

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD
Regular Meeting Minutes
May 24, 2022

The Commissioners Meeting was held in person at 101 Market Street on May 24, 2022. Virtual participation was also available. This information was posted on the town bulletin board and the town website. President Gordon Fronk called the meeting to order at 6 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Fronk asked for reflection and offered a prayer for the victims of today's school shooting in Texas, the victims in Buffalo, and the people of Ukraine.

PRESENT

Attending the meeting were Commission President Gordon Fronk, Commissioner Brian Wells, with Commissioner Jaramillo attending virtually, and Town Manager Cheryl Lewis. Public Works WW Superintendent Matt Ozman was on vacation and Police Chief Patrick Maxwell attended virtually. There were numerous residents in attendance in person and virtually.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Wells motioned to approve the May 10, 2022 meeting minutes, Commissioner Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. President Fronk noted that a Special Meeting had been held on May 17, 2022 at 6 pm for the purpose of going into a Closed Session for Legal Advice.

REPORT OF DISBURSEMENTS

Commissioner Wells motioned to approve the Report of Disbursements for the April 2022, Commissioner Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

MAINTENANCE REPORT

Matt Ozman was on vacation. Lewis present his report noting that Public Works had replaced water valve boxes on South Street, both boxes needed to be raised before paving of the patch could occur. Public Works has investigated and put in a temporary patch for a sinkhole next to a storm drain on South Morris Street, a permanent fix will be installed next week. Pavers are back and working on the final patching work around town. An additional new tide valve has been installed at West Pier Street; work was completed by the town, with help from Barkers Landing Excavation. Parts are on back order for the water fountains in the dog park, buckets have temporarily been placed out for water, and as soon as we get the parts, they will be repaired.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Maxwell reported they have been busy with calls for service, weather related false alarms, check the welfare calls, and have assisted allied agencies. Parking tickets have been issued along the beach where visitors are not following the parking signs.

FIRE REPORT

Lewis proved information reported by Chief Graham Norbury, who stated that he would respond with a report of calls at the next meeting, but wanted to note that there has been an uptick in Covid cases, with symptomatic people not testing positive until day three and urged residents to be cautious. The Fire Company has placed an order for a new pumper to replace the 30 year old Engine 28. The Chicken BBQ will be this Saturday and Breakfast will be on June 12.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

President Fronk opened the hearing on Ordinance 2203 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF OXFORD AMENDING GENERAL AND ENTERPRISE BUDGET ADOPTED BY ORDINANCE 2108 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2021 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2022 TO ADJUST CERTAIN LINE ITEMS AND TO RE-APPROPRIATE CERTAIN FUND. Lewis commented that \$40,000 of capital improvement money was added back to the budget for stormwater work that was anticipated to be completed before the end of the year. Hearing no public comment, the hearing was closed. She also noted that the previously ordered police vehicle, delivery of which is anticipated prior to June 30, was also included in this budget, but was dependent on production.

Commissioner Wells opened the hearing on Ordinance 2204 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF OXFORD ADOPTING A GENERAL/ENTERPRISE BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2022 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2023, AND ESTABLISHING A TAX RATE OF \$.32 PER \$100 OF ASSESSED REAL PROPERTY VALUE, as presented in April and discussed in detail at a prior workshop. The budget proposed rounding the FY 2022 tax rate of .3187 to .32 for FY 2023. Lewis noted it was a conservative budget, but that did include numerous capital improvements that were anticipated to be completed with grant funding. Hearing no public comment, the hearing was closed.

Commissioner Jaramillo opened the hearing on Ordinance 2205 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF OXFORD TO REPEAL ORDINANCE NUMBER 2109 AND TO SET NEW WATER AND SEWER RATES FOR THE TOWN, COMMENCING JULY 1, 2022. The rates include an annual increase of 3%, amounting to a quarterly increase of \$9 for basic service. Lewis noted annual increases are important to continue to bring in funding sufficient to meet the demands of providing the services, including the extreme increases in utilities and expenses seen this year. Hearing no public comment, the public hearing was closed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commissioner Jaramillo motioned to approve Ordinance 2203 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF OXFORD AMENDING GENERAL AND ENTERPRISE BUDGET ADOPTED BY ORDINANCE 2108 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2021 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2022 TO ADJUST CERTAIN LINE ITEMS AND TO RE-APPROPRIATE CERTAIN FUND, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor and the motion carried.

Commissioner Wells motioned to approve Ordinance 2204 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF OXFORD ADOPTING A GENERAL/ENTERPRISE BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2022 AND ENDING

JUNE 30, 2023, AND ESTABLISHING A TAX RATE OF \$.32 PER \$100 OF ASSESSED REAL PROPERTY VALUE, Commissioner Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Commissioner Wells motioned to approve Ordinance 2205 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF OXFORD TO REPEAL ORDINANCE NUMBER 2109 AND TO SET NEW WATER AND SEWER RATES FOR THE TOWN, COMMENCING JULY 1, 2022, Commissioner Jaramillo seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

