

A virtual meeting of the Oxford City Council was called to order by Mayor Mike Smith on Tuesday, October 6, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. Members participating were Jason Bracken, Glenn Ellerbe, David Prytherch, Chantel Raghu, William Snavelly and Edna Southard.

Staff members participating were: Mr. Doug Elliott, City Manager; Ms. Jessica Greene, Assistant City Manager; Mr. Joe Newlin, Finance Director; Mr. John Jones, Police Chief; Mr. Sam Perry, Community Development Director; Mr. Mike Dreisbach, Service Director; Mr. Casey Wooddell, Parks and Recreation Director; Mr. John Detherage, Fire Chief; Mr. Chris Conard, Law Director; and Ms. Mary Ann Eaton, Clerk of Council.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Snavelly moved to approve the agenda. Ms. Southard seconded. The motion passed by the following roll call:

AYE: Ms. Raghu, Mr. Snavelly, Ms. Southard, Mr. Bracken, Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Update – Local Covid-19 Response.

Mr. Elliott advised the City works closely with Miami University, the hospital and the Butler County Board of Health following the leadership of the Governor and the Ohio Department of Health. Mr. Elliott noted a leadership conference call is held each week which includes himself, the President of the hospital, the Mayor, Assistant City Manager and other parties. Mr. Elliott advised every Thursday another conference call is held with the Butler County Health Commissioner. Mr. Elliott shared there are 165 Covid-19 cases in the 45056 zip code which excludes the Miami University student cumulative cases noting the Miami cases are 1,660 as of September 28, 2020. Mr. Elliott advised Butler County is still declared a Level 3 Red Public Emergency along with 10 other counties. Mr. Elliott noted there have been 110 confirmed deaths in Butler County. Mr. Elliott advised to date no Miami students have been hospitalized and noted there has been very little if any community spread outside of the student population. Mr. Elliott advised he felt the community was doing a very good job and needed to continue to stay the course following our guidelines and laws.

Update – Proposal by Black Lives Matter – Oxford.

Ms. Greene advised she would present staff's proposed responses to the requests made by the Black Lives Matter advocacy group. Ms. Greene noted the proposed responses have been discussed and reviewed by the Police Community Relations & Review Commission (PCRRC) and advised this evening she would provide them to Council for their feedback.

Ms. Greene shared her screen and referred to request #1: Require Comprehensive Reporting, specifically pedestrian and bicycle stop data. Ms. Greene advised currently this data does not exist and is not part of the data collection tool used by OPD. Ms. Greene noted OPD is currently collecting data on traffic stops and advised OPD is forming a committee to examine how to gather the additional information requested by PCRRC. Ms. Greene noted that process would need to be applied to pedestrian and bicycle stops, which are sometimes called field contacts. Ms. Greene advised the goal was to start the data collection in January 2021 so at the end of the year there would be a full year of data.

Ms. Greene referred to request #2: Remove Barriers To Reporting Police Misconduct, specifically for Police Officers to pass out business cards with instructions on how to file a complaint with PCRRC. Ms. Greene shared a slide of the current business card, which contains the officer's name, call number, report number, comment area, email address and phone numbers for OPD. Ms. Greene advised a feedback form was created and approved by the Law Director and by the PCRRC noting it was now available on the OPD website. Ms. Greene advised an email form that auto sends to PCRRC was also created noting the goal for implementing that form was January 2021. Ms. Greene noted a new business card was being developed that could have a QR code which would go to the approved feedback form.

Ms. Greene referred to request #3: Research and Fund Alternatives to Traditional Policing, specifically, the creation of a Task Force to review options. Ms. Greene noted a timeline of October 2020 to April of 2021 was reviewed with the PCRRC to create a Task Force, review internal practices, research and reconnect with existing social service agencies, learn what they do and what they offer and talk to them about expanding their services in Oxford. Ms. Greene advised from spring of 2021 to early summer of 2021 the Task Force would be asked to create a recommendation of what is best for the community. Ms. Greene noted in late summer of 2021 the budget and program adjustments would be looked at and forwarded to Council for review in the fall of 2021. Ms. Greene advised the goal for implementing a new program would be 2022. Ms. Greene noted the immediate next steps were to get Council's feedback and work with Council in the near future on a Resolution to create a Task Force.

Mr. Prytherch inquired what the scope of the Task Force would be. Ms. Greene advised she did not have the scope yet noting her goal was to get feedback from Council.

Mr. Snavelly noted concern with a Task Force and inquired who would serve on it. Mr. Snavelly advised he would like to know OPD's view of a Task Force. Mr. Snavelly noted he felt Council needed to judge OPD based upon their record and not that of police departments elsewhere.

Ms. Raghu advised the PCRRC recommended the formation of a Task Force noting she felt there was never any harm with increased transparency. Ms. Raghu advised the Task Force would be created the exact way any other task force, committee or board is established which is by Council voting on the applicants. Ms. Raghu advised this was a global problem, something Council should always investigate and it was something the PCRRC has already voted on.

Mr. Bracken agreed with Ms. Raghu noting this was not about policy it was about a task force considering policy. Mr. Bracken advised this was not a negative reflection on OPD noting there are things we can do better and lead the way on. Mr. Bracken advised the possibilities are good noting many of them save money, reduce conflict and reduce the need for force and potential violence. Mr. Bracken advised to not explore that is not doing due diligence.

Ms. Southard advised she supported the creation of a task force noting she felt people needed to look at the issue and come up with solutions as she felt a task force was the way to go. Ms. Southard advised it should be structured the way Council structures all of its boards and commissions representing a variety of constituents and ideas that comprise the community.

Mr. Ellerbe advised he had some concerns about a task force and how it would come about which is why he wanted to be part of the task force and be involved with it at all stages.

