

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD
Regular Meeting Minutes
July 23, 2024

The Commissioners Meeting was held in the Oxford Commissioners meeting room on Tuesday, July 23, 2024. Meeting was called to order and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT

Attending the meeting were Commissioner Norm Bell, Pres., Commissioner Tom Costigan, Commissioner Greer, Chief Chris Phillips, Town Planner Marilyn Williams, Clerk/Treasurer Vickie Sharp, Attorney Lyndsey Ryan and Public Works Matt Ozman. Approximately 43 people were in attendance along with individuals attending virtually.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Oxford Commissioners will vote to go into Closed Session following this open session on this 23rd day of July 2024 under the Open Meetings Act, General Provisions Art. Sub-Section 3-305(b) – 1 – To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom it has jurisdiction.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Greer motioned to table the meeting minutes for July 9, 2023, pending revisions until the next meeting. Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

A new water fountain has been installed at the tennis courts. We also installed a weatherproof bulletin board, if you want to post information you will need to go to the Town Office and drop off and they will see it gets on the board, they have the key. The Town Park water fountain is temporarily working we were able to finagle a part to get it working, a new fountain will be installed soon. The Well 2 control panel has had repairs. Hill's electric has been working with us in finding the exact cause. They are excellent to work with. Lawn mower maintenance and general maintenance on equipment has been completed for the month. It's been extremely hot and we're finally starting to get a little bit of rain now, and things are starting to look up out there in the tree world and bush world. We want to give a big shout out to the volunteers that were actually able to help out and keep things watered. We have water bags around the younger trees and we are finally starting to get a little bit of rain.

POLICE REPORT

Chief Phillips went of the stats from Talbot County Sheriff's office and the Town of Oxford. The time frame is shorter for the period of July 9th – July 17th. This will be posted on Facebook as well. We did 15 total calls, no actual reports or investigations during that time. A combination of traffic stops and citations, we had a total enforcement of about 25 during that time. You'll also notice on the posted stats, the bottom section I used to have more specific information about some of the traffic stops because I thought people might find them interesting. Currently we have 3 applications for the Citizens Police Academy, would like to see a few more, we are aiming for at least 15, the Academy will start in September and finish early December. Applications are available here tonight and down at the Police Department. If you attended this last time, come again as we have added new classes. I attended the Steering Committee meeting in Easton on July 16th, this is a meeting of the Police

Chiefs and leaders from the County to talk about the happenings in the County. There was a plane crash in Talbot County on July 16th as well.

TOWN PLANNER REPORT

Matt and I went to Tilghman Street to look at the bulkhead, there is a 31-foot stretch section of the bulkhead that needs immediate repair or as soon as possible repair. I have submitted some pictures, it's in pretty bad shape, and we'd like to have approval to do a request for bids and get it advertised for repairs. Once we have the quotes in, for the cost to repair, we will come back and discuss the next process. There are signs of water intrusion that's affecting the parking lot, as well in that section. Commissioner Greer is good with the RFP, asked Vickie, if she inherit any kind of capital improvement plan or list or spreadsheet? Vickie state, I would have to go back and check to see if I have anything. Commissioner Greer stated, we'd want to get the costs, and then we'd want to look at our total CIP and decide what we were going to prioritize. Marilyn stated it needs to be high, high priority, as it has been pushed off and maybe not even brought to your attention. Commissioner Greer state, the first I've seen it was in the packet. Marilyn stated having been out there today, we did meet with our title wetlands person from MDE we wanted her to see it as well as we showed her a few projects around and talked to her about a few things. We'll need an MDE permit eventually to be able to do these repairs. Commissioner Greer asked how did this come to attention. Matt, brought this repair forward as it involves one-finger pier. This area has deteriorated to the point it had to be patched and the patch is starting to give way. The top runners are now starting to rot and has pulled away from the finger pier and bulkhead. Three pilings are the only thing holding things together. Commissioner Costigan went to the site and questioned vehicles parking in the parking lot on top of the area of concern. Matt does not know how far the moisture is going back under the parking lot. We can shift the parking down and cone off the area of concern. Commissioner Greer motioned to approve an RFP to repair the 31 feet of Tilghman Street Dock. Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

