



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING
WORK SESSION
MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2021 – 6:30 PM
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

David Eady – Mayor
George Holt – Councilmember
Lynn Bohanan – Councilmember
Laura McCanless – Councilmember
Avis Williams – Councilmember

STAFF PRESENT:

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

ELECTED OFFICIALS ABSENT:

Jim Windham – Councilmember
Jeff Wearing – Councilmember

OTHERS PRESENT: Mike Ready, Cheryl Ready, Art Vinson, Robert Jordan (Jordan Engineering)

Agenda (Attachment A)

1. Mayor's Announcements

Mayor Eady announced that the City of Oxford is now officially the owner of 13.78 acres of land behind Palmer Stone Elementary and containing part of Dried Indian Creek. The purchase of this property closed today.

2. Committee Reports

- a. Trees, Parks, and Recreation Board – Cheryl Ready reported that the board is finishing its drive to encourage homeowners on Emory Street to agree to trees being planted on their property. Ms. Ready reported that response was slightly better than last time but not a tremendous response. The board is also working on a Master Plan and continuing to review bids for invasive species eradication.
- b. Planning Commission – No report.
- c. Downtown Development Authority (DDA) – No report.
- d. Sustainability Committee – Laura McCanless stated that a Special Called Meeting was held on December 6, 2021 to discuss large and small, short-term and long-term projects. She reported that the second right-of-way meadow is underway thanks to support provided by Oxford College Farm staff and students. The committee is working on compiling their minutes from previous meetings so that they can be posted on the City website.

- e. Committee on Race – Avis Williams reported that the Baskerville Architectural Firm was at Oxford College on December 17th. They also toured Rust Chapel United Methodist Church and Mt. Zion First Baptist Church. An announcement will be forthcoming early in January concerning community meetings about the twin memorials, one on the Atlanta campus, and one on the Oxford campus. The memorial here will acknowledge the contributions of formerly enslaved people who lived in and around Oxford. She is unsure about Watch Night services due to the increase of COVID-19 cases. She has also spoken with a student at Oxford College who wanted to do an article in the Emory Wheel.

3. **Next Steps for Asbury Street Park Ponding** (Attachment B)

The City Council previously discussed the problem with water ponding at Asbury Street Park. The staff and Council would like to discuss the next steps for this issue along with Robert Jordan of Jordan Engineering, who has examined the issue.

Mr. Jordan stated that this issue came to his attention about eighteen months ago. He conducted a quick asbuilt examination of the greenspace area inside the track in August of 2020. He identified three contributing factors: 1) The overall slope between the track and the inlets is supposed to be 1.5-1.8%. The slope varied a lot, but the average slope was .5% - 1.5%. The inlets are slightly higher than designed. He does not think that is the primary cause of the ponding. 2) There are undulations in the surface of the greenspace as depicted on the diagram he provided. 3) He does not know what instructions the landscape contractors were provided as far as installing the sod, but typically there would be three to six inches of granular high-permeable material beneath the sod for a project like this. It appears to him there is a lack of sub-surface drainage between two and eight inches deep.

The third factor is important because the presence of the sub-surface drainage materials allows adequate drainage from the undulations in the field. The absence of sub-surface drainage allows ponding to occur. It would be a simple matter to do a couple of borings to determine if the sub-surface material is missing. He believes this is the greatest contributor to the problem.

Mayor Eady stated the remedy would likely be to pull up the sod, remove some of the clay, then apply the sub-surface drainage material, then reseed or resod the area, which would be costly.

Mr. Jordan agreed with Mayor Eady's statement. He also suggested a less expensive remedy that involves removing the sod in narrow radial strips out from the inlets to the track, filling the strips in with sub-surface material, and putting the removed sod back down. This would cut the cost of repair considerably and would achieve some improvement in the current conditions.

Mayor Eady mentioned a way to level the surface would be to spread sand over the area to level out the undulations and let the grass grow through it over time. Mr. Jordan agreed that sand would level the area in that way and the grass would grow level over time, but the undulations would still be there. The ponding may not be as noticeable,

but it would still occur. It is an inexpensive short-term solution. The radial drains would be an intermediate solution, and a complete rework of the field would be the permanent fix.