Chief Jones noted he appreciated Vice Mayor Snavelly's comments and his confidence in OPD. Chief Jones advised OPD always looks for ways to improve noting he works with experts in the field such as the Oxford Coalition for a Healthy Community Mental Health Work Group. Chief Jones advised for a long time OPD has worked on how to improve response to folks experiencing mental illness. Chief Jones noted OPD has partnered with social workers and treatment advocates over the years. Chief Jones advised he does not look at this conversation as preventing police violence because OPD officers know when to use appropriate force. Chief Jones noted the task force could take testimony from different officers who have had different experiences, take testimony from experts in mental health, take testimony from social service agencies in Butler County and what they can provide to OPD and come back to Council with recommendations. Chief Jones advised he was not opposed to the task force as long as it is not politically motivated, as long as it is not pushing one agenda, as long as it is representative of the community and has experts on it who know about police response to mental health situations.

Mr. Prytherch noted to him it comes down to what the scope and charge of the task force would be and advised he would like to know what that is. Mr. Prytherch advised he did not want to try to fix something that is not broken although he wants to improve upon something he feels is working very well in the City of Oxford. Mr. Prytherch inquired what the difference was between a task force and the PCRRC.

Ms. Raghu inquired if Council had access to the proposal and if so if they read it. Ms. Raghu advised it seemed there might be confusion as to what the actual proposal is. Ms. Raghu noted her hope the proposal from the PCRRC could be given to Councilors. Ms. Raghu noted Chief Jones has mentioned there are different police departments that have social workers and advised she was excited this is something everyone can see eye to eye on and that there is added value to having social workers. Ms. Raghu noted we are not going to arrest our way out of the opioid epidemic and advised police cannot heal sexual assault victims and noted there is only so much police can do. Ms. Raghu advised she thinks about victims of domestic violence and victims of sexual assault and wants to know what will heal those people.

Ms. Raghu advised Chief Jones has said homelessness is not a crime and OPD is not going to arrest people because they have no where to go noting she completely supported his sentiment then and now. Ms. Raghu advised the Task Force would look at how to solve fundamental problems, how to fix the root causes of what ails society here and far away. Ms. Raghu noted she was worried about intimate partner violence, sexual assault, substance abuse, mental health, homelessness and hunger and inquired what can be done to help those families who are affected most by these problems. Ms. Raghu advised she felt everyone was in agreement across the political spectrum that by having a reactive police response no one is going to arrest their way out of any of these societal ills. Ms. Raghu noted to her that is what the task force is about.

Mr. Elliott advised a lot of time was spent creating the PCRRC noting he and Mr. Meade worked very hard to draft the Ordinance. Mr. Elliott noted he hears the notion of other ideas besides traditional policing and advised he has never thought of OPD as a traditional police department. Mr. Elliott suggested tasking the PCRRC to have some hearings to listen to all sides as to what needs to be done rather than creating another committee.

Mr. Snavelly advised he appreciated the Chief's comments noting he seems amenable to the discussion. Mr. Snavelly advised he agreed with Ms. Raghu's comments. Mr. Snavelly noted what the City Manager and Mr. Prytherch said makes some sense to him and it goes along with what Ms. Raghu recommended. Mr. Snavelly advised he does not want a group put together that appears to have a bias one way or another noting he wants a fair hearing of all the issues. Mr. Snavelly suggested the PCRRC perform the task force work.

Mr. Bracken advised the PCRRC specifically approved creating a task force noting if they want to take that back he trusts them to do the work although he trusts what they have already said. Mr. Bracken noted he does not see a problem with a task force at all.

Mayor Smith advised if Council decides to form a task force which he is not opposed to the task force in his opinion would be formed to help Oxford police not to eliminate police, not to defund police if anything increase police funding because we may decide to increase their staffing in some form. Mayor Smith noted this is not going to move as fast as people would like it to because Oxford is incredibly busy as a City. Mayor Smith advised 2 initiatives from BLM that involve OPD are already being addressed and he would like to see them implemented before a task force is formed. Mayor Smith advised the City has multiple projects to implement with CARES Act money before December 31.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Ann Fuehrer, Executive Director, TOPSS, 1345 Dana Drive, advised she listened to Council's Work Session this evening and noted she appreciated the work and commitments of the City Manager's office and of City Council members. Ms. Fuehrer advised she also appreciated the positive regard a number of Councilor's have expressed for the work that TOPSS does. Ms. Fuehrer noted TOPSS proposed for round three of CARES Act funding to add \$53,000 to the \$42,000 that Council approved in round two. Ms. Fuehrer advised the additional funds would allow TOPSS to move from purchasing a used truck to customize a new truck that could be used in several ways.

Ms. Fuehrer advised 40% of the food that TOPSS customers receive is perishable so the refrigerated aspect of the truck would be very beneficial to TOPPS. Ms. Fuehrer noted she felt the vehicle could be customized to serve the needs of TOPPS and the Farmers Market Uptown.

Mr. Justin Chandler, Cincinnati, Ohio, advised he was a resident of Oxford for five years and was still in a PhD program at Miami University. Mr. Chandler noted he was also a member of Black Lives Matter and has been appreciative City Council is considering the proposals BLM presented although he was disappointed there is not already a clear sense among Council about what the proposal for the task force is supposed to be. Mr. Chandler advised when BLM imagined the task force to look into alternatives to policing they felt the make-up of the task force should include affected community members, representatives from local organizations and commissions that deal with issues of equity and representation and officers active in the field who can speak directly to the problems the officers face and the gaps they are unhelpfully forced to try to fill beyond the training they engage in. Mr. Chandler noted it should also include people with budgeting and finance backgrounds, experts in social work to ensure the best practices are being implemented as well as experts in police reform, community organizers and people who can reach out and get the community involved as well as a member or members of the PCRRC. Mr. Chandler advised at no time did BLM think the PCRRC should be tasked with the job of overseeing this task force because it is going to be a different kind of work. Mr. Chandler noted the BLM timeline for this was 6 months and they imagined a sustained research phase that would involve local research of current institutions serving Oxford. Mr. Chandler advised BLM wants community and data feedback, testimonies from citizens and officers about the needs of the community and how we can best collaborate with and build upon the work of organizations such as Oxford's Coalition for a Healthy Community. Mr. Chandler noted key areas to explore would be racial discrimination, mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, poverty, interpersonal violence, international and immigrant experiences and other areas that arise through these needs assessments and data collection that the task force would engage in. Mr. Chandler advised the task force is not about defunding the police it is about identifying what is going on in Oxford, what areas need to be addressed and where help needs to be given.