We need approval to enter into the critical area commission grant program. This is something that we have to do each year. It kind of solidifies our participation with the critical areas and enforcing our regulations. It's a lot of work for our \$1,000 each year. Municipalities fill out this paperwork and give a report each year for a small stipend. But it keeps us in good graces with the critical areas commission. Therefore, we'd like to be able to do this grant program and get our \$1,000. Do you need a motion? Commissioner Costigan motioned to approve the critical area grant agreement as described by Marilyn. Commissioner Greer seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

We had our prequalification for our community rating system or what is called the CRS program this month and right now the community is a seven in the community rating system. Our citizens enjoy a 15% discount on their flood insurance. There's a lot of things that we do on a regular basis that is a part of the CRS program, you don't want to commit to things that are going to be labor intensive. We get credit for our living shorelines, public and private. There are things that we can do to get extra points and we don't need a lot of points comparatively to get to a six. To be a six you also have to have a building code audit number and the Town has not had a building code audit since 1988. I would need approval to move forward with the building code audit. Going from a seven to six would increase the discount on flood insurance from 15% to 20%. Commissioner Greer motioned to approved go ahead with the CRS renewal and building code audit. Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

I attended the state planning meeting this month, I'll have some new legislation to discuss with the historic and the planning commissions. We had staff and commissioners, that attended the post-disaster training offered by Talbot County and Maryland Emergency Services. We have an

emergency operations committee, and will be meeting at the end of the month to review our preparedness have a disaster. The fire department and police department will be involved

CLERK/TREASURER REPORT

Currently reviewing on how to streamline office duties, one being transcribing meeting minutes. I have found a new product called Turboscribe, which is an AI product. You take your recording and drop it in the program, it will translate every word for you from everybody's ah, ooh, or whatever. I tried the program out and you still have to make edits by adding names of the speakers and/or shorten the wording. To subscribe to the program would cost \$120 annually. I ask the Commissioners for approval to move forward with Turboscribe. Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan confirmed that meeting minutes no longer need to be typed. We can use only the meeting stream and you can hear the audio, make it available on the Town website, you no longer have to complete typed minutes. Storage of the meetings have to be for five years, either stored on the website or on a CD, with one year on the website. If all meetings are streamed live, they would be able to go up on the website immediately. Having a video would be the same as typed minutes, as you would see who is speaking. Commissioner Greer motioned to purchase Turboscribe. Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor and the motion carried.

Next, I would like to introduce a product called BoardPAC that will help streamline any agenda items for any committee. Many governments use this product to support and manage their agendas as well as assist with their meeting minutes. Helps streamline deliver of meeting packets by sending them via email. It is an annual or monthly subscription and you can cancel at anytime. Will request a demo.

I'd like to recommend that the staff reports be presented once a month at the very first meeting of the month, and that way individuals such as Public Works and the chief do not need to be here twice a month. Commissioner Greer agreed and suggested moving forward with consent agenda.

TOWN ATTORNEY

I only have one item this evening, and that is the software license agreement with Muni-link, which is the cloud-based billing software for your water meters. I would be asking that you would approve the software license agreement with Muni-link so that the town can go ahead and get it purchased outside of the bigger project. And then you would put the RFP for the water meters out to bid. This contract, again, is for the cloud-based billing software. It's for one year and includes full-time dedicated professional support staff. They're required to use commercially reasonable efforts to make sure that the services that they have demonstrated are the services that they would provide. The cost of the product is \$15,000 with an additional \$525 per month once it's installed for the software fee. The risk of proceeding with this on your own and not doing it as part of the overall project is that USDA could potentially not approve it. It is less than \$20,000, so under your charter, you're not required to advertise the service. However, four software companies were contacted, so you did engage in some competitive procurement. I have three amendments to the agreement, so I would like you to approve it as amended. And those amendments are that the contract term is for one year with automatic renewals. I don't like automatic renewals, so I would just change that such that it's a one-year term, but within 90 days of the term renewal, it has to be my mutual agreement. A lot of times with automatic renewals, the client forgets about them, and then you get into a new contract term, and you're stuck with it for a whole other year. The other is the indemnification that we indemnify, defend, save, and hold harmless, Muni-link. To that, I would just add, to the extent permitted by law. And then the last one is they have the jurisdiction and law being the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Obviously, we want to change that to Talbot County. Commissioner Greer motioned to approve the Muni-link contract as amended. Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor and the motion carried.

