

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 14, 2023

The Commissioners Meeting was held in the Oxford Firehouse on Tuesday, March 14, 2023. Commission President Jimmy Jaramillo called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Attending the meeting were Commission President James Jaramillo, Commissioner Brian Wells, Commissioner Tom Costigan, Town Manager Cheryl Lewis, and Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan. Public Works WW Supervisor Matt Ozman and Planning Officer Maria Brophy attended virtually. Approximately 150 people were in attendance and another 50 virtually.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commission President Jaramillo stated that in the previous town meeting residents expressed their concerns about the Commissioners shortfalls and transparency, the Commissioners heard those concerns and are committed to improving policies and practices going forward.

Commissioner Costigan stated the he had been a commissioner since last July and the question he was posing was could the Commissioner's transparency and communication be better, and his answer was an absolute yes. He stated that answers for many of the questions posed last meeting had been posted on the town website, but for those who may have not seen them, he read them aloud. The website responses are attached to these minutes. Following the reading he stated that with regards to personnel information, which is privileged and confidential, there would be no discussion, which he realizes is the not the answer that some want to hear, but that is what privileged and confidential means. He added that he would be happy to meet with the town ethics board to discuss this matter. He also recommended that the Commissioners set up an ad hoc committee to develop and recommend best hiring practices for the town to implement, requesting that those interested in serving submit their interest to the town office by March 31, 2023, with a preference for residents with real world HR experience.

Commissioner Wells stated that the Commissioners were pleased to announce that Eric Kellner has been hired as the new Chief of Police. 1st Sergeant Kellner is the Executive Officer of the Patrol Division for the Easton Police Department, where he has been employed since 2001. While with the Easton Police Department, his assignments have included, among other things, patrol division, supervisor of bike patrol, Maryland Police Training Commission Instructor, Narcotics Unit, and Swat Team Leader. 1st Sergeant Kellner currently serves as the liaison to the Talbot 911 Center, supervises parking enforcement and school crossing guards, handles public assembly permits, oversees reports and officer scheduling, is the administrator of the speed camera program and speed signs, prepares updates to the Police Department Manual, and responds to patrol. In his off time, 1st Sergeant Kellner is an active lifetime member of a local fire department and has previously served as the Chief and President. In addition, he is a part-time employee of the Caroline County Emergency Services as an EMT which he has done for 19 years. His wife, Jennifer, is an Officer with the Easton Police Department. They have two children. 1st Sergeant Kellner is the assistant coach for his son's little league team. He and his family are looking forward to being part of the Oxford community. 1st Sergeant Kellner comes to us highly recommended from the Easton Police Department, where he is retiring from at the end of this month, and will join our Department officially on April 10th.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Wells motioned to approve the minutes of February 28, 2023 as distributed, Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Commissioner Costigan motioned to approve the Report of Disbursements for January 2023, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

Supervisor Ozman was attending virtually. Town Manager Lewis read his report. Public works has been working on pothole patching around Town with temperatures now above freezing. Public works has been working diligently on storm water drainage around town with the improvements to culverts, jetting, and cleaning out drainage boxes along with ditches. Mark with Bartlett tree was kind enough to send in a team of climbers to retrieve a dead hanging branch in Town Park. Now is the time of year the crew is in the shop performing needed maintenance to our fleet of equipment. This includes dump truck cleaning, painting of beds and rims to prevent rust and normal preventive maintenance. Mowers have been serviced and cleaned up for the upcoming mowing season. Town trucks are being detailed, as weather permits, inside and out including inventory on tools and equipment on each of them. All excavation equipment, backhoes, skid steer and mini excavator being cleaned inside and out and inspected. Public works has finished repairing shop roof over office. Spring is coming the crew has started ramping up on park clean ups and getting ready for Oxford day 2023.

POLICE REPORT

The report had been submitted to the Commissioners for review prior to the meeting and it was noted that Oxford Police and Sheriff's Department will be supporting the Oxford Day Committee on April 22nd. Radios for the traffic personnel during the event have been requested from Talbot County Emergency Services.

