

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD
Regular Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2015

The Commissioners Meeting was held in the meeting room of the Community Services Building on January 13, 2015. Commission President Carole Abruzzese called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Attending the meeting were Commission President Carole Abruzzese, Commissioner Gordon Fronk, Town Administrator/Clerk Cheryl Lewis, Chief Patrick Maxwell, Public Works Superintendent Scott Delude, and Town Attorney Brynja Booth. One citizen was in attendance and a representative from the newspaper.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Fronk made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2014 as drafted. The motion was seconded by President Abruzzese and unanimously carried.

Disbursements for the month of November 2014 were presented. Commissioner Fronk made a motion to file the disbursements for audit, President Abruzzese seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

PUBLIC WORKS

Superintendent Delude presented the maintenance report consisting of the following:

- On December 29, 2014 it was discovered the wells at the Oxford water plant had shut down without sending a signal to the town's monitoring system resulting in a drop in water and an increase in chlorine. The system was immediately flushed, the towers refilled and the operation was up and running in less than 30 minutes.
- Lewis Blake has retired from the Oxford Department of Public Works. Interviews will begin soon for an entry level person starting with the applications that have been received over the last few months. The applications were received from locals based on the knowledge that Mr. Blake would be retiring soon. The plan is to start with local applications and expand, if necessary.
- There was a sewer backup on South Street two weeks ago that was cleared out and the culprit was found to be the new super towels that do not fall apart in the system (such as wet wipes/Clorox disinfectant towels, etc.). Public Works is reminding the public not to flush anything into the town's system that is not meant for it as this can be very costly and cause major inconveniences to all in town. Lewis reminded the Commissioners that the office had sent out letters to residents in the Jack's Point area when a similar occurrence had taken place. President Abruzzese and Commissioner Fronk both agreed that a letter be sent to residents of South Street reminding them to be careful about what they flush in their toilets.
- On January 8, 2015, Tower #2 had to be thawed out as the standpipe flow had started to freeze up. This set off an alarm to the town's monitoring system and was responded to as soon as possible. No water pressure loss was noticed in the system.
- All of the town's Christmas lights have been taken down and put away until next year. Delude reported that he had been approached by several people requesting that all white lights be placed in the Causeway Park next year instead of the colored lights that were used this past season. Delude asked the Commissioners what they would like to see in this area. There seems to be a preference for white and President Abruzzese left it up to Delude to make the decision for next season.
- The new generator for Bachelor Point has been ordered and installation will be started as soon as it arrives by Chucks Electric.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Maxwell presented the Police Report, which consisted of the following:

- 11 – police information/service
- 1 – animal complaint (loose dog)
- 3 – paper service
- 1 – check the welfare
- 2 – lost property
- 5 – assist the fire department
- 3 – suspicious persons vehicles (ID and moved on)
- 1 – disabled motor vehicle
- 5 – assist other police agencies
- 1 - alarm

Chief Maxwell reminded everyone to report all suspicious activity and to beware of scams.

OXFORD FIRE COMPANY REPORT

President Abruzzese read the Oxford Fire Company report for the period December 11, 2014 to January 8, 2015 as submitted by David Baker. During this period there were 8 fire calls: 2 chimney fires; 2 motor vehicle collisions; 2 structure fires – 1 cancelled en route and 1 active house fire in Tilghman; 1 boat call to Malkus Bridge, cancelled en route; 1 pedestrian struck by car in Easton. During this same period there were 12 ambulance calls; 12 calls 8 with patients transported; 2 patient assists or cancelled en route; 2 fire assists or standbys: 35 personnel attending, 10.9 hours, 31.3 personnel hours, and 117 miles traveled. The Fire Company thanks the patrons who attended the January monthly breakfast. The February breakfast will be 8 to 11 Sunday morning February 8th; OFC invites all to join them for breakfast.

