Mayor Eady clarified that Option A has two bathrooms that would be unisex bathrooms. One is ADA compliant; one is not. Only one ADA compliant bathroom is required.

Mr. Wearing stated the roof would have to be extended on the back to keep part of the deck from being exposed to the elements. Mayor Eady stated his assumption was part of the deck would be open for fair-weather days, but the Council can decide specific architectural changes for the back area once one of the designs is voted on by the City Council. The back porch will be shored up to support the ADA ramp, and the deck can be left off at first and added later if that is what is desired.

Mr. Wearing inquired about next steps for the project. Mayor Eady advised the Committee will suspend its activities, and there needs to be some offline discussions with the architect. The Council will vote on which option to support at its next formal meeting.

Mr. Erik Oliver invited the public to the next meeting of the Oxford Historical Society at Old Church for its annual business meeting. The program will be about potential displays at Yarbrough House. They will also have some books and items available that attendees can look at to help facilitate the discussion. The meeting will be February 10, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. The fee to join the Oxford Historical Society is \$10 per year for an individual or \$15 per year for a family, but the meeting is open to the public and all are welcome.

3. **The FY2021 Budgets**

Mayor Eady and City Manager Matt Pepper presented a mid-year review (July 1, 2019-December 31, 2019) of the FY2020 budgets compared to actual expenditures and revenue projections as a kickoff for preparation of the FY 2021 budgets.

Mayor Eady observed that the FY2020 budget is on track, and one of his goals with development of future budgets will be to reduce the amount of funds we move from the Electric fund to the General operating fund through increases in other revenue sources.

4. **Traffic Calming (Attachment C)**

Mayor Eady explained the need for traffic calming devices on East Soule Street. Additional traffic is anticipated on Williams Road/East Soule Street when Covington's Town Center is completed on City Pond Road. The City Manager and Utilities Superintendent have researched how traffic can be calmed within the city limits on this road, and possibly even create a disincentive to utilize this road as a cut through to/from the development.

Matt Pepper stated that a proposal was presented for speed tables, but it was cost prohibitive. The attachment includes an estimate of the cost for two speed humps, which are more cost effective. Mr. Pepper displayed the map showing where the speed humps would be placed between Highway 81 and the city limits on East Soule Street with appropriate signage for each speed hump on both sides of the road. In the

proposed configuration, an adequate amount of space has been left to insert another speed hump between these two if the City of Oxford later determines it is needed.

Theresa Eady asked if the proposed speed humps are like the one in front of Old Church. Jody Reid advised they are not; they are rounded and made entirely of asphalt.

Ms. Bohanon asked if there is a type that is bolted down to the pavement. Mr. Reid advised the City of Oxford had tried that type on Moore Street, and although they are less expensive, the bolts end up sticking out in the street, making them dangerous and destructive to vehicles.

Ms. McCanless asked who would be responsible for installing the signs. Mr. Pepper advised the City of Oxford would be responsible for the signs. The bid does not include signage, only the cost of the speed humps.

Ms. Eady asked if the Covington Town Center is definitely being built. Mayor Eady and Mr. Pepper both stated that is their understanding.

Mr. Erik Oliver stated that the speed hump in front of Old Church is on the July 4th parade route and cannot support low-rider vehicles. This restriction needs to be noted in the parade application.

Mayor Eady advised the bid we have is from Jim Williams, who installed the other traffic calming devices in the City of Oxford. We will get additional bids and vote on moving forward with this project as soon as possible if the Council members are comfortable with doing so. The Council members concurred with this plan.

5. Large/Heavy Vehicles

Mayor Eady explained there are two inter-related issues that the City of Oxford has been discussing for several months:

- a. The City of Oxford has an ordinance regarding parking of large vehicles in yards. Such vehicles must be parked on the side or in the back of property.
- b. The City of Oxford has weight limits for the streets within the city limits of Oxford based on what weights they can handle according to their design. The city has signage that indicates what these weight limits are. Larger vehicles that exceed the limit will cause damage to the streets.

