A Work Session of the Oxford City Council was called to order by Mayor, Kate Rousmaniere on Tuesday, October 17, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. Council members present were Steve Dana, Glenn Ellerbe and Kevin McKeehan. Edna Southard arrived at 6:02 p.m. and Mike Smith arrived at 6:19 p.m. Bob Blackburn was excused.

Staff members present: Doug Elliott, City Manger; Joe Newlin, Finance Director; Casey Wooddell, Parks and Recreation Director; Jung-Han Chen, Community Development Director; Alan Kyger, Economic Development Director; John Jones, Police Chief; Steve McHugh, Law Director and Mary Ann Eaton, Clerk of Council.

Recreation Board members present: Ken Bogard, Craig Bennett, Shaunna Tafelski, Kevin Ackley and Councilor Southard.

Jessica Greene from Enjoy Oxford was also present.

**APPROVAL
OF AGENDA**

Mr. McKeehan moved to approve the agenda. Mr. Dana seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Work Session was to discuss Financing and Fund Raising options for a new aquatic center and for completing the Oxford Area Trail.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Mr. Elliott advised Council would discuss two important projects this evening, the new aquatic center and the Oxford Area Trail. Mr. Elliott noted both projects were included in the City Manager's proposed budget for fiscal year 2018. Mr. Elliott advised he proposed redirecting the current park improvement annual debt service amount of $312,000 for a new 4.5 million dollar general obligation bond for 20 years for the aquatic center. Mr. Elliott noted the Oxford Area Trail is proposed to be completed in phases by applying for and obtaining various grants which will require matching funds. Mr. Elliott advised the proposed 2018 budget includes an appropriation of $25,000 noting the City received additional grants which will require matching funds after 2018 and Ms. Greene will review those this evening. Mr. Elliott advised the goal this evening was to provide Council an opportunity to receive information about financing options to move both projects forward.

PRESENTATION

Mr. Wooddell introduced Recreation Board members in attendance Ken Bogard, Shaunna Tafelski, Craig Bennett and Kevin Ackley and noted Wes Cole was excused.

Mr. Wooddell advised Ms. Southard was the Council representative for the Recreation Board.

Mr. Wooddell provided a PowerPoint and discussed the 2006 concept map of a proposed aquatic facility in the southern portion of the Community Park noting it was a fairly large footprint. Mr. Wooddell noted the Recreation Board had been working to reduce that footprint to keep the costs reasonable while keeping the desired amenities for the facility. Mr. Wooddell provided an updated concept map from August of this year noting there was still a separate competition pool and the lazy river was integrated into the design of the pool instead of being a separate amenity which reduced the overall footprint significantly. Mr. Wooddell discussed the additional staffing requirements for a new facility including fulltime maintenance personnel which would drastically reduce what the City currently pays Cincinnati Pool Management annually. Mr. Wooddell advised the Recreation Board met with Jessica Greene last week to discuss her funding proposals so the board could decipher what the recommendations might be moving forward. Mr. Wooddell noted at the conclusion of the meeting the board recommended that the City finance the aquatic center and the recreational trail be paid for through a levy. Mr. Wooddell advised the Recreation Board was willing to partner with the Oxford Community Foundation to run a fundraising campaign to raise private donations to assist in funding the new aquatic center.

Mayor Rousmaniere inquired if 4.5 million was a realistic cost for the new facility and Mr. Wooddell advised yes, based on the reduced footprint and based on visits to similar facilities in the area.

PRESENTATION

Mr. Newlin noted many times situations out of the City's control affect how money is spent. Mr. Newlin discussed some of the reasons for declining revenue streams such as the reduction of PSAP's in Butler County, the potential of Oxford having to operate a Municipal Court, the elimination of Estate Tax and the reduction of Local Government Funding. Mr. Newlin advised these revenues in the past enabled the City to help fund capital and equipment purchases. Mr. Newlin noted the improvements made to US 27 North were paid for in cash and the elimination of these revenue streams limit the City's ability to fund projects with cash in the future. Mr. Newlin provided hand-outs and discussed the City of Oxford General Fund Revenue Trends from 2003 to present, and Income Tax Revenues for the same time period. Mr. Newlin referred to his Exhibit "E" which shows a downward trend in Cable TV Franchising Fees due to consumers diverting away from Cable TV. Mr. Newlin advised the Capital Improvement Fund has been receiving $85,000 to $150,000 from the Parking Fund to repay a non-interest bearing loan made to the Parking Fund from the Capital Improvement Fund to build the Uptown Parking Garage. Mr. Newlin noted the repayment will continue until 2026 at which time the loan will be paid in full and the revenue will need to be made up somewhere.

Mr. Newlin discussed large outlays of money that have been dedicated for certain projects through 2022 including additional matching funds for the Oxford Area Trail, construction of a passenger rail platform, US 27 paving and the Chestnut Street rebuild. Mr. Newlin noted these were things Council should consider as they decided how to fund the proposed aquatic center.

Mr. Newlin and Mr. Elliott addressed several questions from Council regarding how declining revenues were affecting the City and how they were dealt with during and after the great recession.

