

## **COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD**

### **Regular Meeting Minutes**

**August 11, 2015**

The Commissioners Meeting was held in the meeting room of the Community Services Building on August 11, 2015. Commission President Gordon Fronk called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

#### **PRESENT**

Attending the meeting were 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.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

President Fronk called for a motion to approve the minutes of July 28, 2015 as presented, Commissioner Abruzzese made a motion to approve, Commissioner Graves seconded the motion, all were in favor, and motion carried.

#### **PUBLIC WORKS**

Superintendent Delude presented the public works report as follows:

- The 900 plants installed in the dog park bio-swale for filtration of storm water are looking good and are starting to spread out.
- The five tide gates in town were rehabbed last week with new seals and cleaned out for the upcoming storm season.
- The graffiti at the ferry dock outhouse was taken care of by the public works and the police department.
- Delude reported that he was in a Homeland Security Training this past week, reviewing possible responses to a terrorist attack in reference to public infrastructure. The seminar included studying municipal vulnerabilities, the value of municipal resources and how to protect them.

#### **POLICE REPORT**

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

- 17 – Police information/service
- 4 - Assist other Police Agency
- 3 – Parking complaints (citations issued)
- 1 – Burglary and theft (warrants being obtained)
- 4 – Assist the Fire Department
- 1 – Malicious destruction of property

Chief Maxwell reported that the yacht club regatta this year was busy but there were no major incidents to report.

## **OXFORD FIRE COMPANY REPORT**

David Baker, Secretary of the Oxford Fire Company, presented the Oxford Fire Company report for the period July 23 to August 11, 2015. The Oxford Fire Company has not met since July 23 and the statistics for this period have not been published. They will be included in the next report.

The Fire Company thanks all the 272 diners at their breakfast last Sunday; the next breakfast will be Sunday, September 13, 2015 from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m. Reminder, the Ladies Auxiliary will be at the Oxford Farmer's Market every Wednesday, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. through August where they will be selling pickles, jams, and baked goods.

## **PROMOTION**

President Fronk announced that PFC Chance was to be promoted to Sgt. at this evening's meeting and invited Chief Maxwell to stand and perform the traditional ceremony. Chief Maxwell introduced the visiting police officials and guests from St. Michaels, Trappe, Easton, Talbot County and the State, and followed with a brief history of Jason's police career. The Commissioners were invited to come forward, along with Jason's wife, Laura, to take place in the ceremony of attaching Jason's collar pins, placement of Jason's badge, and fastening of the badge clasp. Police Chief Anthony Smith of St. Michaels expressed his gratitude to Sgt. Chance for providing excellent firearm instruction to his personnel and his service to St. Michaels. Trappe Chief George Ball presented a certificate to Sgt. Chance and the Oxford Police Department in appreciation for the backup Oxford provides Trappe. Commissioner Graves added that he had attended a firearm training session given by Sgt. Chance and commented on his knowledge, professionalism, and excellence in instructing. The ceremony closed with applause from all in attendance.

## **OATH OF OFFICE**

President Fronk announced a recent vacancy on the Ethics Commission. A motion was made by Graves to select Mary Klair to fill that vacancy. The motion was seconded by Abruzzese and unanimously carried with all in favor. President Fronk administered the oath of office to Mary Klair and welcomed her in her new position.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

President Fronk read 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 Talbot Bank on the terms and conditions as set forth in the written commitment dated June 5, 2015.** This ordinance had been deferred from the previous meeting. Attorney Booth, in an update, reported that she had been instructed by the Commissioners to reach out to the property owner's attorney to advise him that the asking price was simply too high. Booth advised the owner's attorney that the Commissioners were willing to renegotiate the contract, reducing the price to the appraised value of \$391,000, with a further contingency of the town receiving grant funding by December 31, 2015. However, the owner could continue to market the building and if she were to receive an offer for more money, she could take that. Regardless of the contractual issue, the town needs to continue to address the ongoing health and safety of the property, and for that reason permission had been requested to stabilize the property at no expense to the owner as part of this proposal. Attorney Booth stated she had followed up with Mrs. Thagouras' attorney who stated he had conveyed the town's messages to his client but that he had not heard anything back from her. Commissioner Graves commented that the public had spoken, and the town had tried to negotiate with the owner based on the public's comments, but with no comment from Mrs. Thagouras, his personal opinion was to vote the ordinance down. Abruzzese agreed adding the building was a blight on the town but that the Commissioners had taken Ordinance 1508 as far as

they could. Fronk acknowledged that the Commissioners had attempted to reach out to the owner regarding the price and that public opinion was clear in that the purchase value needed to be closer to reality. Grant funding has been applied for purchasing of the property and if funding were to come through the town would again attempt to reach a more appropriate purchase price. The town will follow through with the strategic planning for the Historic Commercial District and is in the processing of acquiring grant assistance to do the study. This planning will assist the Commissioners and citizens in identifying potential uses for the commercial district, including the Mews, and will be a solid step in determining the future of this area. A motion was made by Commissioner Abruzzese to disapprove Ordinance 1508, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Graves and unanimously carried with all in favor, and Ordinance 1508 was not approved.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

None was presented.