FIRE COMPANY REPORT

Lewis provided the fire company report for February as submitted by Chief Norbury. 9 fire/rescue calls - 4 in our first-due, 5 mutual aid. 4 medical/ambulance calls – 3 patient transports, 1 mutual-aid standby in Easton for a mass casualty incident (motor vehicle crash with 7 patients), 101 member responses, and 66 hours worked. Overall call volume has been lower than expected for the past month. It's hard to draw any specific conclusions for the underlying reasons other than unseasonably mild weather, but statistics have a habit of catching up over time. Area hospitals remain quite busy as there are a number of different respiratory bugs (including but not limited to COVID) out in the community at present. Oxford Fire Company Officers and Members regret to announce the passing of Life Member/Past Chief Richard Smith. Mr Smith was a strong advocate for fire safety and worked tirelessly with our State Legislators and the Maryland State Fireman's Association (MSFA) to pass laws requiring sprinklers in new residential construction, as well as improving tax benefits for first responders. A viewing and service was held at St Marks UMC in Easton on Saturday March 4, and Interment took place at Oxford Cemetery followed by a reception at the firehouse.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Lewis provided an update on the Speed Camera System Legislation, which has passed the Senate and is pending a vote in the House and, with any luck, will make it through both chambers on the fourth try.

Lewis summarized the Water System Improvement Projects to be funded with the secured USDA Loan and Grant, including new water meter reading and billing equipment and software, test wells for a new water source, and depending on the results, upgrade to the arsenic removal system and a new fluoride removal system, as both minerals are found naturally in the current water source, refurbishing of the existing water towers, and final efforts would utilize remaining funding to continue replacing older water conveyance lines. Attorney Ryan summarized the criteria in the Request for Qualifications and stated responses were received from George Miles and Buhr (GMB), McCrone, Rauch Inc., and Davis Bowen & Friedel (DBF). The information provided was placed into a matrix and rated depending on record of performance, familiarity with the work, understanding and approach to services, and completion of submission. Based on the rating scale, it was recommended that cost

proposals be requested from the two engineering firms that ranked highest, GMB and DBF. Commissioner Costigan recommended Ryan follow up with the two most qualified firms, GMB and DBF, and request submittal of cost proposals, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Lewis stated that a Request For Quotes for the Design Build Flood Remediation Project utilizing ARPA funds has been posted. This project will include studying of stormwater and tidal water flooding issues in two areas of town, South Morris at Pier Street, and the Stewart Avenue, Tilghman Road, Mill Street area. The RFQ request bids for design, with proposed construction, with the intent to pursue the project as far as the funding holdouts. If full construction is not possible with this funding, the town will continue to seek funds for the effort. Responses are anticipated prior to the next meeting.

Lewis stated that a Letter of Interest had been submitted to Senators Cardin and Van Hollen, and Congressman Harris, seeking funding support for "Building Capacity for Sea Level Rise Adaption on the Eastern Shore" proposing a partnership between the town and the Oxford NOAA Lab to study Sea Level rise in Oxford, which is basically ground zero for Sea Level Rise in the Chesapeake Bay, and with a request to include a live tide gauge in Oxford for both historic data and to assist in flood predictions.

Commissioner Costigan requesting support for the ad hoc committee previously mentioned, motioning to create an ad hoc committee to develop and recommend best hiring practices for the town to implement, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. Interested parties should email the town office by March 31, 2023.

LETTERS AND REQUEST

Oxford Auxiliary requested use of Central Park to hold a Carnival on July 15, 2023. Commissioner Wells motioned to approve the request, Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. Chesapeake Cycling Club will be hosting a ride on April 29 utilizing the ferry. Talbot Thrive will be hosting the Tour de Talbot on June 10th, with 400 to 600 bikes expected to come through town. The YMCA will be working at the ferry to assist and it is anticipated they will bring in additional portopots in that area for the event.

TOWN MANAGER

It was noted that the Oxford website "oxfordmd.net" will soon be transitioning to "oxfordmd.gov" which has been in the works for about a year now. Currently they will be moving data from one domain to another and, although no impact is anticipated during the transition, it is worth noting the potential for some disruption on the website. This is just the first step in the process and updates will follow.