President Fronk opened the discussion on the Middle Passage Signage, providing a timeline which began a year ago when Barbara Paca and Philip Logan approaching the Commissioners on March 20, 2021 regarding the Middle Passage Ceremony and Marker Project, which is a 501c3 organization devoted to researching locations where Africans were brought to the Americas as part of the three leg Atlantic Ocean trade route, with the middle leg/passage bringing the slaves from Africa to America. Fronk noted the purpose of the organization is to commemorate the 2 million lives lost in route and the 10.5 million who survived and became slaves, and to provide some healing for what ensued in the years to follow. The organization has suggested the markers be placed at the sites, with the first marker site being Baltimore. The project is identified as a Ceremony and Marker Project, with the intent of the placement of a marker at each location with a ceremony. The original Middle Passage sign Paca and Logan developed was placed on Mill Street in 2021, with anticipation of a sign being designed for placement at the water with a Ceremony on July 4, 2022. The Commissioners originally informed Paca and Logan that placement of a sign would require some discussion and possibly public involvement. With July quickly approaching, Fronk had inquired as to the status of the project, noting that the original sign would not be suitable for placement at the water as the dimensions would be an issue with the offshore winds. This year Logan presented the Commissioners with a concept for an area with multiple signs and benches in front of the living shoreline at the Ferry Dock, a concept that presented concerns, including impacts to the wetlands, being an area the floods and will continue to in the face of sea level rise, and significant safety concerns with vehicular traffic approaching and exiting the ferry. Alternate locations enter the discussion, including to the right of the ferry dock and to the right of the customs house, an area along the Strand and lastly F-Dock. Additional designs were presented by Logan for the alternative sites, which included multiple signs, benches, and walkways. Fronk stated when the original request for the placement of a sign commemorating the Middle Passage was presented, the Commissioners at the time were in favor of a sign, and that he is still in favor of such a sign. Fronk said he had met with Logan recently and had encouraged him to bring a design for a sign to the Commissioners to consider, one that did not include benches and other amenities in what is now being described as a sanctuary. Fronk understands the desire to have a place to come and sit and reflect on the sign, but he doesn't feel that something of the magnitude of what is being proposed is appropriate in the locations being discussed, with the exception of something being possible in the undeveloped area to the right of the customs house, an area for which no design has been presented. Following this discussion, Logan has yet to come back with a suggestion for the placement of just a sign. Fronk reviewed the 28 locations that currently support Middle Passage Markers/Signs, noting that 24 of the locations have a single sign, 1 location has two low profile signs, 1 has a stone monument on the ground, 1 has a statue of a family, and there is 1 large memorial in NY on federal land. Fronk does not feel that the 3 larger displays he mentioned are of an appropriate scale for a

town the size of Oxford. He completely endorses the development of a sign, which is of appropriate scale for Oxford, that the Commissioners could then find a location for placement. Fronk emphasized that he cannot endorse the development of a sanctuary as has been proposed. Commissioner Wells agreed that if there are 24 places with signs, then a sign would also be appropriate for Oxford, and if there is a need for a sanctuary it could be incorporated into the Waters Edge Museum location. Commissioner Jaramillo said that he had been a Commissioner, along with Commissioner Pepe when the original request was presented and that what is now being proposed is completely different. Jaramillo agreed that he wholeheartedly supported the project then, as he does now, but he cannot support a sanctuary in the currently proposed locations and requested that Logan and Paca meet the Commissioners halfway in presenting something that the Commissioners can work with on a scale that would be acceptable for the town. Fronk will provide these thoughts to Logan and Paca.

NEW BUSINESS

Resident Cameron Mactavish presented a PowerPoint on the works of the Oyster Trail committee and their future plans to establish a public bicycle trail along the former Delaware Maryland Railroad spur starting in Oxford and running to Easton. The PowerPoint provided history starting with the creation of the railroad line to Oxford in 1872, which ran through 1960, and included pictures of the current condition of several portions of the old rail line as it runs across public and private properties, including remote paths and bridges. The remainder of the trail is in private ownership and the group has begun the conversation with individuals to solicit participation. McTavish acknowledged the completion of the full trail will be a heavy lift, and will need grant and private funding. He would like to see the first portion of the trail, which runs through the center of the Talbot County Conservation Park, paved in some fashion to start the project and hopes to work with the county, with support from the town, to accomplish this.

LETTERS AND REQUEST

The Oxford Fire Company thanked the town for the annual donation to the Fire Company's operational budget and to the Fire Company's retirement fund.

Talbot County Economic Development sent an invitation for the Economic Workshop to be held at the Oxford Community Center on May 26, 2022, which is open to the public.

ATTORNEY

Ryan noted that County Resolution 328 regarding the procedure for processing an amendment to the County's Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan, as discussed at the last meeting, was still under review, along with two additional amendments to address the original concerns regarding changes to the plan within municipal boundaries, without municipal input.

TOWN MANAGER

Lewis stated that the Municipal Convention would be the week of June 13, so there would be no Commissioner meeting that night, the next Commissioner's meeting would be on June 28. The Election

for one Commissioner would be held on June 21, 2022 in the Commissioners Meeting Room from 2 pm to 7 pm.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Jaramillo expressed sadness in regards to recent national events and reminded all to hug their loved ones.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Former Commissioner John Pepe noted that as a member of the sign committee, he had been brought into the discussion for the Middle Passage Marker, and that he appreciated Fronk's prior comments. He agrees a Middle Passage Sign is important and relevant, and that he too had been researching the markers, noting that only about 50% of the identified sites had markers, and that the ones that did, were similar to state signs, like the Civil War sign currently located on the Strand. Pepe believes that an appropriately sized marker along the water would be the best thing for town property. He stated that Paca has done a wonderful job with the Waters Edge Museum and that it would provide a quiet location for a sanctuary.

Jane McCarthy asked where the public could view the Town Budgets. Lewis responded that they are currently posted under Public Notices on the town website, and once approved they would be moved to the Recently Approved Ordinances section.

Ann Walker inquired as to whether placing a bench with the Middle Passage sign would be considered a sanctuary. Commissioner Wells commented that it would not be a sanctuary, but the addition of a bench could limit the possible locations.

Several residents supported the Rails to Trails concept and thanked Mactavish for his work in bringing it to everyone's attention.

Hearing no further business Commissioner Wells motioned to close the meeting, Commissioner Fronk seconded the motion, and the meeting was closed at approximately 7:15 pm.

Cheryl Lewis, Town Manager