

June 13, 2024

The regular monthly meeting of the Oxford Board of Port Wardens was called to order by the Chairman, Thomas Campbell, on Thursday, June 13, 2024, at 5:00 p.m., in the meeting room of the Oxford Community Services Building.

Present were members Robert Hyberg, Robert Trevorrow, Henry Hale, and Oxford Town Planner, Marilyn Williams.

Chairman Campbell requested forgoing the approval the minutes of April 11, 2024, and May 9, 2024, until next month's meeting.

The meeting consisted of an ongoing workshop discussion about mooring applications and fees.

Chairman Campbell addressed the audience by giving a brief backstory as to how the discussion of moorings started. He explained that it was casually approached in January 2024 and appeared on the April and May 2024 agendas as an item for discussion. In those discussions, it was brought up that a change should be made to the mooring fees, from the current rate of \$25 a year to \$350 a year, along with a one-time security deposit fee of \$350. The reason for the increase was primarily in part because the town does have mooring holders who fail to take care of their moorings or end up abandoning them. Chairman Campbell added that the board is positioned to make recommendations to the Commissioners and that the rate change was something they could not approve themselves, rather the Commissioners have to vote on it and change if, if they feel it is necessary.

Chairman Campbell turned the discussion over to 3 of the active mooring owners in attendance.

Oxford resident and mooring holder, Schuyler Benson, spoke stating that he appreciated the board being proactive and maintaining the mooring field, while pointing out that he and the other 2 mooring owners in attendance have been taking good care of their moorings. Though Mr. Benson stated he did not have any issue with a fee, he did point out that other mooring fields along the east coast have fees ranging from \$175 up to \$500 for commercial vessels. He noted that other areas, such as Nantucket, have higher fees but they also offer a lot of services that come with the fee. Mr. Benson stated that this is not the case with Oxford, other than the ability to put a mooring out in the river. He encouraged the board members to look at a more reasonable fee arguing that if the mooring holders had to pay for usage, other commodities in town, such as the dog park, pickle ball/tennis court, garden plots, etc., should be charged fees as well.

Ben Sheets, mooring holder and resident outside of Oxford proper, addressed the commission stating that he, like Mr. Benson, has a mooring which has a lot of expensive equipment attached to it. He pointed out that his boat was important to him and that he has worked hard to take good care of it. He was of the opinion that there were only a few boats in the mooring field out along the Strand and that he did not think it was a big issue, nor did he think a security deposit would help with anything.

Ted Clucas, long time mooring holder, also addressed the board members stating that he agreed with what Mr. Benson and Mr. Sheets had stated.

Chairman Campbell addressed the 3 gentlemen acknowledging that they have all taken good care of their moorings. However, he explained that what Oxford has isn't like Newport, Rhode Island or other large Eastern seaboard towns. Oxford is a small town, and the running of the moorings does require a certain amount of time consuming administrative work along with the payment of the fees associated with Jeff Mathias and his business for inspecting the town's moorings and dropping chains, if the need arises. He added that the security deposit (the money of which would be held in escrow and returned to the mooring holder at such a time as the holder no longer wishes to continue to have a mooring and has properly taken care it) is to get people to take their moorings seriously.

Planner Williams added that they did investigate other mooring facilities in other local areas and found the yearly costs to run anywhere from \$1,200 up to \$4,000 a year. In many cases, mooring holders are only renting a mooring, not owning it. She further explained that there are many town moorings that are in desperate need of upgrading and that the town has no money in the budget to enforce their regulations regarding moorings nor does the town have the money to pay Mr. Mathias should his services be required.

Mr. Trevorrow addressed the audience members assuring them that they were not being treated as victims, that the fee was not an onerous one, and that the board members had agreed they would revisit the policy again at the end of the year and may adjust the fees, if needed. Chairman Campbell added that Oxford is a small town and that this seemed a fair solution to a bigger problem.

Planner Williams called for a recommendation vote. Mr. Trevorrow made a motion that the board recommend to the Commissioners that they accept the board's recommendation on both the (changes to) the Harbor Management Ordinance and the mooring permit schedule, which has revised the permit fee to \$350, with the deposit spelled out in the board's recommendation in the Harbor Management Ordinance. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hyberg and unanimously approved with all in favor.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby

Assistant Clerk