



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

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

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

APPOINTED/STAFF PRESENT:

Matt Pepper – City Manager
Marcia Brooks – City Clerk/Treasurer
Dave Harvey – Police Chief
Jody Reid – Utilities Superintendent

OTHERS PRESENT: Cheryl Ready, Art Vinson, Laura Gafnea (Oxford College), Melissa Hage, Barbara Cole, Sarah Davis (Covington News)

Agenda (Attachment A)

1. Mayor's Announcements

Mayor Eady did not have any announcements.

2. Committee Reports

- a. Sustainability Committee – Melissa Hage reported that the Committee met at the end of February with Mayor Eady, Matt Pepper, and John Devine from the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) in attendance. They worked on creating a Streets and Trails Plan for the City. They will be able to leverage the creation of that plan when they are working on their Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP) grant application. Mr. Devine will attend their March meeting to work with the committee on the grant application. They are also planning to work on a sustainability plan for the City as a long-term goal.
- b. Committee on Race – Avis Williams reported that the Committee has a meeting scheduled for April. They had a great inaugural Black History Month event and are planning for their next event which will be in June to coincide with Juneteenth. They will have more details on this event after their next committee meeting.
- c. Trees Parks and Recreation (TPR) Board – Cheryl Ready stated that the ginkgo trees were replaced in Asbury Street Park on February 23, 2021. Beryl Budd also led a training workshop that was attended by City of Oxford and City of Covington employees that can count toward the Tree City USA Growth Award presented by the Arbor Day Foundation. She also reported that several trees around the City have been pruned recently.

- d. Planning Commission – Matt Pepper stated that the Planning Commission is finalizing their recommendations for amendments to Chapter 40 of the City of Oxford zoning ordinance. Mayor Eady asked Mr. Pepper if the Planning Commission will initiate the previously discussed rezoning request for properties on the East side of Emory Street. Mr. Pepper affirmed that the Planning Commission is planning to initiate the request. They have had discussions with homeowners the last two months and plan to discuss it one more time in April before submitting the request to the City Council.
- e. Downtown Development Authority (DDA) – Matt Pepper stated that the DDA will be meeting the following week and currently has nothing to report.

3. **City Hall Multifunction Copier** (Attachment B)

Continuing the previous month's discussion about an opportunity to replace the multifunction copier in City Hall, City Clerk Marcia Brooks presented information in response to questions from the previous meeting. She provided statistics for the number of color and black and white copies printed per year for 2017-2020. She also stated that the machine is set to default to black and white for copies but has been printing in color from staff computers. In the last week she has asked all staff to change the settings on their computers to default to black and white when printing to the machine, with the option to change to color if needed.

Ms. Brooks presented two proposals from Novatech, one with a uniform service cost for five years and one with a 10% increase in service cost for years four and five. The proposal with the uniform service cost has a slightly higher total cost over five years than the proposal with the 10% increase in service cost in years four and five. The City owns the equipment in City Hall now, and it could be transferred to the Police Department or Public Works Department for continued use.

Avis Williams thanked Ms. Brooks for the detail and comparative information provided.

James Windham asked how the copier can be disposed of if the City does not decide to repurpose it. Ms. Brooks could not answer this question but will research it and provide information at a later time. He also thanked Ms. Brooks for the information provided.

Mr. Art Vinson asked for clarification on the problem the City is trying to solve, since there is a copier that is paid for and functional in City Hall, although maintenance costs are going up. Ms. Brooks stated she would call it an opportunity for optimization rather than a problem. She acknowledged that Mr. Vinson is correct in that the current equipment is functional. However, the proposed equipment can perform better than the equipment the City currently has with no adverse impact on the budget.

Mr. Windham asked what the proposed equipment has that the current equipment does not have.

Ms. Brooks advised that the new equipment processes jobs faster and has more hard drive space. It also has a hole-punch mechanism and booklet finisher which includes tri-fold capability. The City currently uses a separate piece of equipment for folding and inserting utility bills in envelopes for which a maintenance contract is paid. She will research whether the new equipment can perform this function, which would eliminate the need for maintaining a separate piece of equipment.

Mr. Vinson suggested obtaining prices from other vendors for comparison. Mr. Windham and Laura McCanless supported this idea. Ms. Brooks agreed to check into the folding equipment capabilities and to obtain quotes from other vendors and provide this information to the City Council.

Mr. Windham requested that staff research ways to move more work products to electronic storage rather than storing paper. He also asked that staff research ways to manage work orders electronically using tablets or phones.

4. **810 Whatcoat Lease** (Attachment C)

The existing lease with Oxford College for the building at 810 Whatcoat Street expires at the end of March 2021. Matt Pepper advised that Oxford College is interested in renewing the lease for another three years because of its importance to services provided to their students. They have requested that the price remain the same for the first year of the new lease, which is \$31,710, with a 5% increase in years two and three.

Laura McCanless asked if the 5% increase would occur each year for the next two years, or if it is 5% for the second and third years. Mr. Pepper advised it is 5% for the two years.