Laura McCanless appreciated the information about the sand option since she and Jody had discussed this option previously. She also likes the radial drain option because it would focus on the problem areas. Not all of the area has the ponding problem. She asked if the grates are too high or if they have lips that may be preventing drainage.

Mr. Jordan stated that the elevation of the grates is about .2 higher than designed. If radial drains or replacement of the sod is undertaken, there would need to be some mechanism for the sub-surface drainage to get into the inlets. An approach that may be as cost-effective is to run one-inch PVC pipe from the inlets to the areas that are problematic or add sub-surface material and replace the sod along the path, and level the areas off with sand.

Ms. McCanless stated she hopes to use a less expensive approach. Mr. Jordan advised he may have some names of people with turf expertise. Mayor Eady also asked Bill Andrew to check with Laura Gafnea to see who they consulted for their soccer field at Oxford College.

Mr. Jordan recommended going to the field and doing some plugs to see what is under the sod before undertaking any major repair work.

George Holt would like to know if there are any specifications that address whether the sub-surface materials were included.

Lynn Bohanan stated that she does not want to spend money on something they are not sure will work. Ms. McCanless added that sand and French drains would be more likely to have a positive impact than sand alone.

Ms. Bohanan requested that the locations of the plugs be recorded when they are taken.

Art Vinson stated he was stunned when he saw the design plans, and the extent of the drainage system underneath the sod. He believes if it is not draining, it is a design problem.

Mayor Eady agreed and stated that it would be a good idea to go back to the landscape architect and see if there are any specifications that detail the sub-surface material requirements. However, taking a few plugs is an easy first step.

Mr. Vinson recommended that the current situation be documented before any steps are taken to address the problem.

Mayor Eady asked Jody Reid to work with the Trees, Parks and Recreation Board and go ahead with taking the samples. There are also some specialists at the University of Georgia who may be able to help with this issue.

4. **Next Steps for Coke Street Multi-Use Trail from Watson Street to W. Richardson Street** (Attachment C)

The FY2022 Capital Budget includes \$300,000 set aside for multi-use trails. Previous discussions centered around extending the Oxford Trail from its current northern terminus to W. Richardson Street. Robert Jordan had drafted an estimate at one time estimating costs for various segments.

There is a fairly significant drainage ravine just before W. Richardson Street. Mr. Jordan suggested that it would need to have a culvert or something similar installed if the trail is extended over it. Mayor Eady stated he would prefer to leave it natural and bridge it rather than putting a culvert in it. Ms. McCanless agreed.

Jody Reid recommended using an aluminum bridge like the one installed at George Street Park to minimize maintenance requirements.

Bill Andrew suggested routing the trail down Collingsworth to Hull to W. Richardson to bypass the ravine. He is not sure if there is a ravine on that route. He does know there is a substantial amount of dumped material at W. Richardson St. Some of the dumping is behind the house, but in the 1960s, the City of Oxford used the area as a sanitation landfill.

Mayor Eady suggested an environmental site assessment in the area of the dump. He asked Mr. Jordan if he could find the pins for the property and flag them.

George Holt stated a few years ago there were estimates for five or six different routes to take with the trail, and George Street was selected.

Mr. Jordan stated \$63,000 was the average bridge bid for the George Street Park bridge.

Laura McCanless stated she would like to see this project moving forward. Mayor Eady stated he will meet Bill and Jody on the site to look at the possible landfill site. Staff will work on updating the estimates obtained previously.

5. **Next Steps for Whatcoat Street Improvements** (Attachment D)

The FY2022 Capital Budget includes \$300,000 set aside for improvements to Whatcoat Street. The Mayor and City Council had previously considered adding a sidewalk to the right side of the street coming from the college toward Emory Street. The design included trees to try to achieve symmetry between the left and right side. There is a clear path that would allow avoidance of removal of any trees. Adjusting the route of the sidewalk slightly would also allow avoidance of disruption of the drain underneath.

