

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD
Regular Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2022

The Commissioners Meeting was held Virtually in a Zoom Meeting room on January 25, 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, Police Chief Patrick Maxwell, Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan, and Planning Officer Maria Brophy. Public Works WW Superintendent Matt Ozman was on vacation. There were also approximately 20 residents in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Wells motioned to approve the January 11, 2022 meeting minutes, Commissioner Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Matt Ozman was on vacation. Lewis provided a brief update, noting that Public Works had an OSHA inspection this past week and will be working on corrective action for items identified during the inspection, PW would be preparing once again for the possibility of winter weather this weekend, and one of the PW crew had been accepted into the Fire Service field and would be leaving for his new position.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Maxwell reported concerns with increased calls for behavioral issues both locally and in the county, and that the department had provided mutual aid during the most recent incident. The department has been responding to check the welfare requests which have increased with the recent cold weather.

PUBLIC HEARING

President Fronk opened the public hearing on Ordinance 2119 Acquisition of Certain Properties located at 101 High Street/200 Market Street which was continued from the prior meeting, requesting that Attorney Ryan provided an update on the ordinance. Ryan stated that following the last meeting she was providing a few amendments to the current ordinance for their consideration. The amendments, which were displayed on screen, included flexibility in the future uses of the proposed acquisition, identification that the lot was intended to accommodate daytime passive parking, and that the rehabilitation of the house would be in accordance with Historic District Guidelines. Fronk stated that the Commissioners were in possession of several letters submitted prior to the meeting.

Public Comment was received and included concerns regarding the purchase price which many felt was in excess of the value, concerns with the intended use of the lot for a parking area, the number of spaces created for the cost of the property, the intended long-term use, what uses were permitted per the planning code, how the project would be financed, the cost of rehabilitation or demolition, the economic sense of the transaction, the relevance of purchasing property outside of the flood zone, and the removal of buildable lots from the inventory,. Requests included a property inspection and appraisal prior to adoption of the ordinance, stronger language establishing an advisory opinion from Historic District Commission regarding the plans for the house, seeking advice from local real estate professionals, and allowing the market to determine value. Questions included who would police the parking lot, what would happen to adjacent property values and the loss of tax dollars, could the zoning be changed to mixed-use to expand the commercial district, could parking elsewhere be managed by time limits and signage to avoid the need. There was a desire to see a more detailed plan for the parking lot and tightening up of the ordinance to assure the use doesn't have a negative impact on the surrounding properties, and a suggestion that more parking be established in town park with a diagonal pattern of off-street parking.

Following the opportunity for all to speak, Commissioner Jaramillo motioned to close the public hearing, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor the hearing was closed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

With regards to Ordinance 2119 Acquisition of Certain Properties located at 101 High Street/200 Market Street, President Fronk stated that Commissioners would be giving consideration to all comments presented. In reviewing the recommended amendments to the original ordinance, clearer language regarding the Historic District Commission advisory opinion was requested. Adoption of the amendments and consideration of the ordinance was deferred to the February 8, 2022 meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

None presented.

LETTERS AND REQUEST

None other than those provided as comment on Ordinance 2119.

ATTORNEY

Ryan requested a closed session to provide legal advice regarding an existing loan.

TOWN MANAGER

Lewis requested approval to submit an application to the state for additional funding assistance for portions of the Strand Beach project that were above ground, as the current funding is more narrowly available for shoreline improvements. The commissioners were in agreement with applying for this alternative funding. Lewis requested a closed session to discuss personnel and to obtain legal advice.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Office will be closed on February 21, 2022 for Presidents Day.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None presented.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No further comments were received.

Commissioner Fronk motioned to adjourn the meeting into a closed session for discussion of an existing loan, a personnel discussion, and to obtain legal advice, 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 Jaramillo motioned to close the regular meeting, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the meeting closed at 8:33 pm.

Cheryl Lewis, Town Manager