

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 08, 2022

The Commissioners Meeting was held Virtually in a Zoom Meeting room on March 8, 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 approximately 15 residents in attendance.

Commission President asked for a moment of prayer and thought for the Ukrainian people.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Wells motioned to approve the February 8, 2022 meeting minutes, Commissioner Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

The Report of Disbursements for the month of January 2022 was deferred until the March 22, 2022 meeting.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Matt Ozman provided the following report: Public works has since finished trash can replacements and painting around town, also working on picnic table rehabs and cleaning. Public works is now working on finishing water valve exercises per yearly Preventive maintenance program. Public works has resurfaced several parking and walking areas with 57 stone. The list includes Dog Park parking, Ferry Dock parking and street end walking paths at the end of Bayview and Rhonda Street. Public works has done an extensive clean up after this winters snowstorms, we have been around town cleaning up piles of stone and grassy clumps along with filling in any ruts found along edges of the road. Culvert pipe replacements will begin this week. The wastewater plant has recovered from its winter slumber and has been running very well since the addition of the Vita stim microorganisms. This was the kick-start it needed during the cold snaps that we had back in late January early February. Temperatures are on the rise and the biomass is reacting well with the extra organisms. All stumps have been removed from around the Banks Street pump station and ground has been regraded for new trees. Lewis explained that the town would be planting trees in the pump station areas as residential mitigation requirements provide additional trees to the town.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Maxwell reported that a vehicle belonging to a town resident, which had the keys inside of it, was stolen recently. The vehicle has been recovered and an investigation is ongoing. Maxwell reiterated his suggestion that people lock their vehicles and homes and report any suspicious activities immediately.

FIRE COMPANY

Chief Graham Norbury proved the following report for the 4 week period from Feb 10 thru Mar 8. Fire/Rescue: 6 calls: 1 in first-due and 5 mutual aid; 65 miles traveled; 44 member responses; 36 hours worked. Medical: 12 calls : 6 patients transported, 1 fire standby (CO incident), 4 citizen assists, 1 automatic alarm; 149 miles traveled; 68 member responses; 60 hours worked.

During the period we've experienced lower call volumes than we might expect. I don't think there is much to be read into this, other than statistics usually catch up eventually. For example, we almost went two complete weeks without a call, then received three calls in a single day. The much-appreciated bump in fire company membership last summer continues to show its positive effect on both response times and overall level of equipment staffing. The new members are working hard and enthusiastically training!

Hospital status appears to be stabilizing. While still busy, the trend towards more reasonable wait-times continues.

President Fronk made note of the announcement on the fire company sign stating the Auxiliary had raised \$27,000 over the prior year and congratulated them on their significant effort in support of the fire company.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

President Fronk asked Lewis to elaborate on the Pickleball player request. Lewis stated that the Pickleball players would like to move forward with their request for adding of stripes to the tennis courts for dual use and they have offered to fund the work. She reminded the Commissioners that there was a grant application into the State that included improvements, but they would like to have this done for spring play. At this time, she was simply requesting approval to place the stripes. The Commissioners were in agreement to allow the players to add Pickleball stripes to the existing tennis courts.

President Fronk reminded the Commissioners that the previous request for location of the Middle Passage signage as presented by Barbara Paca at a prior meeting, should be addressed over the next 30 days as Ms. Paca had expressed the desire to have the sign placed on the 4th of July as part of a 150-year anniversary celebration. Discussion of possible locations near the Town Dock, including the Customs House property and the Strand grassy area to the east of the dock. Ms. Paca joined the conversation. It was decided that a meeting at the site to review the possible locations would be the next step and discussions regarding the final location would be continued to the next Commissioner's meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

President Fronk read Ordinance 2201 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF OXFORD TO AMEND SECTIONS 19 AND 32 OF THE OXFORD ZONING ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE A PROCESS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF AN ACCESSORY BUILDING ON A LOT WITHOUT A PRINCIPAL USE WHEN NONCONTIGUOUS LOTS ARE IN COMMON OWNERSHIP AND ARE DIVIDED BY A PAPER STREET OR PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY. Lewis explained that this was a text amendment to the Oxford Zoning Ordinance, which would apply in very few situations. She provided the example of a current property consisting of two parcels on one deed that were divided by a paper street and a pedestrian path, stating that in this case the owner can only put their accessory structures on the same side of the paper street as the principal residence, this would allow them to put a storage shed or garage on the second parcel. If a property owner decided to use this option, they would then be required to enter into a recordable agreement that the noncontiguous parcels must remain in common ownership and the owner would be required to maintain the paper street and/or public right of way for the benefit of public access. Following discussion, Commissioner Fronk motioned to introduce Ordinance 2201, Amending Sections 19 and 32 of the Zoning Ordinance to allow for a

process for construction of an accessory building or structure on a noncontiguous lot if it met the conditions of the proposed ordinance, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion. Lewis stated the introduced Ordinance 2201 would be referred to the Planning Commission for a recommendation and a Public Hearing on the Ordinance would be scheduled for April 12, 2022 at the regular Commissioners Meeting.

