

**Commissioners of Oxford
Regular Meeting Minutes
October 8, 2024**

The Commissioners meeting was held at the Oxford Commissioners meeting room on October 8, 2024. The meeting was called to order and the meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present

Attending the meeting were Commissioner Katrina Greer, Commissioner Norman Bell, President, Commissioner Tom Costigan, Chief Chris Phillips, Clerk/Treasurer Vickie Sharp, and Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan.

Commissioners Comments/Announcements

Commissioner Greer thanked Vickie Sharp for putting out a meeting packet that could be shared with everyone including attachments.

Commissioner Greer stated after the last meeting, Mr. Gray seemed concerned that her meeting with the citizens in the town park on September 24th, was in violation of the Open Meetings Act. Was that a violation of the Open Meetings Act?

Attorney Lyndsey Ryan stated the in order for it to be a meeting there has to be a quorum of the elected body needs to be present.

Commissioner Bell made a comment regarding Resolution 2417. That is one of the items that we were going to talk about when we revisit the Resolution. We had a mix-up in our communications prior to the meeting.

Public Comments

Debbie Krolicki – When will Resolution 2417 be revisited.

Commissioner Bell stated it would be today.

Presentation

Brent Jett (GMB) gave an update on the storm water pumps. The original project was bid as design-build, and we had Barker's Landing as our build portion. Due to health concerns, he has now hung up his hat. We can either find another partner to go forth, and they will price out what we design for the pumps, and you guys will sign the contract with them because we don't have a construction insurance for installation. We're working with two different pump station providers that pretty much will send you the whole package. The one will connect the control panels to it. The third option is we get a full-blown design,

and we send it out to bid. It's not going to change the pump station guys when they deliver it. They're still going to come in and connect the panel.

There was discussion and questions from Commissioners and Town Attorney regarding their concerns with GMB.

Oath

Commissioner Bell gave oath of office to Stephen Selden, Board of Zoning Appeals.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Costigan moved to accept the consent agenda. Commissioner Greer seconded the motion. All were in favor, the motion carried.

Resolution For Consideration

Commissioner Bell proposed Resolution 2411. It's a Resolution setting the fee schedule for the Town of Oxford's Mooring Program, replacing a portion of the Resolution 2212 and all previous fee schedules, effective July 23, 2024. The renewal fee for Moorings is hereby increased to \$350 for a two-year permit. This amendment will become part of the Town of Oxford's fee schedule.

Commissioner Costigan made a motion that we follow the advice of the Port Wardens and institute a fee of \$350 for a Mooring for two years. Commissioner Bell seconded the motion. With a 2 to 1 vote, the motion carried.

Commissioner Bell proposed Resolution 2418. A resolution of the Commissioners of Oxford amending the Oxford Police Manual to clarify that Officers will be compensated for the time spent while off duty appearing in court for time spent, or a minimum of two (2) hours, whichever is greater. Whichever is greater.

Chief Phillips commented on the resolution. What happens, for example, you can get called in on a Friday and you were supposed to be off and probably have a long weekend, but you have to appear for court on a Friday afternoon, this now cuts your day off. You go to court and find out you are not needed or it only takes 5 minutes. What this does is it provides a minimum of two hours of overtime for coming in on your off day you will be compensated.

Commissioner Greer made a motion to approve Resolution 2418, a resolution of the Commissioners of Oxford amending the Oxford Police Manual to clarify the officers will be compensated for time spent while off-duty appearing in court for time spent or a minimum of two hours. Whichever is greater. Commissioner Costigan seconded that motion. All were in favor, the motion carried.

Unfinished Business

Commissioner Bell gave an update on the Strand. The funding for the next phase of the strand project has been approved. Commissioner Greer Stated the Board of Public Works approved the MDE grant for the last phase of it, which is \$300,000. The sand fencing was purchased, and they'll be taking down the orange fencing. The drawings in the parking lot and road raising were sent to Bayland Engineering to review. There is a \$100,000 town contribution to this last phase. The plantings are a concern for both NIFWF and DNR. A meeting with Underwood will be scheduled to review the planting.

Commissioner Greer stated there are 20 applicants from Baker Tilly. Most of your applicants came in, in the last two weeks before the deadline.

Commissioner Greer stated she submitted the Christopher Reese grant. That will be for \$20,000 to buy the Moby Mats so that we are ADA compliant on the strand.

