

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD
Regular Meeting Minutes
December 8, 2020

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commissioners Meeting was held virtually in a Zoom Meeting Room on Tuesday, December 8, 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 Fronk, Commissioner James Jaramillo, Police Chief Pat Maxwell, Public Works Matt Ozman, Town Manager Cheryl Lewis, and Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan. Several citizens were in attendance by video and by phone.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Jaramillo motioned to approve the November 10, 2020 meeting minutes, Commissioner Fronk seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Commissioner Fronk motioned to approve the Disbursements for the month of November to be filed for audit, Commissioner Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. As it appeared not all had received the October disbursements, they will be provided for the next Commissioner meeting.

President Pepe stated that the Commissioners held a Closed Session on November 19, 2020 at 5 pm for the purpose of discussing public security including implementation of an emergency plan and personnel. The Commissioners also held a Special Meeting on December 8, 2020 at 3 pm for the kick off of the MEWs Construction Engineering.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Wastewater Supervisor Matt Ozman gave a brief update for Public Works: New Wastewater plant performance testing is now complete. All lab testing are being evaluated, and he is working closely with the engineers on daily process testing. GMB/Pact will be on site to evaluate the punch list items on Wednesday. Senexson has since finished the water main lining the week of Thanksgiving. Barkers is working on tying in all access pits on the water main project, they have completed tie ins from Caroline to Benoni. They hope to have most of the connection work done before Christmas. Public works employees have put up all the Christmas lights around town and are all currently working on dusk until dawn timers. Ornamental grasses have been planted down the front fence at the shop. All snowplows have been put on, tested, and serviced on all trucks; the only one that was a problem had to be sent to P & M hydraulics to be fixed. Potholes have been patched on JL Thompson, East Pier Street, and Second Street.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Patrick Maxwell gave a brief update for the Police Department: All officers have been to the firing range this month. Thanksgiving was busy but no major issues. He is working with allied agencies keeping an eye on things inside and outside of town. It has been fairly quiet since the holidays, with no significant issues.

FIRE COMPANY

Lewis read the report as prepared by Chief Graham Norbury. Since Nov 10, Fire/Rescue has had 10 calls total; 5 in our first-due and 5 mutual-aid (include 3 working structure fires East, Trappe, Cambridge); 137 miles traveled; 50 member responses; 33 hrs worked. EMS has had 1 call with patient transported 22 miles traveled; 1.3 hrs worked; 5 member responses. The past month has seen low call volume which is not atypical for this time of year. This may be related to the generally mild weather conditions as well as reduction in travel and socialization due to COVID precautions. As colder weather inevitably approaches OVFD encourage people to have their chimneys cleaned & inspected before starting the first fire of the season, and to take care when out and about in icy/snowy weather.

In the bigger picture I would encourage our newer citizens to talk to their neighbors and learn how Oxford Fire Company protects the town and surrounding jurisdictions. Many may be coming to Oxford from larger municipalities that can afford full time career fire departments, whereas on the Eastern Shore, fire-fighting is a 100% volunteer operation. Equipment is staffed and put on the road by members responding to the station when the siren and pagers sound, and it's a rare day when there are personnel already at the station. We are fortunate to have a few very dedicated members who live and work in town and are able to respond to a high percentage of calls night and day, and also for the generous assistance by our Public Works employees who are also firefighters. The cold hard truth however, is that we need more active volunteer firefighters to supplement our ranks. You don't have to be in your twenties and able to complete an Iron Man to join (although that would obviously be nice), just regular individuals with modest fitness and a desire to take on a new challenge and give back to the community.

Without volunteers OVFD cannot deliver on our mission and alternatives are going to be very costly to the community. Funding a 24x7 minimal firefighting crew is upwards of \$1.2M/yr in personnel cost, and that just puts the first piece of equipment on the road with 3 firefighters aboard. A working house fire typically needs 6-8 pieces of equipment and staffing of 20-30 fire personnel.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Sandi Pepe, the Oxford representative on the Talbot County Economic Development Commission, updated the Commissioners on the Talbot County Cares Act grant opportunities for Small Businesses, including a fourth round of awards and additional relief for restaurants specifically.

PUBLIC HEARING

The public hearing for Ordinance 2014 Amending the FY 2021 General and Enterprise Budget to incorporate capital improvements and other normal expenses into the FY 2021 Budget, items which were not included originally when a skeleton operational budget, due to Covid, was approved. Lewis provided a review and explanation for changes based on the prior town meeting. After discussion and no public comment, the hearing was closed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commissioner Jaramillo motioned to approve Ordinance 2014 Amending the FY 2021 General and Enterprise Budget as presented, Commissioner Fronk seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Commissioner Fronk stated the meeting with the contracted architects for the final MEWS construction plans was held this day and the meeting went very well.

NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 2016 honoring Helen Elizabeth (Libby) Dobson was read aloud. Commission Fronk motion to approve the resolution, Commission Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. The Commissioners will coordinate presentation at Ms. Libby's drive by birthday party.

Attorney Ryan presented Ordinance 2017 Maryland Water Quality Loan Agreement, reading the title in its entirety and providing a brief explanation of the purpose of the Ordinance, which will allow for the sale of bonds through the Maryland Water Quality Financing Administration to provide to the town, in the form of a loan, financing for the Morris Street Water Main Project. Commissioner Fronk motion to introduce Ordinance 2017, Commission Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. A public hearing was scheduled to be held virtually at the next regular meeting of the Commissioners on January 8, 2021 at 6 pm.

LETTERS AND REQUEST

Thank you notes from the Oxford Community Center and the Oxford Museum in appreciation for their annual donations were read aloud.

ATTORNEY

Attorney Ryan provided an update on the abandoned boats, stating we had titles in hand and would be working on the trailer titles as feasible. The boats are to be stored at the Public Works facility.

TOWN MANAGER

Lewis stated there would be a town arranged Shred Day at the OCC on December 11th from 9 am to 11 am, open to all. She announced that the town received notice of a grant award of \$1,436,701 from the National Fish and Wildlife Federation to match funds anticipated from the MD Coastal Grant Program for the construction of the Strand Beach improvements currently in design and awaiting comments from the permitting authorities. Lewis said to drive by the Oxford Central Park (Ballfield) and look at the recently planted trees, shrubs and meadow grasses, which were provided through a coordinated Eastern Shore Counties and Towns joint grant awarded by the state. Additional granted funded work from this collaboration will include improvements to the stormwater drainage area at the park, and to the ditch located along the Dog Park parking area of Pier Street and the ditch located at the Bank Street park area along Market Street.

COMMISSIONER COMMENT

No further comments.

PUBLIC COMMENT

It was announced that the infamous Oxford boat known as the Slippery Eel had been acquired, was brought back to Oxford, and was currently undergoing renovations.

Being no further business, Commissioner Fronk motioned to close the meeting at 6:46 pm, Commission Jaramillo seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned.



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