

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 26, 2024

WORKSHOP

Prior to the meeting a Workshop was held at 5 pm for the purposes of reviewing the draft FY 2024 General and Enterprise Budget and Tax Rate.

The Commissioners Regular Meeting was held in the Oxford Commissioners meeting room on Tuesday, March 26, 2024 at 6 pm.

Commission President Costigan shared sentiments regarding the Baltimore Francis Scott Key Bridge tragedy and asked all to keep the victims and families in their thoughts and prayers.

PRESENT

Attending the meeting were Commission President Tom Costigan, Commissioner Susan Delean-Botkin, Commissioner Katrina Greer, Interim Chief Lt. Chris Phillips, Wastewater Supervisor Matt Ozman, Town Manager Cheryl Lewis, and Attorney Lyndsey Ryan. Approximately 50 people were in attendance and approximately 25 virtually. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Delean-Botkin motioned to approve the minutes of March 12, 2024 as distributed, Commissioner Greer seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

Wastewater Supervisor Matt Ozman presented the Public Works report. Public works has repaired parts of the dog park fence including gate fixtures and other pieces of fence that have pulled away from the pole. They are also working on seeding bare spots with grass and repaired the water pump by dog park. The mulching of the park flower beds is complete, and the swing set in town park will be completed this week. Public works has had multiple employees on duty during the past high tides and heavy rains. There was only one after hours call-in for the wastewater plant due to a no pump running alarm for the ENR pump station. A quick repair, replacing a small blown 20-amp fuse, and all pumps were back in service in less than 30 minutes. This is the season we start to find algae growth inside the wastewater treatment plant. They have started the yearly treatment for this type of algae growth inside the wave ox tank itself, which is a very delicate series of treatments that need to happen over the course of about 30 days to get this to retract. A low dose of hypochlorite and WAS sludge pumps are used to gently dispose and kill off the alga. As a reminder, hydrant flushing will start in April if the weather cooperates. Hills Electric has completed electrical cabinet upgrades to the Bachelors point pump station. PW will paint the stop bars at the Tilghman stop sign when weather permits. Matt also noted that higher than normal tides are anticipated over the next 24 hours. Commission President Costigan noted that PW had upgraded the electric components in Town Park.

POLICE REPORT

Interim Chief Lt. Phillips presented police statistics for the prior period, attached here. He noted a new category on the report, Must Appear, which denotes tickets issued requiring court appearance, situations like driving without a license or on a revoked license, etc. He attended a Law Enforcement Steering Committee with community partners on March 19, 2024.

FIRE COMPANY

Tim Kearns provided the report with 8 total calls over the prior period, one automatic alarm in town, one automatic alarm out of town, one gas leak in Easton, three structural fires out of the Oxford area, and 2

EMS calls in town. The Auxiliary Bake Sale will be this Saturday, there will be a Card Party requiring reservations on April 5, 2024 and the Breakfast will be on April 13, 2024, 8 am to 11 am.

OATH OF OFFICE

Commission President Costigan issued the Oath of Office to Jan Nelson who serves on the Parks and Recreation Committee.

Costigan introduced the Town's new Planning and Zoning Coordinator, Marilyn Williams.

PUBLIC HEARING

Attorney Ryan summarized Ordinance 2403 Amending the Floodplain Management Ordinance, basically removing the current exemption which allows for certain equipment to be placed below the elevation of the lowest floor. She noted that not removing the exemption would change the town's CRS status from 7 to 9, as discussed in previous meetings. Williams, the new Planner and a Certified Floodplain Manager, noted that the exemption currently being discussed has already been removed from FEMA and from Maryland regulations for sometime now, and when the town was next audited by FEMA it would require removal. With no public comments, the public hearing was closed.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commissioner Delean-Botkin motioned to approved 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, Commissioner Greer seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

MDOT Bikeways Grant – Talbot Thrive “Oyster Trail” design contract with Lane Engineering was provided to the Commissioners. Lewis noted that the grant of \$ 23,962 would require an in-kind match of \$6,038, which is to be provided by Talbot Thrive and can include town staff services. The Lane Engineering contract is in response to the MDOT Grant requirements as negotiated by Talbot Thrive and at this time, they are seeking Commissioner approval to move forward as the town will be the grant recipient and will manage the project expenses. Commissioner Greer motioned to approve signing the contract, Commissioner Delean-Botkin seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. Lewis additionally request Commissioner approval to also submit for potential construction funding as the MDOT grant period opens in April with a submittal date in May, with Talbot Thrive providing a majority of the effort for the application. Commissioner Greer motioned to move forward with a potential application for construction funding for construction of

NEW BUSINESS

Brent Jett, the Coastal Resilience Group Leader and Jason Lytle, the town's engineer, both of George Miles and Buhr Engineering, the firm awarded the Design/Build contract to address identified stormwater issues, provided the Commissioners with a PowerPoint presentation on stormwater/tidal water management in the face of increasing higher tides and heavier precipitation and recommended infrastructure improvements (PowerPoint is posted on the town website and verbal component can be found within the meeting recording.) Along with area specifics regarding elevations and tide levels, he noted the current anomaly of the low tides actually running higher than the projected high tides and extreme rains over the last three months, stating that it provides a glimpse of what the town can expect for a normal day in 2050. Following information regarding current and near future conditions, the concept of providing under street pumps in the area of the existing tide gates, with improvements to the tide gates, to move flood waters to the river or creek was presented and discussed. Commissioners and residents were provided an opportunity to ask questions. As the next step, the engineers will provide estimated costs for the proposed locations of Mills Street and Pier Street, along with considerations for Bank Street and Caroline Street.