Town Attorney, Lyndsey Ryan discussed Charter language. There's been some discussion about the provision within the Charter related to public comment. The provision states that the Commissioners can adopt rules for regulating meetings, but the rules shall provide that residents of the town shall have a reasonable opportunity to be heard at any meeting in regard to any municipal question.

Commissioner Bell read Resolution 2419. A Resolution of the Commissioners of Oxford to amend the rules for conduct at Commission Meetings. *Public participation in meetings of the Oxford Commissioner.* Commissioner Bell read aloud proposed Resolution 2419.

There was discussion among Commissioners regarding Resolution 2419.

Commissioner Bell opened the meeting for public comments.

Susan Kordell – Referred to Item 6 on the proposed Resolution 2419, then she referred to the agenda for the meeting under Public Comments “Public comments are encouraged and can be emailed to oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net, mailed or dropped off at the Town Office by Noon on the Thursday before every meeting”. She stated “You are not providing any visibility into the agenda so the public can make informed comments by mail or email.”

David Donovan – Spoke regarding the language on the Resolution. Timing of comments and the 2 of the three don't agree on the wording. Further comments about public comment. Should adopt Resolution 2419 because it makes sense.

Jane McCarthy – Asked Commissioner Bell and Commissioner Costigan what they are hiding. Why are you afraid we are going to ask questions? Believes it is unconscionable trying to keep people from talking and expressing ideas.

Dan Kordell – Questioned the 7th “whereas” phrase on page 1 – WHEREAS, the Commissioners have determined it appropriate to allow from time-to-time public comment in connection with specific agenda items specifically designated by the Commissioners”, what does this mean? Is that one Commissioner, is it unanimous, is it the majority, how does that happen? Commissioner Bell stated it is the majority. Mr. Kordell stated it needs to be clarified. It should be one Commissioner that if they had knowledge they would want to hear from that person.

Rose Donovan, would like to pig back on the previous comment, what if the language was “may invite public comment” and if stated there would be a vote on which items would have a public comment, is there going to be a comment on the vote among the Commissioners to have comment on. What is the criteria on items that the Commissioners may or will allow public comment on. Commissioner Bell stated that would be decided by the Commissioners as they put together the agenda. Mrs. Donovan, so outside of public view the Commissioner would decide what action items would receive public comment, this doesn’t sound like what the Oxford Citizens want from the Commissioners.

Rebecca Ellison, discussed an email she received regarding shall and may. Attorney Lyndsey Ryan help clarify.

Susan Delean-Botkin, commented that this is a representative democracy, we elected you to do the work of the people. On C3-7, The Procedures of the Commission, The Commission shall determine its own rules and order of business,

Warren Davidson, seems there will be no public comment at the beginning of the meeting and you will take comment at the end of the meeting and at the discretion whether to comment during the course of the meeting. If you are voting on something you should take public comment.

Commissioner Bell commented, this issue of public comment on specific items was included in the Resolution 2417 that was passed 2 weeks ago.

Commissioners continued further discussion with Town Attorney regarding Resolution 2419. Commissioner Bell motioned to change the title of Resolution 2419 as follows:

A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD TO REPEAL AND REPLACE THE RULES FOR CONDUCT AT COMMISSION MEETINGS, *PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN*

MEETINGS OF THE OXFORD COMMISSIONERS and 2419 includes a requirement of public comment before any vote is taken on any Resolution or Ordinance. Commissioner Greer seconded the motion. All were in favor, the motion carried.

Clarification on receipt of letters for public comment, letters must be received the Monday before the Commissioners by Noon. The letters will no longer be included with the agenda but will be attached to the meeting minutes.

There was discussion among Commissioners and Town Attorney about which employment application to use. It was decided to use option 1 with modifications to add, have you ever been convicted of fraud, theft or embezzlement: this would be for individuals handling cash.

Commissioner Greer made a motion to amend the July 9th meeting minutes. Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion. All were in favor, the motion carried.

Commissioner Bell attended a meeting with Marilyn and Underwood and Associates to discuss some concerns and questions. There is an email from Marilyn included in the packet addressing the key points.

Commissioner Greer, we're going to look at using AECOM and the new permitting person for the planning purposes that will come through the FEMA grants. In terms of Underwood and what she was saying, that will also help us with some of the storm management stuff that didn't take place.

