

**COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**September 22, 2020**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commissioners Meeting was held virtually in a Zoom Meeting Room on Tuesday, September 22, 2020. The public was provided call in information for the purpose of listening, watching, and participating in the meeting, notice of which was posted on the bulletin board and the town website. President Pepe called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

Attending the meeting were Commission President John Pepe, Commissioner Gordon Graves, Commissioner Gordon Fronk, Police Chief Pat Maxwell, Public Works Supervisor Scott Delude, Administrator/Clerk Cheryl Lewis and Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan. Citizens Skip Case, Julie Wells, Art Murr, Norman Bell, Tom Bixler, and Commissioner elect Jimmy Jaramillo were in attendance by phone or video.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Fronk motion to approve the August 11, 2020 and September 8, 2020 meeting minutes, Commissioner Graves seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Commissioner Graves motion to have the report of Disbursements for the month of August filed for audit, Commissioner Fronk seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

**MAINTENANCE REPORT**

Water/Wastewater Supervisor Delude gave a brief update for Public Works: Deluded stated PW had been working on drainage and the county will be cleaning out the county ditches near Rhonda Ave. The Causeway effluent manhole has finally been permanently removed and the pipe has been sealed, so there will no longer be water bubbling up in the road. The more forceful effluent discharge from the new treatment plant should now be able to be pushed into the creek even during a high tide. The Morris Water Line project is on schedule, with most of the water connections installed, which are the lines you see coming out of the ground currently. Once the connections are completed, preparation will start for the lining. The pump at the Banks Street lift station went out and needed repair. The new WWTP is running well and the test samples have been good. The fencing around the pump station will be included in the WWTP construction cost.

**POLICE REPORT**

Chief Patrick Maxwell gave a brief update for the Police Department: Officers have been assisting with work in the roadway and have issued tickets to those who have ignored roadwork caution signs. Checks continued at the beaches, the parks and the businesses, and all have been acceptable. There have been a few small weddings in Town Park. Tickets are still being issued for speeders entering town above the marked speed, even considering all the warnings prior to the town boundary. The Chief will coordinate with the Sheriff's office on radar for speeders in the 35 mph zoning.

**FIRE COMPANY**

No report at this time.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Lewis stated Attorney Ryan had put together an RFP for Construction Drawings and had placed the advertisement in the Star Democrat and on Maryland eMarketplace with the anticipated submittal date prior to the next Commissioners meeting. Lewis explained the window to submit grants to the DHCD has just opened with a due date of October 15, 2020 and if the Commissioners would like to apply one last time, she would try to get an application together. She would propose a request to DHCD for \$200,000 with a match from the town in the way of a loan to compete the construction. The Commissioners recommended she prepare an application. Lewis will provide an update at the next meeting, prior to the October 15 due date.

President Pepe opened the floor to public comment. Skip Case asked if the rumor of an underground spring at the Causeway was true. Delude stated there was no underground spring. Lewis noted it is possible that the wet area may be due to the tide gates and that she would be investigating. It was clarified that the manhole (wastewater effluent) discussed previously and the tide gate (stormwater) drainage were two different infrastructures.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Commissioner Graves motioned to appoint Lewis, the current Town Administrator/Clerk-Treasurer, to the position of Town Manager/Clerk Treasurer per the recently passed Charter Resolution 2012, to become effective October 30, 2020, the position of which then hold the single title of Town Manager, effective October 30, 2020. Commissioner Fronk seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. Lewis reminded the Commissioners that the change to the Charter, allows her as the appointed Town Manager to sign all documents with one title, while still leaving the option for future Commissioners to hire someone in the position of Clerk without the additional required qualifications of a Town Manager.

## **LETTERS AND REQUEST**

Lewis noted that 300 of the 600 registered voters in the town had voted at the recent election, which seems to be an unprecedented number. She also stated that the election had been held completely outside in an organized manner, taking COVID concerns into consideration, and that many had commented on their pleasure with the process, and felt very comfortable and safe voting. Following the election Doretta Murray, having served for many years, did ask to step down from the Election Board, for no reason other than she was ready and felt it was time for others to serve on the board.

The Garden Club has requested to hold their bi-annual Garden tour June 2021, as they would like to start planning now and wanted to have some assurance. The Commissioners were agreeable, assuming the Emergency Declaration was not still in place, and if it was, that the appropriate guidelines be followed.