Town Manager Lewis stated that one bid was received in response to the Central Park/Dugout Memorial Park RFP from Unity Landscape Design/Build Inc. for \$211,896. She stated that she would like to speak with the bidder and come back with a reduced scope for the Commissioner to consider at a future meeting.

With regards to a Town Manger Hiring process, Commissioner Greer proposed, following the prior meetings presentation by hiring professionals, that in order to rally the town behind a vision of the future, the town should consider a process that will ensure a rich applicant pool, and motioned to have an RFP prepared seeking a government search firm. President Costigan stated that he felt that the citizen prepared Hiring Guidelines, the result of a citizen process that began in March of 2023, with the citizen group working through spring and summer in public meetings to create the guidelines, which were subsequently approved unanimously by the Commissioners in October 2023, already addressed hiring in the opening statement, which stated the policy was established to ensure the town can attract the best qualified individuals for all positions. He stated per the guidelines the position should be posted on the town website, social media, Indeed, and the MML website, which can be done as soon as Monday, April 1, 2024. Additionally, he recommended that an RFP be issued for a search firm, which would give the town the ability, should the Commissioners need to avail themselves of this option. At the end of April, the candidates could be evaluated allowing the town to move forward with the selection process, with the hope of having a new hire by mid-May allowing time for training. Commissioner Delean-Botkin stated as someone with experience in utilizing a search firm for government employment, and after researching other eastern shore communities who have used a firm for similar positions, she found some were satisfied with the process, while others who ended up hiring locally were not, she was not sure it was the right direction. She stated that in the many letters received, she came to two conclusions. First it was suggested the new town manager should heal the rift in the town, stating that this was not the town managers job, it was up to the town to heal itself, and she thanked Suzie Hurley and Debra Pulzone for inviting all who were interested to a public meditation this past weekend to start this process. The second concern was transparency, and she did not feel that using a recruiting firm would be any more transparent than the Commissioners conducting a search themselves, considering that they are now keenly aware of the transparency issue. Commissioner Greer reiterated that she felt the best way to assure transparency and a very rich applicant pool is to engage a firm, develop a profile with the community, and advertise more broadly, as you don't know where you applicants might be coming from, and should not limit yourself to just Maryland in order to follow in the footsteps of what we have accomplished, as we are a small town but have a fairly sophisticated operation of grants and infrastructure needs. Costigan felt that following the guidelines already are in place, while also issuing an RFP to have the ability to hire a search firm, was the appropriate direction. If after 30 days the town is not successful, the town can utilize the search firm. He feels that our recent hires demonstrate that the system does work and that the town has the ability to attract viable applicants with our process. Following further discussion, it was determined that the town would have a simultaneous approach, proceed with the current Hiring Guidelines process, while also preparing and placing an RFP out for proposals from professional hiring firms, should a firm become necessary. Commissioner Delean-Botkin motioned to move forward with both plans, Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

LETTERS AND REQUEST

Oxford Library requested to close a portion of Market Street for their annual Oxford Day Booksale as they have in the past, which was granted. Scott Prisco of Popes Tavern requested to close a portion of South Morris Street in the evening on Oxford Day to have an outside band event. They will work with the police department to assist Doc's patrons in getting to Second Street during the time frame. Lt. Phillips stated the department would be available to manager the street closing. The town will require fencing/wrist bands to segregate those approved to be served alcohol, completion of an event permit (to be provided), and an insurance rider. Preliminary approval was granted based on Popes meeting these requirements.

ATTORNEY

Ryan stated that in the matter of Rebecca Keegan, following an appeal of a Port Warden's decision, which was upheld by the Town Commissioners several years ago, the applicant took the case to Circuit Court where it was upheld, and then to the Court of Appeals where it was upheld, after which they went to the Supreme Court. Today she received notice that the Supreme Court has turned down the request. The second case, in which Rebecca Keegan has named the town and numerous property owners in the cove, was upheld in Circuit Court, but is now being appealed to the Court of Appeals.

TOWN MANAGER

Lewis requested appointment of Phyliss Rambo, Leanne Meisinger, Jodie Ware and Dodi Sutton to the Election Board for the upcoming Election. Commissioner motioned to approve the appointment, Commissioner seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried. Lewis stated notices and forms for the upcoming June 18, 2024 Election would be posted and available on April 1, 2024.

