



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING
WORK SESSION
MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2023 – 7:00 PM
CITY HALL**

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

David Eady - Mayor
Laura McCanless – Councilmember
Mike Ready – Councilmember
George Holt – Councilmember
Jeff Wearing – Councilmember
Jim Windham – Councilmember
Erik Oliver – Councilmember

STAFF PRESENT:

Marcia Brooks – City Clerk/Treasurer
Bill Andrew – City Manager
Mark Anglin – Police Chief
Jody Reid – Utilities/Maintenance
Superintendent
Kristin Watkins – Utility Billing Clerk

OTHERS PRESENT: Brian Barnard, Art Vinson, Laurie Vinson, Nick Cole, Laura Gafnea (Oxford College), John Harding (Envirospark), Azalee Watkins

Agenda (Attachment A)

1. Mayor's Announcements

Mayor Eady announced that he was approached by a company about doing a 1-2 MW solar development in Oxford. Such a development would require about 5-10 acres to be cleared. He reached out to Oxford College about their interest in placing it on the Whelchel property. They are waiting for the appointment of a permanent dean at this time and are not prepared to make any commitments. He has spoken with MEAG and ECG and has found out that a solar development of that size can tie in with the City of Oxford system via a distribution line, and is much less complicated than a large-scale development that would tie in to a transmission line. A reverse relay would need to be added to Oxford's power station to prevent the power from going outside Oxford. MEAG is obtaining quotes from three other vendors for comparison.

2. Committee Reports

- a. **Trees, Parks, and Recreation Board** – Laura McCanless provided the report for this Board.
- b. **Sustainability Committee** – Laura McCanless provided the report for this Committee.
- c. **Planning Commission** – Bill Andrew provided the report for this Committee.
- d. **Downtown Development Authority (DDA)** – on agenda

3. Review of Water and Sewer Rate Analysis (Attachment B)

Katrina Bond of ECG presented their analysis of City of Oxford water and sewer rates. The analysis and proposed rate structure are based on a model from the American Public Waterworks Association, which considers the costs of operating the system as well as the revenue.

The proposed rate structure lowers the cost for residential users and increases the cost for commercial and educational users while making Project Jane pay for itself.

4. Review of the Oxford Downtown Development Authority Preliminary Plans for Whatcoat Street Development (Attachment C)

Kevin Ryan from Historical Concepts presented their proposed plans for the Whatcoat Street Development. The plan is intended to give potential developers a vision from which they can make a proposal in response to a RFP.

Laura McCanless asked how much control the DDA will have over the aesthetics of the project. Jonathan Eady stated that the DDA will be able to influence the aesthetics of the project to the extent that they are consistent with costs the developer must absorb. The details will be worked out during the contract negotiation phase.

Erik Oliver expressed his approval for the proposed design but spoke of the need for the City to maintain control over the development in future years as tenants change over time.

Jim Windham asked Jonathan Eady if he has any order-of-magnitude idea about cost for the development. Mr. Eady stated at this point it is back-of-the-envelope estimating, but his thought is in the neighborhood of \$300+/square foot. They have not done any appraisal research on commercial properties in the area. Mr. Windham stated there is a lot he likes about the design, but he would like to see more patio space and feels that a viable reception area is needed for events at Old Church.

Mike Ready stated that he believes it is in the best interest of the City to move forward with how this project began, as a private investment. He advised that the DDA has more leverage to do some things that the City cannot do.

Mayor Eady stated he would like to see the project incorporate sustainable building materials and would like for the construction to be LEED certified. The City also needs to commit to complete the infrastructure changes that have been previously discussed related to this project.

Jonathan Eady stated before this project progresses too far, the DDA needs to feel comfortable about the willingness of the City to convey the property to the DDA so it can move forward.

Jeff Wearing asked if this is a plan for a spec building or shell. Jonathan Eady stated it is not a spec plan. An anchor tenant will be identified to complete the building.

Erik Oliver asked if the next steps are to redesign the ingress and egress portions of George Street and design a lot of record based on the plan before the property can be conveyed. Mayor Eady and Jonathan Eady both affirmed that these are the next steps. Mayor Eady stated that the City will start working on the realignment of Whatcoat Street and George Street. Bill Andrew stated that a proposed task order from Atkins for this work will be presented at the next work session.

Mayor Eady and all the Councilmembers expressed their support for the plans and their agreement that the DDA should move forward.