Mr. Jordan added that aesthetically, sometimes some gentle bends in the sidewalk are preferred. It just depends on how rigid the desire for symmetry is.

Laura McCanless stated that she likes the new path of Whatcoat Street joining George Street. Her concern is what will happen to the sidewalk if the changes to the old City Hall building which are being discussed come to fruition. Will the sidewalk be chopped off to accommodate the building? She also stated that every tree died where the curbing and paving work was completed on Pierce Street very soon after the work was completed. She understands from Beryl Budd that installation of the porous parking area resulted in a lot of the root systems of the trees being stripped off during the grading.

Mayor Eady stated that his thought is a porous material will be used for the sidewalk. Ms. McCanless asked if it could be installed only on top to avoid grading down to the root systems of the trees. This will require further investigation.

Mayor Eady also indicated that the sidewalk could be postponed, and the work could focus for now on realignment of Whatcoat street into George Street to create a safer intersection. Ms. McCanless agreed with this approach.

Art Vinson asked if the traffic volume on Whatcoat Street is known. Mayor Eady stated the City has equipment to do that and can conduct one. Mr. Vinson stated the other northbound streets from campus work well without sidewalks.

Mr. Holt stated he does not think the sidewalks will be used on Whatcoat Street. He also cautioned against spending any money on Whatcoat Street for something that would have to be torn out if the building plans being discussed by the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) move forward. Mayor Eady stated that they are currently conducting an assessment of alternatives and possibly constructing some other buildings in the Town Center area.

Mike Ready commented that changing the alignment of Whatcoat Street coming into George Street benefits anything the DDA is looking at and would only have to be done once. Also, at the Pierce Street location, everything was dug up and redone, and some damage was done in the process. Whatcoat Street would only get a cover over after the work is complete and there would not be digging down into the tree root systems. Mr. Holt stated that Mr. Ready answered part of his concerns, and he does not have a problem with moving forward with the realignment.

Staff will conduct a traffic count on Whatcoat Street.

6. Consider a Final Plat for the Minor Subdivision of 202 Fletcher Street (Attachment E)

Lynn Bohanan has submitted a request to reconfigure her property at 202 Fletcher Street. Mayor Eady asked Ms. Bohanan to stand by to answer any questions but recuse herself from discussion.

The property owned by Ms. Bohanan consists of two lots. The request is to turn the large lot into two lots that both comply with the minimum requirements for lots of their size. The other existing lot would have the small wedge of property where a workshop used to be added to it. The change would be from two lots to three lots. The Planning Commission has recommended approval of the request.

No objections were raised by any Councilmembers. This item will be included on the agenda for the January organizational meeting and regular session.

7. Candidates for the Oxford Planning Commission

Mike Ready will be vacating the Planning Commission due to his election as a City Councilmember. Mayor Eady asked for recommendations to fill the vacancy. He emphasized the importance of this commission and the decisions they make. He stated that the members should be representative of the town in terms of geography and racial diversity.

He stated that the resident who is building a home on Emory Street was recommended to him as a possible candidate. Mike Ready stated that they had provided excellent material to the Planning Commission for their application, however they do not yet live in the City. Mayor Eady asked Bill to locate their development permit application and reach out to them.

Mike Ready also mentioned a resident on Longstreet Circle who came before the Planning Commission regarding a fence around the home and some interior work in March or April and had expressed an interest in being involved with the City.

8. Increase in Compensation for City Staff to be Considered (Attachment F)

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. Mayor Eady presented information documenting that the City's operating budget can support such an increase now and, in the future, based on revenue and expenditure trends.

The main points from the presentation regarding revenue are that Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) and Title Ad Valorem Tax (TAVT) are far outpacing previous predictions. To a lesser extent property values have continued to increase, resulting in an increase in property tax revenue. Over time, electric and water/sewer revenue sales have increased. This increase is mostly due to Oxford College increasing their square footage being serviced by the City of Oxford through capital projects.