Lewis stated the town was accepting applications for the R Gordon Graves Scholarship, explaining that the program provides for at least two scholarships of at least \$500 in the town budget. Last year two students were provided \$1000 scholarships. She also noted that currently the program does have donated funding of \$8600 which remains for this purpose only, and she has shared the information with Phyliss Rambo so she can follow it going forward. The application due date for this year is June 1st.

With regards to the Water Meter RFP, meetings will be set up with the vendors of the two selected products, who will provide presentations. These will be set up as public meetings, either in person or virtual, yet to be determined. Lewis will provide the commissioners with dates once set.

Lewis stated they were currently interviewing for both the Public Works opening and the Chief of Police. She requested a closed session for the purposes of discussing personnel matters and receiving legal advice.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next regular Commissioner's Meeting will be on April 9, 2024; there will be a Public Hearing for Ordinance 2404 Amending the FY 2024 General and Enterprise Budget; and April 27, 2024 will be Oxford Day. This coming Saturday is the annual Easter Egg Hunt in Town Park.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Curt Reintsma requested clarification on the Town Manager hiring process as he felt it was important that there be sufficient time for the current manager to work with the new hire for transitioning purposes. Bob Hyberg asked if a cap had been set for utilizing a recruiting firm. Art Murr also expressed concerns regarding the cost that comes with recruiting from out of the area, moving expenses, housing expenses, etc. Dave Ober felt that the dual approach, in first attempting to get someone with local government experience, was important because he felt hiring from within Maryland was valuable in bringing in someone with knowledge in this environment. Will Cawley inquired as to whether the electrician that the town received the original estimate for the town park work was licensed and what the parameters were. Lewis stated she requested a licensed electrician provide a quote for what he felt was necessary with a response of \$7000 for the work. She also inquired as to the ability of the town shop to complete the work on town property and was assured that they were able to do the work, adding that the work was coordinated with the electrical inspector before, during and after the effort, and the work will be certified by the inspector.

With no further business, Commissioner Delean-Botkin made a motion to enter closed session at 8:39 to discuss a personnel matter and obtain legal advice, which was seconded by Commissioner Greer and unanimously carried. Ms. Lewis advised that an interview panel of three individuals conducted the first round of interviews for the vacant Police Chief position. The interview panel consisted of Ms. Lewis, Deputy Chief Eric Kellner, and Talbot County Sheriff Joe Gamble. She advised that the two qualified individuals that applied, submitted the Town's hiring application, and completed the process, were interviewed by the panel. Ms. Lewis shared the panel's recommendation that the Commissioners interview both candidates, which the Commissioners agreed to.

Lewis advised that she and Mr. Ozman reviewed the applications submitted and scheduled interviews for the vacant Public Works position with the 3 qualified applicants.

Lastly, the Commissioners discussed contracts between the Town and independent contractors. Ms. Ryan advised that the contracts are between the Town and the independent contractor and that if citizens have questions or concerns about a particular project or contractor, they should contact the Town Office or the Commissioners and not the contractor.

At 8:51, Commissioner Delean-Botkin made a motion to close the closed session, which was seconded by Commissioner Greer and unanimously carried. Given that this portion of the meeting was inadvertently broadcast to the public, these minutes are no longer closed and are included in the regular minutes of the March 26th meeting.

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”

Reporting Period: 3/12/24 to 3/25/24

REPORTS	RP	YTD	ARRESTS	RP	YTD
Accident Report	0	0	Drug Arrests	0	0
Animal Complaint	0	3	DUI Arrests	0	0
Assault	0	0	On-View Arrests	0	0
Domestic	0	0	Warrant Arrests	0	2
Found/Lost Property	0	0	Criminal Summons	0	0
Fraud / ID Theft	0	1	Juvenile Referrals	0	0
Harassment	0	0	Other Arrests	0	0
Misc. / Other	1	2	Total Arrests	0	2
Suspicious Conditions	2	3	Civil Process	0	0
Theft	0	2	Warrants Serviced	0	4
Total Reports	3	11	Summons Serviced	0	0
CALLS FOR SERVICE	RP	YTD	COMMUNITY POLICING	RP	YTD
Alarm	2	6	Property Checks	120	700
Animal Complaint	1	9	Special Events	0	4
Assist Other Agency	0	8	Foot Patrol	12	57
Check Welfare	0	2	Bike Patrol	0	0
Found/Lost Property	0	0			
Harassment	0	0	ASSISTS	RP	YTD
Misc. / Other	30	115	Other PD	0	0
Motor Vehicle Collision	0	0	Fire/EMS	0	8
Noise Complaint	0	1	Other Agency	0	0
Parking Complaint	2	4			
Rogue and Vagabond	0	0	ENFORCEMENT – NO ARREST	RP	YTD
Suspicious Conditions	2	6	Parking Citations	0	0
Suspicious Person	0	0	Traffic Stops	17	72
Suspicious Vehicle	3	6	Traffic Citations	1	4
Traffic Complaint	0	0	Traffic / Parking Warnings	17	74
Trespassing	0	1	PC Searches	0	1
Verbal Dispute	0	0	Criminal Citations	0	0
911 Hang Up	0	0	Civil Citations	0	1
Total Calls	40	158	Total Enforcement	35	152
TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS	RP	YTD	TRAFFIC VIOLATIONS	RP	YTD
Speeding	14	44	Cell Phone	0	2
Stop Sign	4	19	Wrong Way	0	1
M/A	1	2	Equipment	0	5