Mayor Eady, Matt Pepper and Jody Reid have discussed a permitting program tied to the size and weight of the vehicle. The larger and heavier the vehicle, the higher the permit would be to compensate for the additional wear and tear to city streets. There would also be an absolute limit to avoid catastrophic damage to streets. Research is ongoing as far as reasonable break points with a three-level scale and finding out how other municipalities are addressing this issue. The permit would also make the permit holder aware of the ordinance requiring parking on the side or back of their property.

Mayor Eady stated that he had discussed this issue with Chris Madden and asked Mr. Madden if that seemed fair to him. Mr. Madden answered yes. Mayor Eady stated that the City of Oxford also wants to treat everyone fairly and equitably. Mayor Eady advised the details will be brought back in a future meeting for a vote.

Mr. Windham asked if there had been any discussion regarding buses. Emory College at Oxford brings in six to eight buses at a time, and all exceed the weight limit. If we are going to encourage tourist buses they will need to be addressed. Large RVs and tractor trailers making deliveries also should be addressed.

Mayor Eady stated that the ordinance regarding parking large vehicles addresses RVs, but buses had not been discussed. Jody Reid stated he believes the buses coming to the college are justifying their presence on Oxford's streets because they are making deliveries of students.

Chief Harvey asked about residents parking tractor trailer cabs (tractors) beside their houses and running them all night. Mr. Reid advised the tractors are likely under the weight limit so they can be parked there. Mr. Holt stated that could be a problem if someone's yard where the tractor is running all night is right next to another home. Mayor Eady advised it may be necessary to cross-reference the city's noise ordinance in dealing with that issue.

6. Right-of-way to Meadow Experiment Site (Attachment D)

Ms. McCanless read her statement explaining that the group of citizens and Council members that installed the George Street Park pollinator garden would like to use leftover funds to place a meadow of native plants on the right-of-way on Wesley Street. It would serve as a pollinator garden. The location is on Wesley Street just north of Fletcher Street along a chain-link fence. Stuart and Alice McCanless are fine with the installation, but contact has not yet been made with the other resident whose property is contiguous to the proposed meadow (Goldie Fletcher). Ms. Fletcher has a stand of dense evergreens along the chain link fence. If this experiment is successful, the meadow could be extended almost to the decorative trees across from Old Church if the Oxford Historical Society is amenable to this extension.

Erik Oliver stated that a sewer line runs along that right of way, and it is also clay, which would require cultivation of a lot of new soil. However, the proposed location is good because it is just above a spring, so it stays moister than other places. Another good location is on George Street. Ms. McCanless agreed and stated there are many possibilities for pollinator gardens throughout Oxford. She would like to see a pollinator corridor.

Mayor Eady stated the meadow would also reduce the amount of mowing the City of Oxford would have to do.

Theresa Eady stated that she feels permission from contiguous homeowners is necessary. She also recommended signs because the area will not look good immediately.

Ms. McCanless agreed. She also stated residents could also request the gardens adjacent to their property.

Ms. Bohanan asked how much of an impact the stand of evergreens along the fence would have. Ms. McCanless stated that the meadow will get five to six hours of sun each day, which is adequate, so the stand of evergreens should not have an adverse impact on the meadow.

Mayor Eady asked Ms. McCanless to obtain permission from Ms. Fletcher. If she agrees, this issue can be brought for a vote at the next official meeting.

7. Maintenance Facility Fence (Attachment E)

The fence around the maintenance facility is in poor condition. Mr. Windham had asked staff to obtain bids to repair. Mr. Jody Reid has obtained quotes from two vendors. Bently Cannon was not willing to repair the fence because he would not be able to match up old and new parts, so his quote only addresses replacing the fence. The original builder, The Fence Man, Tim Kirkland, provided quotes for replacing the fence, repairing the damaged portions, and removing the fence and replacing with chain link fence.

Mr. Holt expressed concern with replacing the entire fence for \$20,000 if there are parts that are still good, and it can be repaired for \$7,700.

