

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD

Regular Meeting Minutes

August 22, 2023

The Commissioners Meeting was held in the Oxford Commissioners meeting room on Tuesday, August 22, 2023. Commission President Tom Costigan called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Attending the meeting were Commission President Tom Costigan, Commissioner Susan Delean-Botkin, Commissioner Katrina Greer, Public Works Supervisor Matt Ozman, Lt Chris Phillips, Town Manager Cheryl Lewis, and Attorney Lyndsey Ryan, with Planner Maria Brophy attending virtually. Approximately 55 people were in attendance and another 65 virtually.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Delean-Botkin motioned to approve the minutes of August 8, 2023 as distributed, Commissioner Greer seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Commissioner Greer motioned to approve the July 2023 disbursements report to be filed for the auditors, Commissioner Delean-Botkin seconded the motion, all were in favor and the motion carried.

GUEST

Ted Book and John Horner from Easton Velocity spoke with the Commissioners and the citizens of Oxford regarding Connect Talbot, their project to extend fiber supported internet throughout Talbot County, and Oxford's consideration of approving a franchise agreement with Easton Velocity for future fiber service to the town. The franchise would provide the town with 3 years of fiber service to town facilities at no charge and the ability to charge a franchise fee on future residential connections. The agreement would include the ability in the future to provide internet, cable and phone services. The basics of fiber installation, including the desire to install the bulk of the fiber underground, was discussed. Currently Easton Velocity is working under a grant project providing service to the underserved areas of the county, after which they will begin to expand into served areas. Currently EV has contracted with the towns of St. Michaels and Trappe. There is no cost to the customer for extension of the service, other than the normal monthly service fees. In response to questions regarding emergency broadcasting, EV will get back regarding any capabilities beyond National Emergency Broadcasting. In response to questions regarding location of the fiber install, EV stated they determine the best approach to each residential unit at no cost to the customer, utilizing trenching and directional drilling, but will install at customer preferred location at an additional cost to the resident. For installations beyond 500 feet, there maybe additional cost to the resident. Anticipated service is currently around 2026. Interested residents can register now at the Connect Talbot website to be contacted when the service becomes available if they choose.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

Supervisor Matt Ozman provide his report. Public works has started painting bridges around the walking track; one is completely done and the other has been started. Public works has finished painting pump station exterior doors, and ventilation piping. Last week Mr. Rooter was in to do pump station cleanouts, which is done yearly as preventative maintenance. There is one backhoe down this week due to a leaking hydraulic cylinder, which has been taken to P&M hydraulics in Preston to be fixed and should be back and installed later this week. Public works will be working between town park beach and ferry dock living shoreline picking up debris this week. The wastewater UV lights have hit 12,000 working hours and all bulbs have been replaced. These bulbs are a critical piece of the wastewater plant as this is the last stage for disinfection. Public works worked extremely hard for the last couple weeks following two significant damage causing storms, with multiple brush pickups and cleaning up of all the parks around town. A big thank you goes out to Bartlett Tree company for coming in quickly after the storm and taking care of storm damaged tree limbs high in the trees of town park and making it safe for the town to open back up. Public works will be removing the stump in the town park at a later date. Fencing has been installed around it for safety reasons.

POLICE REPORT

Lt Phillips provided the report of calls, attached here, and a progress report for the department. The speed trailer set at Tilghman Street to address speed complaints for the period 8/7 – 8/20, recorded 3,225 vehicles, with only 69 vehicles traveling between 26 – 35 MPH, and 1 vehicle at 36 MPH (Highest Speed Recorded), with 97.8% of vehicles in compliance. PD continues to post notices on their Facebook page. The application period for the Citizen Police Academy has closed, but if someone is interested, please contact Lt. Phillips. Crossing Guards utilized for the Oxford Regatta went well, the need will be re-evaluated need next year. The Chief attended the Law Enforcement Steering Committee Meeting, met with States Attorney's Office regarding submitting files to their new records management system, met with Oxford Museum regarding security during their Duck-Duck-Goose event, and met with the Talbot Task Force regarding several vehicle and currency forfeitures from a recent large-scale investigation (Not connected to Oxford). There have been several policy updates and the PD is working on development of in-service training classes. Coffee w/ Cop – will be held on 8/24/23 9:30 am at the OCC. Chief Kellner will be attending the MD Chiefs and Sheriffs Conference in September. Lt Phillips will be attending Human Traffic training this fall.