OVF COMPANY REPORT

In the last two weeks, the Oxford Fire Company has responded 11 times. Fire for a total of six, two within Oxford, three within the first two, one within the county. EMS was a total of five within Oxford itself. The fire boat responded to the plane crash situation for the first time as it was unofficially placed in service. We're still working on installing a number of the components. But we did prove to be very helpful to the situation. Fall classes for new members, both EMS and fire, will begin in August if you would like to attend. The next breakfast will be September 8th and the rummage sale will be in late August.

Resolution #2411 – A RESOLUTION SETTING THE FEE SCHEDULE FOR THE TOWN OF OXFORD'S MOORING PROGRAM, REPLACING A PORTION OF RESOLUTION 2212 AND ALL PREVIOUS FEE SCHEDULES, EFFECTIVE JULY 23, 2024: Currently there are moorings located in the Town's ownership waterways and there is not a structured program for them. The moorings need to be renewed each year or every two years, along with inspections and any repairs. In an effort to develop structured procedures for enforcing the program based on a section in our Code for moorings and harbor management. The fees for the annual renewals of only \$25, that is a low cost for all the work and follow up by Town Staff. I suggested that the fees need to be increased to help offset staff time and liability. The Port Wardens have reviewed this Resolution and approved with a unanimous vote to recommend to the Commissioners this Resolution increasing the annual fee for the moorings from \$25 to \$350. Do to such a large increase, it is recommended to send back to the Port Wardens for reconsideration of a lower price.

ORDINANCE #2413 – AN ORDINANCE FOR THE TOWN OF OXFORD TO AMEND CHAPTER 11 OF THE TOWN CODE TITLED "HARBOR MANAGEMENT ORDINANCE", TO REVISE SPECIFICATONS FOR MOORINGS AND ESTABLISH AN ESCROW ACCOUNT FOR MOORING MAINTENANCE: This ordinance is being introduced by Marilyn Williams, Town Planner. This escrow is for a one-time payment. Will be held in escrow in the event the Owner of the mooring does not pay their annual fee or if they don't do their repairs, then we would have to pull the chain. Currently the Town does not have a budget line item for this cost, by establishing the escrow fund would cover cost for pulling the chain and/or making repairs due to the default of the Owner. If the Owner sells his mooring he would then be refunded his escrow payment. This helps the Town enforce their own code. Tom Campbell from the Port Wardens Commission spoke in favor of this charge.

Commissioner Greer motioned to move Resolution #2411 back to the Port Wardens, Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion and also stated that they consideration a step increase from \$25 to \$350, all were in favor and the motion carried.

Ordinance #2413 will go to public hearing on August 27, 2024.

Ordinance #2412 – AN ORDINANCE FOR THE COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD TO AMEND THE OXFORD TOWN CODE TO PROHIBIT RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE TOWN FROM PROVIDING CUSTOMERS WITH SINGLE USE DISPOSABLE PLASTIC BAGS: This ordinance is being introduced by Commissioner Tom Costigan. This ordinance will go to public hearing on August 27, 2024.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commissioner Bell stated, we need to finalize the vote to use professional search firm. I made a mistake and didn't finalize the vote. We will take the vote again today. Is there a motion. Commissioner Greer motioned to employ the use of a professional search firm that specializes in

