



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING  
WORK SESSION  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 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

**APPOINTED/STAFF PRESENT:**

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

**ELECTED OFFICIALS NOT PRESENT:**

Laura McCanless - Councilmember

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Art Vinson, Holly Bisig (MEAG), Steve Jackson (MEAG), Laura Gafnea (Oxford College)

**Agenda** (Attachment A)

**1. Mayor's Announcements**

Mayor Eady announced that Butch Reid requested that his meeting with him regarding an excessive water meter reading be rescheduled.

Mayor Eady announced his intention to create an Ad-Hoc Committee to determine how the City can memorialize the contributions of African Americans in Oxford including enslaved African Americans. The Committee would also be responsible for reviewing existing markers in public spaces in Oxford. He feels that their contributions have been very important and have been overlooked. He plans to ask a Councilmember to chair the committee. It will be comprised of African American members of the community.

He asked the Councilmembers to email him their thoughts about potential committee members. He will withhold his thoughts about potential committee members until he receives recommendations from the other Councilmembers. He will have more information at the October 5<sup>th</sup> Regular Council Meeting. Creation of this committee is part of his

commitment to working on building an anti-racist culture within Oxford. Part of that is recognizing the City's history and the fullness of the contributions of African Americans.

James Windham mentioned that one monument was installed in a corner of the cemetery.

## 2. **Solar Resource Discussion**

Steve Jackson of Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (MEAG) shared a presentation regarding an integrated electric resource plan for the City of Oxford through 2045. The presentation focused on the rightsizing and resizing of the city's electric portfolio. Several factors feed into this plan, including projections for economic growth, anticipated costs and reliability of various electric resources, and identifying lowest costs.

In 2020-2023, the City will need to purchase additional power to meet its anticipated demand and reserve requirements. Starting in 2024, the plan adds 4 MWs of solar resources which generates 2 MGWs of capacity per year. Solar resources do not require fixed costs and are paid for when they are received. As a result, the City will realize cost savings over time. The City has also made market power purchases for several years, and the solar resources will be a fixed cost for twenty years, which will be lower than market rates.

Mr. Jackson added a caveat that although these projections are reasonable, they are estimates based on current information. Once the solar resources are added, Oxford's energy profile should be 100% non-emitting. MEAG hopes to have a contract ready for the City's review within the next few weeks with a goal to have the contract in place by the end of 2020.

Mayor Eady stated that he had shared the information about adding solar resources to the energy mix with Oxford College. Oxford College was quite pleased that the City would be able to claim that their energy profile will be 100% non-emitting once the solar resources come online, as this is a goal of Oxford College.

Mayor Eady asked Mr. Jackson to speak about the step-up charge. Mr. Jackson stated that in the past they have taken on debt to finance the addition of electric resources providers to their offerings. In this case a third party is constructing and owning the resource and MEAG is simply signing the purchase agreement. The third party is responsible for securing finances for the project.

However, the third party is counting on the revenues that they expect to receive from generating the power. If a participant does not pay, MEAG will sell the output into the market. If selling the output does not cover the shortfall, the other participants would be responsible for paying the shortfall until the fault is cured. Each participant's responsibility is capped at 25%. If the step-up were implemented, it would be for a short period of time as it is a cash flow issue for the defaulting participant. Hopefully, the City would be reimbursed for any costs associated with a step-up by the defaulting participant. MEAG has never had to implement the step-up but it has been included in contracts that with other resource providers and it helps them get a lower price.

George Holt asked when the City of Oxford would find out its cost. Mr. Jackson indicated he hopes to have a contract to the City within a few weeks for review.

James Windham asked if the City could receive information on the magnitude of risk the other MEAG cities have taken on as a result of their participation in the funding of Plant Vogtle, and how much solar energy they plan to purchase in the coming years. Mr. Jackson stated the City would know what cities are purchasing the new solar resources as they execute agreements with MEAG to do so. Many of the participants involved in Vogtle are not taking output for the first twenty years. The ones who do plan to take output understand what their commitments are and are making financial plans to address those commitments. MEAG is supporting them to help them understand these commitments.

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. This project was funded for \$100,000 in the FY2021 Capital Budget as a repair, but to determine the cost of replacement based on these plans, the City will need to let the project out for bids. Matt Pepper advised he is awaiting an order-of-magnitude estimate to get an idea of the true cost.