FIRE COMPANY

Tim Kearns gave an update from the Fire Company, stating there have been 10 calls in the last few weeks. Several new members have entered Fire Fighter 1 and EMS classes beginning this fall and he encouraged anyone who might interested to consider joining the Fire Company.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Town Manager Lewis stated the town is still seeking cost estimates for the installation of crosswalks at town park and as we are approaching fall, the urgency has lessened. She will provide an update once more information has been gathered.

Lewis notified the Commissioners that the Sewer Tier Map introduced as Resolution 2307 has been found acceptable by the Maryland Department of Planning following their review, it has been posted online for quite some time, and is now available for adoption. Commissioner Greer motioned to adopt Resolution 2307 A Resolution of the Town of Oxford to Adopt an Amended Growth Tier Map for the Town of Oxford which comports with the requirements of the Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012, Commissioner Delean-Botkin seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. The newly adopted map will be provided to the MDP and to Talbot County.

A Public Hearing is scheduled on September 12, 2023 at the regular 6 pm meeting for Resolution 2309 a Charter Amendment changing the number of Election Judges from three to six judges. The resolution is posted online and have been advertised.

Commissioner Greer, referring to a letter received from Art Murr regarding banking to be read during public comment, stated that the funds from the soon to expire CDs should be rolled over to the town money market account so that more thought can go into how and where the funds should be reallocated. Lewis noted that, following a request, a substantial increase in the money market interest rate is anticipated and the funds were scheduled to roll into it.

A resolution designating public depository and authorizing withdraw of municipal public monies for two accounts with Shore United Bank was presented, in order to incorporate signatures of the newest commissioners. Commissioner Costigan motioned to approve the resolution, Commissioner Delean-Botkin seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. Lewis stated she also had signature cards for the accounts held at BayVanguard to be signed following the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS None Presented

LETTERS AND REQUEST None Presented

ATTORNEY

Attorney Ryan noted that the workshop for the Charter Amendment, originally scheduled prior to this meeting needed to be rescheduled. It was determined the meeting would be held at 5 pm on September 12, 2023 in front of the Commissioners regular 6 pm meeting.

TOWN MANAGER

Lewis stated the Commissioners had been provided a draft of the Easton Velocity Franchise Agreement to review. Following discussion, it was determined the Commissioners would discuss the agreement at the September 26, 2023 meeting.

Lewis read the Town Code noise regulations, as requested at the last meeting following concerns about mowing on the weekend, which basically states you cannot create loud or unnecessary noise between 10 pm and 7 am, meaning mowing can take place after 7 am, seven days a week. She also noted that during the public conversations regarding noise regulations several years ago, the other regulation that was created was for building permitted construction, only allowing noise generating construction activities to take place Monday through Friday between the hours of 7 am and 7 pm and on Saturday between the hours of 8 am and 4 pm, stating the reasoning at the time was that people should be relieved of construction noise at least one day a week.

Lewis requested a minor correction on the July 25, 2023 minutes, which currently read approval of the prior meeting minutes of July 25th and should actually read the prior meeting minutes of July 11th. Commissioner Costigan motioned to approve the change, all were in agreement and the minutes will be corrected.

Talbot Goes Purple has announced their annual kickoff night on August 31, 2021. Lewis provided some background and reasoning for the TGP project, noting the town has participate for the past 6 years, and again this year Public Works will be lighting the town purple to bring awareness to the campaign, and as in the past years she was requesting a donation to the campaign, which would come from the miscellaneous donation line item in the current budget as an anticipated donation. Commissioner Greer motioned to donate \$3500 to TGP, Commissioner Delean-Botkin seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Talbot Goes Purple on August 31, 2023 at Anchor Church from 6 to 8 pm. Smith Island Crabb Skiff Races at the Strand on August 26, 2023 around noon. OCC Community Day on September 2, 2023 from 9 am to noon. The office will be closed on September 4, 2023 for Labor Day. Talbot County is holding a commemorative event on September 11, 2023 at 8:30 am in Easton on the corner of West and Dover Street.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Delean-Botkin asked Liza Ledford to provide an update on the OCC landscaping plan, which includes their offer to donate any healthy trees that are being removed for repurposing on town property.

