



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING
WORK SESSION
MONDAY, November 16, 2020 – 6:30 PM
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

David Eady – Mayor
George Holt – Councilmember
Jim Windham – 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
Scottie Croy – Asst. Utility Superintendent
Dave Harvey – Police Chief

ELECTED OFFICIALS NOT PRESENT:

Jeff Wearing – Councilmember

OTHERS PRESENT: Holly Bisig and Steve Jackson (MEAG), Art Vinson

Agenda (Attachment A)

1. Mayor's Announcements

Mayor Eady thanked Avis Williams for chairing the committee to look at the role of African Americans in the history of the City of Oxford and how those contributions might be memorialized. Ms. Williams stated that by December she hopes to have the committee fully established and can announce all the members. She has met with some of the people suggested to her by Matt Pepper and Mayor Eady. By December she hopes to have five to seven community members on the committee and suggest a few ways of recognizing contributions that are reachable, reasonable, and worthy of recognition. She welcomes the input of the other City Councilmembers.

2. Solar Power Purchase Agreement with MEAG (Attachment B)

The City of Oxford has an opportunity to diversify its power resources purchased from MEAG to include solar energy in the future. Holly Bisig and Steve Jackson from the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (MEAG) attended the meeting to explain the opportunity and answer any questions.

Steve Jackson has sent out the draft of the Power Purchase Contract (PPC) the City of Oxford would sign to enter into this agreement. He stated that they are also very close to signing the contract with the provider and should be able to share that information soon.

MEAG first must receive commitments from participants to know how many are interested. Once they have this information, they will be able to determine the final entitlement share for each participant. In previous discussions, it was recommended that Oxford purchase 4 MW. The final price will depend on the total number of MW purchased by all participants. The price per MW could vary from \$24.95 for 140-150 total MW to \$25.75 for less than 100 MW.

Mayor Eady advised that City Attorney David Strickland has reviewed the PPC and has no issues or concerns with it. He stated that the City Council will formally vote on the contract at the December Regular Session.

George Holt asked if the City Council is going to vote on approval of the contract before we know how many MW will be purchased and the final cost. Mayor Eady advised that the 4 MW desired entitlement amount had previously been discussed. The price is affected by how many participants sign contracts.

Laura McCanless asked if interest in this power source had been gauged. Mr. Jackson indicated they conducted a survey last December and interest was between 100 MW – 140 MW. Some of the participants are working on an arrangement with Wal-Mart to buy renewable energy on behalf of Wal-Mart for their commercial customers. That level of commitment is between 30 to 40 MW.

Mayor Eady added that Mr. Jackson and Ms. Bisig presented this proposal in a previous meeting and showed that there would be substantial savings for the City of Oxford over the life of the contract (twenty years). Mr. Jackson stated that the final price will be fixed over the life of the contract.

Mr. Holt asked if the City of Oxford would be responsible for payment of other participants' shares if one of the other participants drops out. Mr. Jackson stated that is called a step-up provision, and it is in other MEAG contracts but has never been invoked. This amount is limited to 25% of the City's current bill. The power would be sold into the market, and any amount that cannot be recovered on the market would be the City's responsibility for a short period of time. Ultimately, the city that originally purchased the MW would have to pay the amount due, and the City of Oxford would be reimbursed for any amount paid under this provision.

3. **Dried Indian Creek Corridor**

Mayor Eady shared some slides with City Council during the previous session concerning an initiative to protect the Dried Indian Creek Corridor, providing a buffer on the East side of the City. Since that time, Mayor Eady has been in contact with Donnie Longenecker of the University of Georgia Metropolitan Design Studio, and Dr. John Calabria, a faculty member

at the University of Georgia (UGA). Dr. Calabria is an expert on interventions needed to restore creeks to healthy function.

These two individuals have tendered a verbal proposal to develop some of the technical documents needed to apply for a grant from the Georgia Outdoors Stewardship Program (through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources). They would provide the technical assessment and master plan that would be included in the grant application for a cost of \$43,000. The FY 2021 Capital Budget includes \$50,000 for this project. The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) will assist the City with preparing the application for \$1,000.