Jeff Wearing asked if the conduit would be a separate part of the bid request. Mayor Eady advised it would be bid as part of the project.

Jim Windham asked if any additional information was available about the materials to use. Mayor Eady indicated that no other alternatives have been identified besides the information that had been emailed to Councilmembers by Laura McCanless about more sustainable alternatives. Mr. Windham suggested another alternative would be brick, which would be more costly up front.

Mayor Eady stated that one option is to add Flash to the concrete mix rather than Portland cement to reduce the ecological footprint. He wants to capture the desires of the Council to know what to include in the bid. One challenge will be finding someone who is qualified to bid and who is familiar with alternative options for replacing sidewalk.

Mayor Eady provided an update on the sidewalk project from Soule Street north to the City Limits. The City is considering applying for federal funds for this project, however, the possible timeframe for applying for and receiving the funds is not acceptable to Mayor Eady. Based on the City's experience with the I-20 sidewalk, it could take as much as seven years. Mayor Eady asked that the Councilmembers think about other ways this project could be funded, since it is a priority for the citizens.

#### 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. 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 identify alternative funding and complete the project sooner. Matt Pepper stated that 58 of 85 projects were awarded grants. Of the 58 awarded, 28 were related to water/sewer infrastructure, which shows how competitive the process is. The NEGRC advised him the City does not need to modify its application or Preliminary Engineer's Report but can submit letters of support to bolster its position. If the application is resubmitted, there would be an application fee of \$1,500.

Mayor Eady stated waiting until the next year would mean waiting for the money until sometime in late 2021 or 2022. He asked Jody Reid what the risk is of waiting. Mr. Reid stated that for awhile there were breaks in the area covered by the application every other month, resulting in customers going without water and the City losing a lot of water. For the past several months the City has been fortunate not to have a break in this area.

James Windham asked what the typical life of a water system is. Mr. Reid advised the life of a water system is generally about 40 years. However, the line in question has 180 class PVC which is very brittle and breaks easily, and it also is laid on top of rock which increases the chance of breakage.

Mr. Windham requested information on how many breaks there had been in the area and what the breaks have cost the City. If the breaks have cost the City a significant amount of money, the City perhaps should not wait to repair the line. He also recommended having the water tested at locations in the area because breaks can impact quality of water. George Holt expressed concern about the quality of water in the area as well. He also mentioned that this project had been in the Capital Budget for several years.

Jody Reid stated for the most part his staff had been able to fix the breaks in the area under pressure or flush it from both directions, reducing the need to issue boil water advisories. He estimates there have been two to three breaks per year there, and each break has taken between four to six hours to repair.

Jeff Wearing asked if there are emergency funds that could be requested based on water quality deficiencies. Mayor Eady stated that there is money sitting in the bank that is set aside for capital water and sewer expenses. The City also has access to low-cost loans from the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA). Mayor Eady stated he does not consider these issues as causing toxicity in the water. If borrowing money would be more expensive than allowing the City's funds to earn money, it would be better to spend the money the City has for this purpose.

Matt Pepper stated that the current engineering estimate for the project is \$1.34 million. Mayor Eady requested placement of the issue on the October 5<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting agenda for a vote to replace the water main with existing funds and not reapply for the grant.

## 5. **Right of Way Survey** (Attachment D)

Councilmembers received a large amount of information concerning a contract with Jordan Engineering over the past six years to establish the outer boundaries of the City of Oxford, to survey the original town plan, and to survey the rights of way. There is a small amount of additional work to add information about easements on Stagecoach Road and Richardson Street. Jordan Engineering has proposed completing the additional work for \$1,760.00. Upon completion of this additional work, the completed package can be delivered to Newton County GIS so that the information can be updated in the county's records.

George Holt stated that Jordan Engineering continued to bill the City of Oxford for this work for several months after they completed the work included in the scope of their two proposals for the city boundaries and rights of way. He does not agree with continuing to do the work and not doing anything with the results. He asserted that the City should request surveys as they are needed rather than surveying the entire City.

Mayor Eady stated that the work was being done in phases. The second phase was just the original 1837 town plan. He sent a third proposal with various options that the City Council approved over time. The invoices sent to the Council included a lot of unrelated work that was completed by Jordan Engineering during this period. The current proposal is to complete the dataset so that it can be submitted to Newton County GIS showing the surveyed boundaries and encroachments. There have been a number of times this information has been needed and taking a proactive approach now will put the City in a good position for future development requests.

