



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING  
WORK SESSION  
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2021 – 6:30 PM  
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

**ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

David Eady – Mayor  
George Holt – Councilmember  
Jim Windham – Councilmember  
Lynn Bohanan – Councilmember  
Laura McCanless – Councilmember  
Jeff Wearing – Councilmember

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Marcia Brooks – City Clerk/Treasurer  
Bill Andrew – City Manager  
Jody Reid – Utilities/Maintenance  
Supervisor

**ELECTED OFFICIALS ABSENT:**

Avis Williams – Councilmember

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mike Ready, Cheryl Ready, Art Vinson, Laura Gafnea (Oxford College), Rich Edinger (CPL), Robert Renwick (Keck & Wood)

**Agenda** (Attachment A)

**1. Mayor's Announcements**

Mayor Eady did not have any announcements.

**2. Committee Reports**

- a. Trees, Parks, and Recreation Board – Cheryl Ready stated they are still working on their Emory Street Corridor Revitalization project. The committee has begun talks about their Arbor Day presentation, and their Tree City application is almost finished. Laura McCanless added that they are still waiting for one additional bid for invasive species removal. She also thanked Marcia Brooks for the quick turnaround on the brochures for the revitalization project. She stated that Ms. Ready and Mike Rogers should be getting an email from anyone who wants a tree planted.

Mayor Eady stated that the drainage needs to be fixed at Asbury Street Park, and some professional source needs to be identified for this work. He believes the grass may need to be taken up and reinstalled. Ms. Ready asked if the contractor that installed the grounds originally could be held accountable for the work. Mayor Eady advised the contract could be reviewed but the contractor probably warranted the work for

one year. He asked Laura Gafnea if she could provide some contacts related to the soccer field at Oxford College. She advised she would check into possible contacts and get back with the City.

Jeff Wearing suggested that NatureScapes might can help with this situation. He suspects the pipes that drain the area may have gotten clogged.

- b. Planning Commission – No report.
- c. Downtown Development Authority (DDA) – Mike Ready stated that the DDA has put out some requests for information and are waiting for that information. They have an RFP out currently seeking possible alternatives.
- d. Sustainability Committee – Ms. McCanless reported that Melissa Hage has agreed to chair the committee long enough for a replacement chairperson to be appointed. She also stated that they are making a push to increase their membership. The recent survey about Dried Indian Creek yielded several names of people who want to work on that project.

Mayor Eady advised Ms. McCanless to reach out to Sarah Vinson regarding their efforts to improve and optimize the recycling services in Oxford. Georgia Tech has two student groups looking at this issue, one group from a business perspective and another group from an engineering perspective.

- e. Committee on Race – No report.

### 3. **Consensus Decision on the Mid-Block Crossing for the Emory Street North Sidewalk Project** (Attachment B)

Councilmembers Bohanan, McCanless and Wearing met Robert Renwick (Keck & Wood), Jody Reid, and Bill Andrew recently at Asbury Street Park to discuss options on the placement of the pedestrian crosswalk on Highway 81 to provide safe access to the park for residents who live on the east side of Highway 81. A decision is needed on this placement very soon to ensure that the project does not fall behind schedule.

Mr. Renwick stated that they discussed three options at the meeting. The consensus among the group was the mid-block option. A path could be installed from the crossing to the trail system in the park. It is far enough away from the pavilion that pedestrians would not disturb the pavilion area.

Ms. McCanless stated that the mid-block option they decided on is slightly different from the pictures provided. Mr. Renwick affirmed this statement, advising that it was shifted to pull it about ten feet further away from the driveway to the south of it.

Art Vinson expressed concerns about the safety of pedestrians crossing into a thickly wooded area. Ms. McCanless stated that the new location places the end of the crossing at the top of the bridge that crosses to the pavilion area, which is a

central area for pedestrians. Mayor Eady added that the park is closed at night. The City Council has tried to optimize safety with this crossing.

