

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 23, 2021

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commissioners Meeting was held virtually in a Zoom Meeting Room on Tuesday, February 23, 2021. 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 Jimmy Jaramillo, Police Chief Pat Maxwell, Public Works WW Superintendent Matt Ozman, Town Manager Cheryl Lewis, and Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan. Multiple residents, including Julie Wells, the Murrs, Barbara Ranson, David Poe, Dale Benson, and others were in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Fronk motioned to approve the February 9, 2021 meeting minutes, Commissioner Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Commissioner Fronk motioned to file the January Disbursements for audit, Commissioner Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor and the motion carried.

President Pepe stated that a Special Meeting for the purpose of going into Closed Session was held on February 16, 2021 at 5 pm for the purpose of discussing public security including implementation of an emergency plan. A Special Meeting for the purpose of going into Closed Session was held on February 16, 2021 at 2:30 pm and February 23, 2021 at 5 pm for the purpose of discussing a matter related to a negotiating strategy and legal advice regarding the same.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Wastewater Superintendent Matt Ozman gave an update for Public Works: Barkers Landing has been in and out for the past two weeks cleaning up. They removed most all equipment and smoothed out piles of dirt and trenches behind firehouse. They have also started cleaning up at parking in beside tennis court, they will be restoring the parking lot and having trenches patched throughout town in the coming weeks. Public Works Department has been working on keeping up with the patches around town from the water main project, please be careful in these areas. The main lift station generator transfer switch is under investigation by GMB and Bilbrough Electric. Bilbrough has supplied another backup generator during this period and emergency protocols has been put into place if the power goes out for this station. Salt barn is now built and awaiting inspection by GMB. Grating at South Morris and South St. has been temporarily repaired until road has been fully patched with asphalt. Public works had training on February 16th with Environdyne, training included service and maintenance of clarifiers and headworks equipment. Progress has been made on the sand filters air compressor and we are now a waiting on parts and scheduling of the repairs. Thursday's storm proved to be a nasty one with the disliked mix of snow, ice, and rain. Public works was able to push and clean all the roadways in town without issue. On behalf of the Public Works Department, they would like to thank the residents for all the kind gestures during all the storms this past month from the baked goods, to all the thank you's and patience during these weather events. It means a lot to the staff and they cannot say thank you enough, the residents of this community are what make this town so great.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Patrick Maxwell gave a brief update for the Police Department: Have been busy with Public Works through the recent weather, but no accidents to report and no problems during the storm. The officers continue to keep an eye around town as there continue to be concerns elsewhere in the county. There

was a power outage on South Morris when a transformer went bad. Chief noted that it was Tax time and the annual tax scam phone calls were on the rise. Please do not respond to questionable phone calls.

FIRE COMPANY

As provided by Graham Norbury: Fire/Rescue: 16 calls: 7 first-due, 9 mutual-aid. Of these calls we responded to 4 building fires, 1 medical flyout, 1 active gas leak and numerous lesser incidents and cancelations, 275 miles traveled, 66 hrs worked, 104 member responses. Medical: 10 calls: 8 patients transported, 1 flyout, 1 refusal, 167 miles traveled, 55 hrs worked, 44 member responses.

In the event that it is medically necessary to transport a patient via aviation, one of the incident priorities is identification of a suitable landing zone (LZ) in an open area clear of obstructions such as trees and overhead wires. With the recent wet weather, unpaved ground is waterlogged and extremely soft and therefore unsuitable as an LZ. Adding to this challenge is the fact that current Maryland State Police AW-139 helicopters are nearly three times heavier than their Dauphin predecessors, however the paved parking lot at the Oxford Conservation Park on the corner of Boone Creek Road and Oxford Road is ideal when it is not being used by cars. While such calls are infrequent, we had one the other night and I'm happy to report we were able to get the patient transported without issue.

Lewis noted that regarding phone scams, there are also scam calls regarding vaccine opportunities and reminded citizens to please utilize the current county and state access lines for registration and expect only calls from sites you have registered with. Lewis also noted that due to the weather, vaccines were not received in Maryland this week and considering the county was also two weeks behind due to snow delays, it was not likely there would be an increase in vaccinations this week, but hopefully the future will hold more opportunities for a local vaccination clinic.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