Lewis reminded the Commissioners we would be starting the Budget process with the submittal of both a revised FY 2023 Budget and a proposed FY 2024 Budget in April. At this time she was presenting an emergency request for an amendment to the Police Department budget, which was provided to the Commissioners. It was noted while inspecting the current tasers, all current cartridges had expired in 2020, batteries in all three tasers were too low for the weapons to function, attempts to update the firmware was unsuccessful, and two of the units were showing error codes. With loaner components from EPD, one taser was pieced together and is operational. This request will include the purchase of three new tasers, necessary accessories, and service over a five year period, at \$3000 annually. Additionally the current vehicle laptops are obsolete, with only 1 able to connect to the internet, the request is to purchase 3 vehicle laptops and installation components, with an estimated cost of \$20,000. Lastly, Lewis stated that body cameras will be a requirement by 2025. Currently the department does not have any cameras, but there is the desire to implement them immediately. After reviewing grant funding availability, it does not seem cost effective to seek competitive federal funding for 50% of unit cost, netting about \$1500. Purchase of body cameras and necessary accessories, under a 5 year contract, will be \$4500 the first year and \$1100 annually after that. Commissioner Costigan motioned to acknowledge the Police

Department amendment request, with the understand that it will be included in the upcoming proposed budget amendment, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor and the motion carried.

Lewis commented that there had been a lot of discussion regarding town employee salaries and that, although it is not generally published information, she felt in the interest of transparency she would provide it: Town Mgr \$164k, Waste/Water Supervisor \$100k, Police Chief \$100k, Planning Officer \$85k, Water Supervisor \$80k, Police Officer \$76k, Admin Assistant \$68k, and Maintenance Crew \$50-\$60k.

Commissioner Wells commented that salaries are set by the Commissioners, and when setting salaries they do not look at Oxford as an island, they look at the environment and the region to determine what is being paid elsewhere, noting that as many were aware, salaries went up across the board during the pandemic. Based on his own experience salaries have increased significantly everywhere, and it was the responsibility of the Commissioners to assure fair and competitive compensation to maintain Oxford's talented staff.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Wells took a moment to highlight Town Manager Lewis's accomplishments on her 11 year anniversary, noting both her work ethics and infrastructure accomplishments, with 11 completed projects totaling \$22 million with 84% grant funded, 5 completed studies at \$200k with 85% grant funded, and 7 projects currently in progress at \$8.3 million with 65% grant funded. Full statement is attached to these minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Justin Werner inquired as to whether there was anything the public could do to push the legislation for the speed camera along, and will forward support by email to the office.

Ray Sattler wish to point out that he was appreciative of Lewis's answering of the office phone after hours on Friday, and following up with answers to his question within 30 minutes.

Davenport West requested that the Commissioners bring back the police report detailing calls in town. He was told the reports would come back.

Jan Greenhawk, stated that although it was nice that questions had been responded to, she wanted to know why has it taken so long to follow standard procedures. Now people are involved with the town, we are back, we care, and we are not going away.

Melody Davis noted the quick response to her emailed questions earlier, and asked in reference to the finding in the 2016 Audit 'segregation of duties' statement what made up the two person finance office. Commissioner Wells stated that in response to the segregation of duties question, he wanted her to know that all town checks are cosigned by a commissioner, additionally all disbursements are reviewed by the Commissioners monthly. Lewis stated that in addition to the dual signature checks, which the accountants do verify, along with review of all town processes at audit, the town was currently speaking with an independent auditor to provide additional oversight on a quarterly basis as a third party review separate from the towns auditing firm and providing information to the audit.

Sid Campen expressed his disappointment in the treatment the Commissioners received at the prior meeting, noting they are elected to make decisions on behalf the town, and sometimes they have to make administrative decisions regarding personnel, and these decisions are not for publication and in the case of non-disclosure agreements, they are generally designed to protect the employee not the employer. If you are feel aggrieved by the decision of this Commission, there will be an election in about 90 days. In the meantime, we should step back and let these Commissioners do their jobs. Oxford has made it 340 years without a whole lot of changes and it will likely make it another 340 years without a whole lot of changes.

Dorothy Fenwick noted that she had filed a Freedom of Information request following a visit to the town office where she was not immediately provided a Financial Statement upon request. She stated the Financials were not provided on the website as it is in Federalsburg and Denton. She received a letter stating the 22 years of statements requested were available but would have to be retrieved from storage. She commented that Lewis did inform her that the most recent 12 years had been uploaded to the website and the prior 10 years will still be scanned. Fenwick noted that this is not the natural way of doing things.

