

**COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**July 28, 2015**

The Commissioners Meeting was held in the meeting room of the Community Services Building on June 28, 2015. Commissioner President Gordon Fronk called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

Attending the meeting were Commission President Gordon Fronk, Commissioner Gordon Graves, Commissioner Carole Abruzzese, Town Administrator/Clerk Cheryl Lewis, Chief Patrick Maxwell, Public Works Superintendent Scott Delude and Town Attorney Brynja Booth.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

President Fronk called for a motion to approve the minutes of June 16, 2015 as presented, Commissioner Graves made a motion to approve, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Abruzzese, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

The outstanding May disbursements had been distributed prior to the meeting. Commissioner Graves made a motion to file the May disbursements for the auditor, Commissioner Abruzzese seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

**PUBLIC WORKS**

Superintendent Delude presented the following public works report:

- 900 hundred plants have been planted in the bioswale located at the Dog Park, thanks to help from Oxford Kids Camp.
- There was a sewer collapse on Tred Avon last week. The terracotta pipe had split underground and the repair took 4 days of work.
- There was a water leak at the dog park, which was quickly located and repaired.
- There have been sewer backups at South St., Banks St., and Tilghman St. All lines have been jetted and are running freely.
- The new small slide at the Town Park is being installed, including replacement of the base with engineered wood fiber. Public Works has dug out an 8" deep are for the installation of the slide and new base.

**POLICE REPORT**

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

- 3 - Assist the Fire Department
- 2 - Calls concerning harassment from a Business ( 1 at vehicle, 1 by phone)
- 3 - Check the welfare
- 21 - Police Information
- 1 - Assault (referred to District Court Commissioner)
- 2 - Animal Complaints (1 on Strand, 1 Animal Control pickup)
- 4 - Violations for parking at Strand
- 11 - Messages left regarding parking at Strand
- 1 - Suspicious Vehicle (identified)
- 1 - Alarm

Chief Maxwell stated the Police Department, working with the Wells family, assisted four Oxford restaurants in placing memorial tribute tables in their dining rooms for a week honoring the military members killed in the Chattanooga shootings. The Commissioners thanked the Chief and the Wells for the tribute recommendation and expressed gratitude to the businesses that participated. Chief Maxwell reminded all to be aware of phone scams and suspicious activity.

#### **OXFORD FIRE COMPANY REPORT**

David Baker gave the Oxford Fire Company report for the period July 10 to July 23, 2015. During this period, there were 6 fire calls: 3 automatic fire alarms but no fires; 1 CO detector alarm, cancelled en route; and 2 structure fires, 1 in Trappe and 1 in Easton Club. 66 personnel participated with 103 personnel hours.

During the same period, there were 6 Medical calls; 4 calls with patients transported, and 1 standby and 1 patient refusal. A total of 18 personnel responded, 26.9 personnel hours, and 86 miles traveled.

The next OFC Breakfast will be Sunday, August 9 2015, which is also Oxford Regatta. The Oxford Ladies Auxiliary would like to remind everyone of the Oxford Farmers Market every Wednesday 3:30 to 5:30 throughout the summer; OLA will be selling pickles, jams, and baked goods.

President Fronk added that in regards to the Regatta, the boats would be coming in on Saturday and going out on Sunday this year.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

President Fronk opened the Public Hearing for Ordinance 1508, An Ordinance of the Town of Oxford authorizing the purchase and acquisition of certain property located at 105 South Morris Street, Oxford, Maryland and authorizing the Town to borrow the funds for the acquisition from the Talbot Bank on the terms and conditions as set forth in the written commitment dated June 5, 2015. Fronk stated this was the third opportunity for public comment regarding this ordinance, including Informational Meetings previously held on June 23 and July 11, 2015. No comments were forthcoming and the public hearing was closed.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Ordinance 1508, An Ordinance of the Town of Oxford authorizing the purchase and acquisition of certain property located at 105 South Morris Street, Oxford, Maryland and authorizing the Town to borrow the funds for the acquisition from the Talbot Bank on the terms and conditions as set forth in the written commitment dated June 5, 2015. Commissioner Abruzzese stated the Commissioners have heard loud and clear, though most are in favor of doing something, the unreasonable price was a hold up from everyone, and that this is the point the Commissioners need to evaluate. President Fronk asked Attorney Booth to clarify the available options moving forward. Booth stated there were three options, vote to approve tonight, vote to disapprove, or defer consideration to a later date. If they do not take one of the three options, the ordinance would lapse. She also mentioned consideration should be given to the grant application recently submitted for funding assistance and for this reason, deferring a vote at this time might be an option, although it does not mean that the Commissioners must act at the next meeting. Commissioner Graves requested an opportunity to receive legal advice regarding the acquisition. Commissioner Abruzzese made a motion to defer Ordinance 1508 to the August 11 meeting, Commissioner Graves seconded the motion. President Fronk commented that the Commissioners had received many comments and emails regarding the Ordinance, some say do it at all cost, some say do nothing and everything in between with various suggestions. He added that there is a blight in the middle of our town, and the Commissioners are attempting to address it to the benefit of the town. Most everyone objects to the \$525,000 price, with only a small number asking the Commissioners to do