PUBLIC COMMENT

President Costigan read a letter from Art Murr, as attached, which expressed concerns regarding the removal of a substantial amount of funds from the town bank possibly impacting the viability of the small branch that services the town. Costigan read a letter from Liza Ledford, on behalf of the members of the Oxford Business Association, noting similar concerns, stating that 82% of their members utilize the bank and 100% of their members feel the convenience of having a local bank and 24-hour access to an ATM is crucial to their business, letter attached.

Art Murr stated he had two more concerns with regards to the topic of his letter, first being that the prior discussion about moving funds from the bank was not an agenda item and he was unsure if it would have been an agenda item had he not sent a letter, in the future he would like to see discussions of this significance on the agenda so the public is aware. Additionally, a fiduciary responsibility includes a positive and a negative side and all we are hearing is the positive side of increased interest, and he would also like to hear the negative, as he feels that removing large sums of money will not go unnoticed by the bank and could have real consequences for the town. Following additional comments and discussion regarding the banking topic, it was stated that this would be an agenda item at the next meeting and a public discussion would take place before any actions were taken. There was a request to incorporate Talbot County Sheriff calls into the Oxford report of calls.

With no further comments, Commissioner Greer motioned to adjourn the regular meeting, Commissioner Delean-Botkin seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Cheryl Lewis, Town Manager

Commissioner Meetings are now live streaming and are archived on townhallstreams.com.



Oxford Police Department
101 Market Street
P.O. Box 339
Oxford, Maryland 21654
“Maryland’s First Port”

Eric M. Kellner, Chief of Police

Reporting Period: 8/9/23 – 8/20/23

REPORTS	RP	YTD	ARRESTS	RP	YTD
Theft	1	6	Drug Arrests	0	0
Animal Complaint	0	3	DUI Arrests	0	0
Harassment	0	3	On-View Arrests	0	0
Fraud / ID Theft	0	2	Warrant Arrests	0	1
Assault	0	1	Criminal Summons	0	1
Domestic	0	2	Juvenile Referrals	0	1
Accident Report	1	4	Other Arrests	0	0
Suspicious Conditions	2	6	Total Arrests	0	3
Found/Lost Property	0	17			
Other	0	4			
Total Reports	4	48			
CALLS FOR SERVICE	RP	YTD	COMMUNITY POLICING	RP	YTD
Alarm	0	15	Property Checks	109	872
Animal Complaints	2	24	Special Events	1	15
Check Welfare	0	3	Foot Patrol	6	57
Suspicious Condition	3	12	Bike Patrol	4	25
911 – Hang-up	0	1			
Trespassing	0	7	ASSISTS	RP	YTD
Liquor Law Violation	0	1	Other PD	1	6
Noise Complaint	0	1	Fire/EMS	2	21
Parking Violation	6	11	Other Agency	0	0
Suspicious Person	1	7			
Suspicious Vehicle	1	6	ENFORCEMENT	RP	YTD
Verbal Dispute	0	3	Parking Citations	6	26
Found Property	0	17	Traffic Stops	12	121
Motor Vehicle Collision	1	7	Traffic Citations	0	3
Traffic Complaint	2	13	Traffic / Parking Warnings	16	125
Harassment	0	3	PC Searches	0	0
Rogue and Vagabond	0	4	Criminal Citations	0	0
Misc. Calls	4	42	Civil Citations	0	0
Total Calls	20	197			
TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS	RP	YTD	TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS	RP	YTD
Speeding	9	90	Cell Phone Violation	0	4
Stop Sign	2	16	Other Violation	2	10
Driving w/o License	0	2	Equipment Violation	0	4

202 E. Strand
PO Box 408
Oxford, MD 21654
August 10, 2023

Town of Oxford Commissioners and Town Manager
PO Box 339
101 Market Street
Oxford MD 21654-0339

Dear Commissioners and Town Manager,

I am writing to discuss the proposal, raised by Commissioner Greer, most recently at the August 8, 2023, Commissioners Meeting. Commissioner Greer proposes Oxford to withdraw \$2 - \$3 million from BayVanguard Bank and reinvest in higher interest rate accounts. Commissioner Greer cited fiduciary responsibility.

