

OXFORD PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes – September 15, 2015

MEMBERS: Mike Ready, Chair; Jonathan Eady, Vice-Chair; Penny England, Vivian Harris, and Ron Manson. Shawn Gaither, secretary was absent.

STAFF: Robert Jordan, city engineer; Bob Schwartz, city manager and zoning administrator.

GUESTS: Kendra Mayfield and Marguerite Abd El-Shahid with Oxford College. And Oxford College consultants: Travis Pruitt with Travis Pruitt and Associates, surveyors; Debra Fritz with Lord, Aeck, Sargent, architects; and Greg Maxey, Kimley Horn consultants. David Eady, city councilmember.

OPENING: Mr. Ready called the meeting to order and welcomed the guests.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Upon motion of Mr. Manson, seconded by Ms. England, the minutes for the meeting of July 21, 2015 were approved.

OXFORD COLLEGE DINING HALL: Oxford College is submitting a request for the approval of a development permit for the new Dining Hall. Mr. Ready invited Kendra Mayfield to present the project. Kendra and Debbie Fritz presented a rendering of the new building to the Planning Commission. Kendra and Debbie noted that the Dining Hall will seat 400 in three separate rooms along with 100 in the Dean's dining room. There is a fireplace in one of the rooms and a patio for the Dean's dining hall. The kitchen will be open where the students will be able to watch much of the food being prepared.

Ron Manson asked about the roof. Debbie Fritz reported that it would be a dark charcoal color shingle roof. The building itself will be stucco with a low base of granite similar to the granite base on the science building and on other buildings on campus. The new building will blend in with the other buildings on campus. It will have lower eaves so that appears to be shorter than it is. The drainage from the water collected from the roof will be transported to the storm sewer system.

Kendra Mayfield will submit a letter to the Tree Board for permission to remove the trees that are proposed to be removed from the right-of-way. Ms. Harris asked about the types of trees to be planted. These are listed in the plans on sheet L-401.

Mr. Manson asked about noise mitigation. Kendra Mayfield replied that the double-sided fence will help reduce the noise. In addition, there will be shrubbery and trees planted on the college side of the fence to further reduce the noise.

Mr. Ready and Mr. Schwartz introduced a discussion about the survey for the property where the dining hall is proposed to be built. During the December 9, 2014 meeting of the Planning Commission when the setback variance was requested, Mr. Ready and Mr. Eady had both asked

the college to be sure about their survey. The southeastern boundary on the survey presented had a bend in it. The original survey for the city in 1837 had straight lines for the right-of-way. This raised the question. Based on a request for Mr. David Eady, Mr. Schwartz had asked Mr. Jordan last week to attempt to verify the survey.

Mr. Jordan reported he had been working on this for the last week. What he had to present was a preliminary opinion. The city had been surveyed by Mr. Lloyd Thomas in 1837. He was a famous surveyor. Mr. Jordan had attempted to reconstruct the 1837 grid and then the challenge was to locate it on the ground using GPS points. Mr. Jordan found that the centers of most of the roads fit remarkably well with the original plan. The centerline of the asphalt for Clark, George and Hamill seem to be on exactly the right spot. In other words, usually, the centerline of the asphalt is the centerline of the right-of-way as originally laid out in 1837.

About a year ago Mr. Jordan surveyed the George Street and Coke Street unopened right-of-way. At that time based on other surveys he determined the centerline of Wesley was about 20 feet to the west of the actual centerline of the asphalt. This was incorrect based on current data. It turns out the physical asphalt on Wesley is very much on the centerline according to the 1837 survey. He has checked the survey from Emory to Hall and from Richardson to Hamill. He is not completely finished but it would appear that the property shown on the survey submitted by the College with the request for the development application is incorrect by 14 to 10 feet on the west side and by 22 to 20 feet on the east side in addition to being off by about 25 feet on the southern side.

Mr. Eady said he has some very old survey data which he would share with Mr. Jordan that might verify some of his conclusions. Mr. Jordan noted that would help as this is very much a work in progress. There is much more work that needs to be done.

Mr. Eady asked if any of the right-of-way lines were bent as shown in the Oxford College survey or were all the right-of-way lines straight. Mr. Jordan said on the original survey they were all straight. Mr. Jordan noted there is a very, very small chance that everything would shift to the west by 19 feet but that is highly unlikely. Mr. Jordan noted that in a week or two he will know very much more and be able to definitively give an opinion.

Kendra Mayfield asked is it not the responsibility of the city to have the entire city surveyed.

Mr. Eady noted that the right-of-way is where it is once it can be verified.

Marguerite Abd El-Shahid stated there were lots of monetary and scheduling impacts of this change in the survey.

Mr. Ready noted that the right-of-way is the right-of-way and that's what the Planning Commission has to work with.

Mr. Eady noted he has talked to at least two other surveyors who have told them that the pins in the ground in Oxford are regularly wrong.

Travis Pruitt reported that he took the standard care in preparing his survey he did not survey the city beyond the site of the new Dining Hall.

Mr. Eady reported that the town of Oxford has always retained its wide right-of-way as part of the character of the town.

Ms. Harris noted that some people it had their property taken away when the original wide rights-of-way were surveyed.

Kendra Mayfield noted that Oxford College does not want to build a building on property that is not owned by the college.

Mr. Eady noted that the Planning Commission cannot approve the permit without being sure that the college owns the underlining property. To be fair, we need to let Mr. Jordan finish the survey.

Kendra Mayfield noted that the architects had looked at the right-of-way lines as shown by Mr. Jordan and think that the Dining Hall could fit although there would be a great deal of work and time and money lost by making the change.

Mr. Maxey asked whether it would be possible to do a property swap between the city and the college. Mr. Eady noted that the historic nature of the right-of-way is an important part of the town and it is unlikely although the decision would have to be made by City Council and not by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Jordan stated once again that his findings are preliminary and that he will work to get more data so that he can be sure of his findings.

Mr. Eady asked what the impact of this change would be on the college.

Kendra Mayfield reported that the college had planned to begin to move dirt in November. Marguerite Abd El-Shahid noted that the college was taking price bids on September 24. It might well take at least four weeks to redesign the building.

There followed a discussion about whether or not it would be possible to ask the county and the state to begin to review the plans without having a location firmly decided. Debbie Fritz was going to look into that possibility.

Mr. Schwartz noted that City Council had a work session scheduled for Monday, September 21 and wanted to know whether or not the college wanted to be on the agenda. Regardless of the survey issue, the college needed to request permission from the city to locate the two storm water drainage structures within the right-of-way on Wesley Street. These structures would help the city with its storm water plan but the request needed to be made to City Council for permission to use city property for this purpose. Ms. Mayfield said that they did intend to submit a request to be on the agenda for the work session.

After further discussion Oxford College withdrew their request for the development permit.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Ready adjourned the meeting at 8:35 PM.

Submitted by:

Bob Schwartz, zoning administrator