The rate of increase for employee salaries has not kept pace with the rate of increase of revenue or expenditures. George Holt observed that perhaps the City should look at decreasing expenditures. Mayor Eady pointed out that total revenues was converging with total expenditures by FY2020, and in FY2021, revenues exceeded expenditures in

the general fund. Mayor Eady stated that it is time for an adjustment to the employee salaries.

Mr. Holt stated he does not have an issue with raising employee salaries. He and Matt Pepper tried last year to determine how salaries could be raised to \$15/hour but could not make it work. They did make some incremental changes to salaries but not to the level being proposed now.

Mayor Eady stated that the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (Institute) will be working with the Council in 2022 to conduct a classification and compensation study, but in the meantime, this is an interim step that can be taken toward right sizing the City's salaries and allowing the City to attract and retain qualified employees.

Mr. Holt observed that the City is not waiting for the results of the compensation and classification study it is paying for to increase salaries. Mayor Eady stated that the study is about more than salary – it is about the classification system as a whole and whether positions should be classified differently and whether compensation should be adjusted in relation to those changes.

Mr. Holt stated that the study seems to be the same thing the Institute did in 2006, from which the pay chart the City is currently using came about.

Mayor Eady presented data showing the impact to the budget of the 14.1% increase. The City has been banking money for several years.

Laura McCanless stated that the data and graphs presented by Mayor Eady are irrefutable, making the decision to go forward with the increases a complete no-brainer.

Mr. Holt asked if the cost for insurance for the City's police officer is for one year. Marcia Brooks confirmed that it is, and that the City pays 95% of his cost and 70% of the cost for his spouse and three dependents.

Mayor Eady stated that there is a push to bring minimum wage up to \$15.00/hour in the private sector, and he wants to be sure the City of Oxford is paying its employees enough for a more livable wage and ensure that no employees have a need to rely on any type of public assistance such as Peach Care to get by. The proposal includes all employees so that no employees will be leap-frogged by the increases on the lower levels.

Mr. Holt stated that when he and Matt Pepper raised the beginning pay scale to 11 and raised a couple of people in proportion, but they did not raise salaries across the board, because some of the employees are already paid more fairly and are not 14.1% behind what they should be paid.

Art Vinson stated that he believes a good argument can be made for bringing the lowest paid workers up to \$15/hour, but he sees no connection between those increases and

increases for all other employees. Mr. Holt agreed with Mr. Vinson. Ms. McCanless stated that Mr. Holt made a fair point. Mr. Holt added that he has always been a champion for paying people more but raising the lowest paid person's salary up to a certain level does not mean the boss's salary must be increased to \$100,000/year.

Mayor Eady stated that no one is getting rich from these raises, and the proposed increases are still significantly lower across the board than a lot of comparable cities that Oxford employees may go work for. One example is an employee that recently left Public Works.

Mr. Holt stated that there will always be situations where employees move on for better pay. Oxford does not have enough work to pay full-time lineman's pay when an employee may do lineman's work once a month.

Mayor Eady stated that in the particular situation he mentioned, it was not so much about paying a lineman's wage as paying a livable wage. He believes if the City could have paid this individual \$2 more per hour, he may have stayed. There is nothing in the proposal saying that the position being discussed would be paid a lineman's wage.

Bill Andrew stated when a lineman is needed, we need to pay someone a lineman's wage. Also, if the person is being asked to work on water and sewer issues, there is a specific skill set required for those tasks as well. He believes the Institute will see those individuals as even more valuable.

Mr. Holt stated that he does not like it being said that the City is losing employees because it will not pay them a lineman's wage. He can advocate for paying a lineman's wage when lineman tasks are being performed, but employees should not be paid a lineman's wage for mowing the grass.

Mr. Holt asked Jody Reid what a lineman does when he/she is not doing lineman's work. Mr. Reid stated that they do a lot more lineman work than one would think. They do some type of line work every day. There are also service orders, reconnects, meter changeouts, water main repairs and other things.