#### **LETTERS**

A letter was sent to Superintendent Delude from a town resident in recognition of public works employee Michael Bell and his helpfulness and problem solving skills in dealing with a drainage problem occurring in front of his residence.

#### **ATTORNEY**

Nothing further was presented.

#### **CLERK COMMENTS**

Administrator Lewis stated, in reference to recent discussions regarding the County's One Time bonus to local firefighters, that any contribution from the town to the program would not increase the funding to the individual members; it would only offset County funding. Lewis stated she had not received a positive response from the fire company members regarding town participation and suggested at this time it might be best to let the County proceed with their program.

Lewis presented the Commissioners with a resolution to update the signatures for the Bank of America account. Graves made a motion to update the signature cards, the motion was seconded by Abruzzese, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Lewis requested approval from the Commissioners to submit several grants. The first of which was a grant to the MD DNR Community Parks and Playground Program for upgrades to the swing set in Town Park. The request would be for \$14,000 to replace all the swinging units, including adding an interactive toddler seat and two hard back swings with full harnesses, along with removing the current flooring, replacing the wood timbers, the wood fiber base and adding rubber wear mats under the swings themselves. Commissioner Graves made a motion to approve preparing an application for the grant and signature of the President for any necessary documents, the motion was seconded by Abruzzese, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

The next request was to submit a grant to the same program for the resurfacing of the town tennis courts, which came about at the request of a former Commissioner. It was estimated that the last time any work was performed on the courts was approximately 25 years ago. Lewis stated she was waiting on cost estimates for the project. Past Commissioner Peter Dunbar stated he was recommending replacement with a modern surface that would be kinder to the aging population and suggested the cost would be around \$50,000. Commissioner Abruzzese made a motion to apply for the grant to resurface the tennis courts and signature of the President for any necessary documents, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Graves, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Lewis requested support to proceed with two applications to Maryland's Department of Business and Economic Development Grant Program. The first application would be for strategic planning for the Historic Commercial District, as identified in Oxford's Sustainable Community Plan. Lewis estimated it would be no more than \$40,000 but expected bids would come in around \$30,000. If funded the grant would provide a 50/50 match, reducing the town's cost by half. President Fronk made a motion to apply for the funding and for the President to sign any necessary documents, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Abruzzese, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

In addition, Lewis stated that DBED had made a recommendation that the town submit an application for funding of a revolving loan program. DBED provides a 50/50 match for a revolving loan program so that towns can establish a program to assist their businesses who may be in need of funding. Money would be lent to a business in need once they had received approval through an application process and the business would pay it back with a low interest rate of approximately 1%. As money is being paid back it can then be lent out to other businesses in need. DBED has recommended the town request \$100,000 from them along with a match of \$100,000 of town funds to establish the program, adding that DBED has already identified one Oxford business with an interest in such a program. Abruzzese made a motion to apply for the grant and for the President to sign any necessary documents for grant submittal, the motion was seconded by Graves, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Lewis mentioned she would not be available for the Commissioners next meeting as she would be in a mandatory FEMA training session that week in order to keep up her floodplain certification, noting that in past years the Commissioner have not held the second meeting in August and currently there was nothing on the agenda. Commissioner Graves made a motion to cancel the Commissioner's second August meeting, all were in favor and the motion was carried. The next Commissioners meeting will be on September 8, 2015.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Peter Dunbar gave a brief report of the recent Talbot County Economic Development meeting. Dunbar was also informed that the Commissioners had approved his continued service as Oxford's representative on this committee. The next meeting of the EDC will be in Trappe, with the following meeting in Oxford in October.

Ed Miller asked, if the town was to receive grant funding to purchase the Mews, would it require a new ordinance, the reply of which was 'yes.'

Being no further business, Commissioner Abruzzese made a motion to close the meeting, Commissioner Graves seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 7 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Lewis