Clerk Lewis reported that there might be a grant available for the Oxford Fire Company for a \$400,000 pumper that would be a replacement for Engine 27 and that the fire company may need a letter for support from the Commissioners, which the Commissioners agree to provide if requested.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commissioner Fronk asked if any action had taken place as a result of last month's meeting request from property owner Dale Benson with regards to the Commissioners removing their name off of the Mayors Against Guns Program. Benson stated that he felt a small town should not be endorsing a program that has become controversial and that it no longer had a very good reputation. Lewis noted that it wasn't a unanimous vote to enter the program initially. President Abruzzese asked Lewis to find out what the procedure would be to have the Commissioners of Oxford removed from the list. Commissioner Fronk added that Mr. Benson was a regular attendee of the Commissioners' meetings, and that he felt the request merited further exploration.

NEW BUSINESS

Communication had been received from Easton Utilities with regards to an addendum to continue the current lease for space on the water tower. Commissioner Fronk explained that the addendum they proposed continued the current rental rate for a year, and that the tenant could renew for a one year term annually unless they decide not to, but the addendum did not include an escalator if they did so and did not include any language that would allow the town to either increase the rate or cancel the lease. Lewis presented a draft with a proposed change that would allow either the landlord or the tenant notify the other of intent to discontinue within 60 days of the annual renewal date, although she noted the original lease did not include language for the town to cancel the contract. Lewis explained the reason an escalator was not proposed was because there are only a few remaining customers still utilizing Easton Utilities wireless internet service. Attorney Booth added that the Commissioners could make a motion to adopt the drafted addendum adding the ability to cancel and that if Easton Utilities does not agree to it, it could be brought back to the next meeting. Commissioner Fronk made a motion to adopt the amendment. The motion was seconded by President Abruzzese and unanimously carried.

Discussion took place with regards to a potential application to apply to the Maryland Smart Energy Communities program. The application identifies a future resolution that must identify at least two of the three areas in which the town intends to reduce energy consumption. Acceptance into the program will open up opportunities for the town to apply for funding to replace inefficient equipment on town property and possibly the implementation of new technologies, like solar energy and electric vehicles. Lewis explained that the State of Maryland signed an agreement to reduce energy in Maryland by a certain percentage, which was then passed down to the communities for assistance. The program is funded each year and funding is available to municipalities participating in the program. Lewis stated that she would like to send in the New Communities Application Form, if it was agreeable with the Commissioners. The application, which is due in January, gives a community until December to come up with a plan to reduce energy. Once Lewis and Delude come up with a plan, they will bring it before the Commissioners to adopt by resolution. There is no penalty if a community fails to meet their intended goals. Lewis added that she and Delude were looking to achieve all three policy goals rather than just two of the three required by the State. The three goals and the plans they were working on to fulfill them are as follows:

- 1) Energy efficiency: The town would work to reduce electric consumption in the Oxford Municipal Building by recommended to replace the current obsolete freon units which are not energy efficient, as well as looking into behavior modification such as turning off lights when not needed and monitoring heat and a/c temperature settings.
- 2) Renewable energy: Lewis and Delude have been looking into the possibility of installing solar panels on the public works building to offset the electric cost of the wastewater treatment plant compound.
- 3) Transportation petroleum reduction: Again looking at behavior modifications, such as limiting the number of trips by the Public Works Department into Easton and not idling vehicles for extended periods of time and consideration of electric vehicles for some administrative uses.

Lewis stated she had spoken with a staff member from the MD Energy Program who indicated they would look favorably on hitting all three goals and the town could include previous efforts, like the recent change in the lighting fixtures at the municipal building and public works building. President Abruzzese made a motion to approve submitting a preliminary application which would require a plan be prepared and submitted to the State in December of 2015. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fronk and unanimously carried. President Abruzzese took this opportunity to thank Lewis for the grant work she has been doing.

