

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 10, 2019

The Commissioners Meeting was held in the meeting room of the Community Services Building on Tuesday, December 10, 2019. Commission President Gordon Graves called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Attending the meeting were Commission President Gordon Graves, Commissioner John Pepe, Commissioner Gordon Fronk, Public Works Superintendent Scott Delude, Police Chief Pat Maxwell, Administrator/Clerk Cheryl Lewis, and Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Fronk motioned to adopt the minutes of November 12, 2019 as distributed, Commissioner Pepe seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

A motion was made by Commissioner Fronk to approve and file for audit the disbursements for the month of November 2019. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pepe all were in favor, and the motion carried.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Public Works Superintendent Delude reported the following:

- Two estimates had been acquired for the tennis court fence repair with Brinsfield Fencing's estimate being accepted and supplies ordered. The work is expected to begin in early January.
- Public Works had a water valve leak in front of the fire station on the state road a few weeks ago. An 8' x 8' hole had to be cut in the road to repair the valve and last week the hole was paved and all is good for the winter plowing season.
- On the morning of November 25th, in the public works building, a water leak was discovered on Well #2 and approximately 10,000 gallons of untreated water was lost inside the shop. The leak was fixed before 7 am that morning and at no time was there a loss of water pressure in the town.
- All the fountains, shower, and dog park water have been turned off and drained out for the season and the town's outhouses have been reduced to one port-o-pot each.
- All the Christmas lights have been put up and are being checked on a daily basis to ensure they are working up until New Years.
- Batteries have been replaced in two of the generators, in the town's storm water vehicle, and in the sewer camera system. All together at a cost of about \$1,500 in batteries over the course of the last few weeks.
- Tomorrow, December 11, will be the last pickup for leaves on Wednesdays. The Public Works crew will go back to just picking up leaves and brush on the second and last Tuesdays of every month, except for this month where we will pick up on the 23rd because of the Christmas holiday.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Patrick Maxwell reported the following.

10 – Patrol Checks

3 – Assist the fire department

2 – Animal Complaints

- 3 – Suspicious motor vehicle
- 5 – Court hours
- 2 – Alarm Calls
- 3 – Assist other Police Agencies
- 1 – Motor vehicle crash – no injuries – very minor
- 3 – Check the welfare
- 30 – Police Information – Service

Thanksgiving weekend was busy with no major incidents to report. There were many people in town dining and the shops and stores on the Friday and Saturday following Thanksgiving were busy. Christmas in The Park was successful and well attended. Chief Maxwell reported that he and resident Connie Greenhawk made their annual trek to the USO Station at BWI Airport with the military Christmas tree on Sunday. He noted there were many military personnel there along with their families to see the tree and that it was very humbling. Jeff Frederick of Fred Frederick CDJR in Easton lent the Chief a van to carry the tree up to the airport. A letter was received from a resident in Easton in praise of Lt. James Thomas concerning his contact with her in issuing her a traffic violation warning. Commissioner Pepe commented that it was a nice letter.

FIRE COMPANY

In the absence of any fire company members, Administrator Lewis presented the fire company statistics as follows: Fire/Rescue: 6 calls: 1 lawnmower fire in our first-due area, 5 mutual aid calls (including two structure fires) in surrounding jurisdictions; 93 miles traveled; 35 member responses; 39 hours worked. Medical: 6 calls: 5 patient transports and 1 citizen assist; 117 miles traveled; 26 member responses; 27 hours worked. The December breakfast with Santa was very popular and had a door count of 413 people. The fire company knew they didn't have enough eggs around 9:15 and went to BJ's in Easton to purchase 15 dozen more. As an additional note, all the bacon, scrapple, and sausage was eaten and nothing was left over!

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Administrator Lewis reported on the MEWS sale/development RFP draft. She noted that it would be helpful if the Commissioners could agree to the minimal bid amount so that from there, minor changes to the RFP could be made before it goes out for advertising. Attorney Ryan went over what items the RFP will contain, including what the town was looking for in conjunction with its strategic plan and comprehensive plan as well as sections of architect Cameron MacTavish's conceptual design. Also included was information regarding the redevelopment options the town would like to see, the goals of the redevelopment, and basically what the Commissioners are looking for in a proposal. Instead of really fine tuning the specific details, the RFP allows the proposer to purchase or lease with terms acceptable to the town and specific restrictions regarding the historic preservation easement will be added. The land development agreement, to be mutually agreed upon, will be recorded at the time of closing, and will include oversight by the town throughout the purchase development design and afterwards to make sure the property is not neglected. Administrator Lewis added that she had recommended a minimum bid of \$300,000 based on cost to date and provides room for other anticipated costs going forward. She thought that the RFP should also include a document stating that this was investment by the town and list the grants because it does bring the project to over \$800,000 in currently invested money. Ryan confirmed that there would be restrictions that the purchaser will be required to enter into and that negotiations would be allowed to happen once a bidder is chosen. She noted that it is important for the town to have the ability to enter into and take the property back if it falls into neglect. Lewis stated that the RFP package could be prepared and ready to go out right after the New Year's holiday and that it will be made available electronically. Bidders will be asked to have their packets in to the town by February 5 or 6. President Graves made a motion to definitely keep the purchase price at a minimum of \$300,000. The motion was unanimously carried. There was discussion regarding the zoning uses allowed for the parcel. Ryan pointed

out that once someone else owns the building, it would be hard to the town to restrict what they could do, other than the noted restrictions found in the grant agreements, which are very specific.