*Oxford Police Department
 101 Market Street
 P.O. Box 339
 Oxford, Maryland 21654
 "Maryland's First Port"*

Reporting Period: 3/12/24 to 3/25/24

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
			Total Arrests	0	0
			Civil Process	0	2
			Warrant Service	0	0
Total Reports	0	0	Summons Service	0	0
CALLS FOR SERVICE	RP	YTD	COMMUNITY POLICING	RP	YTD
Alarm	0	0	Property Checks	3	40
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	1	3
Noise Complaint	0	1	Fire/EMS	0	0
Parking Violation	0	0	Other Agency	0	0
Suspicious Person	0	0			
Suspicious Vehicle	0	2	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
Total Calls	0	4			

March 23, 2024

Honorable Thomas Costigan, President of the Commission
Honorable Susan Delean-Botkin, Commissioner
Honorable Katrina Greer, Commissioner

We are writing to support Commissioner Greer's proposal to use a professional city and town management recruiter to guide Oxford town commissioners in selecting a new town manager. This approach will provide a valuable connection for Oxford to the city and town management profession. By using a professional recruiter with experience in helping communities such as ours to identify a new town manager, we will have access to a broad and deep range of local government management professionals. Yes, there is a cost to using a professional recruiter. But the cost is relative, especially compared to the value this approach can bring to the Town.

This important milestone in the Town's history can be marked by moving forward with the belief that we can do it on our own or the recognition that there may be a better way. I encourage Commissioners Costigan and Delean-Botkin to move out of their comfort zone and believe in the value to the Town a different process will bring.

Respectfully,

Carol Kachadoorian and Tom Downs
105 Jacks Point Road
Oxford, 21654

From: [Peter Clancy](#)
To: oxfordclerk@goeaston.net
Subject: RENSBERGER VIDEO REACTION
Date: Saturday, March 23, 2024 5:23:36 AM

Dear Commissioners:

There is a really nasty video circulating now that disturbs me.

I found it in horrible taste. Regardless of your views about the subjects mentioned, it shows a side of Oxford that repels me. Why can't we be nicer to each other?

Ask yourselves who would want to replace Cheryl after viewing this.

I'd like it on record that I support the hiring of a search firm to recruit the next town manager. Now more than ever.

Sincerely,

Peter Clancy
106 Myrtle Street

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

From: [Daniel Kordell](#)
To: [Cheryl Lewis](#)
Subject: Letter to commissioners regarding the Strand Beach Project
Date: Thursday, March 21, 2024 11:07:09 PM

Please read this letter into the minutes of the Commissioners meeting scheduled for March 26, 2024.

To the Commissioners of Oxford,

I and my wife have noticed on many occasions over the past two months, an obnoxious sulfur swamp-like odor while driving past the Oxford beach project when the wind is coming towards the shore. This odor is present even when no puddles are present, and I have never noticed this odor prior to the recent Strand Beach project. I have heard comments from several other residents about this smell as well.

I am requesting that the commissioners hire a professional environmental expert, who is in no way associated with this project, or it's management, to research and monitor this condition, and make recommendations to remedy this condition before it gets worse.

Please advise soonest what actions you will be taking.

Thank you,
Daniel Kordell
510 Strand

Jane R. Selden
100 Tilghman Street
Oxford, MD 21654

Dear Commissioners,

Steve and I think that it is extremely important that you have the best possible applicant pool for all persons seeking positions in our town government. The entire process must be transparent in order that Oxford's population be aware and engaged in the selection of new hires.

Jane R. Selden

Joan M. Levy
218 South Street/PO Box 344
Oxford, Maryland 21654

Commissioner Susan Delean Botkin
Commissioner Tom Costigan
Commissioner Katrina Greer

Thank you for hosting the workshop last week, which brought clarity and transparency to the search process for a new Oxford Town Manager. I appreciate your open-minded willingness to consider the best ways to move forward, as it demonstrates your understanding of the long-term effects your decision will have on our community.

I am currently involved in three active Executive Director searches for organizations in Talbot County, all of which have chosen to work with search firms to assist them. These firms were selected for their experience and success in identifying quality candidates. Despite their differences in staff and budgets, some smaller, some larger than Oxford, they all share similar challenges:

- Competition for individuals with specific skills,
- The complexity of managing a budget that is significantly supported by grants.
- Building trust and acceptance in the process.

While these challenges may seem daunting, there are resources available to help you address them.

Cheryl Lewis set a high standard for what we should expect in a town manager, and I believe that taking the time and dedicating resources to the recruitment process, such as creating an RFP and committing to using a search firm, will demonstrate your resolve to find the best person for the position.

Thank you for your commitment to our community. I look forward to hearing about the progress of the search process. I firmly believe you want to do the right thing.