Ms. Amy Shaiman, referred to transient guest lodging and suggested the City encourage those who rent out their homes to be courteous and notify their neighbors when they are going to do so.

Ms. Shaiman noted she was appreciative to Council, OPD and the Chief for making good progress on the anonymous feedback process. Ms. Shaiman advised she agreed it is hopeful and forward moving to have a task force to take advantage of all the work that has already been done but take it steps further. Ms. Shaiman noted she felt it helps Oxford be proactive rather than reactive.

Ms. Trisha Hillman, 820 Clover Circle, advised she read the proposal for a task force noting she was very interested in it as these are the kind of conversations that she and Chief Jones have had since she organized the vigil. Ms. Hillman noted as Council decides who to appoint to the task force she felt someone from Pflag should be a member. Ms. Hillman advised she was a member of the NAACP who also signed in support of this task force and she could do double duty as a citizen and as a member of the NAACP.

Akanksha, 3753 Washington Avenue, Cincinnati, advised she lived in Oxford for two years and commutes to Oxford on a regular basis. Akanksha noted she appreciated hearing all of the thoughtful discussion in regard to support for the BLM proposal. Akanksha advised she was excited to see the first two recommendations have been received well noting she was surprised at the hesitation for the task force. Akanksha echoed the sentiments of previous speakers noting as someone who works as a therapist and serves a lot of the community she sees these issues are important and pervasive. Akanksha advised she does not see why Oxford cannot be a shining example for how to improve. Akanksha expressed her support for the task force noting her hope there is movement in that direction.

Mr. Brandon Humphrey, 609 Ogden Court, advised he was speaking as a representative of Black Lives Matter – Oxford. Mr. Humphrey thanked members of the PCRRC for their hard work and Ms. Greene for her hard work on the summary she provided. Mr. Humphrey thanked City Council for giving their thoughts on the BLM proposals noting his hope Council will follow through with the recommendations including the task force. Mr. Humphrey echoed what Mr. Chandler has already said which is that the scope and the makeup of the task force was discussed at the PCRRC meeting. Mr. Humphrey noted his hope Council would look at the outline discussed there for what a task force might look like. Mr. Humphrey discussed a petition BLM Oxford organized. Mr. Humphrey advised prior to tonight's meeting BLM delivered to City Council and the PCRRC a letter that describes a petition in support of BLM's proposals. Mr. Humphrey read the following into the record:

"Dear members of City Council and Mr. Elliott,

On August 4, 2020, Black Lives Matter – Oxford, Ohio, presented a letter to the Oxford City Council proposing a number of policing reforms that we believe will make Oxford a safer, more equitable, and more inclusive place. That letter and its proposals have received letters of support from the League of Women Voters of Oxford, the Butler County Progressive PAC, the Interfaith Center at Miami University, Oxford Area PFLAG, and the Diversity Interest Group (Miami University Department of Psychology). More recently, we created a petition to give individual community members the opportunity to voice their support for our original proposal letter.

To date, our petition has received 579 unique signatures, including an endorsement from the Department of Psychology at Miami University. Of these signatures, roughly 80% are residents of Oxford, and 98% reported a connection to the Oxford community (e.g., through residency, proximity, employment, affiliation to Miami University).

Along with letters of support already presented to City Council, this overwhelming response to our petition demonstrates that our fellow Oxford citizens also hope for a safe, equitable, and inclusive Oxford. This can be achieved in part by following through with our letter proposals: (1) promoting transparency and trust through a more robust record of officer-initiated stops (including pedestrian stops); (2) removing barriers to reporting police misconduct by forming an easily accessible and user-friendly reporting system; and (3) establishing a task force to investigate the health and safety needs of the Oxford community and how best to meet them, in an effort to reduce the burden on policing.

Black Lives Matter – Oxford, Ohio stands in solidarity with all members of our community who hope that Oxford can be a shining example of transparency, health, safety, and inclusion for all to follow.

Signed,
Black Lives Matter – Oxford, Ohio”

Ms. Debbie Anderson, 3903 Harris Road, thanked Council for their service. Ms. Anderson noted she would discuss the formation of a task force and advised she represented the Support for Oxford Police Department – the Coalition for a Better Oxford. Ms. Anderson noted she had 2 concerns and 3 recommendations that she feels will provide 3 wins for the City. Ms. Anderson noted she believes the formation of a task force sanctioned by the City is premature, not the solution to all the issues at hand. Ms. Anderson advised for her there is not enough data to warrant fundamental changes noting most of the complaints she has heard voiced against OPD were antidotal, dated in the past, and racial profiling is unsubstantiated in data in OPD. Ms. Anderson noted if OPD had a performance rate of 95% on positive dealings with race relations was that was a cause for major expense and major changes. Ms. Anderson advised if there are 20 officers on the force and the rating is 95% then it could be that just 1 officer is the culprit. Ms. Anderson noted addressing the 5% is best done by on the job training, yearly goal setting and review within the department. Ms. Anderson advised she believed one of the lieutenants is specializing in training the officers and keeping them updated regarding minority relations noting there was no reason to expect that improvement will not continue. Ms. Anderson advised if social services is the issue, it is not the primary role of the police department to solve the mental needs of the City although it is something they must deal with. Ms. Anderson noted OPD has current connections with Butler County Mental Health Services and homeless shelters and advised they are looking for officers with social service training, which sounds like a “win” to her. Ms. Anderson advised she felt there was ambiguity about the purpose, role and scope of the task force. Ms. Anderson asked Council to table for formation of a City sanctioned and funded task force on alternatives to funding policing for 6 months. Ms. Anderson advised BLM is highly motivated at this time noting she felt they could form an independent committee funded by their own donations noting they can research, develop and gather resources and report to City Council in 6 months. Ms. Anderson noted she felt a BLM group could do an excellent job of researching whether or not it is City sanctioned. Ms. Anderson asked Council to encourage OPD to continue with their own ideas for improvement for the next 6 months. Ms. Anderson advised she felt OPD is highly motivated to be the best they can be noting they have only shown professionalism so far and there is no reason to not expect more of the same. Ms. Anderson advised no one in any business or service likes being demanded to make changes without cause. Ms. Anderson noted if after 6 months Council believes OPD is still lacking in some way a task force sanctioned by the City could be implemented at that time. Ms. Anderson advised there are already regrets in many cities regarding defunding the police noting without safety people and businesses and their tax revenues leave the City. Ms. Anderson advised one issue is not about policing at all, it involves what the police are to do with those experiencing food or housing insecurity noting the faith community is highly motivated to provide for the needy in our midst.