New Business

There was discussion about The Oxford Museum requesting a donation. Last year we gave them \$3,000. Commissioner Costigan made a motion that we donate \$3,000 as we did last year to the Oxford Museum. Commissioner Greer seconded that motion. All were in favor, the motion carried.

There was discussion on appointment to the Talbot County Economic Commission. Asking for recommendations through constant contact.

Commissioner Greer moved to approve the Town of Oxford Committee Resilience Committee mandate. Commissioner Costigan seconded that. All were in favor, the motion carried.

Commissioner Greer discussed the RFP for the FEMA grant. We're going to put an RFP out for a structural engineer so they can come in and evaluate whether the homes can be lifted safely, structurally, and not fall apart in the lifting process. I'll work with my fellow commissioners to evaluate whether we need to go to an outside firm to manage the rest of the grant.

Commissioner Greer made a comment regarding Interim Staff. The town office is not going to run itself. I feel strongly of hiring a temp accountant or the clerk for a few months and keep them for a little bit to see if our new admin works out.

Legal

Town Attorney, Lyndsey Ryan, discussed the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. It is a very broad topic and I know everyone wants to exercise their First Amendment rights and you have no intent to impede on those First Amendment rights. It's a balancing act of being able to conduct your meeting in an orderly fashion.

Letters Received

Letters received are included in the packet.

Commissioners Comments

Commissioner Costigan announced that today was Marilyn Williams' last day. Wished her the best in her new position.

Public Comments

Russ Gray expressed concern over Commissioner Greer not inviting all commissioners to a meeting. If I invite a designated selected group of individuals to a meeting and I invite one of the other two town commissioners, without providing public notice, would that constitute a potential violation of the Open Meetings Act?

Rebecca Ellison stated everybody admires Katrina for being open and available. I'm so proud of her and so proud of the people that were there. She was also concerned about the way one of her friends (Wayne Sard) was treated.

Bob Burgner doesn't agree with how the size of the pump will be decided. You determine the size of the pump based on engineering. He was also concerned with the contractor not putting a 4ft grass strip on the Strand.

Debra Pulzone has a problem with Mr. Rensberger, a journalist. There are seven fraternity brothers against one girl. The analogies that he draws is offensive for somebody who has lived through sexual abuse. I find this unacceptable, and it's part of what's tearing this town apart.

Special Public Works Pick Up Days

Leaf Pick Up- Every Wednesday starting October 16, 2024 to December 18, 2024

Special Brush- November 25-27, 2024

Special Brush- December 19, 20, and 23, 2024

Christmas Tree- Tree pick up will be January 15, 2025

Community Events

OVFD- October 13, 2024

Community Day/Oxford Community Center- October 19, 2024

Walk/Run For Mental Health/Oxford Community Center- October 19, 2024

Trunk or Treat- October 31, 2024

Future Commissioners Meetings

October 22, 2024

November 12, 2024

December 10, 2024

January 14, 2025

January 28, 2025

Upcoming Town Closing

October 14, 2024- Columbus Day

November 5, 2024- Election Day

November 11, 2024- Veterans Day

November 28, 2024- Thanksgiving Holiday

November 29, 2024- American Indian Heritage Day

December 26, 2024- January 1, 2025- Offices will be closed, limited staff

Adjournment

Commissioner Costigan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Greer seconded that motion. All were in favor, the motion carried

Letters submitted for Commissioners Meeting on October 8, 2024:

Barbara Paca Letters

Berkley Cone - Hiring 4th Police Officer

Berkley Cone - Oxford Expenses

Catherine Bitter - Opportunities for Public Comment

Curt Reintsma - Commission Meetings

Dan Kordell – Blame

Dave Donovan - comments on Commission Meeting Procedures

Dave Donovan - proposed procedures for Commission meetings

Davenport West - Committee membership

Davenport West - Committees

Davenport West - Was sent earlier and never acknowledged

Davenport West - 3 questions

David Ober - Support Meeting Protocols

David Poe - A Resolution for the Commissioners of Oxford Defining Commissioners Meeting