Emily Knud Hanson said she thought the response to the questions of the 28th was timely and showed that the Commissioners were listening. She also requested that the new chief be introduced at the next meeting so he could be welcomed. He will be invited for introduction at the March 28th meeting and will be sworn in at the April 11th meeting.

John Pepe stated he had prepared a written statement in support of the administration, but many of the positive points had already been covered by Wells and Campen, and he would refrain from repeating. He did wish to note that while he was a seated commissioner during the pandemic, that Lewis had the forethought at the beginning of the pandemic to tell the commissioners it was necessary to tighten up immediately, presenting a budget with a 25% reduction, sufficient to continue operations until things stabilized. He also noted Lewis's efforts during the 18 million dollar upgrade to the sewer plant, producing a substantial amount of grant funding, fighting to avoid cost overruns saving the town money, and building a team of properly trained operators for the new system. Pepe stated that he wish to thank Lewis for what she has done for the town and that it had been a pleasure to work with her.

Warren Davis stated that he sent a letter to the Commissioners regarding recent law changes for non-disclosure agreements, along with several other comments. He was told letters would be read following public comment.

Jim Wilcox agrees with the comments regarding the responsiveness of the Commissioners to the concerns, but he would also like to note that he doesn't feel there is anything in the law that prevents disclosure of the information found within a non-disclosure agreement if confidentiality is waived, and this way everyone would feel better knowing what happen.

Following public comment Attorney Ryan read the letter submitted prior to the meeting and attached to these minutes. Commissioner Wells motioned to close the Public Comments, Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor.

There being no further business, Commissioner Costigan made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Wells seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Lewis, Town Manager

In response to questions asked during Public Comment in the February 28, 2023 Meeting:

Annual Audits: The Town of Oxford is audited annually by a qualified accounting firm, after which a Financial Report is prepared, and in years when federal grant or loan funding is used, a secondary Single Audit Financial Report is prepared to assure compliant use of federal funds. Annually these Financial Report are provided to the Maryland Legislative Services as required by law, along with forwarding to all lenders/grant funders, including the Maryland Dept. of Environment, the Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention, Shore United Bank, and, when requested, USDA Rural Development. The Town has been audited annually since 1940 and is currently compliant with a completed and submitted FY 2022 audit.

Boat Slip Waiting List: The Town has 44 Boat Slips in three locations. The policy is to maintain 50% for town residents (private and waterman) and 50% for non-resident licensed commercial waterman, as there has always been the desire to maintain the working waterfront heritage of the Town. Two waiting lists are maintained at the front desk (town residents/commercial watermen), with people added in numeric order including date of request. Those on the list are asked to identify their boat size in order to determine suitability of slips as they become available. Some have been on the list for an extended period of time because of either the size of slip needed to accommodate their boat, location requested, or because they chose to pass at that time and remain on the list. When a slip becomes available, the first appropriate boat owner is contacted, after which the calls continue down the list until a new tenant is found. Occasionally, lessees are permitted to exchange slips if a more appropriate slip becomes available, but must give up the original slip in order for the next person on the waiting list to have an opportunity. With regards to the rates, the rates increase 3% annually per a resolution passed in 2012 to accommodate the cost associated with maintaining the slips, trash cans, dumpsters, parking lots, and other associated services.

Town owned residential housing: The Town constructed two adjoining townhouses in 1989 to provide the opportunity for a few employees to reside within the town. The homes are generally occupied by a Police Officer and a Public Work's employee. In years when there was not an employee to occupy a home, it was offered to a Coast Guard member, as their residency is always temporary for the term they are stationed here, which is usually around two years. The current intention is to continue providing residency to a Police Officer and a Public Works Employee. Additionally, the opportunity is generally offered to existing employees prior to being offered to incoming employees; and will always be offered to all employees prior to reaching out to the Coast Guard or other town service entity.

Hiring Practice: When seeking personnel to fill open positions for the Town of Oxford, the opportunity to apply for all positions is published on Indeed.com, the highest traffic job website in the US. All supervisory/department positions are interviewed and hired by the Commissioners of Oxford, entry level positions are interviewed by two supervisors and hired upon recommendation to and approval by the Commissioners of Oxford. All employee compensation is approved by the Commissioners of Oxford.