## **ATTORNEY**

Ryan congratulated Commission elect Jimmy Jaramillo and stated to Commissioner Graves that she had enjoyed working with him and hoped to continue to see him at meetings.

## **ADMINISTRATOR**

Lewis requested consideration of Norman Bell as the alternate member on the Board of Appeals, having received the nomination from a Board of Appeals member. Commissioner Fronk motioned to appoint Norman Bell as the alternate on the Board of Appeals, Commissioner Graves seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Lewis provided an update on the WWTP costs, reminding the Commissioners that at the start of the project, there was an anticipated town cash contribution after all the State and Federal grant and loan funding had been expended. As this project had started when two other Commissioners had been in office, she felt it was necessary to review the project cost and the town contribution. At the start of the project Lewis had informed the then sitting Commissioners the cash contribution from the town would be no more than \$400,000 or \$500,000; and although there has been a balance carried on the project summary, after outside funding, of \$163,842, she was requesting a formal vote on the town's currently anticipated contribution of \$200,000. Lewis said she had recently heard questions regarding the town's direction of constructing such an expensive plant, and she wanted to remind everyone that the main reason for constructing a state of the art plant, producing the highest nutrient removal (ENR), was to take advantage of the current grant funding for this technology. The town's share of the \$18,000,000 project costs consist of a \$2,500,000 loan and a small cash contribution. A lesser plant (BNR) at a lesser price would likely have cost the town a similar amount of money or more, and could have resulted in the need to upgrade to ENR by a state mandate at some point in the near future. This new upgrade will carry the town for many years to come. She provided the most recent project cost summary demonstrating the grant and loan breakdown, along with the change from the balance of \$163,842 to the proposed \$200,000 town contribution, which would incorporate the fencing and landscaping around the main pump station into the project. Lewis stated that she may in fact come back for additional funding when the project reaches close out, as there are still expenses that may be incurred beyond the current budget considering the extended time the construction has taken, but at this time the \$200,000 would balance the budget summary and every effort was being taken to minimize any additional costs. Commissioner Graves motioned to update the town's contribution on the project summary to \$200,000, Commissioner Fronk seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. Fronk asked what the anticipated user increases would be going forward. Lewis reminded the Commissioners, that due to COVID, the anticipated 7% increase for 2021 was not proposed and the 2020 rates carried for 2021. The need to continue the 7% increases in future years will be determined as the actual operation costs are incurred over the next year, with the plan to drop to annual 3% increases once the operational cost and debt payments are balanced with revenues.

Lewis said that Pam Baker had assisted at the recent election and was willing to serve on the board in the future. Commissioner Fronk motioned to place Pam Baker on the Election Board, Commissioner Graves seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Lewis commented on trick or treating information that she had forwarded from the County Health Officers and asked the Commissioners to provide some direction concerning the town's position on trick or treating. She recommended that Oxford should consider following the lead of the other towns, if all permitted it, than Oxford should, and if all prohibited it than Oxford should also. The recommendation from the Health Department was to suggest candy be placed outside closed doors to avoid contact, to require appropriate face masks for all, and to leave lights off if you are not participating. Following discussion regarding the socially distanced nature of trick or treating, and guidelines to consider, it was determined that all were in favor of allowing trick or treating, but the best direction would be to follow the lead of the other towns within the County, and to provide cautionary guidelines for the event on social media.

Lewis requested a closed session on September 25 at 2 pm for personnel discussion, legal advice regarding a real estate matter, and for the purpose of discussing public security including implementation of an emergency plan. She also extended her appreciation to Commissioner Graves for his efforts over the last 9 years and stated it had been a pleasure working with him.

**COMMISSIONER COMMENT**

Commissioners Fronk and Pepe expressed their pleasure in having worked with Graves and thanked him for his many years of service. Commissioner Graves stated he ran for office with the best interest of the town as his only agenda, has always made that his priority, and has enjoyed his service and his work with fellow Commissioners and town staff.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Art Murr stated he favored door-to-door trick or treating as an appropriate socially distanced activity. Julie Wells echoed others in stating that Graves would certainly be missed on the Commission and thanked him for his service. Dale Benson said he also agreed with the comments and thanked Graves.

Being no further business, Commissioner Fronk motioned to close the meeting at 7:07 pm, Commissioner Fronk seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cheryl Lewis, Town Administrator-Clerk/Treasurer