While a fiduciary responsibility for a better interest rate is laudable, I believe the potential negative effect on the Oxford community, businesses, and tourism must be equally considered by the Commissioners and citizens before a decision is finalized.

Banks continue to reduce their brick-and-mortar presence. The most recent example is PNC's decision to eliminate 203 branches, 47 of which are in Maryland and 135 store in-store locations such as Giant and Stop & Shop. While these reductions inconvenience the public the impact is not as large when multiple banks serve a community. This is not the case for Oxford where residents, businesses, tourists, etc. are lucky to have a single bank branch and 24/7 ATM access within the town itself in a convenient location next to the Post Office.

My fear is BayVanguard Bank will use the withdrawal of these funds as a reason to close the branch and ATM, depriving Oxford of in-town banking. I remember this topic raised when BayVanguard purchased 1880 Bank in 2021. There was concern from the Town and citizens we would lose the branch. As I recall, the Town of Oxford and BayVanguard agreed to keep the branch in Oxford since the Town uses BayVanguard for their banking needs. Removing \$2 - \$3 million is significant and BayVanguard's response could very well be harmful to the community. Thinking BayVanguard will not notice or react to the loss of funds is misplaced.

I request the following:

- Take no action on this matter until there is consensus on the path forward and understanding of the potential impact on the Town.
- Add this topic to the next Commissioners meeting agenda for debate and discussion giving all attendees the opportunity to express their opinions and concerns.
- Read this letter and enter it into the next Commissioners Meeting and minutes, currently August 22.

Sincerely,



Art Murr

Dear Oxford Town Commissioners,

First and foremost, thank you for your service to the Town of Oxford. Your collective efforts to address the concerns of the citizens and find solutions as they arise is applauded. As you are looking into the interest earned offered at Bay Vanguard, we trust that you have the citizens' best interests in mind.

As the president of the Oxford Business Association, please accept this letter as a representation of our collective members. The OBA is composed of 53 Oxford businesses, 12 of which are nonprofits operating in the Town of Oxford. We surveyed the membership and 70% responded. 82% bank at Bay Vanguard, and all 100% feel the convenience of having a local branch is crucial to their business, especially with Bay Vanguard providing the only 24/7 ATM. If we do not have a bank in Oxford, it will hurt how our businesses do business.

Landlords utilize the local branch for receiving rent, both businesses and residential rent. Also, considering the median age of OX residents, the convenience of a local bank is more serious - it's not just a luxury, it's imperative.

Another point to remember is the incredible number of visitors that come via water. Marina guests don't have cars and travelers on the ferry, all rely on local access to 24/7 ATM, and many look to the bank to cash checks or more involved services that require more than ATMs.

One nonprofit volunteer mentioned that if there wasn't a local bank, they would not volunteer as a treasurer anymore. Volunteerism is the backbone of the local nonprofit organizations and it is important to support those operations relying on such volunteers.

We agree that the Town has a responsibility to the citizens to make the most money they can on investments, but we feel that Bay Vanguard has a responsibility to their customers and can compete to keep our collective business. In the past, the Oxford Library spoke to Bay Vanguard directly and they came back with a comparable rate. The OBA strongly emphasizes that keeping a branch in Oxford remains the paramount concern.

Thank you for your time. We trust that you can make strides with the bank, while keeping the local branch in Oxford.

Please see more testimonials below:

Kindest regards,

Liza Ledford
President, Oxford Business Association

“Having a bank in town is a vital part of our everyday life. It can’t always be about the money, but quality of life for residents and Oxford businesses.”

“Past Town Commissioners made great efforts to keep the bank open. Older populations rely on it.”

“Most of our businesses deposit three times a week and rely on tourists who often ask for the ATM rather than use credit cards.”

“It would be a huge inconvenience if the bank were to leave Oxford.”

“The Oxford Bank is an important part of our community and we need to support them so we do not have them close our branch! Having a bank in town is essential to our business.”

“Our nonprofit utilizes Bay Vanguard; It is expedient to be able to make deposits at the Oxford branch. Not having a local bank is furthering the impersonalization and viability of the town of Oxford.”