Jim Windham stated that the issue he has is the assumption is being made that everyone who crosses Emory Street on the north side is going to the park. In reality he knows that is not the case. He objects to the crossing being placed mid-block. Some people are crossing to visit friends on Collingsworth Street. However, he does not object to what his fellow City Councilmembers have decided.

Ms. Bohanan asked if the City Council should consider Mr. Windham's point and discuss having more than one crossing. Mayor Eady stated that the Georgia Department of Transportation's (GDOT) standards for a mid-block crossing are different from the standards for a corner crossing. Because Emory Way and Collingsworth Street do not align, GDOT will not permit a signalized crossing at that point. The City is planning to put a radar sign by Highway 81 at the cemetery as a reminder of the reduced speed limit approaching the crossing.

Mr. Windham pointed out that the park will be closed after dark, but people will be needing to cross Emory Street when the park is closed. He does not know what the solution is, given GDOT's requirements.

#### 4. **Consensus Decision on the Lighting Options for the Emory Street North Sidewalk Project** (Attachment C)

Several lighting options have been provided by Mr. Renwick. Mayor Eady stated that no feedback had been received. He does not want to bias the others' decisions, but his recommendation is the Holophane Arlington fixture, although he also is fine with the Taft design by Holophane. He has personally inspected this light and feels it is higher quality. Holophane is also the only company of those listed that is in Georgia. He also knows that Holophane fixtures can include an attachment that directs light straight down on the house side so light does not shine into the yards of adjacent houses.

He wanted to know why a twelve-foot pole was recommended rather than a ten-foot pole. The ones he has seen have a ten-foot pole and a base that adds about twelve to nineteen inches to the height of the fixture. He feels a ten-foot pole would be better for this project.

Mr. Renwick stated a ten-foot pole is fine. Mayor Eady stated a ten-foot pole seems more pedestrian-oriented. Ms. McCanless stated the higher the pole is, the more likely light will drift outside the sidewalk area. She also stated that the Arlington is more appropriate for Oxford in her opinion.

Jim Windham asked if the Arlington is dissimilar from the lights at Oxford College. Mayor Eady stated it is very different. The lights on Oxford College campus have a much taller pole, more diffused light, and have globes. Mr. Windham feels this is a

good place to start defining the City of Oxford from Oxford College. Mayor Eady agreed and stated this fixture would set the theme for future lighting projects.

Art Vinson asked if a policy has been adopted by the City of Oxford that design elements for the City should be intentionally different from those on the Oxford College campus. Mayor Eady is not sure it has ever been put in writing, but there have been a number of discussions about this issue and conversations with Oxford College, including subtle landscaping features that would distinguish the campus from other parts of Oxford. The lighting selection for Oxford College met their needs but does not meet the City's needs. They wanted more ambient light as opposed to directional light. This design is still generally similar to the streetlights on the campus in terms of being a "gaslight" type design, but the City's selection is distinctive from the College's.

Mr. Renwick will verify whether the height stated includes the base and light fixture. It has been his understanding that the bottom of the light is at ten feet if it is a ten-foot pole. Mayor Eady had understood that the pole itself is ten feet tall.

**5. Clark Patterson Lee Architecture, Engineering, and Planning (CPL) and Roadbotics Paving Analysis and Paving Plan (Attachment D)**

CPL has provided a proposal to use a company called Roadbotics to utilize a specially equipped vehicle to photograph and laser read the condition of the streets. Their artificial intelligence software will assign a distress score to the streets and map the locations of issues. A spreadsheet compiling the distress scores will be provided which will allow the City to prioritize paving needs for the five-year Capital Improvement Plan. A GIS geodatabase will also be provided, which the map will be generated from. The cost of the study is \$7,520.

Rich Edinger with CPL has a lot of cost data from past projects. He advised that he can use this information to determine approximate costs to repair the identified distress areas in Oxford and help determine if the City is budgeting adequately for this need. Mayor Eady added that the study could also show the City how much must be spent to get all of its roads to a Good rating and sustain that level.