Mr. Ellerbe inquired if there were municipal taxes that could be leveraged and Mr. Elliott advised there were limited ones such as an entertainment tax.

PRESENTATION

Ms. Jessica Greene, Enjoy Oxford, advised she would share some concepts for discussion with the goal of getting the trail system complete within 10 years. Ms. Greene noted 20 years ago an active and organized group of citizens, the Oxford Area Trails group, organized the idea of a trail system. Ms. Greene noted in 2007 the OATs group fundraised $80,000 and hired a firm to do a conceptual design of a trail system and gave the conceptual design to the City. Ms. Greene advised in 2008 the City included the trail system in the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Greene noted to date 2.7 million dollars had been raised in grants toward the trail system and more was possible if there were more matching funds to contribute toward the grants. Ms. Greene advised active transportation systems that encourage bike and pedestrian travel generally increase property values. Ms. Greene advised she felt a tax levy could be done to raise matching funds which will make Oxford eligible for larger grants. Ms. Greene noted she felt the levy should be for a limited time frame to raise the funds to build the trail system and sunset the levy. Ms. Greene advised this was a citizen led initiative and she would like to see if they would be willing to pay for it. Ms. Greene noted the new aquatic center will cost 4.5 million dollars and the entire trail system will cost 12 million dollars. Ms. Greene advised there was funding for Phase 2 and 3 of the trail system which will require 2 million dollars in matching funds in addition to design funds in the next couple of years. Ms. Greene noted the City will need to cover the design cost and Miami University has stepped up to cover the 1.5 million dollar match as long as the City can show it has a plan to support the rest of the trail system construction. Ms. Greene discussed options to fund the projects, one of which was for the City to borrow loans for the pool of 4.5 million dollars and to seek a levy for 7 million dollars for the trail paired with an additional 3.5 million dollars in grants and a 1.5 million dollar contribution from Miami University. Ms. Greene noted the Recreation Board preferred this option. Ms. Greene discussed option 2 which involved grants, loans and a joint levy for 10 million dollars, and option 3 which involved only a joint levy for 12 million dollars. Ms. Greene provided a handout showing property tax option examples for a levy and income tax option examples for a levy noting Miami University did not support an income tax levy.

Ms. Greene noted she felt if a levy failed, it could be tried again or the trail system stops and the grant money would be reimbursed to OKI. Ms. Greene noted she felt Council should consider what happens by combining the aquatic center and trail system into one levy if the levy failed. Ms. Greene noted after research she felt Oxford residents supported levies and formally asked Council to pursue a levy.

Mayor Rousmaniere noted she felt the trail was needed for access to the pool and she felt the projects were linked. Ms. Southard noted it might be possible to rethink the timing of Phase IV of the trail for access to the new pool.

Ms. Greene addressed questions from Council regarding grants and matching funds.

Mr. Elliott provided Council with a handout regarding property tax levies and noted Oxford had the largest income tax rate in Butler County and the lowest property tax in Butler County.

Mr. Elliott noted a bond for 4.7 million dollars was approximately $340,000 a year over 20 years which was why he recommended replacing the City's current bond for the Community Park.

Mr. Elliott thanked Mr. Wooddell, Mr. Newlin and Ms. Greene for their presentations noting Council received a lot of information this evening and at some point decisions would need to be made regarding the funding of the aquatic center and trail projects.

Mr. McKeehan inquired if Mr. Wooddell had projected any attendance figures for the new aquatic center. Mr. Wooddell advised an average of between 300 and 400 per day according to the study and as many as 800 on busy days. Mr. McKeehan inquired what the average attendance was currently and Mr. Wooddell advised approximately 147. Mr. McKeehan noted some people felt moving the aquatic center to the Community Park was a mistake because it was too remote. Mr. McKeehan advised he understood the Community Park was the best option since the City did not own the TRI property and to further invest there would be a problem. Mr. McKeehan inquired if Mr. Wooddell projected the increased personnel costs and Mr. Wooddell advised that was part of the feasibility study. Mr. Wooddell noted the study showed the revenues will meet the costs.

Mayor Rousmaniere inquired why the Recreation Board preferred the loan for the pool and levy for the trail funding option. Mr. Wooddell advised it was a safe option for the pool and to make sure it gets built in the desired timeline. Mr. Wooddell noted the Recreation Board was also concerned about community feedback if a levy failed and the pool got built anyway.

Ms. Southard inquired what would happen at the TRI property when the pool was relocated. Mr. Wooddell advised the pool would be filled in, returned to a grass field and the land would be turned over to the TRI Foundation.

Mayor Rousmaniere noted some citizens felt the City should keep the existing pool. Mr. Wooddell advised the costs and the ability of the existing pool to serve the community were non-existent.

Mr. Dana noted educating the public was important no matter which funding option was selected. Ms. Greene advised the Oxford Area Trail group was willing to provide education for the citizens.

Council further discussed the funding options presented this evening. Mr. Elliott advised a follow-up Work Session would be scheduled.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Dana moved to adjourn at 7:17 P.M. Mr. Smith seconded. The motion carried 6-0-0.