local government for the search for a new town manager. Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor and the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Greer, when are we going to schedule the interviews with the search firms? At this point, we want to understand the services that they provide and how that best fits with what we think we need. It'd be a learning process. And I suggest that we do part of it in an open session and then we close for any confidential or proprietary material they might want to discuss. Meetings could be short and then we would probably re-interview our favorites. Commissioner Bell, my objection to this has been that I feel we need to understand what the scope of that job would be and need to have conversations with staff to understand that. Certainly, before we would go ahead and ask for an RFP. What I understand you're saying is this would just be an intermediate step to figure out who's out there, what they provide. So we would have that information when it's time for us to go to an RFP, we would understand what they would provide. Commissioner Greer, we already have proposals that were solicited from six different firms ranging in price that lay out the scope of their work or they lay out a more minimal search process. This part of the process of doing this is that they gather information with you if you hire them about your needs. They interview staff, they interview you, they interview townspeople to talk about what type of leader you have. It may be after hiring them and working with them, they come back and say, we think you need a town manager three days a week. Maybe they think something different, but that is part of the process. It's not like we ourselves would do the process of deciding what a town manager is like and then tell the search firm that that's what we want. We want the search firm to help us engage with the public and with each other and with the staff to come up with that vision. If we don't start right now, you're talking months and months and months. This would be a matter of doing a half an hour PowerPoint presentation by Zoom, by one of these groups and they're nationally known groups that do national searches and they can talk about their services and how they view their process, how they use the public. This is what we promised the public two weeks ago that we would engage a professional firm and not just kind of make it up as we go along. Commissioner Bell, speaking to, working with staff, understanding what the work is that they're doing now, ideas about filling any gaps, what gaps remain because we don't have a town manager. So, what you are saying is these firms would help us with that. Commissioner Greer, they place people in big municipalities, small municipalities. They are used to doing classification jobs. They come in and do team building exercises. They're much more geared to this and they would have ideas for us in fresh thinking that we don't have. We really need to demonstrate to the public that we have a plan and that professionals are going to help us. That's what we promised, everybody was really great at the last meeting. I think that's because we presented a way forward that made sense to them, and that was to hire a professional search firm. I think we can talk to four or five of these firms, develop a short list based upon the types of placements they've done, the types of work they do, the model they have, and then we interview them again. They will show us, reveal to us, how we develop our plan with our staff, with our town. I think we know that we're not a little backwater anymore, that we have FEMA grants, that we have grants we want to get to, and that we have a great property tax base, and we want to keep it that way by not having flooding. I think this is what we owe the public. This is what they want. Commissioner Costigan, I'm willing to listen and learn. If that means we have to do a couple of meetings and attend a couple of Zoom meetings, I don't have a problem with that. We're not making any decision, and we're not making any final hiring decision of these firms until we have a firm idea of what they can offer us. Quite frankly, I'm a little bit up in the air as to just what these firms can offer us. I'm not sure that there's a ... It's apples, apples, apples, apples. I think each one probably has strengths and weaknesses, and we can listen to them and make our decision then as far as where we're going. Commissioner Greer, I will set up some meetings. We'll probably do two firms a night. Like I said, some of that will be open to the public.

Commissioner Greer, we had talked about divvying up the duties, and I had talked about wanting to do finance and the grants that I had taken the FEMA grants management, and then I had taken a great interest in the budget. We had talked about you taking the boards and commissions and public works and Tom taking the police and emergency planning and the media. Shall we do that

We had talked in our administrative session about developing a workflow, and I've started that process about what needs to come to all three commissioners, what could come to your supervisor. It is a short-term solution, based upon the fact that we have no town manager. But it's going to be very open-ended. The workflow document gives some guidelines about when to report to your superior, when to report to the clerk-treasurer, when to report to all three commissioners. We agreed in the administration session that I would do the first draft and that you guys would take the second, third stab at it.

LETTER RECEIVED FOR THE COMMISSIONERS

Barbara Paca – Preserving Oxford's Trees to Cool The Earth and Watershed

Berkly Cone - Governance

Barbara Paca – Request Formal Written Apology

Schuyler Benson – Fee Structure For Oxford Moorings

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Debbie Krolicki, simple question, you mentioned about the trees being trimmed. Are they finished, or are they going to be coming down all of our side streets because they're sorely needed? Commissioner Bell, there's still work to do on Tred Avon and Benoni. Commissioner Costigan, specifically at the corner of Benoni and Morris, there is a tree that has its branch laying on a live line. They did say they were going to come back and take care of that. I also showed them a tree that was growing into a transformer on Tred Avon Avenue, which for some strange reason their survey team missed. Debbie Krolicki, there was an excellent presentation from, Commissioner Greer, International County Cities Management Association, the former president of that, Don Baruch, and then we also had David Deutsch from the Mercer Group. He was 28 years the town manager in Bowie, Maryland. He's currently doing the search for Cambridge, but he places a lot of Maryland people. The other search firms are similar. They are more nationally focused, but they do placements in the regional area. Debbie Krolicki, what I wanted to say that I'm a neophyte on something like that, but they explained the scope of what a search firm would do. That would include helping us decide what we want our town manager, the scope of the work that that town manager would do.

Jane McCarthy, we keep saying we're a small town, and yet our budget grew from \$2 million 12 years ago to \$6 million. We received \$40 million worth of grants. I think it's time for someone else to look at this town from a fresh perspective, and I think we need to start this search right now. I think we could let it go, it sounds like, for a year, and then it'll sort of drop off our focus.