Art Vinson asked Mr. Edinger to explain the subsurface characteristics of the Roadbotics System. Mr. Edinger stated that video footage is taken of the streets. A software program has been developed that will analyze the different types of distresses seen in the video and quantify them. Mr. Edinger then applies cost data to the quantified values.

Mr. Vinson asked if they take into account the differential load ratings for different roads in the City. Mr. Edinger advised that a load rating is not used. Most streets a City has to maintain are local streets. For example, Highway 81 (Emory Street) is maintained by GDOT. The most significant load-related stress for local streets is alligator cracking. This type of stress is generally proportional to the amount of time

between resurfacing projects. Mr. Edinger is able to quantify this type of stress and estimate the cost to repair it.

Mayor Eady stated that it currently seems like the City is always behind and never caught up. This study will systematically show the City what is required to get all the streets up to standard and keep them on track. The mapping could be done again in five years if the City feels that it is needed.

Bill Andrew stated that having this information may help the City negotiate better rates and commitments for contracts by giving the City the information to enter into multi-year contracts.

Jim Windham stated that the best thing about this effort is that it is a planning tool. It will help the City maintain its infrastructure in better condition. He recommends using it every four or five years.

**6. A Proposal for Services from the Carl Vinson Institute of Government (CVIOG) for a Classification and Compensation Study for the City (Attachment E)**

The City of Oxford has requested a quote from the CVIOG to conduct a classification and compensation study for the City. Bill Andrew stated that the City currently has a classification and compensation system, but it is not clear what the basis is for setting it, and certain positions have fallen out of the market. The City is having difficulty attracting and retaining employees in certain positions.

The Carl Vinson Institute performs this work for most cities and counties in Georgia. Because of the backlog in local governments requesting the service, they estimate their completion date for Oxford would be December 23, 2022. The cost of the study is \$7,500.

Mr. Andrew provided the example of the lineman trainee. The City's current entry pay for this position is \$13.81 per hour. When a lineman completes training in four years, the pay is increased to \$14.31 per hour. Employees complete the training, then quickly go to other organizations that pay more for trained linemen than the City of Oxford does.

Jim Windham asked how this study relates to the request for Council review of the personnel manual and the questions he raised related to the manual, or does it?

Mr. Andrew stated that the manual includes this plan, and the manual requires the City to have a plan. The issue right now in staff's opinion is whether the plan aligns with market rates.

Mr. Windham asked if the manual will be left as is for the moment. There are several things in the manual that he considers completely out of line, such as job descriptions that are in conflict with other portions of the manual.

Mr. Andrew agreed with Mr. Windham and mentioned that he and Mayor Eady read in the City of Oxford Charter that the City Manager directly supervises the Police Department, but the organization chart in the manual does not reflect that relationship. He acknowledged that the Charter overrides the manual.

Mr. Holt asked if the Charter actually says that the City Manager supervises the police department. Mayor Eady stated that it says that the Mayor and Council appoint the police chief, but the City Manager supervises the police department.

Mr. Holt stated that he did not read the charter that way. His understanding is that the Mayor and Council appoint the police chief and have something to do with hiring in that department. He would like to have that issue clarified.

Mr. Windham stated that this is part of the problem – the manual states one thing and the charter states something else. He wanted to know if the issues he raised concerning these discrepancies are going to be addressed. Mayor Eady stated that these issues will definitely be addressed. The improvements to the manual needed to be adopted but he is not complacent to the issues identified by Mr. Windham, and in some cases, the charter may need to be amended.

Mayor Eady quoted Article III of the City Charter which says, “The Chief of Police and all other police officers shall be under control of the City Manager.”

Mr. Windham stated that is not the reality of the situation at the moment on the ground.

Mayor Eady agreed and stated that’s an example of a disconnect that needs to be fixed.

Mr. Windham stated there is also a disconnect in the personnel manual about what the City Manager does and what the reality is on the ground.

Mayor Eady agreed and stated he and the staff plan to bring recommendations for improvements to the City Council for consideration.

Mayor Eady stated that the questions raised by Mr. Windham will be addressed but there were several improvements that the City needed to get out to the employees.