Ms. Anderson noted there were 3 highly motivated groups in Oxford all wanting to make a difference and asked City Council to table a City sanctioned task force for alternative policing for 6 months and offer BLM to create an independent committee independently funded to look at and research the ideas for 6 months and report their findings to City Council. Ms. Anderson advised she was looking for City Council to encourage the police department to continue their innovations and plans for improvement for 6 months noting if Council does not feel there is sufficient progress a task force could be sanctioned and funded at that time. Ms. Anderson encouraged City Council to invite area churches already involved to coordinate their efforts and work together to meet the needs of underserved in Oxford and report their ideas in 6 months. Ms. Anderson noted she believed by doing these things all three groups can stay highly motivated in their work and advised they can innovate and create the best solutions for Oxford with the hope for the most results with the least risk for error. Ms. Anderson thanked City Council, OPD, BLM, the Support for the Oxford Police Department – Coalition for a Better Oxford, and area churches for all having a heart for the best Oxford.

Ms. Natalee Price, 3441 Northland Drive, Hamilton, Ohio, advised she was deeply embedded in the Oxford community through her status as a 4th year PhD student in Miami University's Clinical Psychology Program. Ms. Price noted she does research with children and families in the Oxford area and works as a graduate student therapist in the Miami University Psychology Clinic and at Talawanda High School. Ms. Price advised since June she has also been working alongside other students, faculty, staff and administrators on Miami's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force to help create and implement recommendations for their institution on changing policies and climate to be more inclusive, equitable and accountable. Ms. Price advised through these experiences she feels she has developed some perspective into what it takes to change both at an individual and an institutional level. Ms. Price noted she fully supports each of the 3 reform proposals that the BLM chapter of Oxford is proposing and advised she works closely with children and families in Oxford and has a strong vested interest in doing everything she can do to help make sure the children of this community feel safe, healthy and proud of their Oxford community. Ms. Price advised she felt it was critical for Oxford to facilitate transparency, open communication and trust between community members and Police Officers by requiring comprehensive reporting as relayed in the first and second proposed reforms. Ms. Price noted this will provide important data about how our community is doing in terms of policing. Ms. Price advised as someone who works extensively with severe mental illness and regularly engages in crisis interventions she feels it is vital that Oxford follows other city and town examples of creatively helping our police officers and community members by exploring alternatives to policing like mental health professionals who are well equipped to respond to a particular crisis. Ms. Price noted she believed her therapy experiences provide her with a unique perspective about what it takes to make change happen and advised therapy is all about changing for the better by using evidence-based strategies to help facilitate this change, which is akin to how the reform proposals are based on decades of research. Ms. Price advised the change we are trying to facilitate is not always easy in the therapy room and it does not happen overnight. Ms. Price noted the proposed reforms Council members are being presented with provide an incredible opportunity to make our community change for the better.

Ms. Amber Franklin, 1211 Dana Drive, advised she was a member of the PCRRC. Ms. Greene thanked Ms. Greene, Chief Jones and staff at the City of Oxford for the hard work they have done so far to implement the first two proposed initiatives of the BLM proposal. Ms. Franklin noted she appreciated the comments and discussion City Council had on this matter and advised she also appreciated Vice Mayor Snaveley's point that we have a good police force. Ms. Franklin advised when she tells people that violent crime happens in Oxford, shootings, stabbings and armed robberies they are surprised because they do not know. Ms. Franklin noted she felt the reason they do not know is because OPD handles those situations quite well. Ms. Franklin advised she did not think we should assume that just because something happened elsewhere that it could not provide some context for something that can be changed here. Ms. Franklin noted terrible things happen to police officers and she suspects there are changes in practices that are adopted across police departments in different cities or states because of something terrible that might have happened elsewhere. Ms. Franklin noted in 2016 after two killings there were two different shootings of police officers who were ambushed one in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and one in Houston Texas noting there were about 7 police officers who were just doing their jobs protecting and serving citizens who were killed in cold blood. Ms. Franklin advised the PCRRC wrote a letter to Chief Jones and OPD expressing their condolences and sadness for what happened to the officers. Ms. Franklin noted she knew Chief Jones and OPD appreciated it and advised they did not say well this happened in big cities not in Oxford. Ms. Franklin noted they were grateful for it because it was a recognition that what happens to any of them anywhere affects all of them because they are a community. Ms. Franklin advised she did not think it was unreasonable to think something that happened in Minneapolis or elsewhere could prompt some changes we might want to see here in Oxford. Ms. Franklin noted the last PCRRC meeting she attended was the most robust and productive meeting she has experienced since she has been on the commission. Ms. Franklin advised from some of the feedback she has heard those who listened including members of BLM really appreciated some of the input that the lieutenants provided. Ms. Franklin noted Lt. Robinson has experience working with community service agencies in Oxford and mentioned he would like to bring some of those services back to Oxford which was greatly appreciated. Ms. Franklin advised she felt members of OPD have a lot to offer the task force. Ms. Franklin noted she has a PhD in Speech Language Pathology noting every semester for every class she teaches her students undergrads and graduates evaluate her teaching. Ms. Franklin advised some of the students have been out of high school for a couple of years and they give her input on the quality of her teaching, whether she has created a safe environment for them in the classroom, whether she has provided a rigorous environment noting sometimes the feedback they give is something she cannot change. Ms. Franklin advised sometimes the feedback they give is very helpful and has improved and changed the quality of her teaching. Ms. Franklin noted she felt they have a right to have some input because they are affected by her teaching and advised not everything that comes out of the task force in terms of recommendations will necessarily be adopted although she felt we have an obligation to listen to the community both professionals and individuals within the community to get their ideas. Ms. Franklin noted there might be an idea that comes forth that we find revolutionary even for a police department in a community that is already doing very well.