With specific reference to the Police Department, a post seeking officers was published on Indeed in February of 2022, and was posted on the town website and Facebook Page at the same time, along with

newspaper advertising first in the Star Democrat, then in all eastern shore newspapers owned by the Chesapeake Publishing. The opportunity to apply for a Police position is still posted on the town website, as the town has been actively seeking applicants for the last year.

With regards to questions about personnel issues, interviews, discussions, reprimands, and personal information provided by applicants and employees, this information is privileged and confidential and will not be shared to protect the individual employees who apply, serve, or who have served this town.

On behalf the Commissioners of Oxford,
Cheryl Lewis, Town Manager

Cheryl Lewis Anniversary (11 years)

- Started with the town in April of 2012, Accomplishments to date:
 - Builds and maintains a highly effective and productive town staff team
 - Supports the work of 7 separate town governance committees
 - Often works 12 hour days and weekends on Oxford's needs
 - Is on call and responsive 24/7
 - Douglas Hanks award recipient in 2017
 - Citation from the MD DNR Secretary for efforts to address Sustainability w/ state funds
 - Successfully submitted an application for Sustainable Community Designation with the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development in 2014 allowing for access to State Grant funds across all departments.
 - Secures recurring funding because the town delivers on the goals of the grant

- 11 PROJECTS COMPLETED - \$22 million, 84% external funding
 - Oxford F-Dock rebuild (on going for 2009 – completed in 2013)
 - \$ 223,000 - 100% funded by grants - \$223,000 (acquired previously)

 - Tilghman Landing rebuild – (2017)
 - \$ 226,000 - 100% funded by grants - \$226,000

 - Maryland Energy Grant – Town Building HVAC replacement (2015)
 - \$ 67,000 - 37% funded by grants - \$25,000

 - State of the art WasteWater Treatment Plant (2013 - 2022)
 - \$ 18,500,000 - 85% funded by grants - \$16,000,000

 - Morris St. Water Main rehabilitation without major disruption (2021)
 - \$ 1,350,000 - 50% funded by grants – \$675,000

 - Oxford Mews acquisition and stabilization (2016 – 2020)
 - \$725,000 - 70% funded by grants - \$505,000

 - Oxford Causeway Park Series of Ponds and Swales Construction (2015 – 2018)
 - \$ 740,000 - 93% funded by grants - \$690,000

 - Oxford Dog Park (2014)
 - \$ 43,000 - 88% funded by grants - \$38,000

 - Oxford Tennis Court Rehab and Pickleball Modifications (2017)
 - 52,500 - 95% funded by grants - \$50,000

 - Oxford Mini Façade and Interior Improvement Grants – 3 separate awards (2016 – 2023)
 - \$ 140,000 - 100% funded by grants – no town match required - \$140,000

 - Public Works and Police Truck purchase – (2022 – 2023)
 - \$ 110,000 - 30% funded by grants – \$32,600

- 5 STUDIES COMPLETED - \$200,000, 85% external funding

- Oxford Stormwater and Flood Management Study (2013)
 - \$ 34,500 in technical assistance - 100% funded by grants - \$34,500
- Oxford Historic Commercial District Strategic Planning (2015)
 - \$ 40,000 - 50% funded by grants - \$20,000
- Oxford Working Waterfront Strategic Planning (2015)
 - \$ 40,000 - 100% funded by grants - \$40,000
- Stormwater/Shoreline Infrastructure Master Plan (2016)
 - \$62,000 - 82% funded by grants - \$51,000
- FEMA Community Rating System Application development (2016)
 - \$25,000 - 100% funded by grants - \$25,000
- 7 PROJECTS IN PROGRESS - \$8.3 million, 65% external funding
 - Strand Beach Shoreline Enhancement and Stormwater “Design” (2019)
 - \$ 95,000 - 95% funded by grants - \$90,000 - complete
 - Strand Beach Shoreline Enhancement and Stormwater “Construction” (2023)
 - \$ 2,800,000 - 90% funded by grants - \$2,500,000 (still seeking additional funds)
 - Oxford Central Park
 - \$ 122,000 - 100% funded by grants - \$122,000
 - Oxford Basketball/Pickleball Court Rehabilitation
 - \$ 40,000 - 100% funded by grants - \$40,000
 - Water System Improvements, Well, Towers, Billing System
 - \$ 4,674,000 - 45% funded by grants - \$ 2,102,000
 - Oxford 2100 Visioning for Sea Level Rise
 - \$ 40,000 - 100% funded by grants - \$40,000
 - South Morris and Tilghman areas -Stormwater “Design – Build” out for bid
 - \$ 600,000 - 100% funds received through ARPA - \$600,000
- WORKING RELATIONSHIPS OUTSIDE OF OXFORD
 - Talbot County government
 - Serves as the town’s liaison on the TC Local Emergency Planning Commission
 - Maryland Municipal League
 - State government
 - MDE - Represents Oxford and the Maryland Municipal League as a member of the Maryland Bay Restoration Advisory Committee
 - DNR – Numerous projects and initiatives
 - MD Dept. of Planning – Comprehensive and Water/Sewer Planning
 - Senator and Congressmen – multiple issues, including Speed Camera