The CVIOG proposal will be voted on at the December Regular Session meeting. In the meantime, Mayor Eady and Mr. Andrew may work on some internal benchmarking to see if any adjustments can be made to the compensation plan.

#### 7. **Utilities Account #147** (Attachment F)

Through recent code enforcement actions, the City has identified a resident who has been paying monthly minimum charges for water, sewer, and electric service, but has not been receiving service. The water and sewer have been billed since

October 1, 2005 with no service, and electric has been billed since October 1, 2008 with no service. The total amount billed through October 31, 2021 is \$9,169.52. Staff is requesting an assessment from the City Council as to whether some, or all of the amount billed without service should be refunded to the customer. The customer sends a payment of \$100 on a regular basis, and sometimes has a credit balance.

The City is working with the Planning Commission to allow this individual to place a site-built accessory home on the lot, as their current home is beyond repair. Electricity has not been connected at this location, and the water has been cut off at the meter for a number of years. The customer has advised various City employees that they feared having to pay a large amount to have the services reconnected if the accounts were closed.

Mr. Andrew advised that he has discussed the refund issue with City Attorney David Strickland. Mr. Strickland advised he could support the City regardless of which path is chosen. An argument could be made that the majority of the amount billed could be considered "readiness to serve." The alternate argument can be made that due to the person's mental incapacities, most or all of the billed amount should be refunded. In conversations with the person, it is evident to Mr. Andrew that there is some cognitive dissonance.

Mr. Windham asked why the electric, water and sewer service were disconnected. Mr. Andrew advised that the house in its condition could not handle electric or water service, and the sewer service is billed based on water service. Mr. Windham wanted to know why we were still sending the customer a bill. Mr. Andrew advised it was because he had an open account.

Mr. Holt stated the City should refund all the money billed when the customer did not receive services. Ms. McCanless and Ms. Bohanan agreed. Mr. Windham stated that he generally agrees, but believes the money refunded should be used for the accessory dwelling.

Mr. Andrew stated his inclination is not to give the money directly to the person, but legally there is no basis for not giving it directly to him. He has not assigned a Power of Attorney, and he has a checking account and has a job. Mr. Andrew thought that he and Marcia Brooks could sit down with the person and gently encourage them to use the money toward the accessory dwelling.

Mr. Windham stated that he is not opposed to giving the money back to the person but would like to be assured that the money would be used toward helping the City of Oxford help the customer.

Mayor Eady stated that would be the purpose of the conversation. If the person decides to work out a different agreement with the builder, that is his prerogative. If the City Council decides to refund the money, it is the customer's to use as they wish.

Mr. Windham and Mr. Holt inquired about the person's living situation. Mr. Andrew advised that the person has a job at Pactiv and has reliable transportation. It is his belief that the person lives in the home part of the time and in the vehicle part of the time.

Mr. Vinson stated that he is uncomfortable with the tenor of the conversation. He recommended that the City Council go into Executive Session to discuss such matters.

Mayor Eady stated that the issue does not meet the standards to allow the City of Oxford to go into a closed meeting. The privacy of the individual is being maintained by not identifying the address of the property or the identity of the individual. This issue is a public matter, related to the spending of the public's money. He believes where the City Council needs to be careful is ensuring it does not become too parental in handling the matter.

Mr. Vinson commented that he is surprised the City Council is not discussing paying interest on the investments the customer has made. Ms. Bohanan stated that she had that same thought.

Mayor Eady stated the challenge would be the basis for determining what interest rate to apply. Mr. Vinson asked what customers are charged if their payments are late. Mr. Andrew stated that the City does not earn interest on customer deposits.

Mr. Holt asked if the customer has a credit balance in addition to the amount reflected in the memo. Marcia Brooks stated that she believes it is several hundred dollars at this time. Mr. Holt stated that this amount should have also been included in the memo.

Mayor Eady pointed out that when the accessory building is connected to City services, the customer could be given the option of expending the credit before paying. Mr. Andrew stated the customer will also need to pay a new tap fee. Ms. Brooks stated she will also verify whether the City is still holding a deposit for the customer. The credit amount and the deposit amount (if any) will be provided to the City Council.