Ms. Shana Rosenberg, advised she was a representative of the BLM – Oxford Leadership Team and would speak on their third proposal presented to City Council to research and fund alternatives to traditional policing and specifically the development of a task force to investigate these matters. Ms. Rosenberg noted it appears Councilors did not receive the document BLM presented to the PCRRC with a full description of the composition and scope as well as research phases and what community input should be. Ms. Rosenberg advised Mr. Chandler did a great job summarizing and expanding upon what was presented at that time. Ms. Rosenberg noted when the PCRRC voted to recommend a task force be formed they voted based on that document. Ms. Rosenberg advised this was no longer a proposal by BLM, this is now a recommendation a City commission has forwarded to Council. Ms. Rosenberg noted she would like to address a misconception she feels some community members have about the proposal. Ms. Rosenberg advised while there has been talk across the country about defunding the police BLM – Oxford is only interested in the City of Oxford including the police department best meeting the needs of those in the community when they are in crisis. Ms. Rosenberg noted this includes all members of the community, which includes people of color, LGBTQ, the mentally ill, those with substance abuse issues, victims of sexual assault and interpersonal violence. Ms. Rosenberg advised BLM is not attempting to dismantle OPD or even adversely affect their budget so they cannot perform the important work they do to keep everyone safe and investigate criminal behavior. Ms. Rosenberg noted she cannot agree that the task force should be an OPD led initiative and advised this does not mean she thinks OPD does a bad job and this does not mean she thinks OPD has anything but the best intentions. Ms. Rosenberg noted when she was a panelist at the PCRRC meeting resulting in their recommendation she was gratified to hear about OPD's efforts to improve their crisis responses and their collaboration with the Coalition for a Healthy Community and other experts. Ms. Rosenberg advised not all people view police officers as being helpful or even safe to interact with during a crisis. Ms. Rosenberg noted whether that is a true perception about our local officers or not we have a diverse community and she felt it might be better for there to be a response while there are people in the worst times of their lives as they may not want to interact with a police officer and that may actually not deescalate the situation. Ms. Rosenberg advised many organizations and individuals in the community are in support of this task force and investigating ways to unburden the officers from tasks that are better suited for mental health and social service workers. Ms. Rosenberg noted Trisha Hillman of the NAACP and Councilor Ellerbe were willing to serve on such a task force. Ms. Rosenberg urged Council to follow the recommendations of the PCRRC as they believe this is the best way to examine ways to improve crisis response in Oxford so the diverse population feel their needs are being met.

Mayor Smith thanked everyone for their comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of the September 15, 2020 City Council Work Session. (Mary Ann Eaton, Clerk of Council)

Minutes of the September 15, 2020 City Council Meeting. (Mary Ann Eaton, Clerk of Council)

Minutes of the September 21, 2020 City Council CIP Work Session. (Mary Ann Eaton, Clerk of Council)

Report regarding the September 3, 2020 Recreation Board Meeting. (Casey Wooddell, Parks and Recreation Director)

Report regarding the September 16, 2020 Board of Zoning Appeals Meeting. (Sam Perry, Community Development Director)

Mr. Snavelly moved to approve the consent agenda. Mr. Prytherch seconded. The motion passed by the following roll call:

AYE: Mr. Snavelly, Ms. Southard, Mr. Bracken, Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch, Ms. Raghu
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

RESOLUTION
CARES ACT FUNDING (PUSH)

A Resolution No. 7218 authorizing the donation of twenty five thousand dollars (\$25,000.00) to People United for Self Help (PUSH) as a sub-recipient of Federal CARES Act funds to assist with emergency and critical home repairs for low-income homeowners. (Jessica Green, Assistant City Manager)

Mayor Smith inquired if staff had anymore input on the proposed Resolution and Ms. Greene advised nothing additional from what was discussed at the Work Session.

Ms. Jeanne Glaser, thanked City Council on behalf of the PUSH Board for considering the Resolution noting they hoped to help a lot more people this winter with the extra funds.

Mr. Snavelly moved to adopt Resolution No. 7218. Ms. Southard seconded. The Resolution was adopted by the following roll call:

AYE: Ms. Southard, Mr. Bracken, Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch, Ms. Raghu, Mr. Snavelly
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

RESOLUTION
CARES ACT FUNDING (OXFORD SENIORS)

A Resolution No. 7219 authorizing the donation of forty one thousand six hundred dollars (\$41,600.00) to Oxford Seniors as a sub-recipient of Federal CARES Act funds to assist with Covid-19 testing, and the purchase of air cleansing equipment, automatic doors, and Adult Day Care personal protection equipment. (Jessica Greene, Assistant City Manager)

There were no comments from staff, Council or the public.

Mr. Snavelly moved to adopt Resolution No.7219. Ms. Southard seconded. The Resolution was adopted by the following roll call:

AYE: Mr. Bracken, Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch, Ms. Raghu, Mr. Snavelly, Ms. Southard
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

RESOLUTION
CARES ACT FUNDING (AGE FRIENDLY OXFORD)

A Resolution No. 7220 authorizing the donation of seven thousand eight hundred forty dollars (\$7,840.00) to Age Friendly Oxford as a sub-recipient of Federal CARES Act funds to assist with communication regarding public health efforts via a mailed newsletter to elderly residents. (Jessica Greene, Assistant City Manager)

There were no comments from staff, Council or the public.

Ms. Southard moved to adopt Resolution No. 7220. Mr. Snavelly seconded. The Resolution was adopted by the following roll call:

AYE: Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch, Ms. Raghu, Mr. Snavelly, Ms. Southard, Mr. Bracken
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

RESOLUTION
CARES ACT FUNDING (CHAMBER OF COMMERCE)

A Resolution No. 7221 authorizing the donation of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) to the Oxford Chamber of Commerce as a sub-recipient of Federal CARES Act funds which shall be used to reimburse businesses for Covid-19 expenses. (Jessica Greene, Assistant City Manager)

Ms. Kelli Riggs, President, Oxford Chamber of Commerce, thanked Council for consideration of funding the CARES Act proposal submitted by the Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Riggs noted she listened to the Work Session and appreciated the fact Council is considering helping the businesses in Oxford with more financial assistance as many of them are struggling. Ms. Riggs advised we needed to do everything we can as a community to make sure people are supporting the small businesses.