Art Muir, Chris, this is for you. The crosswalk on either side of the crosswalk, there's yellow. It's being ignored. I can go by there at night, and I guarantee you there are people parking there. What I'm going to suggest is that in that area, first of all, enforcement, one, but number two, put crosshatches, block off the street so that you have crosshatches that come out onto the street so that you can't see, so you don't have the excuse of, I didn't see the yellow line. It's on the street itself. Stop to hopefully give people more encouragement to not park in the illegal parking spot that they're all parking in. Chief Phillips stated we have to go to the state or something like that. It's a state road, but I think it does make a lot of sense. In terms of enforcement, I can't tell you how many tickets I've written there.

Dan Kordell and Sarah Kordell, read aloud a letter that was sent to the Commissioners, I submitted this letter before the last commissioners' meeting and have heard no response, so that's why I'm reading it now. What I didn't send them, though, is Todd Whitaker, a contemporary American educator, said, the culture of any organization is shaped by the worst behavior the leader is willing to tolerate. Again, the culture of any organization, that's us, is shaped by the worst behavior the leader, that's you all, is willing to tolerate.

John Fairhall, I and my wife and my next-door neighbor had a nice meeting the other day with Marilyn Williams. Thank you again. This was about Doc's and their plans to physically expand their facility. Certain information was not provided because Marilyn said it was really not part of the public record. I filed a Public Information Act request in the last 24 hours and think that information should be available. It's just that he or his folks have submitted plans for what they're going to do, and I want to see those. I want to see them for private benefit. I want to show them to everybody who lives near Doc's because we have that problem that we have every year with parking in particular. There are other related problems. Coincidentally, I ran into the owner of Doc's, and we had a very amiable conversation at his restaurant the other day. He brought up something which was interesting. He said he thought one of the solutions could be restarting up that golf cart taxi service, if you will, that we used to have, which actually did work or allocating parking spaces on the grass and then requiring Doc's to pay the cost of the golf cart. We need a little bit more information about what's going to be built there, and I hope that the Freedom of Information Act request is honored, and we need some help arranging a meeting so we can air some of these things and reach a solution pretty quickly. Marilyn Williams, I'm still working with him on his building permit, and we are addressing these things, and we're already looking at additional parking. There's a lot of moving parts, and nothing at all is near a final stage. Commissioner Greer, I think when it gets a little closer, or perhaps we set up the meeting now, I know the owner would like to have a public meeting with the neighbors, and I think that's essential. We don't have provision in our zoning code that requires you to notify the neighbors.

Sarah Matthew, I'll be short. Maybe not that sweet as last time. The commissioners who were here in March, you said you would hire a search firm if we didn't get a successful candidate. We know we didn't get a successful candidate. And two weeks ago, it was a public promise that you made, and you reiterated that promise today. I am just waiting for all three of you to uphold your word and engage in the search firm and continue that process. Don't just hold a meeting and say, hi, thank you very much, and walk away from that search firm.

Bob Bergner, several weeks ago, my sweetheart observed a frail lady with a cane trying to navigate the gravel path. Lady realized that she wasn't going to make it, so she sat down on the dune, never making it to the beach. I know what it's like to be disabled. I have the experience of limited mobility. And with that observation, I decided that I would research the Strand Project as much as I could. I went to the town website, and I combed, along with a couple others, everything as far back as 2020 that pertained to the draft or to the Strand. And I also had documents from the Corps of Engineers and the Maryland Department of the Environment that basically was asking selected residents. I don't think these requests for comments went to everybody in town. And on those drawings, or on this request, were drawings from the contractor, which was Underwood & Associates. Four separate drawings submitted by Underwood, three of them specifically identifying the location of the two ramps, one at Mill Street and Strand, and the other one across the street from the beach. There was also a specific semi-construction generic drawing of an ADA ramp out of an ADA graphics book, basic standard, which clearly identified that a ramp was going to be built.

Maryland Department of the Environment issued a water quality certificate about a year and a half ago to Underwood & Associates, specifically identifying that two ramps would be built contingent on the issuance of the water quality certificate. If we do have this company build the ramps for us, designed, engineered is important, and that should be done by a certified civil engineer, structural engineer, so that the specifications of the ramp meet the American Disabilities Act specifications. Documents were handed to the Commissioners and Staff. I did send the basic cover letter, I believe, to Marilyn and Vickie, and I didn't hear back. That's why I decided that I would make this presentation.