Respectfully,



Joan Levy

March 25, 2024

Commissioner Tom Costigan
Commissioner Susan Delean-Bodkin
Commissioner Katrina Greer

Re: New Town Manager Hiring Process

Dear Commissioners:

I recently had an opportunity to read a letter to you, dated March 19, 2024, from Madge Henning and Warren Davis supporting the use of an executive search firm to assist the Commissioners in hiring a person to replace Cheryl Lewis as Town Manager. I support the positions taken by Warren and Madge in their letter.

I would also recommend that you take advantage of the experience and expertise of residents of Oxford in this process, in particular, Russ Gray who has broad experience in the search firm business. His input would be invaluable to you in selecting the search firm as well as managing the search once a firm is retained.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,

James B. ("Dick") Deerin
301 S. Morris Street
Oxford MD 21654

Cc: Russ Gray

From: scmdva119 <scmdva0119@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 25, 2024 3:55 PM
To: Cheryl Lewis; Greer Katrina; dc2ox4d@verizon.net; sdel@hotmail.com
Subject: Recent town meetings

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing today to let you know how shocked and saddened I was to see the incredible rudeness shown by Commissioner Bodkin to speakers at two of our recent Town meetings.

The first time when Scott Rensberger got up to speak, Ms. Bodkin called him a liar and wanted to argue with him. The second time was when we had guest speakers educating us about recruitment best practices. In a third incident I understand Ms Bodkin confronted a citizen after the meeting.

Please Ms. Bodkin, can you try to get past your emotions and give people the respect they deserve from now on ? We all know you were not in favor of the recent workshop on hiring but sometimes things don't go our way !

Ms. Bodkin continues to disappoint.

Mr. Costigan, can you please keep her in check ? It is your job as president to maintain order at the meetings.

I would like this letter read around at the next Town meeting.

Respectfully,

Kelly Greenhawk

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **scmdva119** <scmdva0119@gmail.com>
Date: Sat, Nov 4, 2023 at 11:05 AM
Subject: financial committee proposals
To: <dc2ox4d@verizon.net>, <sdel@hotmail.com>, Katrina Greer <katrinahgreer@icloud.com>, Cheryl Lewis <oxfordclerk@goeaston.net>

Hi,

I have reviewed the 2 proposals for a financial committee to advise the Town and I would approve of Katrina's proposal over Mr. Costigan's.

Thank you,

Kelly Greenhawk

March 19, 2024

Tom Costigan
Susan Delean-Botkin
Katrina Greer

Dear Commissioners,

Madge and I attended the recent workshop regarding the role a professional recruiter could play in the search for a successor to Cheryl Lewis. We thought the workshop was informative and well presented. It prompted us to give further consideration to the advisability of including a professional recruiter in the process.

Before attending the workshop, it had occurred to us that it might be useful for the Commissioners to appoint a citizen screening committee to assist in the search for a new Town Manager. Our thought was prompted by a review of the recently approved Hiring Practices and Procedures which, as we read them, provides little guidance in how a vacancy in the Town Manager position should be filled. Our views on this were communicated to the Commissioners in our letter noted at the last Commissioner meeting. Our hope was that a broad-based committee, with each Commissioner selecting two committee members, would go a long way to ensuring a fulsome search and, most importantly, broad citizen support for the person ultimately selected by the Commissioners.

While we continue to believe that such a screening committee would be helpful, we have been persuaded that there are disadvantages (particularly the cumbersome nature of large committees) that may outweigh the significant benefits we anticipated. That said, based on what we learned at the workshop, we see significant benefits, and little downside, in utilization of a professional recruiter to assist the Commissioners in this very important process.

What are these benefits?

1. A recruiter who specializes in the field of municipal town leadership will have significant more knowledge than the Commissioners regarding how positions like Town Manager are filled. They will certainly be aware of the publications and services that are read by the people we are looking for.
2. A recruiter will have a data base of persons looking for our type of position and, more importantly, knowledge of persons who are not actively looking but who may be interested if approached by the recruiter. Although we are a small town, we have a treasure in terms of people, property and location that could be very attractive to qualified individuals who are approached by a professional recruiter.
3. A recruiter would add an independent voice to the search (free of any Town politics or issues) that will encourage broad citizen confidence in the search and enthusiasm for the eventual hire.

We clearly feel that these benefits outweigh the downsides of proceeding with a professional recruiter. Given the size of our budget, the magnitude of the challenges we face (namely, the multiple offshoots of climate change: rising water levels, tidal flooding and severe storm flooding), we believe an expenditure of \$20-30,000 is entirely responsible. Any delay in the process attributed to hiring a professional recruiter should be offset by the experience the recruiter would bring to conducting a speedy, but thorough, search.

Ultimately, the three Commissioners must make this important choice. A bad decision could be severely detrimental to our Town's future. Hiring a professional recruiter with experience in filling a Town Manager position should significantly reduce the chance of a bad decision.