David Poe - Proposed Meeting Procedures

Debbie Krolicki - Limiting Public Comment

Deborah Pulzone - Workshop Town meeting

Henry Hale - Sad Day in Oxford

Jan Greenhawk - Letter to be read into the next town meeting minutes

Jock Beebe - Town of Oxford Public Comment Resolution

John Delean - Commission Meetings

John Hockmeyer - Comment on Public Comment Resolution; working sessions

Larry Myers - Public Workshop on Resolution No. 2417 Rules of Conduct at Commission Meetings

Mac Sommerlatte - Public Comment

Madi Yates - Suggestion for South Street left turn to Morris Street

Mary Jordan - Simple courtesy during town meetings

Mickey Terrone - Commissioners Meeting Management

Ray Munsch - Proposed mooring fees

Ray Stevens - Support of the meetings protocol

Robert Hyberg - Does not Support Modifying Resolution 2417

Ron Walker - PUBLIC RECORDS.

Russ Gray - To Commissioner Greer - Meeting Conduct

Russ Gray - Town Meeting on Sept 24 2024

Scott Rensberger – Election

Scott Rensberger - We Shall take this issue to court

Sheilah Goodman - Public Comment Support

Susan Delean-Botkin - Meeting Protocols

Suzie Hurley - Support Town Meeting Protocols

Theresa Lee - Conduct and questions at meetings



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

24 March, 2023

Ms. Cheryl Lewis and the Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office, Oxford, Maryland 21654 (410) 226-5122
townoffice@goeaston.net

Dear Ms. Lewis and Esteemed Commissioners of Oxford,

I would like to formally request that the swearing in of the new Police Chief be delayed, and that another search be started with proper advertising and one in which the citizens of Oxford are properly notified.

Such a gesture would thereby allow those of us who are fortunate enough to call Oxford "home" the opportunity to play a more significant role in making such a critical decision such as this one, which directly affects our daily lives and sense of well being.

In my opinion, the lack of adequate advertising for the positions of both Police Chief and Town Planner have left me feeling excluded/bewildered—as has been the experience for many others. Furthermore, the process exercised suggests a systemic bias in hiring practice which to me is not in alignment with the standard and customary practices of transparency in Maryland. Finally, in viewing the salaries awarded there appears to be a great disparity in financial remuneration, professional qualifications, and time on the job.

It has come to my attention that in your grant applications focusing on sustainability and environmental stabilization, you mention our small business which is based in Oxford. This came as a surprise to me because we have always been excluded from the process when we have offered to you our assistance to serve on a *pro bono* basis.

I write to you as member of the Oxford community, property owner, and small business person, and sincerely hope that you will consider this respectful submission. Thank you for your consideration of this formal request.

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



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

29 March, 2023

Ms. Cheryl Lewis and the Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office, Oxford, Maryland 21654
(410) 226-5122
townoffice@oxford.net

Dear Ms. Lewis and Oxford Commissioners,

It has come to my attention that Philip was verbally assaulted by former Commissioner Mr. John Pepe, and also Commissioner Jaramillo after last night's town meeting. Philip was accused of reading "rude" letters, one of which was written by me. Given the gravity of accounts by others who were astonished by their aggression—witnessing what sounds like bullying to me, I require information from you regarding best procedure for making a formal statement about this verbal assault. I am currently in Paris, and prepared to do whatever it takes to register this concern.

Also, a gentle and final reminder that I'm still awaiting information from you regarding your grant applications focusing on sustainability and environmental stabilization in which you mention our small Oxford-based business. As you know from my letter written last week, this came as a surprise to me because we have always been excluded from the process when we have offered to you our assistance to serve on a *pro bono* basis. I continue to await full details of all grants that you submitted on behalf of my business, citizens of Oxford, and the Town of Oxford and require that information no later than 30 March.

I write to you as member of the Oxford community, property owner, taxpayer, small business person, and member of a family who has called the Eastern Shore home for over three centuries, and sincerely hope that you will consider this respectful submission and recognize the fact that I shall always consider it a privilege and a duty to respond accordingly to any form of injustice.

Thank you in advance for acknowledging receipt of this letter and in following through.

Sincerely, Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E. barbara@preservationgreenllc.com

N.B. – In an email, you had stated that you would read letters at the meeting for the Minutes, but for some reason didn't do so—as there was another person who had gone to the trouble of submitting his concerns in writing, which were not voiced. It would appear that this oversight is NOT in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. I am glad that Philip read our letters, and that they are now a part of the Town record.