5. Envirospark to Discuss Electric Vehicle Charging Station Options for City and Public Use (Attachment D)

John Harding with Envirospark presented information to the City Council about their vehicle charging stations. He discussed business models for the City owning chargers for charging City vehicles, and for Envirospark owning chargers that would be used by the public. There is also a separate funding opportunity for grant funds from the federal government to place charging stations for the public in proximity to interstate highways. When the City lets Mr. Harding know what type(s) of charging stations and what business model(s) it wants to use, he will provide a cost estimate.

6. Atkins Engineering Task Orders for Paving Bid and Supervision of Paving (Attachment E)

Bill Andrew reminded the City Council that a 5-year plan for repaving all the roads in the City of Oxford was compiled last year. Atkins has advised him that they recommend combining the costs for years one and two into one bid to get a better price. Based on the best bid the City of Covington obtained in 2022, it is estimated that around 3.15 miles of streets can be repaved. The 5-year plan included paving of 2.81 miles in the first two years, so the first two years' paving goals plus some of year three's goals could be completed based on this estimate.

The task orders being presented are to have Atkins manage the bid process and supervision of the paving work. The total cost is estimated to be about \$1.2 million dollars. There would be about four weeks of patching and about two weeks of paving. The supervision of the work would involve ensuring that the base is sufficient for the new paving to last.

George Holt expressed concerns about spending \$50,000 on the bidding and supervision of the work, since the City has never spent money on these activities in the past.

Mayor Eady stated that the proposed work is a matter of scale compared to past paving projects, and relieving Jody Reid of the responsibility of supervising the work.

Jim Windham stated that the paving in the past was probably not paved with sufficient base, and many of the streets in the City have holes that have been patched previously. The City has never cored the work in the past. Atkins will core the work to test it, meaning it will last longer before paving is needed again.

Erik Oliver asked what the threshold is for requiring bids. Bill Andrew stated competitive bids are not required for professional services, which Atkins' services fall under. Mr. Andrew stated the work would probably be done around June-July.

Mayor Eady advised the City Council will vote on approval of the task orders at the April regular session.

7. Jehovah's Witnesses Use of Asbury Street Park (Attachment F)

A request has been made to the City by representatives of the Jehovah's Witnesses to display literature in a kiosk at Asbury Street Park. They advised they want to have people approach them rather than them approaching people, and they will not obstruct walkways or paths. Bill Andrew advised his concern is the type of precedent allowing this activity might set for future requests. City Attorney David Strickland advised this activity is protected under the U.S. Constitution.

Laura McCanless asked if the City can restrict where they display. She is also concerned about stray literature being discarded on the grounds.

Jim Windham stated that this group has a history of litigation with these types of issues. He stated that he has not seen this activity in any park.

Erik Oliver stated he has seen people preaching with speakers and microphones on street corners. He believes if that is allowed, this activity would also be allowed. However, he believes the City can specify where the activity can take place.

Ms. McCanless asked if setting an area aside in the park for expressions of free speech is legal. Mr. Andrew stated Mr. Strickland would need to advise the City on that question.

Chief Mark Anglin asked how the restrictions the City places on them should be enforced.

Mr. Windham recommended that Mr. Andrew or Mr. Strickland should contact a constitutional lawyer.

Mayor Eady advised that he and Mr. Andrew will contact GMA and ICMA to see if they have any recommendations.

Erik Oliver stated that the City Council already agreed to waive the fee for rental of the City green for churches and non-profits, and an Easter egg hunt has been scheduled on the green by Allen Memorial United Methodist Church. He does not believe the City can restrict this activity.

8. Preference on the 4th of July Parade Route (Attachment G)

Staff provided options for the parade route for 2023. The main decision to be made is whether to return to Hwy. 81 or to use last year's route. Bill Andrew advised that Oxford Baptist Church has agreed to allow staging in their parking lot again.

Erik Oliver prefers Emory Street, and he felt the staging at Oxford Baptist Church worked well last year. Laura McCanless stated that Emory Street makes a bigger impact than Asbury Street. Jeff Wearing and George Holt agreed.

Mike Ready and Mayor Eady stated that it was difficult to line everyone up at Oxford Baptist Church due to lack of space.

Jim Windham recommended using the old route and having registration check-in at City Hall. The front of the line would be on Haygood Street at the tennis courts. Participants would leave registration and line up there.

All Council members supported this plan.

Chief Anglin asked if the Council will pay for the security needed. Jim Windham, Mike Ready, and Mayor Eady all affirmed that the City will budget for the staff needed.

9. Other Business

10. Work Session Meeting Review

11. Executive Session

An Executive Session was held to discuss real estate matters. The Executive Session was convened at 8:53 p.m. and ended at 9:04 p.m.

12. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Eady at 9:04 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcia Brooks



City Clerk/Treasurer