

**COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD**  
**Regular Meeting Minutes**  
**February 27, 2024**

The Commissioners Meeting was held in the Oxford Commissioners meeting room on Tuesday, February 27, 2024.

**PRESENT**

Attending the meeting were Commission President Tom Costigan, Commissioner Susan Delean-Botkin, Commissioner Katrina Greer, Interim Chief Lt. Chris Phillips, Public Works Supervisor Matt Ozman, Town Manager Cheryl Lewis, and Attorney Lyndsey Ryan. Approximately 35 people were in attendance and approximately 30 virtually. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Delean-Botkin motioned to approve the minutes of February 13, 2024 as distributed, Commissioner Greer seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

President Costigan stated the Commissioners of Oxford held a Special Meeting on Thursday, February 22, 2024 at 4:30 pm at 101 Market Street for the purposes of holding a Closed Session to discuss personnel matters and legal advice regarding the same.

**PUBLIC WORKS REPORT**

Wastewater Supervisor Matt Ozman provided the Public Works report. Public works is currently replacing and repairing garden boxes for this upcoming spring. They have been working on repairing edges of roadways since we have had such a wet season. Trash can and picnic table maintenance and repair has started, they will be brought to the shop to be inspected, repaired and painted, in the event anyone notices some are missing. They have been using the winter months to take an inventory of spare parts to make sure they have needed for all maintenance, trucks, equipment, water leaks, etc. they do this twice a year to make sure they are stocked up. Public works is gearing up for spring, working on lawn mowers and park equipment to get everything ready for the warmer weather. The wastewater treatment plant will be transitioning from winter mode to spring/summer mode. This means they will start to decrease the amount of biomass inside the aeration tank, making room for new growth now that the worst part of winter is hopefully over.

**POLICE REPORT**

Interim Chief Lt. Phillips presented police statistics for the prior period, attached here. He noted Coffee with a Cop had a great turn out. He has been responding to questions regarding comments made at the last meeting about bike laws and going the wrong way on one-way streets. Some citizens were utilizing South St instead of Morris St due to how congested and busy it becomes during the summer. They felt safer avoiding Morris St. He explained that this can present an issue if you are involved in a collision with a vehicle while you as the rider are headed the wrong way on the street, as you are at fault. He suggested, with concerns for biking, it might be good to do some community brainstorm, possibly including members of Talbot Thrive, with the hope of getting community buy-in, after which they could provide a plan to the commissioners. Yesterday, 2/26, the PD held the first graduation for the Oxford Citizen Police Academy, receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback about the program. This hopefully is the first of many classes, and will likely begin the next program in September. Eva Smorzaniuk, one of the graduates provided a testimonial of her experience, stating she went in to it unsure of what to expect, and it exceeded her expectations. She highly recommends participation to other citizens. Phillips requested the no parking yellow marking be expanded on the park curb at the town park on either side of the new crosswalk. He also mentioned the possibility of getting stop lines painted at the new stop signs. It was noted there was an arrest on Saturday 2/24/24 after a person was observed exhibiting suspicious behavior, which resulted

in probable cause and upon discovery of warrants, the arrest. He stressed reporting suspicious activity to the department immediately does help in protecting the community.

#### **FIRE COMPANY**

A report is anticipated at the next town meeting.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Attorney Ryan, gave an overview of Ordinance 2403 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF OXFORD TO AMEND THE FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE TO REMOVE SECTION 4.4 (E) ESTABLISHING AN EXEMPTION FOR SERVICE EQUIPMENT BELOW THE ELEVATION OF THE LOWEST FLOOR. Explaining that the current language in the Zoning Code allows for the placement of certain equipment below the Flood Protection Elevation under specific circumstances, noting that as part of the CRS renewal process FEMA has requested that the language for an exception in 4.4 (E) be removed in order for the town to potentially maintain their rating of 7. The town was advised if they kept the language, they would be reverted to a rating of 9. Commissioner Delean-Botkin noted that she felt that there was a thorough discussion at the last meeting. Commissioner Greer stated that keeping the CRS 7 rating was important with the current FEMA grant opportunities, but in the future the town may want to reconsider as it is a real heavy administrative lift to keep the program up. Delean-Botkin motioned to introduce Ordinance 2403, Commissioner Greer seconded the motion, all were in favor, the motion carried, and a Public Hearing was scheduled for the regular meeting of March 26, 2024.