All Councilmembers stated they approve of the proposed lease renewal.

5. **FY2022 Operating and Capital Budgets** (Attachment D)

Matt Pepper summarized the first drafts of the FY2022 Operating and Capital Budgets. The proposed budget will be discussed again in several subsequent meetings before approval of the final budget scheduled for the June regular session.

The operating budget for the current year (FY2021) is \$4.4 million. The proposed FY2022 budget will increase to \$4.9 million, which is about where the typical budget lands for the City. The FY2021 budget included a cut of about 20% to prepare for possible decreases in revenue due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Revenue collections for FY2021 have not suffered as anticipated. LOST and SPLOST collections have remained strong. The City had expected students not to be on campus at all for their Fall semester at Oxford College, however, the college used a hybrid model with the number of students on campus reduced.

Mayor Eady stated that the City plans to increase the Trees, Parks and Recreation Board budget. There is a backlog in caring for the existing trees in the City and planting new trees, so their annual budget is being increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000. The amount for this item in the budget will probably stay at \$15,000 for several years to get back to a more proactive and strategic plan for tree care in the City.

Jeff Wearing stated that there are predictions for construction expenses to increase substantially in the near future. He recommends that the City use caution in proceeding with any construction-type projects.

Matt Pepper asked Councilmembers and citizens to reach out to him if they have questions about any specific line items in the proposed budget. He expressed confidence in the revenue streams for the City providing adequate coverage for the proposed budget.

6. Maintenance Facility Fence

Mayor Eady stated that the City is in the process of obtaining updated bids for the maintenance facility fence.

7. City Sidewalk Project (Attachment E)

Mayor Eady stated that the alternative material discussed for the sidewalk project on Emory Street from Soule Street to the northern city limits has been submitted by the vendor for approval to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). The City wants to get some idea of the timeline for the decision process by GDOT.

An estimate for the infrastructure for lighting also needs to be incorporated into the project. It was included in Keck & Wood's concept plan but has not been incorporated into the estimate for the project. Mayor Eady does not expect the cost to increase substantially, but it will increase above the \$85,500 cost in the current plan.

The City had also discussed the possibility of using the alternative material as a pilot project. Mayor Eady has asked Matt Pepper to find out from GDOT whether the entire project can be a pilot project.

8. Credit Card Convenience Fees (Attachment F)

At the December 2020 City Council Work Session City Clerk Marcia Brooks discussed a proposal to absorb the customer charges for use of credit cards to incentivize the use of online payments and to also allow the City to accept Visa in person. The City Council did not make a decision on this issue. They asked for an estimate of a flat fee charged to customers that would cover these costs rather than a percentage of the transaction, which is the current practice.

Ms. Brooks summarized the costs and main issues presented previously, then she discussed the estimated costs to cover online and in office transactions. The costs for covering online fees are higher in some cases for customers than the current model of charging 3%. In her opinion the only feasible solution is to continue charging 3% for online transactions and to charge a flat fee for in-office transactions so that staff can begin accepting Visa in the office. She also stated that there are other options coming soon for alternative methods of payment that the City can hopefully implement.

George Holt asked for clarification on how the merchant and convenience fees work for online and in-office transactions, which Ms. Brooks provided. He stated he does not feel

comfortable with a flat fee because some customers will pay more based on a flat fee than they would otherwise.

Mr. Art Vinson asked if there is any sense of the cost to process a check payment as opposed to a cash payment. He also asked what percent of transactions are checks as opposed to credit cards. Ms. Brooks stated the only information she has readily available is that credit cards are about 12% of total transactions. She will need to research the other questions.

Mr. Holt asked if banks are still charging an amount per check to deposit them. Ms. Brooks stated they are not.

James Windham asked what percent of the transactions cash payments are. Ms. Brooks advised she will need to calculate this percentage.

Mr. Windham asked when the other options mentioned earlier will be available. Ms. Brooks stated that e-check and payment by phone are available now. She just needs to find out what the cost is to implement them and how to integrate them with our accounting system. Mr. Windham stated he would like to have that information as well so that a decision can be made about all options at one time.

Mr. Vinson asked if the City accepts Zelle or Venmo or if she knows anything about their cost. Ms. Brooks stated she did not have any information on these products. Mr. Holt advised he believes there is no cost unless the payment is needed immediately.

9. Work Session Meeting Review

- a. Multifunction copier – Ms. Brooks will conduct additional research and provide information to Mayor and City Council.
- b. 810 Whatcoat Lease – City Council agreed to move forward with terms discussed.
- c. FY2022 Operating and Capital Budgets – Provide comments to Mr. Pepper and copy Mayor Eady.
- d. Maintenance Facility Fence – Staff is working on bids.
- e. City Sidewalk Project – Updated proposal will be shared after clarifying information is obtained.
- f. Credit Card Convenience Fees – Ms. Brooks will investigate questions and issues discussed.

10. Adjourn

Mayor Eady adjourned the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brooks
City Clerk/Treasurer