

**RESOLUTION NO. 24/17**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD TO  
AMEND THE RULES FOR CONDUCT AT COMMISSION  
MEETINGS**

WHEREAS, Section 3C-4 of the Oxford Town Charter provides, "All meeting [meetings] of the Commissioners shall be open to the public, and the rules of the Commissioners shall provide that residents of the Town shall have a reasonable opportunity to be heard at any meeting in regard to any municipal question"; and

WHEREAS, Section C3-7 of the Charter provides, "The Commission shall determine its own rules and order of business", and

WHEREAS, historically, the Commission has encouraged the public to attend and observe the proceedings and has provided on the meeting agenda, a time at the end of each meeting of the Commissioners for "public comment"; and

WHEREAS, the public is encouraged to communicate with the Commissioners prior to any meeting by letters and emails any comments and/or questions at any time; and

WHEREAS, in the recent past members of the public have sought to make comments and ask questions during times other than the time designated for public comment at end of the Commissioner's meeting; and

WHEREAS, allowing sporadic comments and questions during the time when the Commissioners are conducting the public business is disruptive and prevents the Commissioners from conducting efficient and fair meetings; and

WHEREAS, although photographing and videotaping of meetings is permitted, such actions can be a distraction to the general audience.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Commissioners of Oxford hereby adopt the following rule regarding participation in by the general public in open meetings of the Oxford Town Commissioners.

***PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS OF THE OXFORD COMMISSIONERS***

1. At any open meeting on the Oxford Town Commissioners, the general public is invited to attend and observe.
2. Except as provided below and except in instances when the Commissioners of Oxford expressly invite public testimony, questions, comments or other forms of public participation, or when public participation is otherwise authorized by law, no member of the public attending an open session may participate in the session.
3. At the conclusion of the business session of each meeting of the Oxford Town Commissioners, the agenda shall provide a time during which members of the general public may make comments/questions, provided that:
  - a. The individual wishing to make a comment or present a question shall utilize the microphone and identify him or herself by name and address;
  - b. Direct all comments and questions to the Commissioners; and
  - c. Limit comments/questions to three minutes.
4. One or more of the Commissioners or appropriate staff will provide answers to any questions put forth by a commenter as soon as practicable after the close of the meeting. The form of the answer shall be in written form (letter or email) and attached to the minutes of the meeting.
5. All meeting participants must act in a courteous and civil manner. Defamatory comments, profanity and obscenity will not be tolerated.
6. The Commissioners will make every reasonable effort to post on the Town website the meeting agenda by the close of business on the Thursday prior to each regular Oxford Commissioners meeting. The public is encouraged to file written comments to the Commissioners. This will provide time for interested parties to file written comments and questions regarding items on the agenda. Items on the agenda may be added or deleted to the agenda by a majority of the Commissioners without regard to this provision.
7. A member of the public, including any representative of the news media, may record discussions of the Oxford Town Commissioners at an open session by means of a tape recorder or any other recording device if the device does not disturb members of the Oxford Town Commissioners or other person attending the session.
8. A member of the public, including any representative of the news media, may photograph or videotape the proceedings of the Oxford Town Commissioners at any open session if the equipment
  - a. is operated without excessively bright artificial light that disturbs members of the Oxford Town Commissioners or other persons attending the session,
  - b. does not create an excessive noise that disturbs members of the Oxford Town Commissioners or other persons attending the session,
  - c. and does not block in whole or in part the view of any persons attending the session.

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All such equipment and its operation will be done in a specific designated area to maintain the orderly conduct of the meeting.

9. A recording of an open session made by a member of the public, or any transcript derived from such recording, shall not be deemed a part of the record or any proceeding of the Oxford Town Commissioners.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Resolution 24/17 shall become effective upon the favorable vote of a majority of the Commissioners of Oxford.

RESOLVED, this 24<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2024

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD:

Norman Bell

Norman Bell, President

Tom Costigan

Tom Costigan, Commissioner

Katrina Greer

Katrina Greer, Commissioner

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was passed by a yea and nay vote of the Commissioners of Oxford on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2024.

Attest: Vickie Sharp

Vickie Sharp, Clerk/Treasurer

Town of Oxford

## RESOLUTION 23\_\_

### A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD DEFINING COMMISSIONER'S MEETING PROCEDURES AND NORMS RELATED TO PUBLIC COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

**WHEREAS**, The Oxford Town Charter states that “all meetings of the Commissioners shall be open to the public, and the rules of the Commissioners shall provide that residents of the Town shall have a reasonable opportunity to be heard at any meeting in regard to any municipal question.” [REF]; and

**WHEREAS** the Commissioners of Oxford affirm that, as duly elected representatives of the citizens of Oxford, every Commissioner has the obligation to do their best to maximize the opportunities that they have to interact with citizens, and to hear and consider citizen input; and

**WHEREAS** the Commissioners of Oxford affirm that every Commissioners Meeting has a dual purpose: first, to allow the Commissioners themselves to interact with each other and execute public business in a forum adhering to Maryland's Open Meetings Act; and second, to allow a free and open forum for the citizens of Oxford to (a) interact with the Commissioners as a panel and (b) discuss concerns and ideas related to both town government and town administration; and