Mr. Holt asked if a Scope of Work could be obtained from Jordan Engineering to know exactly what they propose to do so that he can verify that the work they said they would do was completed. Mayor Eady stated that they had provided a detailed proposal, but additional information could be requested if the City Council feels it is needed. Mr. Holt stated the City usually develops the Scope of Work for the vendor. Mayor Eady stated that Jordan Engineering is usually given the information verbally for what is needed, and they develop the proposal.

Mr. Windham indicated that based on his initial review, he is not sure all the markers are placed correctly on the diagrams provided. He feels they were given a lot of information and are not ready to vote on the proposal at the October Regular Session. He feels that this work can be postponed until and if it is needed.

Mayor Eady agreed that is it a lot of information and stated the decision does not have to be rushed.

Avis Williams asked if the City ever received an all-encompassing Scope of Work for the complete job, or if it has been a section-by-section Scope of Work. Mayor Eady stated the City contracted with Jordan Engineering to survey all city boundaries and rights-of-way and install markers at intersections. Along the way in his role as City Engineer, he has assembled about 90% of the private parcel information that goes with the city boundaries

and rights-of-way. The current proposal would complete 100% of the private parcel information.

Mr. Holt asked if surveys could be completed as they are needed. He asserted that the City spent money on all of this work, and it is sitting on the shelf – nothing has been done with it. Mayor Eady stated that the information had been used in several projects, and what started the initiative to survey the rights-of-way was that there had not been an accurate survey of Wesley Street and Asbury Street prior to the Oxford College Dining Hall being built. The Dining Hall was going to be on City property, and that was determined based on a reactive survey, with the results being less than optimal.

Mr. Windham suggested bringing Scopes of Work back to the Council for review before proceeding on projects such as the previously discussed water main replacement so that any concerns can be settled in advance.

**6. Native Vegetation Ordinance (Attachment E)**

Councilmember Laura McCanless coordinated with the Sustainability Committee, the Trees, Parks, and Recreation Board, the State Botanical Garden and the Georgia Native Plants Society to develop a proposal for a new ordinance. The draft ordinance requires all plantings on city property to be native to Georgia. An approved planting list is included and needs to be incorporated. The first reading for this ordinance proposal will be the October Regular Session on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

**7. Proposed Amendment to Sec. 8-124. Non-license sales (Attachment F)**

Marcia Brooks discussed a proposal to modify the City's Non-license sales ordinance to accommodate planned changes to the Farmer's Market. The changes are to allow other items to be sold in addition to farm and garden produce, and to add a daily rental fee per 100 square feet of space occupied by vendors.

James Windham expressed concerns about charging a fee per space when the market is first kicked off since it has not been marketed in the past. He is not sure what they would be paying for. Mayor Eady suggested the fee could be included in the ordinance but suspended for a period of time due to the current economic situation in the accompanying ordinance.

Lynn Bohanan asked where \$5 had come from. Mayor Eady stated other markets were researched and the fee was determined based partly on that research. Ms. Bohanan stated a fee that small does not seem worthwhile. Jeff Wearing stated he thought \$5 is appropriate.

Mayor Eady stated the fee can be dropped or it can be suspended. The Council agreed at the previous meeting to get some procedures in place and tweak them as it progresses. Mayor Eady feels this is a good way to start.

Melissa Pratt pointed out that \$5 a day for 8 days a month works out to \$40 a month, which seems to be quite reasonable and in line with other markets.

Mr. Windham stated his desire that if the ordinance is passed, he would like to see it enforced.

Mayor Eady stated the first reading of the ordinance proposal will be the October Regular Session on October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Mayor Eady stated the fee could be placed in the fee schedule rather than in the ordinance.

**8. Annual Mayor and Council Retreat**

Traditionally the City Council has held a retreat, which essentially has been a day-long strategy session. Mayor Eady does not want to have an all-day Zoom call but believes a couple of sessions on Friday mornings could be held on Zoom. Possible topics include: amendments to the City's zoning ordinances with a strategic focus; Trees, Parks, and Recreation Board discussing their mission and goals for the coming year; and short, mid-, and long-term plans for the Sustainability Committee. Mayor Eady asked Matt to check everyone's calendars to determine what Friday dates would work best for everyone.

Mayor Eady adjourned the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brooks  
City Clerk/Treasurer