

**OXFORD CITY COUNCIL
PLANNING RETREAT
THE CENTER
NOVEMBER 11, 2016
8:30 A.M.**

RETREAT SUMMARY

Participants:

Jerry Roseberry, Mayor
Melvin Baker, Councilmember
Sarah Davis, Councilmember
Michael Ready, Councilmember
Jim Windham, Councilmember
Bob Schwartz, City Manager
Lauran Willis, City Clerk
Jody Reid, City Superintendent
David Strickland, City Attorney
LaTrelle Oliver, Tree Board
Vivian Harris, Planning Commission
Kendra Mayfield, Oxford College
Hoyt Oliver, Resident

Facilitators:

Jim Dove, NEGRC Executive Director
Mott Beck, NEGRC Executive Assistant

Mayor Jerry Roseberry welcomed everyone, and provided an overview of the agenda. He mentioned that this is an annual event and believes that past retreats have been very productive. He then asked Jim Dove to make opening remarks and begin the session.

Mr. Dove provided a list of six questions or open-ended sentences to be completed by participants. Those six items were:

- 1. This is what I would say if I had five minutes of uninterrupted air time at the next City Council meeting:**
- 2. This is what I would say if I had five minutes to explain the City of Oxford to a stranger I met in an elevator or in a restaurant:**
- 3 The economic development project that is at the top of my list is:**
- 4. Here are the names of three people that I would consider for the next vacancies on the Tree Board, the Planning Commission, City Council, or the DDA:**
- 5. One thing I wish the College could do is:**
- 6. One thing we could do to improve our relationship with Oxford College is:**

Participants were given approximately 15 minutes to address those items and it was indicated that results of this exercise would be addressed throughout the retreat.

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As the next item of business, answers to the first question (What would you say in five minutes) were discussed. They are as follows:

- How are services to be paid for in the future?
- Oxford is a proud City with an impressive history.
- Encourage attendance at meetings.
- How to communicate.
- Find a way to fund utility upgrade.
- Understand our heritage/think out of the box.
- Take advantage of opportunities to serve/make decisions.
- Develop new image/be creative in providing things other jurisdictions do not.
- There are mixed emotions regarding the future/some areas are neglected.

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A review of answers to the question (How would I explain the City to a stranger in five minutes) was undertaken. The answers are as follows:

- Good place with a fine quality of life.
- Leaders try to maintain character/beauty while controlling the future.
- Bike/walk/Emory.
- Small town – large in citizens.
- Caring community with emphasis on environment and history.
- Born with good planning.
- Beautiful.
- Has challenges.
- Considered beautiful, College is a resource.
- Wonderful, friendly, great City/College relationship.
- Nice homes and educational institution, rich in history.

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The next item to be discussed was **Relationship with College**. The following items were addressed:

- Strides have been made (especially with Kendra’s assistance) – still a long way to go.
- Local campus hindered by administration in Atlanta.

- Communication is important. Meetings among City and College leaders occurred more frequently in the past and need to be increased.
- Attempts to cooperate should be more aggressive in both directions.
- Leadership needs to be engaged – been chaotic.
- History matters.
- Course on “community” has been offered and improves relationships.
- Chaplain has brought community together through adopt-a-student program.
- Some people try to avoid the college.
- Faculty doesn’t necessarily live in Oxford.
- Be aware of needs.
- Straightforward – interactive future development plan.
- What can Oxford College do for the community?
- Find new ways to interact.
- College needs to be more transparent.
- Meet with freshman students to gain their involvement.
- Do not encroach on neighborhoods.
- College should change image of “dictating” demands.
- Internships.
- Grease rails of bureaucracy.
- Focus on parking areas.
- Areas of concentration should be (a) meetings of substance among leaders, as well as social events; (b) available housing for faculty; (c) continue to communicate and involve Kendra; (d) create part-time paid positions for students; (e) City and College become more important to each other through planning/development and sharing information; (f) students become better informed as to Oxford history; and (g) need a site for social events/visiting families, etc.