Lewis updated the Commissioners on the previous meetings discussion of possible 'living shoreline' improvements to the First Street street-end. Jennifer Stanley currently has a permit in hand for a living shoreline on her property to the south of the street-end and has asked the town if they would like to entertain the possibility of her extending the living shoreline improvements across the town's street-end too. Lewis stated she would like some direction from the Commissioners as to whether Ms. Stanley should pursue the additional effort in the name of resilience. Commissioner Delean motioned to ask Stanley to proceed with the new design incorporating the town property and to keep them informed with a final drawing. Commissioner Greer noted most citizen concerns centered around parking and the Commissioners were in agreement that they did not see this improvement generating traffic and that they would like to see it pursued.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

Lewis updated the Commissioners on the current Water Meter Improvement RFP, with a brief explanation of the effort and the urgent need. Four bids were received: Zenner USA/Texas, Metron-Farnier/Colorado, Core&Main/West Virginia, Ferguson/Maryland. They have been turned over to GMB Engineering, who will prepare a review and recommendation for the Commissioner's next meeting.

#### **LETTERS AND REQUEST**

One letter was submitted by a First Street resident in favor of the living shoreline improvement as discussed previously.

#### **ATTORNEY**

Commission President Costigan inquired as to whether some of the recent legislative concerns expressed in the news regarding limiting the ability of counties to manipulate zoning to prevent cannabis uses would present issues to the town considering our recently adopted language. Ryan stated that although there has been a lot of push back from local government regarding the cannabis reform act, that MML and MACO have taken the position to apply the regulations broadly and not take a hard stance on regulating above and beyond the intent of the legislation in order to avoid further legislation. Current actions are likely a response to certain local governments over regulating and hope is as the legislation learns that the majority are acting responsibly, further regulations will be avoided. If there are changes, Oxford will amend their zoning as needed.

## **TOWN MANAGER**

Lewis updated on the consideration of submitting an application to FEMA BRIC for technical assistance, which was approved at the last meeting, stating that she had prepared the submittal and sent it for review, and anticipated submittal prior to the Friday deadline. She provided FEMA's timeline for response to the applications, with anticipated announcement of selected communities in late spring 2024. Additionally, the current ARPA funded study of the flooding issues in the greater Tilghman and South Morris areas where discussed, noting the engineers would be providing information at the March 26<sup>th</sup> meeting regarding the recommended use of the remaining ARPA funding for flood mitigation infrastructure. A successful award of the BRIC funding would allow for continued review of necessary mitigation and assist in identify funding mechanisms going forward.

The previous RFP for the Central Park, now formerly named Dugout Memorial Park, was readvertised with a due date of March 15<sup>th</sup>, with a review of bids to be presented at the March 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, adding the we did have two bidders attend the prebid meeting and at least two bids are anticipated. It was also noted that a product supplier also provided a quote for equipment, which could be utilized if in fact there were no responsive bids to this second request.

Regarding the MDOT Bikeways Grant, Talbot Thrive met with Lane Engineering to review the potential contract for the town, based on the Lane's original quote to Talbot Thrive. As the grant is to the town for the Talbot Thrive project and is for design only from the Causeway parking lot to the east side of Dugout Park and then from there to the walking loop within the County Conservation Park, this contract would be with the town. The design itself would involve town approvals along with the approval from the county for their portion and after a design was determined the project would proceed to the next step of acquiring funding.

With regards to Personnel, the Planning position was filled by Marilyn Williams, formerly with Wicomico County, she started this past Monday. She will come to a future meeting for introduction once she has had the opportunity to settle in. The Commissioners completed interviews for the Clerk/Treasurer position and have chosen their potential hire. Lewis will provide an update on the hire at the next meeting, with an anticipated start date around mid March. The Chief's position has been posted and interviews are anticipated to start some time after March 6<sup>th</sup>. The recently vacated Public Works position has been posted and interviews are expected to start around March 12<sup>th</sup>. Lewis requested a Closed Session for Personnel Matters and Legal Advice regarding the same following the meeting.

