



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE OXFORD MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEETING
REGULAR SESSION
MONDAY, September 14, 2020 – 7:00 PM
Via Teleconference**

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

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

APPOINTED/STAFF PRESENT:

Matt Pepper – City Manager
Marcia Brooks – City Clerk/Treasurer
Melissa Pratt – Associate Clerk
Jody Reid – Public Works Supervisor
Dave Harvey – Police Chief
David Strickland – City Attorney

OTHERS PRESENT: Monique Carter, Rev. Natalie Faulkner (Allen Memorial United Methodist Church), Butch Reid, Nick Cole, Barbara Cole, Dr. Lakliesha Izzard, Art Vinson, Laura Gafnea (Oxford College)

1. The meeting was called to order by the Hon. David Eady, Mayor.
2. The invocation was delivered by Rev. Natalie Faulkner.
3. Pledge of Allegiance.
4. **A motion was made by Jeff Wearing to accept the Agenda for September 14, 2020. Laura McCanless seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (7/0).** (Attachment A)
5. **A motion was made by Jeff Wearing to accept the Agenda for September 14, 2020. Laura McCanless seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (7/0).** (Attachment B)
6. **Mayor's Report**
No matters were presented by the mayor.
7. **Planning Commission Recommendations/Petitions**
None.

8. **Citizen Concerns**

- Butch Reid discussed his concerns about a high water bill for his mother, Nadia McKnight, from January of 2020 (497,000 gallons). He contended that they did not have a leak during that time, and the amount that was billed is unrealistic. Mayor Eady advised that he had discussed the issue with staff and as far as staff can tell the meter was correct. Also, staff had reduced the billing to the wholesale rate and agreed to a payment plan if needed. Mr. Reid stated a plumber came and hooked up a hot water heater, and the plumber advised that they do not have a leak. Mayor Eady recommended that he and Jody Reid come to the residence and meet with Mr. Reid to evaluate the issue further. Mayor Eady asked Matt Pepper to coordinate the visit.
- Nick Cole asked if a map could be made for walkers showing the distance around Asbury Street Park with milestones indicated.
- Dr. Lakliesha Izzard asked for clarification about the millage rate that was adopted last month by the Council.

9. **COVID-19 Update**

Matt Pepper stated that the same protocols are still in place as have been at City Hall. All persons inside City Hall are wearing masks and practicing social distancing. The city has adequate equipment and supplies needed to support a clean and safe city and community. Chief Harvey stated all park patrons are in compliance with social distancing requirements as far as they can tell.

10. **Financial Discussion**

Matt Pepper presented a comparison of the months of March – August 2019 and 2020.

Highlights:

- Although revenues for this period in 2020 are not as low as anticipated, they are lower than the same period in 2019.
- CARES Act reimbursements have covered the decrease in revenue from 2019 to 2020.
- For the first time in a couple of years, the police department was fully staffed, which increased fines collected during the period as well as expenditures for the period.
- Rather than a 20% decrease in LOST collections as was anticipated, actual LOST receipts have increased in 2020 from 2019.
- Oxford College was closed April – July, which caused a drop in electric and water/sewer revenue, but those revenue funds have rebounded in August due to Oxford College deciding to return to campus for Fall Semester. During budget discussions, assumptions were made for Oxford College operating at 20% capacity for Fall Semester, which has not turned out to be true.
- Penalties and late fees revenues were significantly lower in 2020 from 2019 because the City Council made a conscious decision to waive these fees during the pandemic.

Mayor Eady commended Oxford College for the way they are handling the COVID-19 situation on campus. They have not had any positive test results so far.

11. Personnel Discussion

The FY2021 budget included funds to hire an additional Groundskeeper and an Administrative Clerk. Due to the uncertainty surrounding revenue collections during the COVID-19 pandemic, filling these vacancies was put on hold. Based on the analysis just discussed, the city's projections for revenue collections in FY2021 look more promising and the city should be able to support filling the two vacancies.

All Councilmembers were in favor of posting the job vacancies. Jim Windham commented that he would like to see the new Groundskeeper work closely with the current Sustainability Committee. Mayor Eady provided a specific example of staff working closely with the Sustainability Committee and Councilmembers to handle encroachment of an invasive species of grass on the trail without using a lot of toxic chemicals. Laura McCanless praised those involved for the way this issue was handled.

12. Native Vegetation Ordinance (Attachment C)

A draft version of a proposed new ordinance and approved planting list related to native vegetation on city properties was discussed. Laura McCanless stated that the Sustainability Committee has discussed the proposed ordinance at length. She has also shared the draft with representatives with the Georgia Native Plant Society and the State Botanical Garden. A great deal of research has gone into making it as appropriate and flexible as possible for the city.

All Councilmembers were in favor of moving forward with the procedure for amending the city's ordinances.

13. Discussion on Farmer's Market

Melissa Pratt made a brief presentation with the staff's recommendations for kicking off the Farmer's Market in October within the framework of the existing ordinances. Some of the recommendations will require changes to city ordinances. She discussed her plans for marketing the Farmer's Market.

Mayor Eady recommended that the city try the proposed recommendations and learn as we go, making adjustments as needed. The marked-up ordinance changes can be presented to the Council. Marcia and Matt can determine if there are adequate funds to purchase the items needed to kick off the Farmer's Market. All Councilmembers agreed, and commended Melissa for the work she had done on this project.

14. Landscape Maintenance at City Cemetery

Mayor Eady observed that since March, the grounds maintenance at the cemetery has been poor. He has photographs he can share with those interested. The property is not being maintained well. It appears that it's because the current contractor does not have adequate capacity to give it the time and attention it needs. The contractor (one person) was there all day the past Saturday weeding and did not come close to taking care of the grounds.

Concerns have been expressed to the President of the Cemetery Foundation. They are given an allotment each year of around \$5,000 for maintenance as well as an additional \$5,000 for tree removal and other maintenance-related expenditures. The next course of action Mayor Eady proposes is sending a letter from him to the Board. The letter would express his desire to find a way forward to collaboratively maintain the cemetery in a way that families represented there, and the City, would want it to be maintained. It objectively is not being maintained to this standard today. Their most recent contract is for \$20,000 with a landscape management company.

Avis Williams stated she has had a couple of people call her directly to express that it did not seem to be maintained as it was in the past. Mayor Eady advised he had also gotten some calls directly.

Jeff Wearing suggested the new Groundskeeper might could help there during the Fall/Winter period.

James Windham recommended reviewing the contract with the Cemetery Foundation and the appropriateness of the City's relationship with the organization.

15. **Invoices** (Attachment D)

The Council reviewed the invoices paid by the City of Oxford for \$1,000 or more in August 2020.

16. **Executive Session was convened at 8:27 p.m. to discuss real estate matters.**

James Windham made a motion to adjourn at 9:03 p.m. George Holt seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously (7/0).

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Brooks
City Clerk/Treasurer