

**COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**January 11, 2022**

The Commissioners Meeting was held Virtually in a Zoom Meeting room on January 11, 2022. With the continued HIGH transmission rate for COVID cases in Talbot County, all town meetings have remained in virtual settings temporarily as a precautionary measure. The public was invited to participate in the virtual meeting. This information was posted on the town bulletin board and the town website. President Gordon Fronk called the meeting to order at 6 pm.

**PRESENT**

Attending the meeting virtually were Commission President Gordon Fronk, Commissioner James Jaramillo, Commissioner Brian Wells, Town Manager Cheryl Lewis, Public Works WW Superintendent Matt Ozman, Police Chief Patrick Maxwell, Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan, and Planning Officer Maria Brophy. There were also 22 residents in attendance.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Jaramillo motioned to approve the December 14, 2021 meeting minutes, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

**MAINTENANCE REPORT**

Matt Ozman provided the following report: Public works has started to take down all Christmas lights around town and will be placing dock trees in storage once they have been disassembled. We have experienced two snow storms so far this January and Public Works employees were on duty through both storms from the start of each to the finish, with no issues to report. The new water main line on Pork Alley has been completed. There were no after hour calls to report this month. Public works has repaired one fire hydrant this past month on Banks Street.

**POLICE REPORT**

Chief Maxwell reported that there have been several incidents outside of town and reminded citizens to report any suspicious activity they see in town. There were numerous alarm calls due to weather and wind. Chief reminded all to be cautious of spam calls and emails.

**FIRE COMPANY**

Chief Norbury forwarded the following report for the period 12/15/21 thru 1/11/22. Fire/Rescue: 11 calls: 9 in our first-due area, 2 mutual aid. Most of these incidents were minor in nature but we did assist St Michaels with one larger brush fire. 140 miles traveled, 97 member responses, and 39.4 hours worked. Medical: 13 calls: 10 patients transported, 2 citizen assists, 1 fire standby, with 244 miles traveled, 61 member responses, and 89.5 hours worked. The data reflects an uptick in activity for both fire and medical incidents during the past month.

I am very pleased to report that in early December three new firefighters successfully completed the MFRI FireFighter I class which they began in early September. These individuals along with two other newer members (one of whom also recently completed his FF1 class) have been very active and responded to many of the recent calls both as firefighters and additional manpower on our medical calls. Their

dedication and commitment to the community is most appreciated by our longer service members whose backs may not be as flexible or strong as they once were!!

All Oxford residents should be advised that our local hospital resources are being severely stretched near breaking point. The reasons are complex but at a high level can be attributed to increased infectiousness of the current COVID variant on top of unresolved long-standing staffing challenges within UM Shore Regional Health. Ambulance personnel are increasingly finding themselves held for one to two hours while awaiting patient bed availability, or else diversion to less capable facilities such as Cambridge & Queen Anne free-standing emergency rooms. Holds such as these reduce the availability of emergency medical units on the street and have the potential for increasing 911 response times. As an example, Dorchester Paramedic 100 was recently placed on a medical call in Oxford with an approximate 15-20 minute expected response time. Ultimately our Oxford ambulance was able to load and transport the patient ourselves with no unusual delays, but upon arrival at Easton we found 4 Talbot Medic Units parked waiting to hand over their patients. Once inside we waited nearly 60 minutes to hand over our patient. Please call 911 if you are having an emergency, but I strongly recommend everyone avoid going to the hospital for more minor issues that can be addressed easily with a visit to your Primary Care Physician or an Urgent Care facility.

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

President Fronk opened the public hearing on Ordinance 2119 Acquisition of Certain Properties located at 101 High Street/200 Market Street and requested Lewis provide some information. A map of the area, along with bullet points identifying the intended use for the property was displayed on the screen (attached to these minutes). Following the presentation, comments were taken from all parties interested in speaking. President Fronk noted that written comments had been received prior to the meeting and would become part of the record. Comments and questions were expressed by numerous speakers, including questions regarding the negotiated purchase price, the intentions for the historic residential property, the need (or not) for parking in this area, who would be utilizing the spaces, whether there would be overnight parking, whether parking could be provided in one of the nearby park areas instead, the number of parking spaces and the design of the proposed area, the feasibility of the cost of the project, and the removal of a buildable lot from the town inventory. Historic District Commission members expressed their concern with consideration of demolition and their desire to maintain the historic structure and to have approval of any changes to the exterior of the structure. Responses to several of the inquiries, which were in line with the provided bullet points (attached), were provided.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

With regards to Ordinance 2119 Acquisition of Certain Properties located at 101 High Street/200 Market Street, following a lengthy discussion, it was suggested the public hearing be held open until the January 25, 2022 meeting to allow for further comments from the public and an opportunity to reflect and investigate those comments presented this evening. Commissioner Jaramillo motion to keep the public hearing open until the next Commissioners meeting on January 25, 2022, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Amendment #7 of the GMB contract for engineering on the Upgrade to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Lewis explained this amendment would cover the last 17 months of engineering services provided for the project which had exceeded the prior approved engineering timeline, noting this cost will be covered in the recently awarded USDA funds. This amendment will lead to the closeout of the project, hopefully by the end of the current month. President Fronk motioned to approve GMB Amendment #7 in the amount of \$ 124,522.75, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

#### **LETTERS AND REQUEST**

Lewis provided a Christmas Card from a resident expressing their appreciation for the services that are provided by the town staff. She also noted that over the last few weeks, especially with the recent winter weather, numerous thank you's and positive comments had been posted on social media for both the efforts of Public Works in clearing snow and the administrative updates provided throughout the event.

#### **ATTORNEY**

No further comments.

#### **TOWN MANAGER**

Lewis displayed a budget amendment memo (attached), modifying the cost for the purchase of two new town vehicles due to increase costs, and noted that the cost of the vehicles would be partially offset by the USDA Public Vehicle grant funding received previously. President Fronk motioned to approve the budget amendment, Commissioner Wells seconded the amendment, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Office will be closed on January 17, 2022 for Martin Luther King Day.

#### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

Commissioner Jaramillo requested a Closed Session for Legal advice. Lewis stated she would also like to request a Closed Session for a Personnel Discussion.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No further comments were received.

Commissioner Jaramillo motioned to adjourn the meeting into a closed session for legal advice and personnel discussion, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor and the meeting was adjourned in to closed session at 7:40 pm. Following the closed session, Commissioner Wells motioned to close the regular meeting, Commissioner Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the meeting closed at 8:16 pm pm.

Cheryl Lewis, Town Manager

*“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”.*