There were no comments from staff or Council.

Mr. Snavley moved to adopt Resolution No. 7221. Ms. Southard seconded. The Resolution was adopted by the following roll call:

AYE: Mr. Prytherch, Ms. Raghu, Mr. Snavely, Ms. Southard, Mr. Bracken, Mr. Ellerbe
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

RESOLUTION
CARES ACT FUNDING (ENJOY OXFORD)

A Resolution No. 7222 authorizing the donation of thirty five thousand dollars (\$35,000.00) to Enjoy Oxford as a sub-recipient of Federal CARES Act funds to assist with creating a winter marketing campaign to engage residents and visitors with local businesses and attractions.
(Jessica Greene, Assistant City Manager)

There were no comments from staff, Council or the public.

Mr. Prytherch moved to adopt Resolution No. 7222. Ms. Southard seconded. The Resolution was adopted by the following roll call:

AYE: Ms. Raghu, Mr. Snavely, Ms. Southard, Mr. Bracken, Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

RESOLUTION
CARES ACT FUNDING (CITY OF OXFORD)

A Resolution No. 7223 authorizing the expenditure of nine hundred thirty eight thousand one hundred eighty six dollars (\$938,186.00) of Federal CARES Act funds which shall be used for public health upgrades, economic sustainability programs, and educational supports within the City as set forth on Exhibit "A" attached hereto. (Jessica Greene, Assistant City Manager)

Mr. Snavelly moved to amend the proposed Resolution by striking the words “as set forth on Exhibit A attached hereto”. Mr. Prytherch seconded. The motion passed by the following roll call:

AYE: Mr. Snavelly, Ms. Southard, Mr. Bracken, Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch, Ms. Raghu
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

Ms. Greene advised staff would realign some of the funds in Exhibit “A” and come back to Council with that proposal.

There were no comments from the public.

Mr. Snavelly advised he was still interested in TOPSS being able to get the vehicle, which they have argued, for noting he felt they did a very good job of it. Mr. Snavelly inquired if that would come forward as a separate Resolution at the next meeting. Ms. Greene advised a Resolution would come forward with TOPSS as a sub-recipient.

Ms. Southard noted the vehicle in question would be shared with the Farmers Market.

Mr. Prytherch advised he was grateful to the Federal Government for providing assistance in a time of great need. Mr. Prytherch thanked staff for their hard work on CARES Act funding.

Mr. Prytherch moved to adopt Resolution No. 7223. Mr. Snavelly seconded. The Resolution was adopted by the following roll call:

AYE: Ms. Southard, Mr. Bracken, Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch, Ms. Raghu, Mr. Snavelly
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

RESOLUTION **NAMING COMMITTEE**

A Resolution No. 7224 establishing a Naming Review Committee per Chapter 149 of the Oxford Codified Ordinances Entitled Facility Naming and/or Renaming to provide recommendations to City Council for naming or renaming a street after the late Mr. Mike Davis, Treasurer/CFO, of the Talawanda School District. (Mike Smith, Mayor)

Mayor Smith advised he was approached by multiple people after the untimely death of Mr. Davis to possibly look at renaming a street specifically the street that leads to Talawanda for him. Mayor Smith noted per City regulations the naming committee will meet once or twice to reach a recommendation and bring it forward to Council.

Mr. Kevin McKeehan, 2126 Dana Drive, thanked Council for bringing the proposed Resolution forward noting his hope a successful conclusion would be made.

Mr. Prytherch advised the contributions by Mr. Davis were many in addition to the Talawanda School District noting a number of new buildings were constructed under his tenure. Mr. Prytherch advised Mr. Davis spent years of service on the Community Improvement Corporation noting in addition to bringing a lot of wisdom and business sense he had very infectious laugh that all in Oxford miss. Mr. Prytherch advised he felt it was wonderful Council could take this opportunity to honor someone who gave so much to the community he loved.

Ms. Southard moved to adopt Resolution No. 7224. Mr. Prytherch seconded. The Resolution was adopted by the following roll call:

AYE: Mr. Bracken, Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch, Ms. Raghu, Mr. Snavely, Ms. Southard
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

RESOLUTION **2021 CDBG**

A Resolution No. 7225 authorizing the City Manager to submit eligible projects to the Butler County Board of Commissioners for the 2021 Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) year application. (Mike Dreisbach, Service Director)

Mr. Dreisbach advised in 2021 the City expects to receive \$113,000 in CDBG funds noting \$17,000 would be spent for administrative expenses and \$96,000 would be available for other projects. Mr. Dreisbach advised staff recommends the continuation of the handicap ramp program which has been done for several years competing about 80% of the City. Mr. Dreisbach advised 3-4 more years were needed to complete every ramp on the sidewalk system in Oxford. Mr. Dreisbach shared a drawing depicting the areas completed and areas left to complete. Mr. Dreisbach noted the proposed Resolution will authorize staff to complete the CDBG application and submit it to Butler County and HUD for approval.

There were no comments from the public.

Ms. Raghu noted what she is going to say should not be confused with her being anti-sidewalks or anti-improving wheelchair accessibility.

Ms. Raghu advised when she looked up what CDBG funds are for it said “CDBG program provides annual grants on a formula basis to states, cities and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment and by expanding economic opportunities for low and moderate income persons the program is authorized under Title One of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974”. Ms. Raghu noted she was trying to wrap her head around the usage of this funding.

Mr. Dreisbach advised this program gives a categorical exclusion for the removal of architectural barriers and allows funds to be used citywide. Mr. Dreisbach noted without the exclusion the projects would have to be done in low to moderate income areas. Mr. Dreisbach advised this was something the City has done for several years which relieves the burden from the General Fund. Ms. Raghu advised Council has said affordable housing matters to them and then applies for money, which is not being used for what CDBG money is meant for. Ms. Raghu noted Council says affordable housing matters although the way the money is spent does not reflect that value. Ms. Raghu advised she felt Council needed to re-evaluate what they say matters and reflect that in the budget.