Lewis reported that the grant application submitted for the DHCD Mini-Grant Program was successful with the town being slated for \$40,000 more dollars to continue the program. She noted that she was happy the town would be able to continue the program and she had several completed projects on her desk. In addition, Lewis stated the original Sustainable Community Plan was 5 years old and would expire on January 14th. She stated she was in the process of creating the revised plan and it would be submitting the update by the expiration date.

NEW BUSINESS

Lewis presented a Resolution authorizing a RUS WWTP Loan for \$493,000. The loan is for additional funds needed in conjunction with the grant the town received for \$1,750,000 for the completion of the WWTP upgrade. Commissioner Fronk moved that the Commissioners adopt the loan resolution for the Town of Oxford to borrow the sum of \$493,000 in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Grant in the amount of \$1,750,000. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pepe, all were in favor and the motion carried.

Lewis presented to the Commissioners a request to submit another grant application. She explained that following her letter proposing an application, she had received a call from DNR to discuss the possibility of applying for grant funds for a sea level rise study. This grant would just be funding for a study, with the intent of determining what sea level rise impacts would look like in Oxford in 50 and 100 years and the mitigations steps that would have been necessary to get there. Lewis stated that the plan she sent to the DNR was not just for funding to hire an engineer to do the design work but also to work with neighboring universities or subject matter experts to really look at the possibilities. She added that the Director of the Critical Areas was very interested in the program and may have recommendations for participation. She asked the Commissioners approval to follow through with the full application in hopes of acquiring solid technical assistance to create a vision for Oxford. Lewis added she felt this would be the first of this type of initiative for Maryland if the grant is approved. Commissioner Fronk expressed strong interest in the project. Commissioner Pepe made a motion to approve that Lewis move ahead with the grant application as discussed. the motion was seconded by Commission Fronk, all were in favor and the motion carried.

ADMINSTRATOR

Lewis reported that the town had received a letter requesting an appointment to the Talbot County Economic Development Commission to replace Peter Dunbar and that she had spoken with Sandy Pepe who had expressed interest in the position, but did want to confirm it would not be considered a conflict for with her state employment. Lewis stated that it does not appear there would be any conflict and that Mrs. Pepe understands there may be circumstances whereby she may have to step back, but otherwise understands her job is to report to the TCEDC as to what the town is doing and report to the town what the TCEDC is doing. She then formally requested that the Commissioners consider Mrs. Pepe for the position. Commissioner Pepe recused himself from the vote. Commissioner Fronk motioned that if Mrs. Pepe is willing to serve, that she be appointed to the position, the motion was seconded by President Graves, both were in favor and the motion carried.

Lewis asked that Christina Myles-Tochko be reappointed to the Board of Appeals and that Bruce Beglin and Edwin Miller be reappointed to Planning. Attorney Ryan confirmed that all three were good members. Commissioner Fronk made a motion to approve the reappointments as noted, the motion was seconded by Commissioner Pepe, all were in favor and the motion carried.

Lewis reported that the anticipate finish date for the WWTP will be in April of 2020. Most of the work left is electrical, the engineers are reviewing the timeline for April and funding requirements.

With regards to the Morris Street Watermain project, the preliminary design is complete, although after meeting with some state personnel the exact method is yet to be decided. At this time, it appears to be a combination of lining of the main pipe and consideration for cutting the street and dropping in new service lines. State Highway Administration has said they are willing to consider repaving of the road if the town is willing to participate in the cost. This would create some wiggle room as to how to install the service. Lewis suggested a letter be sent to SHA offering to budget \$50,000 towards paving, money which would come of the town's state highway user funds. This would be a joint venture in which the town would be providing funding for a portion of the project. Commissioner Pepe asked when the water project would begin. Superintendent Delude responded that it would start around March and it would probably take until November 2020 to be completed. Administrator Lewis stated that if everyone was in favor, she would prepare a letter from the Commissioners to SHA. Everyone was in agreement.

Administrator Lewis requested a closed session for personnel discussion and added that notices will be posted as to when the office will be closed, leaves picked up, and when to put out Christmas trees for collection.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Fronk asked how things were coming with the abandoned trailers. Ryan stated that she had been in contact with the owner and we had been under the impression he was going to claim his property, which did not happen. Lewis suggested to Ryan that she proceed with legal actions as the owner was not cooperative and had been given sufficient warning to remove property that has been abandoned for nearly two years. The Commissioners were in agreement.

Commissioner Pepe expressed concerns that the many real estate signs posted in town make the Town of Oxford look like it is in trouble and thought that smaller signs, such as 8 ½" x 11" signs, might look nicer and would have less of a negative effect. Lewis responded that in order to reduce the size of the signs, it would be necessary to make a change to the zoning ordinance and had already recommended the Sign Section be reviewed in detail. It was noted that it is great to have a strong sign ordinance but when you make it too restrictive, you can create more problems, noting that most communities have language in their sign ordinances that allow for community sponsored signs could be larger than single business signs because they serve a bigger purpose, adding that most of the community type signs, fire co and community center for example are grandfathered, which makes them difficult to replace when needed. She suggested the matter be taken up with the Oxford Planning Commission for review.

Commissioner Fronk noted that the museum looked so Christmassy and that he would like to see something done with The Mews to create a similar effect. He offered the use of some trains that he has and thought there might be some hobbyists in town who might have trains that might want to share theirs as well. Commissioner Pepe thought it was a great idea.

There being no further business, Commissioner Fronk made a motion to adjourn the meeting into closed session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pepe, all were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Lewis, Town Administrator-Clerk/Treasurer