Jim Windham asked if the wetlands just north of Soule Street could be folded into this project. Mayor Eady acknowledged that is a valid concern.

Mayor Eady advised he and Matt had reached out to the City of Covington and Newton County about working collaboratively on this project but Oxford will concentrate on the northern part of the land down to where it becomes more of an urbanized stream at Herring Street.

Laura McCanless stated that connectivity and trails are both important points for the grant, as well as partnerships.

Mayor Eady added that Dr. Calabria can apply for a federal 2:1 match grant that could reduce the City's cost for the services provided by the University of Georgia by about \$15,000.

Mr. Windham asked if the project has any impact on the passageway under Odum Street. Mayor Eady advised that would have to be assessed as part of the overall plan.

Mr. Windham asked what the overall goal is. He has concerns about numerous studies being conducted over the years that no one ever looks at. He does not want the City to pay for another study that will have the same fate.

Ms. McCanless stated she was surprised by the price tag of the UGA proposal. She would like to see a list of what they are going to provide and would also like to know what they need to provide for the grant. She knows that an assessment is needed of how to restore the stream, but she thought the stream team they toured with could provide more detailed assistance in this area. She expressed her concern about the finite resources the City has and using almost all the money budgeted for the technical assessment and master plan.

George Holt agreed and believe that their assistance was not requested. He echoed Laura's concern about finding out what is really needed. Mr. Windham reiterated his concerns about advocating for and spending money on projects that never happen.

Ms. McCanless asked if the City can get a list of what the UGA team will provide and find out from NEGRC what is actually needed.

Mr. Holt asked what the City has asked UGA for. Mayor Eady indicated that he and Mr. Pepper had talked to John Divine at NEGRC several times, and had been advised that there are a number of technical components to the proposal, including scientific and engineering-based analysis to support the implementation of any proposed measures and the estimate of cost for those measures. The UGA team would be conducting a detailed analysis of the watershed, what the stressors are on it, what interventions are needed to restore it to healthy function, and what the cost of those interventions would be.

Using that information, the City would then request formal bids from engineering firms to install the improvements. This information is required to get the money to implement the improvements, pay for land acquisition to protect the corridor, and build the trail that will connect to the section in Covington.

Ms. McCanless asked if UGA would help identify contractors who could perform the work. Mayor Eady advised they would provide a reasonable estimate of the cost to complete the work, and the City would request bids through a separate RFP process. It may bolster the application if bids could be included but there may not be time to complete the RFP process before the application is due in October.

Mr. Windham stated that the Council needs to decide how important protection of the corridor is and what the Council is willing to do on its own if the grant is not approved. He recommended that the UGA team define the interventions in steps so that if the grant is not approved, the City could elect to complete portions of the intervention on its own. He also asked if any of the information needed is available through other taxpayer-funded groups.

Ms. McCanless agreed, and thought that the DNR stream team indicated they have the resources and expertise to provide the information for the grant. Mayor Eady stated we can ask DNR, and they do have a lot of technical expertise. However, his understanding is they are not structured to do the type of assessment and planning needed for this project. They can provide a lot of general information, but not specific information and an actionable plan for this creek.

Mr. Windham asked how Donnie Longenecker would contribute to the project. Mayor Eady stated he would use his design studio to generate the "eye candy," or the drawings showing what the corridor is envisioned to look like once the restoration interventions and the trail corridor are installed. It is the visual presentation that will go along with the technical assessment that Dr. Calabria will provide.

Mayor Eady also stated that the \$43,000 spent on the assessment and master plan will count toward the match required for the DNR grant. George Holt asked if additional engineering drawings and other materials must be paid for to submit the grant application. Mayor Eady stated no other expenses should be needed for the grant application. UGA will be able to leverage their resources in their engineering school to provide this detail as part of their technical assessment.