Mr. Prytherch advised he felt the sidewalk improvements serve some of the very goals Ms. Raghu is referring to. Mr. Prytherch noted having a safe pedestrian network makes the community more socially just although he would like to get creative in upcoming years on how to use CDBG money for a variety of things.

Mr. Snavely moved to adopt Resolution No. 7225. Ms. Southard seconded. The Resolution was adopted by the following roll call:

AYE: Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch, Ms. Raghu, Mr. Snavely, Ms. Southard, Mr. Bracken
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

RESOLUTION **OPWC GRANT APPLICATION**

A Resolution No. 7226 of Council supporting the submission of a grant application for Ohio Public Works Commission Issue 1 funds to be used for the design and reconstruction of Main Street (SR732) between High Street (US27) and Park Place. (Mike Dreisbach, Service Director)

Mr. Dreisbach advised staff recommends Council allow staff to apply for the Ohio Public Works Commission grant for the project described above. Mr. Dreisbach noted the roadway in question has a failing road base and advised there have been two water main breaks in this area. Mr. Dreisbach advised the irrigation lines between the two Uptown Parks also need to be replaced and upgraded. Mr. Dreisbach noted this is the same program the City has used to rebuild the High Street and College Avenue brick streets and this would be a continuation of those projects.

There were no comments from the public.

Mr. Prytherch inquired if this was a renovation and replication of what is there already or were there any other improvements as part of the project. Mr. Dreisbach advised there will not be many changes on the surface although there will be many improvements under the surface.

Mr. Snavelly moved to adopt Resolution No. 7226. Mr. Prytherch seconded. The Resolution was adopted by the following roll call:

AYE: Ms. Raghu, Mr. Snavelly, Ms. Southard, Mr. Bracken, Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

ORDINANCES **FIRST READING**

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

An Ordinance Approving A Conditional Use Permit To Allow An Existing Detached Garage Structure at 305 N. Main Street To Be Used As An Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) In The R-3MS Single, Two, And Three Family Mile Square Residential District With Conditions. (Sam Perry, Community Development Director)

Mr. Snavelly recused himself from the discussion.

Mr. Perry shared his screen and discussed the proposed project as presented on pages 79-108 of Council's packet noting the Planning Commission recommended approval at their last meeting. Mr. Perry noted the request was to convert a garage to a dwelling unit at 304 N. Main Street. Mr. Perry advised this code was added in 2017 as part of an overall package of updates to the zoning code and up-zoning parts of the eastern section of the Mile Square to increase density near campus. Mr. Perry provided several slides of the property and discussed the three conditions for approval as presented on page 82 of Council's packet.

Mr. Scott Webb, Architect, provided slides of the proposed project and advised he and his client were asking for an adaptive reuse of an existing building rather than tearing down an existing building to build another one serving the same function. Mr. Webb noted his client wished to adaptively reuse the existing building in its current state with some improvements to address the concerns of the Fire Department and of City Council. Mr. Webb provided slides which showed what improvements will be made to make the structure look like a dwelling unit rather than a garage so emergency vehicles know where it is. Mr. Webb advised a building permit will be required which will give the opportunity for inspections by NIC, the Building Department, by the Rental Department and all affected departments in the City to ensure it is up to code in terms of safety.

Mr. Webb noted at that time staff will have the opportunity to review it and its compliance with the Mile Square design Guidelines. Mr. Webb offered to answer any questions.

There were no comments from the public.

Mr. Prytherch advised a code was created for this type of use noting he felt this kind of project fulfills the letter and spirit of what Council was hoping to do.

Mr. Prytherch noted the goals driving the conversation at the time were how to increase density while maintaining the visual character of the Mile Square. Mr. Prytherch advised he appreciated the Planning Commission working with the petitioners, the Police Chief and Fire Chief for figuring out how to make the code work noting his hope other people seek this solution as he felt it was a good one.

Ms. Southard referred to some of the slides Mr. Webb provided and inquired what other measures would be taken to make the structure not look like a garage. Mr. Webb advised the garage doors would be removed and replaced with windows and a covered entry would be installed. Mr. Webb noted the block and stucco would be refreshed.

Mayor Smith advised Council will consider the proposed Ordinance on October 20, 2020.

ORDINANCE **TEXT AMENDMENT**

An Ordinance Repealing Oxford Codified Ordinance Section 931.13 Entitled Charges, And Adopting New Oxford Codified Ordinance Section 931.13 Entitled Charges. (Doug Elliott, City Manager)

Mr. Elliott referred to Chapter 931 of the Oxford Codified Ordinances entitled Solid Waste Collection and Disposal; Recycling, and explained the rationale for repealing Section 931.13(d) since it no longer applicable.

There were no comments from Council or the public.

ORDINANCE **SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET**

An Ordinance Amending Ordinance No. 3538. Supplemental Budget Ordinance Number 7 To Make Supplemental Appropriations For Fiscal Year 2020. (Joe Newlin. Finance Director)

Mr. Newlin addressed his staff report as presented on page 112 of Council's packet.

There were no comments from Council or the public.

ORDINANCE
SECOND READING
FINAL PLAT

An Ordinance No. 3589 Approving The Final Dedication And Easement Plat For Lake Forest Drive In The City Of Oxford. (Sam Perry, Community Development Director)

Mr. Perry addressed his staff report as presented on page 114 of Council's packet and offered to answer any questions.

There were no comments from the public.

Mr. Snavelly advised he has driven the new roadway noting he felt it was really well done.

Mr. Snavelly moved to adopt Ordinance No. 3589. Ms. Southard seconded. The Ordinance was adopted by the following roll call:

AYE: Mr. Snavelly, Ms. Southard, Mr. Bracken, Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch, Ms. Raghu
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Elliott thanked Council for their support and adoption of the Resolutions at the last meeting and this evening for the CARES Act funding. Mr. Elliott recognized Ms. Greene for all of the hard work she has put into this project by contacting the various agencies and providing information to himself and Mr. Newlin for review and recommendation to City Council.