**WHEREAS** the Commissioners of Oxford further affirm that the aforementioned two purposes of the Commissioners Meeting are EQUAL in importance; and

**WHEREAS** the Commissioners of Oxford affirm that their goal is to maximize citizen input and interaction during every Commissioner's Meeting, in the interests of openness and transparency; and **WHEREAS** the Commissioners of Oxford recognize that any categorical refusal to engage with citizens and/or answer questions in the Commissioners Meeting is contrary to the interests of openness and transparency; and

**WHEREAS** the Commissioners of Oxford submit that citizen input and interaction cannot be maximized in a forum that is not orderly, balanced, fair, and civil; and

**WHEREAS** the purpose of this resolution is to ensure that elected officials can conduct every Commissioner's Meeting efficiently, fairly, and with full participation of all present.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD AS FOLLOWS:

**Section 1. (Decorum)** The following rules of decorum will apply to all present at the meeting, including attendees, citizens, staff, and Commissioners:

- a. All meeting participants will be required to act in a courteous, civil manner, with respect to all people.
- b. No defamatory comments, profanity, obscenities, jeering, belligerent or combative behavior, or bullying will be tolerated.
- c. No interjections will be tolerated from persons who have not been recognized to speak.

**Section 2. (“Open Public Comment” agenda item)** With the goal of maximizing citizen input and interaction during every Commissioner’s Meeting, every Commissioner’s Meeting will include an Agenda Item for “Open Public Comment”, where attendees may ask questions and provide comments about any Town-related item or issue.

**Section 3. (Comments and Questions)** Comments and questions by citizens and staff are welcome during the Commissioners Meeting, subject to the following rules:

- a. (Timing) Public comments and questions will be restricted to the period of the “Open Public Comment” agenda item and the period described in paragraph d.(3) below .
- b. (Requirement to be recognized) Persons wanting to contribute a comment or ask a question must raise their hand and be recognized by any one of the Commissioners PRIOR to speaking. Once recognized this person is considered, for the rules below, as “the speaker”.
- c. (Requirement for identification) After being recognized, the speaker must stand, if able, and identify their first and last names, or in the case of staff or other attendees, their employment position.
- d. (Relevance to agenda) In the interests of keeping the Commissioner’s Meeting as efficient as possible, the following rules will apply:
  - (1) Any questions or comments made outside of the general “Open Public Comment” agenda item at the end of the meeting MUST be restricted to, and apropos of, the agenda item being discussed at the moment.
  - (2) Once an agenda item is closed (see below), further questions and comments about that agenda item must be reserved for the “Open Public Comment” agenda item at the end of the meeting.
  - (3) Before closing each agenda item, the Commission President will ask whether there are any outstanding questions or comments about that agenda item. If there are outstanding questions or comments (evidenced by raised hands) the agenda item may ONLY be closed by a unanimous vote of all Commissioners present.
  - (4) Any agenda items that are closed when there are outstanding questions or comments (evidenced by raised hands) will be automatically added to the Open Meeting Period, so that comments may be heard.
- e. (Duration) In the interests of time:
  - (1) It is the responsibility of the President of the Commission, or other staff member who is acting as Secretary of the meeting, to keep track of the speaker’s time.

- (5) The “clock” on this rule will reset upon interjection, comment, or response of any Commissioner, staff, or other attendees.
- f. (Question documentation in meeting minutes) All questions posed by either citizens or staff will be documented in the meeting minutes.
- g. (Response by Commissioners) The Commissioners will answer any questions posed by either citizens or staff to the best of their abilities.
- h. (Conversion of questions to action items) If the Commissioners are unable to answer a question in the Meeting, Commissioners and staff will conduct reasonable and appropriate research or consultation in order to provide an answer at the next Commissioner’s Meeting.
- I. (Equality of access) In order to ensure that all persons present may participate equally, and to prevent even the appearance of favoritism, the Commissioners will ensure that all persons with questions and comments are allowed an opportunity to speak, and not just those of specific people.

**Section 4. (Media recordings)** As an official meeting of the Oxford Town government, recording of the proceedings using any available medium (e.g., video, audio, photograph) is permitted during all open sessions, subject to the following rules:

- a. (Non-disruptive) Recording of Commissioner’s Meetings cannot disrupt the meeting, either by excessive movement within the room, use of flash photography, or noise produced by recording equipment.
- b. (Line-of-Sight) Since Commissioners will be using visual cues (raised hands) to allow for participation in the meeting by citizens:
  - (1) Recording equipment cannot be placed in such a way as to obstruct the line-of-sight between the Commissioners and the area where the majority of attendees are seated.
  - (2) Recording equipment whose height is at or lower than the average eye level of a seated attendee will not be considered an obstruction.
  - (3) Recording equipment whose height is higher than the average eye level of a seated attendee is allowed, must be positioned at the periphery of the seating area to minimize obstruction.

his Resolution shall become effective immediately.

**ENACTED** this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_.

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD

Norman Bell, Commission President

Katrina Greer, Commissioner

Thomas Costigan, Commissioner

I hereby certify that the above Resolution was passed by a yea and nay vote of the Commissioners of Oxford on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

Attest:

Vickie Sharp, Clerk/Treasurer  
Town of Oxford