Respectfully submitted,

Warren Davis
Madge Henning
201 Banks Street

From: Noname <noname.hyberg@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 15, 2024 12:58 PM
To: Tom Costigan; Susan Delean-Botkin; Katrina Greer
Cc: Cheryl Lewis
Subject: Head Hunters

Dear commissioners Costigan, Delean-Botkin and Greer,

I do not support the Town of Oxford engaging with a 'head hunter' for the sole purpose of filling the position of town manger.

Time is of the essence and focus should be on the three of you along with Cheryl's input to define duties, responsibilities and oversights she has performed over the last twelve years. The three of you should be capable to create a job positing for advertising.

Your consideration in a need for a head hunter is clearly a testimonial on Cheryl's capabilities to successfully manage and grow the town of Oxford. But I believe we would be better served between you three and Cheryl creating a more concise job description, responsibilities and experiences requirement for the job of town manager. I am betting Cheryl is the first person that would take-on helping define all aspects of her job.

You should be focus on developing a comprehensive job description using your historical skills in conjunction with Cheryl's, not developing a proposal to seek a head hunter.

I attended the disappointing "workshop" on best practices, expecting to hear concrete definitions on establishing business models recommendation on defining comprehensive job definitions and quantifiable techniques to gather existing practices. Instead I heard marketing justifications to hiring a head hunter, no substance to strategies on using 'best practices' in defining and advertising, just who might do it better.

As for the 'carrot' dangled about Garrett Park, MD, I am very familiar with Garrett Park. A very affluent community adjacent to Kensington, MD where I spent some fifty years growing up and owning a home in Kensington. I am aware of some of the politics there and surmise how a head hunter was invoked. I found it odd David selected them to use as an example. A community with deep pockets and subject to the political atmosphere permeating out of Washington DC. Adjacent to Bethesda and North Bethesda, MD. Georgetown Preparatory School, Strathmore Musical Center, National Institute of Health, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and much more to attract a wide net of applicants. Be that as it may, I am sure they had a multitude of benefits to embellish that search.

The three of you do not need to be innovative on how you find a new town manager, you just need to dig in and do it.

Respectfully submitted and thank you for all your efforts,

Bob Hyberg
(302) 864-8008

From: John Fairhall <john.fairhall@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2024 10:40 AM
To: Tom Costigan; Sdel@hotmail.com; katrina Greer
Cc: Cheryl Lewis; John Fairhall
Subject: Recruiting a new town manager

(Please publish this with the minutes of the public record)

Dear Commission President Tom Costigan and Commission members Susan Delean-Botkin and Katrina Greer,

After the recent meeting on how best to recruit a successor to Town Manager Cheryl Lewis, I went home thinking Oxford is in the enviable position of being able to attract talented people beyond the borders of Maryland. People want to live here because it's well known as a great community in a great region and state. We ought to take advantage of that in searching for individuals who have deep backgrounds in governmental management and significant accomplishments, regardless of where they worked. Why not set our sights high?

I respect those who worry about spending too much money, but I also believe we shouldn't be penny wise and pound foolish. I don't see what's wasted by hiring professionals to help us search broadly. As commissioners, you determine an appropriate budget for recruiting and hiring and make the final decision on hiring. We will likely have to live with that choice for a long time.

Fresh ideas combined with strong managerial skills are crucial to helping the town deal, for example, with the threat of rising waters. Many other challenges face Oxford —filling positions in the fire department, for example. The biggest challenge, I think, is whether Oxford can retain its appealing character, attracting full and part-time residents as well as visitors. An effective town manager, using ideas and skills acquired in previous jobs, can help with that.

It's worth spending good money to find a good town manager, regardless of where they work and live now.

Sincerely,

John Fairhall
108 W. Pier St.
Oxford

From: Eva Smorzaniuk <evasmorz@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 11:04 AM
To: Katrina Greer; Susan Delean-botkin; dc2ox4d@verizon.net
Cc: Cheryl Lewis; Philip Dietz
Subject: Hiring of new town manager

Dear Town of Oxford Commissioners,

The process of hiring a town manager was, likely, in the past, a more simple process, involving a search within the local talent pool. The job of manager has grown more complex, the challenges facing the town more numerous, and the citizenry more critical and divisive. We would certainly support you if you chose to do this unaided. There are probably more trade-specific job listing databases that can be accessed on-line. And, we have confidence in the ability of our commissioners to come up with a comprehensive job description and to engage in a thoughtful interview process. However, while expensive, a professional recruiter could relieve you of some of the burdens, cast a wider net, and give you some measure of protection if the hiree did not meet up to the town's expectations.

Good luck in this important endeavor.

Sincerely,

Eva M. Smorzaniuk
Philip E.L. Dietz, Jr.
104 Bayview Ave.

From: Scott Rensberger <scott.rensberger@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, March 21, 2024 9:50 AM

To: Cheryl Lewis <oxfordclerk@goeaston.net>; Katrina Greer <katrinahgreer@icloud.com>;
dc2ox4d@verizon.net; susan delean-botkin <sdel@hotmail.com>

Subject: Oxford needs to do a Forensic Audit

Dear Commissioners and Town Manager,

Several of my questions regarding the flooding in my neighborhood are going unanswered and unaddressed. Since 2012, study after study have clearly illustrated that more needs to be done along Banks, Stewart, Norton and Mill Streets. For the most part, it appears the Town of Oxford has ignored several of these recommendations. So naturally residents like myself have questions. After all, when it comes to flooding my property seems to be ground zero.