Lewis presented the Commissioners with a draft amendment to the FY 2024 General and Enterprise Budget, with a brief explanation of the documents provided and the process going forward, to include future review of this amendment, prior to introduction of the ordinance, which includes a public hearing prior to adoption. She provided a quick review of the items included on the summary, including the current approved budget, the amended budget, funds from prior year reserves, and potential grant/loan funded projects both for FY 24 and FY 25, explaining that most of the adjustments in the current year are the result of completed or not completed grant funded projects, to adjust anticipated income and expenses to the actual numbers. Lewis stated she would provide the commissioners with a date to review the amended budget, to be scheduled between March 7<sup>th</sup> and March 21<sup>st</sup>. The same process will be utilized for the new FY 2025 General and Enterprise Budget, and she will also be providing the drafted FY 2025 budget at an upcoming meeting. The timeline would include public hearings in April for both adopting ordinances, with the intended adoptions by the beginning of May, in advance of the required adoption date of June 1, 2024.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The next regular Commissioner's Meeting - March 12, 2024, the Stormwater Engineer will be attending the March 26, 2024 meeting.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS**

President Costigan noted that Talbot County has purchased the Poplar Hill property, removing the land from potential development, as a result of public involvement. April 25, 2024 has been designated as Talbot Day, with further information available on the county website. Oxford day will be on April 27, 2024, with more information to come on this popular town event. Costigan noted how impressed he was with the young citizens involved in the Civil Air Patrol, following his participation in the presentation of the Oxford Resolution honoring Cadet 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Phillip Horner of the Civil Air Patrol at their formal ceremony. Commissioner Delean-Botkin commented on the town's street ends, also known as paper roads, which provide public access to the water throughout the town, reminding the residents of the commitment of former Commissioners to preserve these street ends, for public use.

Commissioner Greer stated, following Lewis's retirement announcement at the prior meeting, she would like to know what would be the best management practices for hiring of a new town manager, and how to include the community in the process. Costigan stated that the town should follow the recent citizen prepared Hiring Guidelines, which was prepared for the hiring of employees, with the hiring to be overseen by the Commissioners. Greer preferred to have someone come in and speak to the commissioners on the hiring process to include community involvement, with the community having say in how they are managed. Delean-Botkin felt that the management position was already detailed in the job description and as identified in the town charter. Greer stated she had envisioned a nationwide search involving the community, stating there were town citizens with experience who could provide insight, after which it could be determined if the town wanted to hire a recruiter, as they are available from MML. Greer stated the hiring of a town manager is the most important decision the Commissioners would make and she wants to see the community involved in the process, and she proposed the Commissioners have a workshop to receive information from professionals in order to discuss the process further. Delean-Botkin did express her concerns with a town of 600 residents conducting a nationwide search at a cost \$25,000 to \$30,000, based on her experience in similar processes. It was determined that a workshop would be arranged for the Commissioners to receive input and discuss the matter.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Scott Rensberger, Stewart Avenue, addressed the Commissioners regarding what he sees as the lack of the town responses to his recent emails, noting his journalism expertise, stating this is the most non-transparent town he has ever seen. He expressed his concerns with the town's stormwater infrastructure, stating he knows the drain going under the Mill Street marina has not been cleaned out for forty years, requesting a copy of the 2016 Stormwater Study. He stated the town manager's salary is the highest paid in the State of Maryland, which he has thoroughly researched, and he made numerous statements regarding town employees. Jane Seldon felt that it was necessary to go much deeper into the search for a town manager. Will Cawley inquired as to whether permits that have been issued are grandfathered with regards to the recent Floodplain amendment. He was told that as long as he followed the plans that were approved as part of his original permit, he would be in compliance.