Scott Rensberger, the next time the chair of the Port Warden says he doesn't want to be on camera, I want you to tell him that this is a public meeting and he's part of the town. He's part of the whole board system. And I've never gone after him. I've sent him nice letters in the past that I'm willing to share with you. So, the next time he does that, I want you to speak up and say, you're in a public meeting right now. And then the next question, since he kind of brought it up here, what is he even being the warden for? He's got two boatyards. It's a conflict of interest. Where I come from and every town I've ever visited, that would not be heard of. So we should get rid of that right away. Mr. Tom, I mean this with all due respect. I look forward to the day when I'm riding my bicycle past your house every day in the summer and I'm seeing your beautiful wife and everything, and I want to get back to that period. I really do. I just want you to know that you said about 20 minutes ago, I don't know what any of these professional hiring firms can offer. With all due respect, this is what they offer. None of these firms, none of them would hire a man who wears pantyhose and shows their junk to children at seven different locations. Matt, I'm going to pick on you just for a second, and I love you, brother. Who put the trees in the ball field? That was all done before you? Who put the mound of dirt, and where did the mound of dirt come from? I've recently learned, residents of Oxford, I recently learned with a high probability that a large portion of that dirt that was dumped at the ballpark came from the wastewater treatment, the old wastewater treatment plant. Where did that dirt come from? Matt Ozman stated, they actually came out of the bio retention ponds that were dug around town. That's where that dirt came from. Mr. Rensberger some of it did. If this is the case, the soil could be extremely toxic. Think about this for a second. There has to be a reason that that stuff was dumped at the ballpark. If that dirt was good, if it was safe dirt, it would be sold to a contractor, a landscaper. They would come for free and grab all that stuff. But it wasn't. It was put there because we didn't know what to do with it. At one time, we were sending all of this toxic stuff to another state, and I think we ran out of money or time or they didn't want it anymore. I don't know exactly if everything I just said is absolutely true, but I think the soil should be tested. Matt Ozman stated, I do know that when they dug those bio retention ponds, Barkers Landing, they did those projects. They did the one behind the ballpark.

Scott Rensberger, regarding the last election, Norm, I really mean I am thankful that you're Commissioner, and I really hope this takes off and everything in my heart is for you, okay? There were a few voting irregularities that I've seen. There are a couple people that live at 105 West Division that, to my knowledge, has never lived in the house. It doesn't have a certificate of occupancy. I don't even know if it has electricity. How these two people got to vote, and then my neighbor behind me who's lived here for 40 years, but he's part-time, he comes and goes, but for 40 years, can't vote. I can't vote. I've been here eight years, and I know I've spent three years of my life in Oxford, so I can't vote, and I wouldn't even try to vote because I know the rules. I want to know how 105 West Division got to vote. And then the other person I saw, and I haven't researched the whole thing because you all took it down, the voting video down for 13 days, and then the 4th of July came up, and I didn't have the time to look through everything, but I also believe I saw Laura Frock walk in here. I think she's the daughter-in-law of the former commissioner. She came in here and voted, and she lives in Easton, I believe. Maybe I'm wrong, but her address is Easton. I hope that

Pam looks into these things and gets back to me. I would like to know about these little voting irregularities. Thank you so much for your time.

Future Commissioner's meetings, August 13th and August 27th. I'd like to hear an adjournment of the open session to go into a closed session.

Commissioner Greer motioned to adjourn the open session. Commissioner Costigan second the motion, all were in favor and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted, Vickie Sharp, Clerk/Treasurer

*Citizen letters discussed inn these minutes are available upon request at the Town Office.
Commissioner Meetings are now live streaming and are archived on townhallstreams.com*



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18 July, 2024

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PRESERVING OXFORD'S TREES TO COOL THE EARTH AND WATERSHED

Dear Oxford Commissioners, Oxford Staff and Ms. Ryan,

Oxford resident Mrs. Frances Curtis lived to the age of 98, and she shaped my son's and my life in an impactful way. Among her many fine qualities, one of the best things about Miss Frances was her direct manner of speaking—comprehensive truths—and her words have stayed with me and shape this letter. Before we knew about climate change, she told us that the “sun seemed hotter” to her, recounting that “Back in the day, you could walk to church in the gentle shade of large trees.”