For several weeks and months I've asked very basic questions. Questions like -- How often are the floodgates cleaned? Can I talk to the flood engineer who is currently studying my backyard? I've received zero information. Crickets. Nothing.

Back in January, our Town Manager said, "Stewart, Norton and Mill Streets drain under the marina" to Town Creek. However, a 2013 Maryland Report found that the pipe underneath the marina doesn't work. In fact, our former Maintenance Supervisor told me -- the drainage pipe that our Town Manager's talking about, to his knowledge, hasn't been cleaned since the Reagan Administration. So, when our Town Manager tells me that my entire neighborhood depends on a pipe that doesn't function properly - either she's not aware of the 2013 Maryland Report or something else.

About a month ago I literally begged for the 2016 Stormwater Master Plan but for some reason I wasn't allowed to see it. And then, at a Commissioners meeting, I was taunted by Commissioner Susan Delean-Botkin. She called me a liar twice and held up what she called was the 2016 Master Plan and said, "here it is." All three Commissioners and the Town Manager knew I wasn't lying. You all knew -- the Town of Oxford had not given me the Master Plan. And, no one came to my defense. Everyone at the Commissioners table just let the Honorable Commissioner Delean-Botkin call me a liar in front of the entire town. Ironically, about 24 hours later the Master "Draft" Plan was put online. Still, no one from the town contacted me.

Last week Commissioner Susan Delean-Botkin stated in the public meeting that residents, like myself, only have three minutes to speak and the Commissioners and Town Managers have no obligation to answer any questions. So, here I am, a simple guy living in the low part of town, who would do just about anything for our community, and I can't get answers in public meetings or by email.

Currently, the only way I know how to communicate to the other residents of Oxford is by video. If you find anything incorrect regarding this video or anything I've ever said please email me and I'll be more than happy to correct any mistakes. Unlike the Town of Oxford -- I'll respond.

Finally, all I'm seeking is good old-fashioned transparency. I believe a forensic audit will help heal our beautiful town. Afterwards, we can all move on. And, please don't worry about the cost. Several residents have already shown great interest towards picking up the tab. It's a win-win for everyone.

Thank you so much for your time.

Youtube Link --

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Scott Rensberger
202-423-9040

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Stephen Weissenberger** <sjweissenberger@comcast.net>

Date: Mon, Mar 25, 2024 at 10:53 AM

Subject: Comments on the March 12, 2024 Commissioners Workshop and Hiring Practices

To: Oxford Tom Costigan <dc2ox4d@verizon.net>, Oxford Katrina Greer

<katrina4commissioner@gmail.com>, Oxford Susan Delean Bodkin <sdel@hotmail.com>

Cc: Home <sjweissenberger@comcast.net>

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for holding the Workshop on 3-12-24 introducing the attendees to the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and to the idea of using a consultant specifically for the hiring of Oxford's replacement Town Manager.

We have a mixed audience, some who have Corporate/Private Sector or large Government/Public Sector experience and some who do not. So introducing the audience at-large to the concept of outside counsel as an option for this process is the right thing to do.

I know it is controversial whether you handle the process of hiring a Town Manager in-house or with the help of using a consultant. One can argue for either side and sleep at night knowing you made the right decision.

Oxford residents are very split right now, it can be hostile and un-civilized, I am sure you have been on the receiving end of this and it is not fun and not deserved.

You should not have to put up with this nonsense.

However, you have chosen to be in leadership roles for the Town and therefore have to make the decision on how to proceed in this hiring process, i.e. in-house or with the help of an outside consultant.

The arguments for keeping the process in-house are easy: we have always done it that way, we know what we want, the process has worked in the past, it is cheaper.

The arguments for going outside are also easy: need help, broader reach, opportunity to reflect on who/what we need for the future with the help of experts, additional perspective, un-biased, transparency.

Your goal through this process should be three-fold: envision what the town will need in the future, find a town manager to meet these visions, heal the wounds.

I have also reflected on what is best for the town going forward. Based on the state of the Town, the division, the mis-trust, the decision is an easy one. I hope that you choose to proceed with the hiring of an outside consultant to help with the hiring process. The current Town Manager should not be included at all; she has chosen to retire and therefore should have no voice or involvement in the process.

This is an opportunity to create a vision for the Town for the next decade and choosing the right person to fulfill that vision. The commissioners should take the time to create this vision and let the experts fulfill that vision with the right candidates.

My experience having been a manager for a large division of a fortune 200 corporation with Corporate HR and Personnel Offices has shown me that using recruiters and consultants has been beneficial in helping identify needs and providing other perspectives.

Respectfully,

Steve Weissenberger
105 Benoni Street
Oxford, MD.