Mr. Windham asked if the determination was made that the house could not handle the services on the dates given in the memo. Marcia Brooks stated those were the dates the meters stopped spinning. Mr. Windham asked if something the City did or did not do led to the meters stopping.

Jody Reid stated that the customer lived there for many years with their mother, and their usage was small. Once their mother passed away, the customer stopped usage. Several months after that, the City received a call about the line going to the



house arcing, and the customer was advised it must be fixed before power could be restored.

Mr. Windham commented that the customer has a job, a car, and a bank account, and some choices were made by the customer. He is confused by the whole situation but will go along with the City Council.

Mr. Holt stated that this is not a bailout in his opinion. When the power was cut off, the City should have cut off the meter. He feels part of the responsibility is with the City of Oxford for continuing to bill in this situation. Mr. Windham acknowledged that may be true but a determination needs to be made of where responsibility lies, and if the City is doing what is right, since this is the public's money. Jeff Wearing agreed with this statement.

Mr. Holt stated that the money is theoretically not the City's. Mr. Windham restated Mr. Andrew's earlier position of the minimum billings reserving services for the customer, and the City was negligent in not getting it hooked back up or closing the account.

Ms. Bohanan stated that she is not sure if it can be determined where the ball was dropped. What needs to be determined is whether to give the money back to the customer, and she's not sure we can make any stipulations about how it is used by the customer.

Mayor Eady stated his recommendation, and the one that staff feels most comfortable with, is to refund the money and ask the customer how they wish to receive the money. This is part of the bigger effort since Mr. Andrew came on board of trying to identify properties that are notably in a condition that may need to be condemned. This property is the only one still occupied, so it requires additional attention. The City is trying to fix things that have happened over time and keep those problems from arising again.

Mayor Eady stated that the recommendation is to refund the full amount stated in the memo plus any credit he has in his account.

Mr. Windham stated the City could issue the refund in the form of a credit for the new charges that will result from the accessory building rather than issuing a check.

Mayor Eady stated if the customer wants to cut the City a check for the tap fees and use the refund amount toward future services, that is another alternative.

#### **8. Next Steps for Yarbrough House**

Mayor Eady would like to reaffirm what was stated at the City Council Retreat. His understanding was that the City wants to remove the Yarbrough House and make the property available for other public uses and hire a landscape architect to design

the park space on the property. The removal of the house should be nominal to zero cost to the City.

Ms. Bohanan, Mr. Windham, Mr. Holt, and Ms. McCanless agreed with Mayor Eady's statement. Mr. Wearing asked if it would be feasible to cut out most of the house and retain a small portion on the site to make it like Kitty's Cottage to complement the park. The cost would be minimal.

Mayor Eady stated it would require investing a substantial amount of money to make the building clean and sanitary. The City Council expressed at the retreat that it did not want to invest good money after bad. Mr. Wearing acknowledged Mr. Eady's point and stated he had agreed with it at the retreat. Ms. Bohanan added that the structure also does not have the historic significance once thought.

#### 9. **Other Business**

None.

#### 10. **Work Session Meeting Review**

- a. Mid-Block Crossing – Consensus - approved about ten feet north of what is currently depicted; Keck & Wood will provide revised drawing
- b. Lighting – Consensus - Holophane Arlington ten-foot height; Keck & Wood will provide revised specification for clarifications on height and base
- c. Clark Patterson Lee Roadbotics study - approve at December Regular Session
- d. CVIOG Classification and Compensation Study – approve at December Regular Session
- e. Utilities Account #147 – vote to refund money at December Regular Session and discuss with customer their preference for how the money should be refunded
- f. Yarbrough House – Identify options for removal and present options to City Council

#### 11. **Executive Session**

The City Council went into Executive Session at 8:00 p.m. to discuss real estate and personnel matters. The City Council ended Executive Session and returned to open session at 8:17 p.m.

#### 12. **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Eady at 8:18 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brooks  
City Clerk/Treasurer