

**COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**August 11, 2020**

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commissioners Meeting was held virtually in a Zoom Meeting Room on Tuesday, August 11, 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 Superintendent Scott Delude, Administrator/Clerk Cheryl Lewis and Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan. Citizens Steve Goldman, Art Murr, Jimmy Jaramillo, Capt Tom Bixler, Dale Benson and new resident Patch Canada, were in attendance by phone or video.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Graves motioned to approve the July 28, 2020 meeting minutes, Commissioner Fronk seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Clerk Lewis noted the Commissioners of Oxford held a special meeting on July 29, 2020 at 8:30 am for the purpose of holding a Closed Session to discuss public security including the implementation of an emergency plan and to obtain legal advice.

**MAINTENANCE REPORT**

Water/Wastewater Supervisor Delude gave a brief update for Public Works: With regards to the remnants of Tropical Depression Isaias and the extended power outage, all the generators worked great, there were trees and wires down that were quickly cleaned up, and as of today all brush has been picked up. The HVAC unit at the shop was damaged during the outage and estimates have been requested for replacement. Two trucks were also put in the shop following the cleanup. There is still some tree damage in the park and Bartlett Tree has been notified. The Morris Street Water project is going along fine and every effort is being made to minimize impacts. The Wastewater Plant is in the acclimation process and so far, so good. Some of the kinks in the system are still being worked through and there are still some night alarms, but things are improving. President Pepe stated that he had received numerous compliments on the efforts of the public works crew during and after the storm and all were very appreciative.

**POLICE REPORT**

Chief Patrick Maxwell gave a brief update for the Police Department: Officers had handled several check the welfare issues during the recent storm related power outage and worked with Public Works throughout the event with road closures and trees down. The portable speed trailer has been relocated to Tilghman and will be set up a week each direction. Chief also stated he was going to approach SHA regarding the possibility of getting additional signage on 333 warning of a speed zone, trimming of the growth in the state easement, and consideration of adding a double line to prevent passing in the 35 mph zone, all of which the Commissioners were in support of. Residents and visitors have been complying with masks and social distancing restrictions due to Covid.

## **FIRE COMPANY**

No report available for this meeting.

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

Public hearing was open for Ordinance 2006 removing Special Exception for Fences in the Oxford Zoning Code. Commissioner Graves read the ordinance title. Lewis explained that the ordinance basically changes the process for apply for a fence in excess of the allowed height of 4' from a Special Exception to a Variance, which is more appropriate for a fence request. No comments from the public were received. Attorney Ryan added that fences were generally handled as variances in most jurisdictions and this was really just a housekeeping matter. Support letters for this ordinance were submitted by both Planning and the Appeals Board and had been provided to the Commissioners prior to the meeting.

Public hearing was opened for Resolution 2007 Fee Schedule changing the fee for water and sewer service for new connections. Lewis read the ordinance title and stated that the only changes were to these line items. The charge for a buildable lot that is currently paying a vacant lot fee would be \$2500 for water, \$2500 for sewer and \$1500 for a basic meter for a new property. The charge for a newly designated buildable lot, not already paying a vacant lot fee, would be \$5000 for water, \$5000 for sewer and \$1500 for a basic meter for a new property. Lewis added that this fee change has been discussed for years, but now with the new plant coming online it should be addressed. Pepe added that in a prior meeting comparable town rates were reviewed and these new fees were still less than most. No comments from the public were received.

Public Hearing on the Intent to File an Application with USDA, Rural Development, Rural Utility Services. Commissioner Graves read the public notice of the "Intent to File" in its entirety. Lewis explained that this was a second funding source for the Morris Street Water Main Project, which was submitted as a precaution once the town was notified there would be a delay in the Board of Public Works approval for the MDE funding. The advertisement of Intent to File is a requirement of the process. Citizen Jim Jaramillo inquired as to whether the funding would be available for some other work, and it was explained that it would only be available for this project; any other project would require a new application be submitted.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Ordinance 2006 removing Special Exception for Fences in the Oxford Zoning Code. Following discussion, Commissioner Fronk motioned to approve Ordinance 2006, Commissioner Graves seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Resolution 2007 Fee Schedule changing the fee for water and sewer service for new connections. Following discussion Commissioner Fronk motioned to approve Ordinance 2007, Commissioner Graves seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Intent to File an Application with USDA, Rural Development, Rural Utility Services. As explained in Public Hearing, this is just backup for the Morris Street Water Main Project, although at this time it does not appear that this funding will be necessary. Commissioner Fronk motioned to approve, Commissioner Graves seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Ryan stated for the record that the public hearing on the previous ordinance, resolution and intent where advertised in the Star Democrat on July 22 and 29, 2020.