nothing, and he felt the Commissioners needed to find a place in the middle, realizing many questions have been presented regarding what would be done with the building if it were purchased and what type of businesses could be supported. With this in mind, the Commissioners will be seeking professional planning services to create a Strategic Plan for the Commercial Area, to assist in identifying what uses could be supported by the town's population and visitors. Such a study would be helpful to the Commissioners and town, and also helpful to potential investors. Information regarding any grant funding awarded would not be received until December and in the meantime, the town can work on this planning study. With that knowledge the town will be able to better assess what the building might be used for and what cost might be offset by grants in order to develop a more feasible project. Fronk also stated that deferring the acquisition at this time does not mean the Commissioners are not going to continue to seek a solution to the problem, but at this time, deferring makes sense and called for a vote on the motion. All were in favor and action on the Ordinance was deferred. Several people in attendance questioned what could change prior to the August 11 meeting. President Fronk explained approving the Ordinance results in the acceptance of a contract. One of the main objections is to the price identified in the contract. It is possible the ordinance will be better received if, in fact, the price were to be reduced and specific contingencies were added to the contract, like grant funding results. At this time, we cannot predict whether or not the seller would be receptive to any contingencies; if not, the Commissioners may determine that it is best to disapprove the ordinance.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

No new business was presented.

#### **LETTERS**

Talbot County Emergency Services thanked Commissioner Fronk for attending a recent event supporting emergency responders. The Commissioners received an invitation to participate in Vienna's upcoming Mayor's challenge, the great Tomato Race, on August 22. The Oxford Police Department and the Oxford Office received Thank you cards from Parks and Recreation thanked them for their assistance in organizing of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July events.

#### **ATTORNEY**

Booth stated she had just received 90% submission documents from GMB Engineering for the upgrade to the Wastewater Treatment Plant and she would, along with staff, be reviewing the documents with the engineers in the next few weeks, and would expect to report back to the Commissioners near the end of August or beginning of September. She also stated she was preparing an RFP for interim financing to identify a bank to work with through the construction process. The request would be for a line of credit to cover cost prior to closing on grant and loan funds and would be seeking a good interest rate and a bank experienced in MDE/USDA financing requirements.

#### **CLERK COMMENTS**

Lewis announced that Jennifer Stanley had acquired a quilt project representing Oxford at the silent auction held during the June Quilt Show, and it was currently displayed in the town office.

Lewis reminded the Commissioners of a previous conversation regarding the County's plan to give a one-time bonus to all active firefighters in the county and their request the Town considers participation. She stated she was attempting to meet with the Oxford Fire Co. president regarding any input they might have, adding the other remaining towns had not taken any action.

She gave an update to the Public Works report, stating the work on the slide had been completed within the last few hours, adding that Public Works had thrown some mulch down under the swings in

preparation for this season, but that that area was also in need of rehab and that she would be seeking grant funding.

Lewis said she had an opportunity to meet with the town's representative from the Maryland Department of Economic Development earlier in the day and it appears they may be able to help the town with funding for the previously mentioned Strategic Planning, along with the possibility of getting support for a Revolving Loan Program to assist Oxford businesses in need of funding for improvements. She is researching the steps and will report to the Commissioners regarding the process.

Lewis announced Oxford had been awarded an additional \$50,000 from the grant application she had submitted last year for DNR Waterway Improvements and this funding combined with previously awarded funds should be sufficient to cover the cost of the relocation of the boat ramp on Tilghman Street. Currently we are waiting on State approval of our construction permit and are still planning on winter construction. She added she intended to submit to the 2017 Program for a possible future project to address dinghies and small boats visiting overnight.

Lewis requested an executive session on property acquisition, a personnel issue, a public safety issue, and a question regarding possible litigation.

### **COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS**

Commissioner Graves expressed appreciation for the recent Oxford Community Center Summerfest event providing a nice family atmosphere and a free meal.

Commissioner Fronk complimented Michael Valliant on the super job he was doing at the OCC. He was a great asset at the Chesapeake Maritime Museum and he expects there will be many great things to come.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mitch Nathanson expressed his concerns regarding recent restrictions at the Strand Beach, stating he and his wife have lived on the Strand for 27 years and have enjoyed seeing all kinds of people having fun and playing together. Although he understands the idea of not wanting boats overnight, he suggests allowing dinghies and kayaks in the sandy area. He also commented on previously mentioned solutions to the grass damage along the road area by introducing a loading zone. President Fronk added the Commissioners are still giving consideration to the issues at the Strand and the best options.

Rebecca Ellison added that it was too bad dogs could not use the beach area.

There being no further business or comments, Commissioner Graves made a motion to adjourn the meeting into executive session for legal advice regarding property acquisition, a personnel issue, a public safety issue, and a question regarding potential litigation at 7:05 pm. Commissioner Abruzzese seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the meeting adjourned to executive session.

The executive session adjourned and a motion was made to close the regular meeting at 8 pm, all were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, Cheryl Lewis

*“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”*