

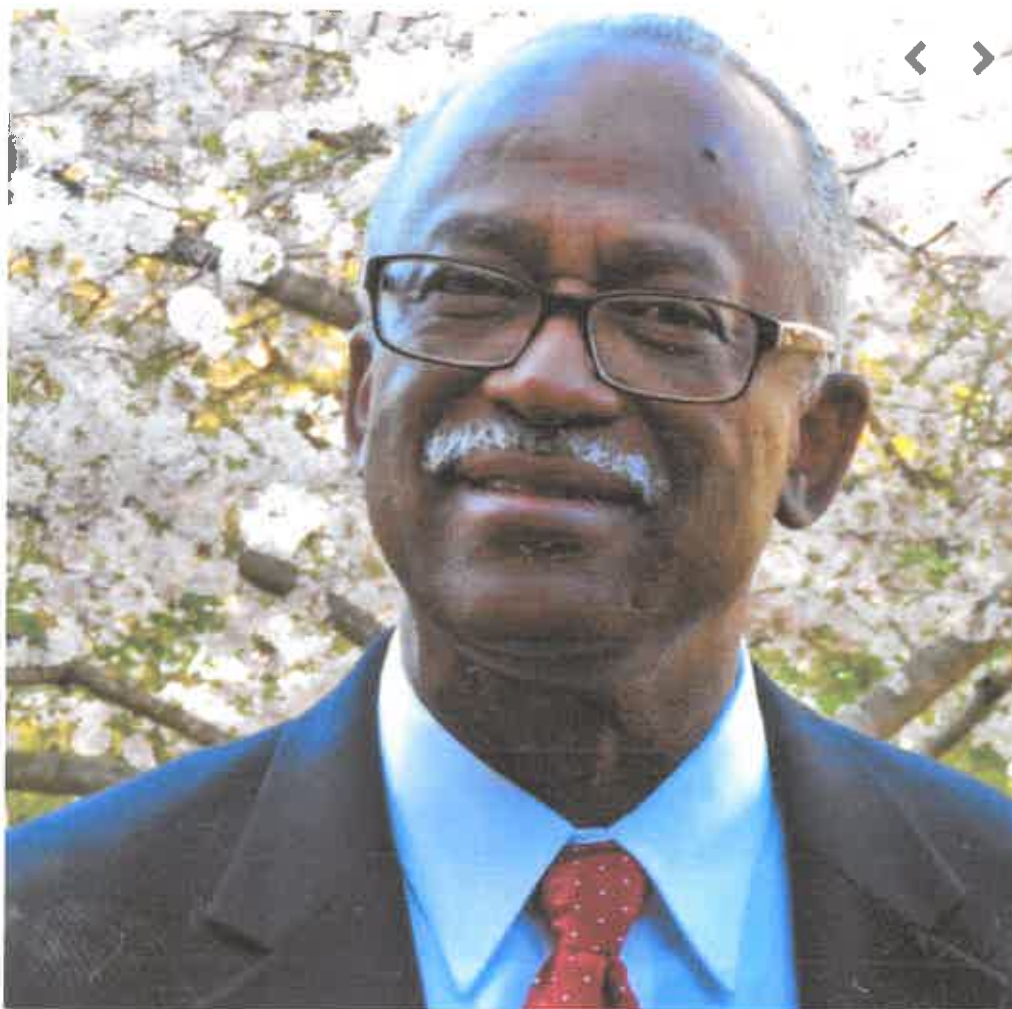
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FEATURED

New councilman eyes keeping Oxford as it is

By Wade Marbaugh

wade.marbaugh@rockdalecitizen.com Updated Jun 9, 2016



Melvin Baker

COVINGTON — A retiring member and a replacement appointee on the Oxford City Council gave Mayor Jerry Roseberry and other officials a moment this week to praise a public servant, welcome a highly qualified new one and reflect on the many changes the municipality has seen in the past decade.

After nearly two decades of service, Terry Smith retired from the council, and Dr. Melvin Baker was sworn in to fill the seat for the remainder of the term at Monday's council meeting. The term expires in 2017.

The change came because Smith and his wife, Kathy, sold their Oxford home and moved to Covington.

"We will miss Terry and Kathy for the many years of service they have given the Oxford community," Roseberry said. "Terry served 18 years on the council and Kathy has been a valued volunteer for many city projects."

Like Smith, Baker grew up in Covington but he and his wife, Gussie, are longtime residents of Oxford. A graduate of the dental college at Augusta University, Baker served as lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy Dental Corps. He is retired from a private dentistry practice of 40 years.

Council member Jim Windham nominated Baker to serve the remainder of Smith's term, and the council approved with a unanimous vote.

"I'm excited about serving on the council," Baker said. "As an Oxford resident, I'm of course interested in what the City Council does, and it's an opportunity to do and learn new things."

Baker said he would like to keep Oxford a pedestrian-friendly community.

"I like to walk. I'd like to keep Oxford just as it is, small, safe and a good place to raise a family."

"The Oxford City Council was unanimous in its support for Dr. Baker, and we look forward to working with him in the future," Roseberry said. "He brings a wealth of community service experiences to the council. We are happy he agreed to accept this appointment."

At Monday's meeting, Roseberry noted the many changes in Oxford since Smith joined the council in 1998.

“Everyone can see the new maintenance facility, the new City Hall, the new parks and the new buildings on the campus of Oxford College,” Roseberry said to Smith. “But few know of the critical infrastructure that made those changes possible. ... For 18 years you served on the Oxford City Council and you spent most of those years overseeing the process whereby a reliable electric system and a healthy flow of clean water was available for all.”



Roseberry said that Smith, whose professional background was construction, often would be on work sites along with the city public works superintendent.

“When we built City Hall his advice was invaluable in the selection of the brick and other construction materials,” Roseberry said.

“We’ve seen a slow steady movement forward in the city in all facets of city government, such as updated and better functioning utilities, parks and public safety,” Smith said in a telephone conversation Wednesday. “We’ve seen a great improvement in the quality of life for the citizens of Oxford.”

Roseberry said that although the city will miss Smith’s service, he is optimistic that Smith still may provide consultation.

“As mayor, I have relied on Terry for input on numerous occasions, and he has assured me that he will continue to answer his cell phone when I call,” Roseberry said.