As with many Oxford citizens, I, too would like to see a return to the hospitality of high shade to cool our town, and have walked the streets with friends, observing the recent pruning. As with Mr. Burgner of the Strand, I was trained as an arborist, and recognize the issues that have alarmed our neighbors. Today arborists prune trees differently to allow for mature trees to survive severe storms. In performing “developmental pruning” we encourage trees to grow with a more open canopy, allowing them to adjust to the increased sunlight.

Again, the challenges associated with the obvious perils of human/property loss and downed electric lines from trees is well known, and I believe that concern for security is what motivated the company engaged to over prune our trees. My perception re. the aftermath of July's aggressive pruning is as follows: beyond disfiguring mature specimen trees on public and private properties, canopies were hollowed out at the top which now allows sunlight to penetrate into the trunk. All mature specimen trees will suffer; particularly members of the maple family, especially sugar maples, which have been suffering for a decade—this is clearly evident in the reduced leaf size, poor branching architecture, and decline leading to verticillium wilt. As a result of weakening some of Oxford's largest specimen trees, many are now actually less stable and unlikely to survive storms.

The problem is complicated, and the solution is not easy--In sum there are 3 options:

1. Continue practicing arboriculture as has been done and suffer the consequences of a dying forest. Oxford will suffer aesthetically, and we will create a heat desert, negatively impacting the land and adjacent watershed
2. Plant only small-scale trees under the powerlines. Slight challenge is that these too will become entangled in the wires creating the same problem as above
3. Bury the powerlines and plant trees where they are most likely to succeed in cooling the earth--along sidewalks and the roadways. This involves planning and would be done in steps with the review of other significant infrastructure.

One only has to look overhead to understand the biggest challenge to cooling the earth in Oxford: overhead wires providing the power on which we all rely. If there were a comprehensive plan to make Oxford truly green, one would address this first. Annapolis buried powerlines in the historic district in the 1980's. Perhaps, with transparent management and an intelligent plan, this could happen in Oxford. Toward that goal, Mr. Burgner and I would like to suggest your consideration of a tree policy and perhaps a Tree Commission.

As a beginning, the trees that have proven successful in my research include:

For Long-Term Shade: White Oak, Willow Oak, Silver Linden, American Black Gum, American Sycamore, European Hornbeam, Bald Cypress

Small-Scale but also good for Cooling/Shade: American Redbud, American Crabapple, Kousa Dogwood, Crepe Myrtle, American Hawthorn, American Chaste tree (pruned with an open canopy to provide shade, Smoke tree (a shrub which becomes a tree)

With All Good Wishes,

Yours Sincerely,

Barbarapaca.

Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E.

cc: Robert Burgner robert.burgner@me.com

12 July 2024

To: Mr. Tom Costigan
Ms. Katrina Greer
Mr. Norman Bell

Re: Governance

Dear All:

I wish to make a couple of comments about the most recent meeting at the Community Center this week. Firstly, I wish to applaud the Pledge of Allegiance and the process of affirmation of the new Commissioner under the laws of Maryland. That process clearly emphasized that our commissioners are held to the values of a Democratic Society and not to the values of an autocracy.

Election of the Youngest Commissioner

Given that there are only three Commissioners, I found it startling that the Chair nominated the youngest Commissioner, rather than the more experienced Commissioner. Given that there are only three votes, obviously Ms. Greer lost the vote before it even started. I humbly found this voting process a violation of normal corporate and NGO board procedures. Clearly, the more experienced Commissioner should have been selected to ascend to the Chair position.

Expand the commissioners to a 5 member Commission so that such a voting process cannot be repeated again. Adding two Commissioners would, in my humble opinion, strengthen the Commissioners bench for added expertise and the succession process for leadership.

My wife and I found it fascinating that the Commission meets so frequently, why not consider a once a month meeting schedule?

We understand that a citizen of Oxford was twice threatened, once at 11:30 at his home, and on another occasion at a shop where a citizen threatened him with a fist fight. Were these two incidents reported by the Police Chief to our fellow citizens?