- Federal Agencies
 - USDA
 - NOAA
 - NFWF
- Non-Profit Organizations
 - Eastern Shore Land Conservancy
 - Chesapeake Bay Trust
 - National Wildlife Federation

March 14, 2023

Commissioner James Jaramillo, President
Commissioner Brian Wells
Commissioner Thomas Costigan

Dear Oxford Commissioners,

At the February 28th meeting, the Oxford Commissioners met and listened to an hour of concerns from a standing room only meeting of town citizens. Last week the home page of the town website was updated to include some responses to issues raised at the meeting, including:

- Links to the Annual Audits/Financial Reports;
- Description of the Town Boat Slip Policy;
- Discussion of policy regarding town-owned housing;
- A description of the Town's hiring practices, including efforts starting in February of 2022 to hire police officers; and
- Ended with this, "With regards to questions about personnel issues, interviews, discussions, reprimands, and personal information provided by applicants and employees, this information is privileged and confidential and will not be shared to protect the individual employees who apply, serve, or who have served this town."

While some of this information is partially responsive and appreciated, the concern that drew the standing room crowd to the OCC was not addressed - the facts and circumstances surrounding the resignation/retirement/firing of Chief Pat Maxwell.

Here is what we would like and expect to see:

"Retirement" of Chief Maxwell. The Commissioners declined to provide any information regarding Pat's "retirement" under the rationale that they are "protect[ing] the individual employees who apply, serve, or have served this town." Ironically, in this case the rationale, when coupled with the Commissioners' conditioning Pat's "retirement" benefits on his signing a non-disclosure agreement (NDA), achieves the exact opposite result. A 34+ year highly respected public safety employee of Oxford is left with the presumption, which he is unable to respond to, that he engaged in conduct so egregious that it warranted his immediate and unplanned "retirement." In order to overcome this impasse, we strongly urge the Commissioners to meet with Pat and his counsel and negotiate a termination of the NDA so that both he and the Commissioners would be free to discuss the circumstances that led to his "retirement." The NDA termination should not in any way impact the economic terms of Pat's "retirement" and

both parties would agree to forego any right to seek further redress with respect to this matter. Pat should have the right to accept or reject this proposal.

Search for New Police Chief. We have been able to find the advertisement for police officers on the town website which, as you indicated, was published in February of 2022. It is our assumption that the posting for the position of police officer was in direct response to the retirement of Officer Jim Thomas (who retired in the fall of 2021). We have not been able to find any similar posting for the position of police chief. The Commissioners should direct the Town Manager to fully disclose all actions taken to hire a new police chief. In addition, the Commissioners should consider appointing a number of citizens of Oxford to participate and advise the Commissioners in filling this position.

Compensation of Key Town Employees. In response to requests for access to the Oxford financial audits, copies of recent audited Financial Reports have been posted to the town website. However, these reports fail to reveal the compensation paid to Oxford's most highly paid employees. The public disclosure of compensation to Maryland State employees is mandated by law. In the interest of transparency, we believe the same should apply to municipal employees of the Town of Oxford. The Commissioners should direct the Town Manager to disclose the names and compensation of each Town employee earning over \$50,000, including records of the hiring process (advertising, etc.) followed for each.

There were a number of other issues raised during the February 28 meeting, including questions regarding the ethics of certain personnel decisions. These will be addressed to the Ethics Committee as a separate matter.

The undersigned have reviewed this letter and agree that it reflects their views regarding the matters discussed at the Commissioners' meeting of February 28th. We request that the Commissioners read this letter into the record and respond to this letter during the meeting scheduled for March 14th.