With no further business, Commissioner Delean-Botkin motioned to adjourn into a Closed Session for Personnel and other Legal Matters, Commissioner Greer seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned to go into a closed session at 7:18 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Cheryl Lewis, Town Manager

*Commissioner Meetings are now live streaming and are archived on [townhallstreams.com](http://townhallstreams.com).*



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

**Reporting Period: 2/14/24 to 2/26/24**

REPORTS	RP	YTD	ARRESTS	RP	YTD
Accident Report	0	0	Drug Arrests	0	0
Animal Complaint	0	2	DUI Arrests	0	0
Assault	0	0	On-View Arrests	0	0
Domestic	0	0	Warrant Arrests	1	2
Found/Lost Property	0	0	Criminal Summons	0	0
Fraud / ID Theft	1	1	Juvenile Referrals	0	0
Harassment	0	0	Other Arrests	0	0
Misc. / Other	1	1	<b>Total Arrests</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
Suspicious Conditions	0	1	Civil Process	0	0
Theft	2	2	Warrants Serviced	3	4
<b>Total Reports</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	Summons Serviced	0	0
CALLS FOR SERVICE	RP	YTD	COMMUNITY POLICING	RP	YTD
Alarm	1	2	Property Checks	104	470
Animal Complaint	1	7	Special Events	2	4
Assist Other Agency	1	7	Foot Patrol	9	37
Check Welfare	0	1	Bike Patrol	0	0
Found/Lost Property	0	0			
Harassment	0	0	ASSISTS	RP	YTD
Misc. / Other	21	66	Other PD	0	0
Motor Vehicle Collision	0	0	Fire/EMS	1	7
Noise Complaint	0	1	Other Agency	0	0
Parking Complaint	0	1			
Rogue and Vagabond	0	0	ENFORCEMENT	RP	YTD
Suspicious Conditions	0	3	Parking Citations	0	0
Suspicious Person	0	0	Traffic Stops	13	43
Suspicious Vehicle	0	1	Traffic Citations	2	3
Traffic Complaint	0	0	Traffic / Parking Warnings	13	43
Trespassing	0	1	PC Searches	1	1
Verbal Dispute	0	0	Criminal Citations	0	0
911 Hang Up	0	0	Civil Citations	0	0
<b>Total Calls</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>90</b>			
TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS	RP	YTD	TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS	RP	YTD
Speeding	6	25	Cell Phone	0	2
Stop Sign	4	9	Wrong Way as of 2/14	1	1
Driving w/o License	1	1	Equipment	1	3



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**Reporting Period: 2/13/24 to 2/26/24**

***Talbot County Sheriff's Office Response Statistics***

REPORTS	RP	YTD	ARRESTS	RP	YTD
			Drug Arrests	0	0
			DUI Arrests	0	0
			On-View Arrests	0	0
			Warrant Arrests	0	0
			Criminal Summons	0	0
			Juvenile Referrals	0	0
			Other Arrests	0	0
			<b>Total Arrests</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
			Civil Process	2	2
			Warrant Service	0	0
			Summons Service	0	0
<b>Total Reports</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>			
CALLS FOR SERVICE	RP	YTD	COMMUNITY POLICING	RP	YTD
Alarm	0	0	Property Checks	12	31
Animal Complaints	0	0	Special Events	0	0
Check Welfare	0	1	Foot Patrol	0	0
Suspicious Condition	0	0	Bike Patrol	0	0
911 – Hang-up	0	0			
Trespassing	0	0	ASSISTS	RP	YTD
Liquor Law Violation	0	0	Assist Oxford PD	0	1
Noise Complaint	0	1	Fire/EMS	0	0
Parking Violation	0	0	Other Agency	0	0
Suspicious Person	0	0			
Suspicious Vehicle	0	1	ENFORCEMENT	RP	YTD
Verbal Dispute	0	0	Parking Citations	0	0
Found Property	0	0	Traffic Stops	0	1
Motor Vehicle Collision	0	0	Traffic Citations	0	0
Traffic Complaint	0	0	Traffic / Parking Warnings	0	0
Harassment	0	0	PC Searches	0	0
Rogue and Vagabond	0	0	Criminal Citations	0	0
Misc. Calls	0	1	Civil Citations	0	0
<b>Total Calls</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>			