From: Larry Myers <brushstrokeslarry@gmail.com>

Subject: Urge use of independent outside recruitment firm to assist hiring a new Town Manager

Date: March 23, 2024 at 2:50:59 PM EDT

To: dc2ox4d@verizon.net, susan delean-botkin <sdel@hotmail.com>, Katrina Greer <katrinahgreer@icloud.com>

Dear Oxford Commissioners:

Our family urges that the Commission commit to the hiring and use of an independent executive recruitment firm to aid in the objective and transparent selection of a new Town Manager for Oxford. We understand that a formal decision on this matter may be taken at your next meeting on March 26. It may be optimistic to expect that a specific firm, process and contract can be developed by then, but the Commission should at least commit to the use of a transparent outside executive search process as the core of its recently affirmed commitment to best practices in its replacement of this most important executive position in our town.

We watched by zoom the workshop meeting of March 12, involving explanations on the use by smaller communities of independent recruitment services by experts from several Maryland municipal management associations and extensive Q & A by the Commissioners. The essence of the process is that the Town, with the firm's advice and solicitation of public comments, would develop a RFP for the Manager position, describing the town, its governance structure, its financial resources and needs, any particularly important skill sets and experience for the position (such as grants management), and any other criteria for selection, as well as compensation and other contract issues. The recruitment firm would conduct the RFP search within an agreed time frame, maximizing the candidate pool, and then summarize the applications for the Commission, while protecting personal identities as required by Maryland law. The evaluation process would be objective based on the defined criteria, but most importantly, the search and selection process would be fully transparent to the citizens of Oxford, with their input where appropriate.

Commissioners had questions about search costs, the scope and timing of the search process and other practicalities. It was noted that the Town has recently hired a Town Planner and a Clerk-Treasurer without using an outside recruitment firm. The implication is why the need in this case?

The answer to that is that the selection (or replacement) process of Town employees over the years has generally involved minimal citizen input, or engagement, resulting in a substantial decline in public trust in the integrity of the processes being used. It is readily apparent in the quality of controversy now seen in public discourse among residents on a variety of issues facing the Town. Suspicions abound, whether warranted or not. The Town is being harmed by these divisions. Each of us is being harmed in our various ties to the community. One likely solution is more transparency in Town decisions and more direct public engagement in important Town actions,

Hiring a new Town Manager is probably the most important decision that this Commission will make. There is not a lot of time, but the use of an independent search firm can help make it work. It is worth the cost and effort.

Brooke and Larry Myers
Oxford.

Hugh G. Beebe and Carin Starr
803 S. Morris Street/ PO Box 132
Oxford, Maryland 21654
Hb151nmsto@gmail.com cstarr7@gmail.com

March 20, 2024

Dear Commissioners of the Town of Oxford, Maryland,

We write to encourage you to use a recruiting team to manage the search and successful hiring of our next Town Manager. We appreciate there is a significant financial investment with this decision. We believe there is also much to be gained, worth every penny of the investment.

Our town has endured a great deal in the past 18 months. Transparency seems of utmost importance for healing and finding common ground. Both will facilitate our community moving forward productively. Beyond this, the resources a recruiting firm can provide, the experience and follow through, should the selected Town Manager not work out, greatly enhance their participation and the financial investment.

You three will be the final deciders for this very important position. Using a recruiting team doesn't change your role. For us, it seems to empower you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Jock Beebe and Carin Starr

Re: Hiring a new Town Manager Yahoo/Inbox

David Russell Poe

From: davidrussellpoe@gmail.com

To: Katrina Greer

Cc: dc2ox4d@verizon.net, susan delean-botkin, cevaught@gmail.com

Mon, Mar 18 at 12:07 PM

Hi Katrina,

Happy to offer thoughts, not that they are of any great moment.

The infomercial presented at last Tuesday evening's workshop set forth a number of generalities about hiring a recruiter but offered few meaningful specifics. The examples offered relating to communities in Montgomery County and other areas on the western shore probably have minimal relevance to our situation. The reality is that no one is going to cross the Bay Bridge on a daily basis to be our town manager, so we're looking for someone from Talbot County or one of the nearby counties or communities - most probably someone already on the Eastern Shore but I suppose there is a tiny chance that someone might want to move here for the position. So the major reason generally offered for hiring a recruiter - to bring in candidates that we might not otherwise reach in our search - does not seem to provide a compelling justification for proceeding down that road.

On the other hand, a recruiter can add structure to a hiring process that will be difficult for the Commissioners. Probably, hiring a new town manager will be the most important decision you will have to make in your tenure as a Commissioner. Developing a job description for the position, beating the bushes (advertising) for candidates, and evaluating candidates that come forward are all three large tasks in of themselves. It is not unreasonable for part-time Commissioners to hire assistance for some or all of those tasks, although it would not necessarily have to be a recruiter.

The cost estimate presented at the meeting (in the neighborhood of \$ 25 K) seemed somewhat vague. It may turn out to be low, which is not necessarily bad. However, comparing the cost to the size of the town budget may not be the most apt. The issue - as always - is whether the town will receive sufficient value for the money it spends. That will be the judgment call.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views.

I am copying the other Commissioners on this response.

Sincerely,

Dave Poe

Sent from my iPad