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

24 April, 2023

Ms. Cheryl Lewis and the Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office, Oxford, Maryland 21654 (410) 226-5122
townoffice@gocaston.net

Dear Ms. Lewis and Oxford Commissioners,

Please read this at the town meeting. I'm still awaiting information from you regarding financial details re. your grant applications focusing on sustainability and environmental stabilization in which you mention our small Oxford-based business. As is clear from previous correspondence, this information came as a surprise because we have always been excluded from the process when we have offered to you our assistance to serve on a *pro bono* basis. I continue to await FULL details of all grants that you submitted on behalf of my business no later than 30 April.

After being informed by you that it may be "costly" to obtain details, I requested full disclosure on specific grants in which you inserted my company as a partner. After repeating my request for full budgetary details in several emails, you finally sent only general information (provided in red at the end of this letter). Please allow me to express the need for specifics. Here are a few questions that indicate standard/customary protocol in transparent practices: Is there a PI on this project? Who is that person? How is she/he remunerated? To whom does the PI report? What are the budget categories? Are there contractors, and if so, what is the process for selection?

I write to you as member of the Oxford community, property owner, taxpayer, small business person, and member of a family who has called the Eastern Shore home for over three centuries. Thank you in advance for acknowledging receipt of this letter and in following through in a professional manner.

Sincerely, Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E. barbara@preservationgreenllc.com

General grant information email from Cheryl Lewis Friday, April 21, 11:46 am

National Wildlife Federation – This funding of \$1,437,736.02 was awarded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to the National Wildlife Federation. The National Wildlife Federation will be providing the Town of Oxford \$1,176,921.39 in grant funding for the Strand project. All funding will be utilized for contracted efforts for the project construction. Payments will be made to the town through a Request for Reimbursement to NWF with evidence of payments made to the awarded contractor.

Oxford's Maryland Sustainable Community application is an application for renewal of the town's Sustainable Community status. All details for the application are found within the application document as published by MD DHCD: <https://dhcd.maryland.gov/Communities/Approved%20Sustainable%20Communities/Oxford.pdf>. No funding to the town is requested or awarded based on this application for designation.



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

28 June, 2023

Ms. Cheryl Lewis, Lindsay Ryan, Esq., and the Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office, Oxford, Maryland 21654 townoffice@gocaston.net

Dear Ms. Lewis, Mr. Ryan, and Oxford Commissioners,

This is a formal request for a copy of reports and budgets disclosing information pertaining to all grants received for the benefit of Oxford, Maryland from July 1, 2017 - July 1, 2023. This includes all state, county, and federal grants, providing details regarding full financial and budgetary disclosure, preliminary engineering reports, and projects plans.

The Town Manager's comments and those made by others about how over \$30,000,000 has been awarded in grants to Oxford made me sit down and think about how fortunate we are. With such blessings and privilege comes responsibility. As was pointed out in a recent town meeting, Oxford has many citizens who would be worthy collaborators in assisting and offering their expertise in helping to manage the multiple grants received thus far—be it in the field of science, construction, design, financial management, ethics, and communication.

I would be honored to assist with organizing the platform for this information to be made available to the public. It would be mutually beneficial to share with other taxpayers and our neighbors on the Chesapeake the valuable knowledge and achievement gained from these grants. I believe there is much to be gained by sharing with neighboring waterfront communities the results of these grants, particularly those who live in fragile and underserved rural heritage areas. For example, directly across the water is the early African American settlement of Bellevue. We share many of the same challenges, such as the impact of climate risk and the threat of gentrification. Bellevue, in particular, has had to deal with the burden of insensitive developers who have built housing that blocks views from the historic African American church to the water. We all would benefit from a dialogue around understanding the grant process and how it can aid our communities in long-term preservation and planning.

Kindly be advised that this request is made via the Public Information Act of Maryland, under the supervision of the Maryland State Attorney General's Office. I am certain that you will conform to the law and respond in a prompt and professional manner. Finally, I should be very grateful if you would please read this letter at the next Town meeting to be recorded into the Town Minutes.

