

**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING
PUBLIC HEARING
MONDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2012 – 6:00 P.M.
COMMUNITY CENTER, OXFORD, NEWTON, GEORGIA**

MEMBERS PRESENT: JERRY D. ROSEBERRY, MAYOR; DAVID EADY, MAYOR PRO-TEM, COUNCIL MEMBERS JIM WINDHAM; FRANK DAVIS; GEORGE HOLT; LYN PACE; COUNCIL MEMBER TERRY SMITH WAS NOT IN ATTENDANCE

OTHERS PRESENT: Hoyt Oliver, Erik Oliver, Margaret Dugan, Dean Stephen Bowen, Chief Dave Harvey

The Public Hearing was called to order by the Honorable Jerry D. Roseberry, Mayor

Pursuant to Article 10, Chapter 40 of the City of Oxford zoning code, this is a public hearing of an application request from the Oxford College, Emory University to rezone a parcel of property on Emory Street, Newton County Tax Parcel #X0050-000000-015-000, from R20 Infill Overlay to Agricultural.

Citizen Comments:

Eric Oliver, Chairman Planning Commission

You all received a recommendation and it was a unanimous vote of support to rezone from R-20 to Agricultural. The public record will stand for the request.

Dean Bowen

For everyone's sake of clarity I prepared for you slides that will summarize background for this request to rezone the Elizer property to Agricultural. Our interest in developing an organic farm stands apart from the Universities commitment to sustainability. That commitment takes several different forms. One is commitment to operating institution in such a way that is sustainable in choosing the selection of materials for the building construction and operation. We are also committed to preservation of natural areas and to the use of local and organic foods in our food service. On the further extension to that commitment is a commitment to the education of students on the principals and practices of sustainability. A significant national trend in the last decade is that students have shown a growing interest in organic gardening. As a result dozens of small colleges have developed organic farms. They serve two purposes, one is educational, which is the principal, secondarily in many instances they are adequate to provide a significant amount of food that can be used either in campus food service or sold as to offset some of the cost of operating. This turns out to be something very attractive to college students especially those who are committed to wanting to make a difference in the world and they often seek out institutions that have organic farms and a place to learn about organic farming.

Further motivation for colleges to develop organic farms is that the public associate organic farms with a high quality of life and a high environmental quality in the environment. It represents commitment on the part of the sponsoring institution to operate in a sustainable way so implications for the community as a whole are positive.

Oxford College was very fortunate to recently receive a gift of 11.7 acres of which we all know was the Elizer Property located seven hundred feet away of the edge current college property and across Emory Street. The property was owned by the Elizers from the early 1950's. In 2003 an alumnus of the college

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and a very dear friend of the Elizers bought the property from them so they would then have financial sources to move to an assisted living. That was Dr. Trulock Dickson. With the Elizers encouragement Dr. Dickson transferred the property to the college in a hope that it would be used as an organic farm as he had discussed with the Elizers for years. I think it particular appropriate to do that is as much as the Elizers operated a large garden on the back of the property for nearly fifty years.

In order to plan for the development of this organic farm we created a committee. The committee conducted a feasibility study by assessing responses to six evasive questions about the feasibility of developing this for educational purposes. In the process of their doing that they consulted with facility at Universities that already had organic farms to find out what their experience was. They also consulted with Newton County organic farms and produce wholesalers in the area to get local interpretation and understand the contrast of what it would mean if we went ahead to develop a farm of that sort.

The conclusion of the feasibility study with a organic farm is expected to engage a large proportion of the student body both for educational purposes and also give them some way to provide service to the College which is a high priority among Oxford College students. On that precedence, there are already several facilities at Oxford College interested in this project and think they can use this as part of their classes. As we fan the facility we intend specifically to recruit to the facility individuals who have interest in taking advantage of possibility of what an organic farm represents. In a third conclusion was a production of a facility which is likely to help support the educational program by helping to make financial feasible. We don't expect to turn a profit most years but we expect to get enough revenue from either the sales to third parties or the use of the food ourselves. It will help offset our cost.

The recommendation of the feasibility group shows how the property would be developed. There are two structures to be built. One is a building for equipment storage and produce processing. It is on the location of an existing structure of the same size. The existing structure is decrepit so it would have to be demolished and a new one built. Immediately below it is the probable location for a greenhouse. It would be a small structure used for developing seedling before they are planted out.

Towards the back of the property is where we expect to cultivate crops out in the open, basically because of the superior condition of the soil in that area. There are three hoop houses immediately south of the residence. Those houses are preferred in farming to grow produce because they give them control over the internal environment and they discourage the invasion of pest.

Finally there is a large area in front is suggested to be ideally suited for an orchard. Crops, that is well suited for that environment such as paw paws and others that will grow well with minimal care.

We were advised by the Planning Commission that the appropriate district for rezoning to allow us to develop an organic farm for educational purposes was agricultural so we have made that request.

Mayor Roseberry- Is anyone present who wants to speak against this application.

Mayor Roseberry asked if anyone of the council wished to be recognized for questioning.

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Jim Windham asked Planning Commission chairman, Eric Oliver, "Why did you choose to go this route?"

Eric, as far as the availability of the some of the categories, the request to rezone Institutional this was not allowed in that category this is why they chose to go with Agricultural for that area.

Windham, so the code doesn't allow for conditional uses?

Eric - No, Previously in years past we had more flexibility, but it also expressed interest on part of council to get rid of that kind of thing. Instead we developed tables. The tables in each of those tables will say allowable or not allowable for conditional. If something is in that table as conditional then is eligible for conditional application to it. If it does not have c beside it then it is not. If something is not expressive in the table then it is considered privilege.

Eady, what is the current definition of the property under our current comprehensive future plan?

Eric, R20 which is a medium to high density, we go all the way to R-7.5 which is high like Clarks Grove. The next one is R-15, R-20's, and R-30. So it is a medium density. It follows the pattern which is called transects where you cluster activity in center of urban area or towns and gradually decrease the density as you get out to rural areas. Our whole process in doing the comprehensive plan was focused on that with the with town center, and the campus and the town center being that core, allowing much more development having to pass around that core. So this would still follow the five minute walk. The town center was considered at the time ideal for pre-housing process and ideal for residential development.

Eady – to clarify you made reference to the land use as part of that zone district. In the zoning map, the official zoning map of the Oxford what is the current designation of the property?

Eric – R20

Eady – And in condition to the R20 what is the conditional definition to that?

Eric – It is part of the infill overlay which is the layer that goes over top of the zoning map and shows those areas of town those very limited areas of town where we could have traditional residential development in the future and that property is one of them. It allows for a traditional subdivision.

Eady - So is it correct that the comprehensive plan that was adopted 2008 and the future land use plan which part of that was a map that was incorporated in that, that it designated not that particular parcel but property around that parcel is designated as low to medium density.

Eric, correct, I made it very explicit in the criteria in analyzing their request. We were very open in acknowledging that it does not meet the current comprehensive plan. And it does create an isolated zoning district.

Eady: When was the current zoning map changed or adopted?

Eric: Last summer, last year.

Eady: Do you recall if there were any concerns or policy objections to the zoning designation on that map at the time?

Eric: There were none.

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Eady: Thank You

There being no further questions or comments Mayor Roseberry requested for a motion to adjourn.

A motion was made by Frank Davis, seconded by Jim Windham to adjourn the Public Hearing at 6:24 p.m. The council vote was unanimous with Councilman Lyn Pace recusing himself due to conflict of interest.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauran S. Willis
City Clerk