Mayor Eady and Mr. Reid clarified that parts of the fence are falling over, but the entire fence is in poor condition and will require repairing again soon if it is not replaced. The rationale behind replacing the fence is to get it all done at once and keep it on a repair cycle. Also, new parts cannot be matched back to old parts.

Ms. Bohanan asked about the chain-link option. Mr. Reid advised it is just an option someone had asked about. Mayor Eady added that when the maintenance facility was built, it was the City Council's desire to make the fence aesthetically pleasing since it was being built in a residential area.

Mr. Holt asked Mr. Windham if he feels the fence needs to be replaced. Mr. Windham advised he does not think it needs to be replaced. He feels most of the damage is not as conspicuous to the public, and those parts should be repaired, specifically, the part hidden by landscaping on Highway 81, the part perpendicular to Highway 81, and the part along Asbury Street across from where Tommy Ballard used to live. These parts have less exposure to sun and wind, and therefore have deteriorated more quickly. He suggests that the other Council members go look at it and see what they think.

Mr. Wearing suggested a fence with a mural as another possible option along the part that faces Highway 81 as a way to show off Oxford. Mayor Eady advised as a nearby homeowner he would not favor this option because it would take away the landscaping. Mr. Wearing advised the landscaping could be modified so that it could remain, but a mural could also be seen.

Mayor Eady agreed with Mr. Windham's suggestion that other Council members go look at the fence.

Ms. Bohanan asked how the subject matter would be determined and who would do the mural. Mr. Wearing did not have that information, he is just putting the suggestion on the table. There are several artists around who could paint murals.

Mayor Eady clarified that an estimate has not been obtained for this suggestion, and the type of fence needed is not known.

Mr. Reid advised the total length of the portion along Highway 81, excluding the indentation, is 181 feet.

Ms. McCanless agreed with Mayor Eady that nice landscaping is preferable to her along this part of the fence (Highway 81).

Mr. Windham pointed out that the Trees, Parks, and Recreation Board had invested a lot of time, including getting permission from the State of Georgia, to put the landscaping on the right of way.

Ms. McCanless asked if a bid good be obtained for synthetic wood-like material. It may be more expensive to begin with but might save money in the long run. Mr. Reid advised we can get a bid, but it cannot be stained. Mayor Eady asked Mr. Reid to check into this option.

Since there is no consensus on this issue, it will be discussed at the next work session, which will give Mr. Reid time to obtain a bid for repair using synthetic material, and the other Council members can go by and look at the fence.

8. Transportation System Analysis and Prioritization Study (Attachment F)

The City of Oxford's participation in the Transportation System Analysis and Prioritization Study by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) was approved at the January 6, 2020 Council meeting. Mayor Eady is asking for nominations from the Planning Commission, the Downtown Development Authority, and the Trees, Parks and Recreation Board of individuals to serve on the committee which will represent the City of Oxford on this study being conducted by the NEGRC.

Mayor Eady allowed others to speak who previously had their hands raised. Ms. Greer commented that since the maintenance facility fence is next to the new park, it is much more visible now. She also asked how a mural would change maintenance needs for the fence.

A comment was made that the split-rail fence at George Street park is in bad repair. Ms. Cheryl Ready commented that it has long been on the Trees, Parks and Recreation Board's list. They have one bid for repair and are waiting for another one. Once they receive a second bid, they will be ready to proceed with repairs.

Mayor Eady advised that the City Council would convene for Executive Session following a five-minute break, and no other matters would be discussed or voted upon afterwards.

Mayor Eady entertained a motion to go into Executive Session at 8:20 p.m. Mr. Wearing made a motion to go into Executive Session. Mr. Holt seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (7/0).

9. Executive Session

The City Council discussed real estate litigation exposure issues.

Mr. Windham made a motion to adjourn Executive Session at 8:58 p.m. Mr. Holt seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (7/0).

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia Brooks
City Clerk/Treasurer