Sincerely, Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E. barbara@preservationgreenllc.com

cc: The Honorable Anthony G. Brown, Attorney General of Maryland
The Honorable Serena C. McIlwain, Maryland Secretary of the Environment
Mr. Devon Dodson, Assistant Secretary, Maryland Department of the Environment

BOARD MEETING:
2ND AND 4TH TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH
(410) 226-5122



101 Market Street
P.O. Box 339
Oxford, Maryland 21654

Commissioners of Oxford

July 14, 2023

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

Re: PIA Request Received July 5, 2023

Dear Dr. Paca:

The Town of Oxford received your request under the Public Information Act, Md. Code Ann., Gen. Prov. ("GP") §§ 4-101-4-601 on July 5, 2023. You are seeking copies of reports and budgets disclosing information pertaining to all grants received for the benefit of Oxford from July 1, 2017 to July 1, 2023. Specifically, you are seeking copies of the following: "all state, county, and federal grants; providing details regarding full financial and budgetary disclosure, preliminary engineering reports, and project plans."

Your request is extremely broad. As noted on the attached grant spreadsheet, the Town received more than twenty (20) grants between the periods of 2017 and 2023. Within each grant project, there many documents which may qualify as "reports and budgets" disclosing information pertaining to that grant. Responding to a request to provide all documents associated with more than twenty (20) grants would require such a diversion of resources and staff time and would amount in a high volume of records and a huge expense.

By providing the attached grant spreadsheet, I thought you may be able to narrow your request to a specific grant that the Town received during the time period requested. In addition, there are various documents associated with each grant depending on the type of grant received. If you can further clarify the specific information you are seeking pertaining to a specific grant that will assist with narrowing the number of copies to be reproduced.

Therefore, please review the attached spreadsheet to clarify or narrow your request so that the Town may begin to process it. If I can provide further assistance in narrowing your request, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Lewis
Town Manager