Mr. Holt stated he tried a long time ago to get proper work orders showing exactly what people are doing and has not ever received anything. This information would help the Council to know how much of each type of work is being done. Mayor Eady stated that one project being worked on is an update to the City's accounting and billing system that would have a better interface for work orders to manage workflow processes.

Lynn Bohanan asked if Mr. Holt is talking about a fluctuating pay rate based on what the employee is working on. Mr. Holt stated he was not; he just wants to know what tasks are being worked on if a raise is being asked for.

Mayor Eady asked Mr. Holt if he does not have a problem fundamentally with the 14.1% increase to bring the lowest-paid employees up to a living wage and bring the other

employees closer to par. He gave the example of Emory Police, which pays their starting officers \$46,000 per year, which is the same amount in the proposal for police officers.

Mr. Holt stated that what he said was if it takes a 14.1% increase to bring the lowest-paid employee up to parity, that does not mean everyone up the line should also get a 14.1% increase. Mayor Eady observed that it becomes an issue of how to implement it fairly.

Bill Andrew pointed out that increasing the grade 11 and 12 positions by 14.1% will make them bump right up against the starting pay for the grade 14 position. He believes that when the inflation rate is taken into consideration, the Institute's compensation and classification study will recommend increases beyond the 14.1% at all position levels to be competitive. Waiting for their recommendations is an option, but the City is in danger of losing employees and is unable to attract highly qualified employees at the current rates.

Mayor Eady challenged the Councilmembers to look at the Pay column on the attachment showing the increase and look at comparable cities of their choice, and he believes they will find that each one is comparable with the raise included. He also agreed with Mr. Andrew that the Institute's study will likely recommend further increases.

Mr. Holt asked if that is true, why not wait for completion of the study. Mayor Eady advised he believes the employees are owed increases now rather than waiting twelve months. This proposal is leveling the pay to where it should be. The employees have not benefited from the increase in revenue and expenditures by the City over time.

Ms. McCanless stated that raising the pay will result in the City drawing from a pool that will not even consider working for Oxford now.

Avis Williams thanked Mayor Eady, Mr. Andrew, and Ms. Brooks for putting the numbers together. She believes it looks reasonable to treat the City's people fair as rates of inflation have gone up and not their rates of pay.

Mayor Eady stated he spoke with James Windham and he does not have any issues with the proposal. He would like to have a vote on this proposal in January.

Mr. Holt asked if the proposal will move forward without demonstrating how it will impact the budget. Usually when changes such as this are proposed, the impact to the specific budget is shown. Mayor Eady stated he will work with Mr. Andrew and Ms. Brooks to come up with data showing how the raise will impact the FY 2022 budget and determine if any budget amendments are necessary.

Mike Ready pointed out that the change for FY 2022 is about \$65,000. He stated that he is in favor of an across-the-board raise. Changing only selected employees sends

the wrong message to employees. It needs to be done now to make the changes more incremental rather than making huge changes based on the Institute's recommendations.

Lynn Bohanan stated that she is in favor of the increase for all employees.

Mr. Holt clarified that he is not against raising pay but does not feel that all employees are 14.1% below their proper pay level. Mr. Vinson agreed with Mr. Holt's statement.

Mayor Eady disagreed and reiterated that the comparable positions from the competitive market demonstrate that a 14.1% increase of all positions brings all employees up to parity. He feels highly confident that the Institute's study, which will benchmark Oxford's salaries against those of other cities for comparable positions, will validate the 14.1% increase for all employees.

9. Contract with Carter & Sloope Consulting Engineers for the CDBG Water Line Replacement Project (Attachment G)

Carter & Sloope assisted the City of Oxford with the application for the CDBG Water Line Replacement Project. Staff proposes contracting with Carter & Sloope to complete the Final Design, Permitting Assistance, Bidding Supervision, Construction Contract Administration, Construction Observation, and any necessary Preliminary or Permanent Easement Drawings.