Mr. Elliott reminded everyone the Budget Work Session was scheduled for Thursday, October 15 at 7:00 p.m. noting it would be a virtual meeting.

Mr. Elliott encouraged anyone who has not submitted their Census forms to do so.

Chief Jones shared a story about OPD assisting a local family when their four year olds four wheeler was stolen. Chief Jones praised his department noting they live in this community, care about this community and do things Council does not hear about in taking care of the community. Chief Jones noted the people they take care of are not usually the people attending City Council meetings, they are people who are impoverished or do not have a lot of money and Council will never hear about them.

Ms. Greene advised Parks and Recreation will host a Halloween Drive-Thru parade on Thursday, October 29 noting her hope everyone can join in.

Ms. Greene thanked Mr. Perry for his research and understanding of the cold shelter and transitional housing programs.

Ms. Greene advised there was an exciting grant opportunity through Jobs Ohio called a Vibrant Communities Grant for an amount up to \$2,000,000 and noted Oxford was one of nine communities in southwest Ohio that is eligible to apply. Ms. Greene advised it was a statewide competitive grant noting she was working with Miami University and other partners in applying for the grant.

Mr. Perry referred to Ms. Shaiman's comments this evening regarding an Airbnb property and encouraged others with concerns to contact the Community Development Department.

Ms. Raghu shared pages from the City's 2021 draft budget and made some comparisons between the City of Oxford and the City of Bowling Green. Ms. Raghu also compared the violent crime statistics for each City noting Bowling Green had about 27 violent crimes over the last year while Oxford had 42. Ms. Raghu advised she did not know why Oxford had so much more crime compared to Bowling Green which was a very similar City with very different expenditures in their budget. Ms. Raghu noted it was a question to be asked as far as what Oxford is doing for root causes, what is Oxford doing to work with the university and what can we learn from Bowling Green to get a lower crime statistic. Ms. Raghu advised the CARES funding has resulted from feedback from community members and has been an exercise in what it looks like to use your funding based on your values. Ms. Raghu noted budget discussions were coming up soon and asked going forward how to make the budget a reflection of our values and do we think public health and welfare deserves to be that small of a bar on our bar graph. Ms. Raghu advised she felt there was a lot to borrow from other cities and a lot we can learn. Ms. Raghu noted she felt the more we can bring in community members and the more transparent we can be the more we can glean from the wisdom of what our community actually wants. Ms. Raghu thanked Ms. Greene again noting she did an amazing job with the CARES funding which was satisfying a lot of what people are asking for.

Mr. Ellerbe noted early voting has started and encouraged everyone to get out and vote and advised if people do not vote this year he does not know what to tell them.

Mr. Snavelly advised he spoke to a couple of people who went to the Butler County Board of Elections to vote early and while the line looked long, they said it moved very rapidly. Mr. Snavelly echoed Mr. Ellerbe's comment.

Mr. Snavelly thanked Chief Jones for sharing his story and thanked Chief Jones and all of the police officers for the work they do. Mr. Snavelly noted he felt we should do more in other ways for our community and the health and welfare of our community. Mr. Snavelly advised he was glad Council was able to do so much with the CARES funding and expressed support for OPD noting he felt they do a very good job.

Ms. Southard noted OPD was very busy this past weekend.

Ms. Southard echoed the comments on voting and advised there are free rides to the polls for any registered voter from now until November 3. Ms. Southard advised the rides were available twice a day through the Oxford Senior Center and encouraged those interested to call 523-8100. Ms. Southard noted a \$2,000 grant from the Oxford Community Foundation makes this service possible. Ms. Southard advised the van will be sanitized between trips and 4 passengers were permitted per each ride.

Mr. Bracken echoed everyone's sentiments noting he agreed with all of them and especially Councilor Raghu's. Mr. Bracken advised he liked what she said about the budget and noted his hope we approach the budget going forward as we did the CARES Act.

Mr. Bracken referred to the CARES Act funding and advised he was excited about the ways we can help the community and help those who are most in need. Mr. Bracken advised he knows how much work went into it and noted he was very appreciative of that.

Mr. Bracken thanked the officers that were mentioned by Chief Jones noting it was a fantastic story, which highlights the great things that OPD does. Mr. Bracken noted one thing he did not like was it sort of suggested that those who spoke tonight on behalf of BLM would not be as appreciative of it. Mr. Bracken advised they certainly would be appreciative noting many of them are involved in helping those in need. Mr. Bracken advised nothing negative was said about the police this evening. Mr. Bracken noted it was more about how to make OPD even better and our city better.

Mr. Bracken advised COVID was ramping-up again noting he wanted people to be safe and he did not want to lose anyone in town to it. Mr. Bracken encouraged everyone to wear masks and practice social distancing. Mr. Bracken advised he felt things would get worse now that all of the students are here and we are heading into cold and flu season.

Mr. Prytherch advised he appreciated equally the passion to which BLM and other activists are bringing in terms of questioning and critically thinking about policing. Mr. Prytherch noted he felt it was wonderful for us to anticipate and think about how to do better. Mr. Prytherch advised there is a lot in terms of clear and present danger in the City of Oxford right now such as COVID and economic damage and many other things. Mr. Prytherch noted he felt all of this could be done although he hopes people understand there is a certain amount of bandwidth that Council and staff can take on. Mr. Prytherch advised policing was one of the priorities Council talked about and he felt Council would move forward with it. Mr. Prytherch noted the budget Council deals with is also the product of many decisions by people in prior years of building up a department and funding it.

Mayor Smith reminded everyone to get a flu shot, to test negative and to stay positive.

ADJOURN

Mr. Snavery moved to adjourn at 10:00 p.m. Ms. Southard seconded. The motion passed by the following roll call:

AYE: Ms. Southard, Mr. Bracken, Mr. Ellerbe, Mr. Prytherch, Ms. Raghu, Mr. Snavery
Mayor Smith (7)

NAY: None (0)

ABS: None (0)