YEAR	GRANT	TOTAL GRANT AWARDED	TOTAL LOAN AWARDED	PROJECT	REQUEST FOR BIDS	AWARDED CONTRACTOR	CONTRACTOR INVOICES	PURCHASES	TOWNS MATCH	GRANT REIMBURSEMENT	FORFEITED GRANT DOLLARS
2013	Prior Accrued Funds	\$ 126,088.00	\$ 126,088.00								
2014	IG-2015SA-13.7	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00								
2015	IG-2015SB-14A	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00								
2016	IG-2015SC-15	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00								
2016	IG-2015SD-16	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00								
2016	IG-2015SD-16 ADD OH	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 12,000.00								
2017	IG-2015SE-17	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00		5/16/2014	Muretek, Inc.	\$ 333,174.90	\$ 1,372.62		\$ 375,747.52	\$ 1,340.48
2018	IG-2015SF-18	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00			GMB engineering /adv cost	\$ 45,200.00				
2019	IG-2015SG-19	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00					\$ 859.69		\$ 859.69	
2020	IG-2015SH-20	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	Waterway Improvements / Housing Dock							
2016	DHCD SRP-CL-2016-00266	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	Payade Grants	n/a	n/a	\$ 50,000.00		\$	\$ 50,000.00	
2017	DHCD SRP-CL-2017-00409	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	Payade/Interior	n/a	n/a	\$ 50,000.00	Remaining	\$	\$ 50,000.00	
2020	DHCD SRP-CL-2020-00179	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	Payade/Interior	n/a	n/a	\$ 25,620.00	\$ 14,380.00	\$	\$ 40,000.00	
2016	DHCD SRP-SDP-2016-00263	\$ 300,000.00	\$ 300,000.00	MEWS Acquisition	n/a	n/a	\$ 502,885.62	\$ 202,885.62	\$	\$ 300,000.00	
2016	DHCD SRP-SDP-2017-00370	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 75,000.00	MEWS Design/Stabilization	11/30/2016	Voth Electric/Vector MacSorley	\$ 75,000.00		\$	\$ 75,000.00	
2019	DHCD SRP-SDP-2019-00134	\$ 175,000.00	\$ 175,000.00	MEWS Rehabilitation	12/19/2018	Victor MacSorley	\$ 219,332.00	\$	\$ 44,332.00	\$ 175,000.00	
2016	BASEC 2015-15-0201	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	Townhall HVAC	5/24/2016	Comfort Plus	\$ 66,790.00	\$	\$ 41,760.00	\$ 25,000.00	
2015	CD TRUST 13419	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	Causeway Bioretention Design	2/19/2016	Reuch Inc.	\$ 33,097.00	\$ 22,362.00	\$ 15,459.00	\$ 40,000.00	
2017	DNR 14-18-2323 TRF 15	\$ 650,000.00	\$ 650,000.00	Causeway Bioretention Construction	2/19/2018	Barbers Landing	\$ 650,657.78	\$	\$ 657.78	\$ 650,000.00	
2016	DNR 14-16-2108 CDM 165	\$ 51,000.00	\$ 51,000.00	Stormwater Master Plan	n/a	GMB Engineering	\$ 56,500.00	\$	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 51,000.00	
2017	DNR 14-18-2360 CDM 153	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 25,000.00	Community Rusting System Application	Agreement	Manlyed Environmental Services	\$ 19,888.44	\$ 1,150.60	\$	\$ 21,039.04	\$ 1,160.44
2016	MDE	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	Historic Commercial Plan	9/30/2015	Alshabak	\$ 38,950.00	\$	\$ 19,935.00	\$ 19,015.00	\$ 75.00
2016	DNR 14-17-2215 CDM 170	\$ 35,000.00	\$ 35,000.00	Working Waterfront Strategic Plan	1/24/2017	Landner/Itan	\$ 35,000.00	\$	\$	\$ 35,000.00	
2018	CDP 6327-210-118	\$ 37,866.00	\$ 37,866.00	Dog Park		Brimfield	\$ 14,695.00	\$ 23,171.00	\$	\$ 37,866.00	
2017	CDP 6336-210-131	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	Tennis Court Rehab		American Tennis Courts	\$ 49,620.00	\$ 304.00	\$	\$ 49,924.00	\$ 76.00
2019	CPW 6371-20-135	\$ 122,400.00	\$ 122,400.00	Community Central Park	10/25/2021	unresponsive	\$ 29,083.00	\$	\$	\$	
2022	CPW 7431-20-139	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00	Baseball Field/Abell							
2021	USDA 2021 CP VEHICLES	\$ 32,600.00	\$ 32,600.00	Police/Public Works	n/a	n/a	\$ 309,413.00	\$ 76,813.00	\$	\$ 32,600.00	
2021	DNR 14-22-2975 CDM	\$ 45,000.00	\$ 45,000.00	Oxford 2100 Vision	4/24/2023	Preservation Green / GMB	\$	\$	\$	\$	
2021	ARPA RECOVERY FUNDS	\$ 597,067.25	\$ 597,067.25	Design Build Flood Remediation	9/29/2023	GMB Engineering	\$ 13,692.60	\$	\$	\$	
2018	DNR 14-19-2456	\$ 90,000.00	\$ 90,000.00	Strand Design	5/29/2018	Underwood & Assoc	\$ 94,485.80	\$ 5,000.00	\$	\$ 89,485.80	\$ 114.20
2022	DNR 14-21-3093 CRP	\$ 900,000.00	\$ 900,000.00	Strand Construction	12/12/2022	Underwood & Assoc	\$	\$ 175,000.00	\$	\$	
2022	14-23-4025 CBG 9001	\$ 512,574.00	\$ 512,574.00	Strand Construction	Above	Underwood & Assoc	\$	\$	\$	\$	
2022	WHP 15 2207-100	\$ 1,176,821.89	\$ 1,176,821.89	Strand Construction	Above	Underwood & Assoc	\$	\$	\$	\$	
2023	MDE FLOOD MGMT	\$ 300,000.00	\$ 300,000.00	Strand Construction	??		\$	\$	\$	\$	
2017-2022	USDA MDE	\$ 4,100,000.00	\$ 2,457,000.00	Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade		GMB Engineering / PACT Construction	\$ 18,347,411.00	\$ 2,457,000.00	\$	\$ 15,864,171.00	
		\$ 11,783,171.00	\$ 11,783,171.00					\$ 26,240.15	\$	\$	
2020	MDE	\$ 654,954.76	\$ 654,954.76	Water Main Replacement - Morris Street	2/13/2020	GMB/RIE/Barbers Landing Excavation, LLC	\$ 1,300,909.52	\$	\$ 654,954.76	\$ 1,309,909.52	(MDE Grant/Loan Reimbursement)
2023	USDA	\$ 2,302,000.00	\$ 2,572,000.00	Water System Improvement Project	2/24/2023	GMB Engineering	\$	\$	\$	\$	



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

3 August, 2023

Dear Office of the Public Information Act of Maryland:

I have been requesting grant information since March of 2023.