Town Manager Position

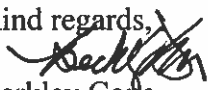
The process of the selection of a qualified Town Manager was, in hindsight, quite flawed. Now that particular candidate has been discarded for obvious reasons. Was that individual given a remuneration for his release as an employee of Oxford? If he received a payout, what was the amount? The Commissioners were responsible for this event and why has not a Commissioner considered resigning over this very flawed process. I will humbly submit, that Oxford was indeed lucky to avoid this individual and one citizen of our community deserves a great deal of credit for spotting a criminal flaw in that person's character.

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12 July 2024
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Search for a New Town Manager

I applaud the decision that a professional firm be brought in to make a proper search. Yet firstly, the actual position needs to be defined and I strongly recommend that this search include finding a candidate within our ranks of Oxford. Perhaps, we need to hire out the fundraising component and just hire a Town Manager. I humbly submit that we have many highly intelligent folks that would be qualified to serve Oxford.

Mine is only one voice and I respect the service of each of you.

Kind regards,

Berkley Cone
215 South Street
Oxford, MD 21654

Cc: Ms. Vickie Sharp



Barbara Paca, Ph.D., O.B.E.
101 and 103 Mill Street
Oxford 21654

8 July, 2024

Oxford Commissioner Tom Costigan
c/o The Oxford Town Office, Oxford, Maryland 21654
(410) 226-5122
dc2ox4d@verizon.net

cc:

townoffice@goeaston.net
oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
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***LETTER TO BE READ ALOUD AND RECORDED INTO THE OXFORD TOWN
MINUTES DURING THE TOWN MEETING ON 9 JULY, 2024**

Dear Oxford Commissioner Tom Costigan,

This is to request a formal, written apology from you to the Citizens of Oxford for your negligence in hiring Michael Everett Calvert as our Town Manager.

As the mother of a vulnerable child with severe special needs who grew up in Oxford, the thought of your reckless behavior in introducing a person convicted of sexually-related offenses into our community distresses me to the core. It is my understanding that many other parents and grandparents share my sense of shock and disgust.

Should you be unwilling to engage a professional recruitment firm to hire a new Town manager, there will be repercussions, as there are many others in town who share my belief that you have been derelict in your duties. Please disclose the role you played in the previous selection, who you professionally engaged to perform the background check, and how much the citizens of Oxford invested in this dangerous decision. You also need to state how you intend to conduct a search for the next Town Manager, which I expect to be done in a professional manner. Again, I urge you to do the right thing and hire a professional recruitment firm

This letter is to be read during the upcoming Town meeting as a part of the official record.

Sincerely, *Barbarapaca*. Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E.

* Kindly note: If, for some reason, the Town Staff should accidentally forget to bring this letter (as has happened in many previous meetings), it will be read aloud by a citizen of Oxford (who pays property tax and votes) at the end of the meeting. This letter will also be recorded into the Town Minutes.

**Schuyler Benson
101 Bay View Ave.
Oxford, MD 21654**

Monday, July 22, 2024

Dear Commissioners of Oxford,

I am writing to request that you reconsider the fee structure being proposed for Oxford Moorings. The proposed increase of over 1000% seems excessive. From attending the June Port Warden's meeting, I understood that the proposed fee increase is to cover the expense of implementing and maintaining this program, which has been in place for twenty years.

There might be a better way to decrease the burden on the town staff and protect the interest of all involved. Currently, the Town Code states:

"D. Mooring maintenance.

1. Mooring tackle from the pennant (and including the pennant) to the bottom chain (including swivels) and the connector to the bottom chain shall be serviced and inspected at least every two years, and written evidence of a current inspection shall be submitted..."

Make a mooring permit that is good for two years instead of just one. This would cut the town's paperwork in half and keep the inspection requirement the same. Staff would have free time for other tasks, and the moorings would still be maintained at the same level.

With regard to the proposed escrow, I would like to ask how many moorings have been removed in the last twenty years as opposed to having the chains dropped. I know of a few that Jeff Mathis disconnected for the town in the last two years, but I am not aware of any that the town has actually ever removed.

I have my mooring serviced annually even though I am only required to have it done biannually — the fee which is charges if \$150.00. I asked Jeff last week how much it would cost to disconnect my mooring, and he said \$150.00, the same as an inspection. The proposed escrow of \$350.00 also seems excessive. If moorings are being maintained as per the code, then those in a bad state of repair will either be upgraded or abandoned, and the concern and need for this escrow will not exist.

I appreciate your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,


Schuyler Benson