Mayor Eady stated that the firm has been a great partner throughout the City's two-year attempt to get the grant and he feels confident of their ability to handle completion of the listed tasks for the project.

There was no discussion. Approval of the contract will be put to a vote in the January regular session.

10. GDOT Local Maintenance Improvement Grant (LMIG) Application (Attachment H)

The City of Oxford must submit its LMIG application by February 1, 2022. Staff recommends banking the funds for one year, which is allowed by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), so that the funds can be applied to the roads where they are most needed based on the paving analysis recently contracted for. However, the City must list an intended use for the funds in the application.

Bill Andrew recommended using the manual rating list Jody Reid had compiled about one year ago to select a road that is rated as needing repairs soon. Mr. Andrew stated that E. Clark Street is most in need of repair and widening, but easements must be obtained from property owners to complete the work.

Mayor Eady stated that a project had been discussed to relocate E. Clark Street slightly north and align it with W. Clark Street. Laura McCanless reminded Mayor Eady that the E. Clark Street property had been deeded to the Downtown Development Authority

(DDA). Mayor Eady acknowledged this fact but felt that the City could work with the DDA to facilitate obtaining the easements.

Ms. McCanless asked how a turnaround for emergency vehicles at the end of the street would be handled. Mayor Eady stated there are several proposed ways to handle this and a decision would have to be made as to which one is chosen. He believes another road should be listed for the LMIG grant because the E. Clark Street project would require a much larger financial investment.

After discussion, it was determined that E. Richardson St. would be listed on the application.

11. Discussion to Provide Clarity on the Personnel to be Supervised by the City Manager

The City Charter states that the City Manager shall have the power and it shall be his duty to exercise supervision and control of all departments and all divisions created in this charter. The Code of Ordinances states that the Chief of Police and all other police officers shall be under the control of the City Manager.

Mayor Eady asked if it is more a matter of the City Council from a policy perspective to recognize that the Police Chief and all police officers report to the City Manager or does the City Council wish to amend its charter to remove any ambiguity.

George Holt stated that the Charter supersedes the handbook and ordinances. He also stated that the Charter does not say that the police officers are supervised by the City Manager. The City Manager's job description states that the City Manager has the power to appoint and employ all employees required by the City with the exception of those employees appointed by the Charter. The Charter specifies that the City Council will appoint the Police Chief at the first meeting of the year. It also states that appointed employees are not considered employees of the City, and the Mayor is the only one who has the authority to suspend or remove an appointed official. He believes there are conflicting provisions within the Charter, and it needs to be amended.

Bill Andrew stated he believes the Charter is referring to the judges and attorney not being employees. He believes the Police Chief is an employee. Mr. Holt asked how the Police Chief can be supervised by the City Manager if he gets all his orders from the Mayor and City Council. Mr. Andrew stated he does not believe the Police Chief gets all his order from the Mayor and City Council. He believes David Strickland needs to review these issues.

Mayor Eady stated that the appointment of the Police Chief by the Mayor and City Council does not preclude the City Manager's authority of oversight of the Police Department. Mr. Andrew added that the Police Department has a set of SOPs, but they are superseded by the Employee Handbook policies, which are administered by the City Manager.

Mr. Holt pointed out that the employees of the City Clerk are under the City Manager, but the City Clerk reports to the Mayor and City Council.

Mayor Eady stated that the legal points raised need to be clarified, but this is also an opportunity to clarify the ordinances as well.

Mr. Andrew asked if a Zoom meeting with Ms. Brooks, Mr. Strickland and Mr. Holt may be appropriate. Mayor Eady asked Mr. Andrew to set the meeting up.

12. Other Business

Bill Andrew stated that the new police chief is ready to start with Oxford. A vote will be taken at the January regular session to approve the appointment.

13. Work Session Meeting Review

14. Executive Session

The City Council went into Executive Session at 9:18 p.m. to discuss personnel matters. The City Council ended Executive Session and returned to open session at 9:25 p.m.

15. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Eady at 9:26 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brooks
City Clerk/Treasurer