Mr. Windham requested development of a firm scope of work with deliverables and an assessment of any other costs to the City before the work recommended by the UGA team can be accomplished. Mayor Eady stated the City Council will be receiving a formal proposal from UGA detailing what the deliverables will be. They can answer any additional questions. Mr. Windham requested that they also tell the City what will be needed to accomplish the goal other than the deliverables they provide.

Mr. Holt asked for clarification on the process. He wanted to ensure that the Council would be able to review an official proposal and see the cost to submit the grant, know how much the proceeds of the grant would be if it is awarded, and be able to discuss it in a work session before voting on it. Mayor Eady affirmed that Mr. Holt's assumption was correct.

Laura McCanless mentioned an area of the creek where the concrete revetment supporting the sewer main crossing Dried Indian Creek has partially collapsed due to storm debris. This issue needs to be addressed immediately. The issue was referred to Jody Reid to check.

Mayor Eady stated he would bring the proposal back to the Council at a later meeting for review.

Art Vinson spoke about the scope of work improving the quality of life in Oxford. He raised a concern about the element of noise pollution. Every resident near I-20 and State Highway 81 must deal with this problem to some extent. He feels more citizens would benefit from remediation of noise, or sound dampening, than restoration of the Dried Indian Creek corridor.

Mayor Eady thanked Mr. Vinson for his comment and stated that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has very specific modeling for determining what areas qualify for their noise abatement remediation. He asked Matt Pepper to check with GDOT to see if they have already done some modeling/analysis for the Oxford area. He pointed out that the Dried Indian Creek project would serve as a way to preserve tree cover in certain areas, which is an effective method of noise dampening.

Mr. Vinson stated he is in favor of a holistic approach to include noise mitigation in the scope of the project.

Mr. Windham agreed with Mr. Vinson that noise pollution is a serious problem that does not appear to be getting any better. He recommended reviewing the City's ordinances regarding resident-generated noise and look into all the sources of noise. He also requested that when Mr. Pepper checks with GDOT about the noise modeling/analysis, to also ask if there are any plans to divert tractor trailer traffic away from Oxford.

4. **Emory Street Sidewalk Replacement Project** (Attachment B)

At the October 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 using recycled material

for the sidewalk was discussed. Laura McCanless has obtained additional information from the vendor about the recyclable material.

The vendor offers a ten-year warranty on the product. There is also the option to add additional binding material if the granules start to loosen. Matt Pepper is in the process of contacting references for the product. He has been able to speak to the Texas Instruments office in Northern California. They have poured some at their corporate campus and did not have any major concerns with it. It has been installed for several years. It is only used for pedestrian use (no bikes used on it). He will follow up with the other references to try to get additional feedback.

The drawings were modified to reflect accurate lamp spacing for pedestrian-scaled lamps. After additional references for the material have been finalized, Robert Jordan will prepare an RFP requesting two proposals from vendors – one for traditional cement as the material, and one for the recycled material.

James Windham asked if the lamps would have the light directed downward to prevent light pollution. Mayor Eady advised the lamps are sophisticated enough to control how much light is focused downward to minimize light pollution.

Art Vinson asked if they are motion-sensitive or if they stay on all the time. Mayor Eady advised they do respond to motion, but he is not sure if they are sophisticated enough to distinguish automobiles from pedestrians. The current project is just to install the conduit for future lighting in the sidewalk. When the City places lamps in the sidewalk the features can be discussed with the vendor based on what is desired by the City.

5. **Voting Delegates for the Electric Cities of Georgia (ECG) Board** (Attachment C)

The City of Oxford designates a delegate and alternate to serve as the City's representatives for the ECG election process for its Board of Directors. The individuals previously identified to serve in this capacity are no longer on the Oxford City Council. Mayor Eady recommends that the City appoint the positions of mayor as the delegate and the mayor pro-tem as the alternate, rather than appointing specific people, so that the agreement does not have to potentially be modified each time the makeup of the City Council changes.

James Windham thanked Mayor Eady for his involvement in getting the East Clark Street property cleaned up.

Mayor Eady adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia Brooks
City Clerk/Treasurer