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Participants likewise addressed **Relationship with Board of Commissioners**. The following was noted:

- Internal BOC relationships need to improve – must build trust among themselves.
- Invite BOC to “Newton County Tomorrow” and to Town meetings.
- Host “Get to Know” gatherings.
- City leadership should attend BOC meetings.
- Have active voice in SPLOST negotiations.

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At this time, City Manager Bob Schwartz provided an overview of financial projects and addressed questions and comments. A copy of his presentation was provided and is included in the retreat file.

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Mr. Dove then led a discussion on answers regarding **Economic Development Projects Desired by Participants**. They were:

- Cell towers.
- High speed internet.
- Catalyst for renovating residential areas.
- Oxford Cemetery.
- Town Center.
- Interactive housing stock.
- Provide support services to attract development.
- East Clark Street.
- Bring something to meet citizens' needs.
- Turn dirt at Town Center.
- Develop community as desirable "get away place".

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The next item for discussion was **The SPLOST Referendum and Support Committee**. The following items were discussed:

- \$64.8 million SPLOST proposed.
- 22% of base would be allocated to cities, along with 25% of overage.
- Covington has objected to Level 1 projects.
- County could do it alone – this is dangerous.
- Cities utilize Support Committee to promote idea.
- Governments cannot use funds for marketing purposes.
- Need to get serious in January 2017 to promote SPLOST.
- Put Committee in place when something definite is received from the County.
- SPLOST funds are a huge part of local budget (30%).

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The subject of **Term of Office/Succession Planning** was then discussed.

- There is not a lot of turnover among elected officials.
- An election schedule was presented (and is included in the Retreat File).
- Be aware of the need for succession planning.
- How do we get people involved in various opportunities?

- Young people do not get as involved – it is a generational thing.
- Honorary Councilmember Program – keep casting net.
- “Closed Club”.
- Determine volunteers’ interests.
- Must be a meaningful experience.

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At this time, Kendra Mayfield, Associate Director of Operational Programs at Oxford College, provided an update. She indicated that it is beneficial to have a process in place for interaction with the City. It was also discussed that College development projects should be presented to the Planning Commission at an early point to determine if any problems exist. It was also discussed that master planning in the future, which includes leadership of the City and the College, is very important.

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The next item on the agenda was an update on City projects undertaken during the past year (included in the Retreat File).

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The last item on the agenda was **The Comprehensive Plan and Short Term Work Program**. Items discussed included the following:

- The deadline for completion is February 2018.
- In each community, the decision must be made as whether to prepare an individual plan, or undertake a joint effort with the County and other municipalities.
- This is a matter to be decided by the Mayor and Council.
- It must be also decided as to elements other than those included in a base plan, to be undertaken.
- The future Development Plan of Oxford College should also be taken into consideration.

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Participants were asked to comment on any other items deemed appropriate. The following are noted:

- Sign design – build on ongoing efforts.
- Micro businesses – possibly visit City of Auburn.
- Continue to improve infrastructure.
- Is it feasible to engage an intern to work on marketing/website?

- Visitor information/welcome site – possibly in center of town for accessibility – involve Historical Society – need to capitalize on unique history of City.
- Research center for African-American community – Rosenwald School.
- Don't forget residents other than College – hear voices of citizens.
- Educating the citizens helps diffuse perceptions.
- Bob's weekly update – greater dissemination.
- Include greater numbers in class on community.

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Although not discussed during the retreat, below are names of persons suggested for consideration as members of various boards, authorities, etc.

- Judy Greer
- James Waddey
- Peggy Madden
- Lee Autry
- Janice Wearing
- Robert Aiken
- Kirby Hatfield
- Martha Molyneux
- Jan Ballard
- Gwen Green
- Laura McCanless
- Erik Oliver
- Adrienne Vincent
- Tosha Dobbins-Bennett
- Mollie McGhee
- Megan Stewart
- Frank Perry
- Sherwood/White Family
- Aaron Robinson
- Melvin Baker

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There being no further business, Mr. Dove summarized the day's events, and turned the meeting over to Mayor Roseberry. He expressed appreciation for everyone's participation, and adjourned the meeting.