Respectfully submitted,

Dick Deerin
Dorothy Fenwick
Mark Lacey
Henry Hale
Joan Levy
Joe Kenny
Tony Passarella
John Hurley
Jimmy Greenhawk
Daniel Baldwin
Rebecca Gaffney
Barbara Hartshorn

Warren Davis
Madge Henning
John Pittman
Simon Arnstein
Sharon Kenny
Cammy Passarella
Suzie Hurley
Jan Greenhawk
Kimberly Baldwin
Terry Lee
George Gaffney
Leslie Howells

William Kooper
Jack Sullivan
John Sutton
Wendy Gibson
Stephen Weissenberger
Larry Myers
Freiderikos Franke
Suzanne Fischer
Maxine Millar
Jane Selden
Jane McCarthy
Chris Fogarty
Emily Knud Hansen
Jan Greer
Susan Kordel
Ray Sattler
Carol Kachadoorian
Melody Davis
Kristen Hagn
Jodie Hamburg
Jean Konopacz
Amber Petry
Elaine Rensberger
Richard Schramm
Liz Hasbrouck
John Fairhall

Courtney Lambeth
Sue McWilliams
Dodi Sutton
Jan Nelson
Brooke Myers
Catherine Bitter
Thomas Caravytha
Joseph Fischer
David Ghysels
Stephen Selden
Susan Devlin
Nancy Forarty
Chris Kalinsky
Daniel Kordel
Davenport West
Linda Sattler
Tom Downs
Elizabeth Gordon
James Hagn
Mike Hamburg
Robert Konopacz
Mark Petry
Scott Rensberger
Zoe Perkins
Emily Griswold

From: [Melody Watson](#)
To: [Cheryl Lewis](#)
Subject: Comments / Questions about Oxford Audited Financials 2022 for Town Meeting on 3/14
Date: Monday, March 13, 2023 4:29:17 PM
Attachments: [FY22-Oxford-FS.pdf](#)
[OXFORD 2012-Res-Town-Manager-Clerk-Treasurer.pdf](#)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and ask questions in advance of the Town Meeting on 3/14.

My question is related to the Independent Auditor's report on Internal Controls, which starts at page 52 of the attached, Finding Number 2022-001

The auditors noted the need for segregation of duties as the current system creates conflicts within duties assigned to a single individual and produces a high level of internal control risk. The auditors recommended responsibilities for authorization, recording, and maintaining custody of assets be assigned to different employees. The auditors acknowledged that this may not always be possible, especially in a small office, so they recommended implementation of certain transaction review controls.

The response from the Town is it would not be cost effective to add additional personnel to ensure complete segregation of duties in the Finance department, however, within the 2-person finance department, the Town has effectively designed and implemented mitigating controls to reduce the risk.

Question:

1) What is the structure within the 2-person Finance department, and who is responsible for doing what?

- Who can create purchase orders,?
- Who reviews purchase orders/expenditures?
- Who approves purchase orders/expenditures?
- Who has access to the bank accounts?
- Who reconciles the bank accounts?

2) Are there payment authority levels (in other words, is all authority granted to the Town Manager/Treasurer, or are there \$\$ thresholds that would necessitate the Town Commissioner's review and approval of certain transactions?

3) Resolution No 2012, Section C3-2 (see attached), indicates, " The office of Town Manager / Clerk-Treasurer, combining the two positions, may be utilized if the Commission determines it is appropriate and a suitable person is available." What activities does the combined Town Manager / Town Clerk perform?

4) Has the Town thought about hiring a Controller, or a Finance person and de-coupling some Finance functions from the Town Manager? I recognize funds might be tight for that, and hence the rationale for combining the Town Manager / Treasurer position and in that case, could the Town design other compensating controls to address the segregation of duties concerns?

In my opinion, the combination of the Town Manager and Treasurer function is not ideal. To be clear I don't believe there is any impropriety going on, but the lack of strong segregation of duties creates a perception/optics challenge for the Town. Both my husband, Ken Davis and I have a combined 20+ years experience in the accounting/auditing world, and we would be happy to troubleshoot ideas for compensating controls that could be put in place to further mitigate the audit finding.

Thank you for your consideration,
Melody Davis