LETTERS

A letter was received from Rabbi Hyman thanking Chief Maxwell for participating in the 6th Annual Community Menorah Lighting. A second letter was received from Andy Hollis, Talbot County Manager, accepting the town's proposal to construct an outside port-a-pot enclosure for the new county park. A letter from Judy Shuler, Chairperson of the Oxford Parks and Recreation Committee, provided information regarding what is known as the "Holly Run" to the residents of Tangier Island involving sprigs of holly delivered via airplane from various communities in and around the area. This year John Allen, senior staff member of Talbot County, made a request to various Talbot Co. staff members (of which Mrs. Shuler is one) to provide sprigs of holly. Mrs. Shuler, in her letter, thanked local resident Jennifer Stanley for providing cuttings from her Nellie Stevens holly tree. Mrs. Shuler also added that she would like to take seedlings of the Nellie Stevens holly to deliver to Tangier Island this summer.

President Abruzzese explained that the Commissioners had asked the Oxford Museum to research the information provided as part of the Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers Project, Inc., regarding slaves coming in through the Port of Oxford. Leo Nollmeyer, local resident and historian, researched the information submitted by Middle Passage and although there was a limited amount of information, his research of other historic writings supported their claim of a few slave ships recorded as arriving at the Port of Oxford and there are also documents listing duties for slaves, although they do not give specifics. Commissioner Fronk suggested taking further consideration before responding to the Middle Passage Port Markers Project, Inc. committee and Abruzzese agreed.

ATTORNEY COMMENTS

Attorney Booth reported that she, Lewis, and Delude met with GMB to review the design progress on the upgrade to the town's Wastewater Treatment Plant, stating the project was on schedule and by March they should be 30% complete on the design aspect of the project. They intend to come before the Commissioners at their regularly scheduled March 10th meeting to give an overview of the project to date and should have a site plan and building layout at that time. The mechanics of the construction of building the new plant while keeping the old plant operational was discussed, along with the best options for decommissioning the first lagoon for construction purposes. The engineers proposed approaching Maryland Department of the Environment for a consent agreement, whereby they would recognize the town would be in a transition period and may not always be able to meet the WWTP permits. This consent agreement would give the town some leeway while allowing the MDE to recognize that the town is in the process of building a new plant. Decommissioning the existing lagoon next to the public works building and placing the new construction at this location, provides an already elevated site which will meet floodplain regulations and also will allow for the best use of the property, allowing for additional land space for other future uses once construction is complete. Booth will research and provide further details regarding such an agreement.

Attorney Booth requested an executive session for the potential of the acquisition of real property.

CLERK COMMENTS

Lewis stated that she was requesting approval from the Commissioners to proceed on two environmental grant opportunities. The Chesapeake and Atlantic Bay Trust Fund requires a letter of intent this month for an application due in April regarding a non-point source pollution control project, which could include stormwater/shoreline projects the town has already been considering, like living shorelines and bio retention areas. The Commissioners agreed to proceed with the letter of intent. The second opportunity is a Coast Smart Community Grant, which she will be working with the NOAA technical assistance team to identify projects meeting the grant criteria, and which the town may be able to utilize to creating the necessary plan to enter the Community Response Program that would work towards lowering the FEMA rates for town citizens. The deadline for the grant is March 13, 2015. The Commissioners agreed to continue to pursue the opportunity.

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS

President Abruzzese suggested the Commissioners hold a meeting outside their regular meeting dates on a weekend, perhaps in the form of an open house, to take questions or responses from town residents who are unable to attend regularly scheduled meetings. Lewis suggested that it could be in the form of a community outreach project and scheduled as a Saturday afternoon event to let residents know what the town is doing. President Abruzzese stated she would discuss the matter with Commissioner Graves and Sarah Ramsey, representative and member of the Oxford Community Center, regarding location and possible dates.

President Abruzzese stated that Lewis was asked to speak at a brown bag lunch event at the Oxford Community Center on February 25th and that she thought it would be nice if all the Commissioners could attend.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

There being no further business, President Abruzzese made a motion to convene a closed session to consider the acquisition of real property. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fronk, and unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Cheryl Lewis, Town Clerk

“In accordance with Section 10-508(d) of the State Government Article of the Maryland Annotated Code, a written statement of the closed session is attached to the official minutes of the Commissioners of Oxford and maintained in the minute book in the Town Office.”