With continued discussion on the Strand Coastal Resilience Design, Town Manager Lewis stated she added all the presentation videos provided at the last meeting to the town website. She also stated she has been gathering questions as they come in and forwarding them to the engineers for response. She plans to place the relevant responses into a bullet format for posting on the website. Lastly, a video was played which was taken this fall from the second story of the condos located at the Strand, and which demonstrated the conditions in a storm, the wave action and the extensive intrusion into the street. Lewis stated she was also expecting a rendering from the engineers providing a visual of the planned shoreline. Currently the engineers are working on modifications were possible to accommodate citizen concerns and will be providing the revised plan to the Commissioners in the future. Larry Mekulski inquired as to exactly what the new stakes identify. Lewis stated the stakes identify the peak of the dune/berm to allow citizens to see the height along the beach line, additionally the engineers will be incorporating a four foot grassy walkway along the water side of the road to continue to allow for foot traffic along the Strand. In response to another question, the design is to the 100 year storm plus, which Lewis stated would be a base flood elevation of 6' in this area. Commission Fronk felt the stakes were very helpful in understanding the proposed elevation, stating that although there will be a change to the beach, the proposed height will not be terribly disruptive and the addition of a walking area is welcomed. President Pepe added that it was important that people understand that not only is this design intended to protect the beach and town infrastructure inland, it is designed to collect sand as opposed to allowing erosion thereby supporting the health of the beach going forward.

Lewis detailed the town's participation in the Envision multijurisdictional grant application, which had been discussed at prior meetings, stating that in the town's efforts to address stormwater issues in all parts of town, all opportunities are explored, and this is one that could provide a possible solution for one of these issues. There are several residential areas in town where the land is lower than the streets

and for which proper drainage is very difficult. One of these areas is the block between Pier St and Willows Ave, where the stormwater drains to the center of the block and struggles to leave the area. This grant application would involve research of the identified area and properties to review the current drainage situation and to design a solution or solutions for the area to assist the homeowners in draining their property. The solution may include both public and private efforts, but would at least provide a starting point. The application requires a match from the town and Lewis is proposing a match of town infrastructure upgrades that are currently identified and anticipated in the near future. The town work would include replacing the culvert leaving South Morris and going to West Pier Street where it enters the river and upgrading as needed the tide gate at West Pier. The culvert is failing currently and will need to be addressed with or without this grant in the next year or two, and for that reason is a good match to the possible engineering for the private properties. The application also includes a circuit rider for technical assistance and an educational component in the way of courses available to both locals and staff, with these services having a cost of \$9000 for three years of service. Lewis clarified that the grant is requesting design funds and there are not currently construction funds identified for the improvements beyond the culvert/tide gate, but in order to ever get to construction funding, design is the necessary first step. Pepe mentioned that Fronk had proposed a commission at the last meeting tasked with maintaining the knowledge of the resilience efforts the town has expended over the last many years, noting that the educational courses proposed here would be an excellent opportunity for these members. Following discussion Commissioner Fronk motioned to approve submittal of the application as reviewed and the commitment of an estimated \$50,000 in infrastructure improvements and \$9000 for additional services, along with in-kind staff services, Commissioner Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Lewis noted that through a similar joint grant effort, the planned ditch improvements in three areas of town would be starting in the very near future. This work includes the ditch along Market Street at the town park, the ditch along East Pier Street on the parking area side, and the stormwater pond proposed in the new Central Park. All will be green infrastructure projects intended to improve drainage, while supporting better water quality through appropriate natural filtration.

NEW BUSINESS

President Pepe requested consideration of increasing the current Commissioner's salary of \$2000 annually, which has been in place for many, many, years. He noted that the position of Commissioner has become a position of increased effort over the last few years, and requires a substantial amount of time commitment. He stated he had discussed this consideration with former Commissioner Graves prior to his passing and is now proposing it for discussion. He views the ability to provide future Commissioners an increased salary as beneficial. Lewis and Ryan responded that they would research current salaries locally, along with necessary adoption procedure and provide the information to the Commissioners.

LETTERS AND REQUEST None received.

ATTORNEY

Ryan stated that the Talbot County Council was currently meeting virtually and the Oxford Speed Camera was on their agenda. Either she or Lewis would be representing the town in requesting the county's support for the current legislative request to install a speed monitoring system near Rt 333 and Bonfield depending on the end time of the town meeting.

TOWN MANAGER

Lewis provided a proposed draft of the R Gordon Graves Award for the Commissioners to consider, which she will email to them for their review.

COMMISSIONER AND

The President deferred his comments to Sandi Pepe the town's Economic Development representative so she could provide an update on the recent Grant Funding to Talbot County small businesses. Through the Cares Grant - 156 businesses in Talbot County received funding including 8 businesses in Oxford; through the Restaurant Relief Fund - 6 Oxford restaurants received funding in both of the two rounds available; and through the Hotel/Motel assistance there are 3 businesses expected to receive funding. A total of over \$141,000 federal and state funds was or will be distributed to Oxford businesses through the Talbot County Economic Development efforts.

PUBLIC COMMENT

It was suggested in regards to the resilience stewardship program proposed, consideration for a junior membership, which might help to create a generational program.

Being no further business, Commissioner Jaramillo motioned to close the meeting, Commissioner Fronk seconded the motion, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted, 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".