Ordinance 2008 Amending Short Term Rental Regulations. The drafted ordinance with revisions from the prior meeting was presented in a red line version of the original. The redlined ordinance was shown on the screen for all in the meeting to view, and each recommended change was read and discussed individually in detail. The requirement to provide off street parking was better clarified in the draft. The requirement to utilize only gas or electric grills and no outside burning was better clarified in the draft. Discussion of a cap concluded that the current number of STRs is small and well spread out across the town, but if this became an issue in the future, the ordinance could be revisited. Commissioner Fronk motion to introduce Ordinance 2008 Amending Short Term Rental Regulations, Commissioner Graves seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. The public hearing was scheduled for September 8, 2020 at the 6 pm regular meeting. The public was allowed an opportunity to comment. Jim Jaramillo stated he appreciated the change to electric and gas grills only and having lived near short term rentals in the past, felt the improvements to the code were well thought out and necessary. Art Murr expressed his concern with those who are renting and have not applied. Lewis stated if there appears to be a STR, we currently contact the owner and request an application be submitted, and if they met the criteria, they would be issued a permit. A notice could be included in the next water bill that would then assure that all property owners were notified that an STR license is a requirement. Steve Goldman inquired as to whether providing notice to the neighbors had been considered. After discussion it was determined there might be an opportunity to notify neighbors after a permit has been issued, but that it would not be a requirement of the permitting process.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Lewis notified the Commissioners that 1880 Bank was currently in the process of being acquired by Vanguard Banking out of Baltimore. The understanding was that they were a community bank and very little change was anticipated with this acquisition. Clarification as to whether they intended to keep the Oxford Bank open was not available, but our bank manager did state they were working on opening the Oxford Bank, currently closed due to Covid, in the very near future.

#### **LETTERS AND REQUEST**

Lewis wanted the Commissioners to be aware that she had received many comments thanking the town for all the notices and information that was provided before, during and after the recent storm event and acknowledgment of the work that was done by the town staff and public works to clean up and help the citizens. Lewis also noted that several areas of the county were seriously impacted by the storm, with trees down along RT 50 and significant power outages. She added that she, Scott and Pat were in good communication throughout the event, and were well supported by Talbot County Emergency Services. She was hoping to have an opportunity in the future to do a virtual 'after hurricane' public outreach while it was fresh in everyone's mind. The Commissioners expressed their appreciation of the staff and their handling of the event. Fronk pointed out their assistance to Holy Trinity was immediate and invaluable.

#### **ATTORNEY**

Ryan reminded the Commissioners of the three funding opportunities to be put in place for the Water Main Project, starting with MDE financing should it be approved, USDA funding as back up, and lastly Interim Financing for the project from Shore United Bank. The Interim Funding request is for \$1,585,000 at an interest rate of 2.95% for one year with total balance due at maturity. Ordinance 2009 Authorizing a Line of Credit in the principal amount of \$1,585,000, the proceeds of which may be used to provide Interim Financing for the Water Main Replacement Project to Structurally Line 3000 Linear Feet of Water Main on Morris Street, and Install 800 Feet of New Water Main, and Replace Approximately 93

Water Services, said Loan to be Repaid by Loan Funds Received from the MDE and that the Town will pledge its Full Faith and Credit Toward the Repayment of the Loan. Commissioner Fronk motioned to introduce Ordinance 2009, Commissioner Graves seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. The public hearing will be held on September 8, 2020 at 6 pm at the regular Commissioners Meeting.

#### **ADMINISTRATOR**

Lewis stated she had submitted a grant application to the Chesapeake Bay Trust, as she had requested at the last meeting, but that she had changed the request slightly after reading through the application package. The request was for construction funding towards the Strand Beach improvements, along with a request for signage for all of the town's stormwater and shoreline improvements and brochures to explain the town's efforts, both to the benefit of locals and tourist.

#### **COMMISSIONER COMMENT**

Commissioner Fronk stated he had been approached by a reliable Talbot County Business who was interested in pursuing a lease on the MEWS building, which he felt it was a very good opportunity and hoped to have more information at the September building.

Ryan added that, as everyone was aware, the town had been negotiating with the single responder to the prior RFP for the Purchase, Design, and Development of the MEWS. She stated the Commissioners had not been able to reach a mutual resolution with the proposer that the Commissioners felt was responsive to the original RFP, and for this reason the bid had been rejected and the town will continue to seek other options outside of the RFP.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No further comments.

Being no further business, Commissioner Graves motioned to close the meeting at 7:40 pm, Commissioner Fronk seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned.

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