Lewis informed the Commissioners that the Speed Camera Bill that Delegate Mautz had submitted last year was once again being submitted to the state legislators for consideration. HB 1262, as displayed virtually, would add a single location, near the intersection of Bonfield Ave and Oxford Road, to the existing state speed camera legislation. If this bill was successful, it would enable the town to pursue the implementation of a speed camera at this location, but was not a commitment to install the camera.

The state has implemented a new program, that is currently funded to run through December 31, 2023, that would offer assistance to low-income households that had fallen behind on their water and sewer payments. Lewis stated that she did not believe we had anyone that would qualify for this assistance at this time and that unlike other communities, Oxford did not turn water off if someone was behind on their payment. Attorney Ryan added that other communities, where there was a need, were adopting the program but were also concerned with the volume of administrative effort required to operate the program. Lewis stated she would continue to review the program, and should a recommendation to participate be presented, Commissioner approval of the MOU would be required.

Lewis stated that, in coordination with Talbot County Emergency Management, she was looking at an opportunity to submit a grant application to the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) for potential funding of elevation of the most at-risk primary structures located in the Special Flood Hazard Area, along with mitigation funding for stormwater improvements that would reduce the impacts of flooding to structures in low lying areas. A Notice of Interest is required to be submitted to the agency by March 17, 2022, and if accepted, a preliminary submittal by May 31, 2022. Following discussion of the Commissioner Fronk motioned to approve the submittal of a Notice of Interest for the project as described, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Lewis reminded the Commissioners that previously they had approved contracting of GMB to prepare a study of the town's water system to identify improvements. USDA had expressed interest in a comprehensive study in order to determine current and future needs of the system and potential funding. The study, known as a PER or preliminary engineering report, is currently under review with USDA and it is anticipated they will be requesting a funding application at the end of the month. Lewis stated that the current budget for Phase One was 4.4 million dollars, and covered several needs including an upgrade to the Arsenic Removal System, introduction of a Fluoride Removal System, incorporation of water components into the wastewater SCADA system, replacement of the Water Meter Equipment and Billing System, and upgrades to existing Water Lines. She noted that the replacement of the main water line on Morris Street was a component of the PER, but the town had taken advantage of the MDE Water Quality Loan/Loan Forgiveness Program and completed that work in 2021. It is expected that a vote approving the application will be presented at the March 22, 2022 meeting. At this time, it is not clear whether USDA would be offering Loan or Loan/Grant funding, as this would be determined after review of our PER and our financial information.

LETTERS AND REQUEST

Lewis stated that the Oxford Garden Club had asked to hold their annual Secret Gardens of Oxford Tour, which includes ticket sales and a shed sale in Town Park. As this was a considerably smaller event than Oxford Day, she

had informed them there should be no problem with their request to hold their event. The Commissioners were in agreement with holding of the event and use of Town Park as in past year.

ATTORNEY

Ryan stated, that following a request from Lewis, she had prepared an Ordinance to modify a portion of the Harbor Line to eliminate the nonconforming status of several piers found within Town Creek in an area known as Crockett's Cove. Ordinance 2202 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF OXFORD TO AMEND THE HARBOR LINE TO ELIMINATE THE NONCONFORMING STATUS OF SEVERAL EXISTING PIERS AFFIXED TO PROPERTIES WITHIN TOWN CREEK IN THE AREA KNOWN AS CROCKETT'S COVE was displayed virtually. Lewis explained that a property owner needs to rebuild his existing dock which includes several finger piers that are currently outside the Harbor Line. She stated that when the original maps were drawn in 1981 the lines appeared to go from tip of dock to tip of dock, but often did not include finger piers or pilings, and in some cases went right through docks. In 2012 when it was necessary to apply for improvements at Shanahan's property, a request was made and approved modifying the Harbor Line to eliminate the nonconforming structures in that area. Three options were provided on maps, revising just the singular property in question, revising this and the neighboring property, and revising the line to allow for all existing properties in Crockett's Cove to become conforming. She requested that the Commissioners consider the third option, because although there were other areas with similar concerns, this would correct the situation for this specific area as a whole and would allow the property owner who has submitted an application to the Port Wardens to continue with his project. The Commissioners would look favorably at a comprehensive review of the complete Harbor Line in order to attempt to correct similar issues found in other areas. Lewis stated she would be providing the Ordinance to the Port Wardens for their recommendation at their April meeting, and would also suggest they move forward with a comprehensive review of the remainder of the Harbor Line, in order to not interfere with the current application for improvements that is the subject of this ordinance. Ordinance 2202 would be provided to the Commissioners for their review and placed on the agenda for the March 22nd meeting.

TOWN MANAGER

No further comments.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None presented.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Jaramillo announced that Oxford had been selected to be one of the spotlighted communities at MML this summer, and they would be sending a video crew to town to film for this purpose. Jaramillo stated he gave an update at the recent Economic Development meeting and that he and Gordon had participated in the Talbot County Police Accountability Board earlier in the day.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Julie Wells suggested that consideration be given to placing the Middle Passage Marker close to the Ferry Dock, as oppose to the Customs House, which is a reproduction and not the original location.

Commissioner Wells motioned to close the meeting, Commissioner Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm.

Cheryl Lewis, Town Manager