The desired outcome is to have a comprehensive database of all grants in the last 5 years with full financial and budgetary disclosure, preliminary engineering reports and project plans. This information will be used to help fragile and underserved waterfront communities in Maryland. I currently serve as a commissioner on the Maryland Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities as a representative for the Eastern Shore.

In addition, I ask for full financials and individuals granted award monies for the Maryland Sustainable Communities grant in which I was named as a grant manager without my knowledge.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

barbara@preservationgreenllc.com

+1 917 282 7102

**Kind Regards,
Barbara Paca, PhD, OBE**

MAILING ADDRESS: POB #543, 103 Mill Street, Oxford, Maryland 21654



BARBARA PACA, O.B.E., PH.D.

14 October, 2023

The Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office
Oxford, Maryland. 21654
sdel@hotmail.com
dc2ox4d@verizon.net
katrinahgreer@icloud.com

Dear Commissioners Costigan, Delean-Botkin, and Greer,

I am writing this letter to inform you of my strong support to avoid altering the existing Town Investment Policy as outlined in Resolution 9607.

The existing policy is clear, achievable, and prudent.

It is the responsibility of the Commissioners to work together to ensure that the town be in compliance with all of the Town's regulations, particularly with regard to budget, finance, and ethics.

Efforts to rework the Investment Policy, to work a way around being in compliance with current policy, should not be supported by anyone who respects transparency.

To ensure that the finances of our Town—which my taxes and other citizens support—are best utilized, I am in full support of the formation of a Finance Committee comprised of experienced neighbors to provide expert advice to our Board of Commissioners.

Thank you for all of your work as Town Commissioners and thank you for consideration of my recommendation to remain in a community of collaboration, transparency, and adherence to the law.

I would be grateful if this letter would be read as part of the record at the next public town meeting.

Sincerely,
Barbara Paca.

STUDIO, 103 MILL STREET, OXFORD, MD 21654
MAILING: P.O.B. #543, OXFORD, MD 21654
M/WHATSAPP +1 917 282-7102
EMAIL barbara@preservationgreenllc.com



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

3 June, 2024

Ms. Cheryl Lewis, Lindsay Ryan, Esq., and the Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office, Oxford, Maryland 21654

***LETTER TO BE READ ALOUD AND RECORDED INTO THE OXFORD TOWN
MINUTES DURING THE NEXT TOWN MEETING ON 11 JUNE, 2024**

Dear Ms. Lewis, Mr. Ryan, and Oxford Commissioners,
One year ago, I wrote a letter to you requesting a copy of reports and budgets disclosing information pertaining to all grants received for the benefit of Oxford, Maryland from July 1, 2017 - July 1, 2023 (2023 letter is attached to this email).

This was to include an outline of all received/pending state, county, and federal grants; providing details regarding financial and budgetary disclosure, preliminary engineering reports, and projects plans.

I now write to you to ask for a summary of all grants received and/or pending to the present date.

As Cheryl Lewis, the Town Manager, is retiring soon, I believe that it would be prudent to obtain a list of all grants received and/or pending, for future reference.

My final question regarding these grants is straightforward:
Has the Town Manager benefited financially as a principal investigator on any of these grants?
If so, how much has she made above and beyond her salary?

I'd appreciate her disclosing the answer to this question during the upcoming Town meeting.

With All Good Wishes,
Yours Sincerely,

Barbara Paca

Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E.

cc: The Honorable Anthony G. Brown, Attorney General of Maryland
The Honorable Serena C. McIlwain, Maryland Secretary of the Environment
Ms. Aneca Atkinson, Maryland Deputy Secretary of the Environment
Ms. Mariah Davis, EJ Officer, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

* Kindly note: If, for some reason, the Town Manager should accidentally forget to bring the letter (as she did at the last meeting), it will be read aloud by a citizen of Oxford at the end of the meeting. The request will also be made to record this letter as a part of the Town Minutes.



BARBARA PACA, PH.D., O.B.E.

27 May, 2024

Ms. Cheryl Lewis, Lindsay Ryan, Esq., and the Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office, Oxford, Maryland 21654
townoffice@goeaston.net

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION:
LEAD PIPES AND PIPES WITH LEAD JOINTS IN THE TOWN OF OXFORD**

REQUEST: Kindly read aloud at the Oxford Town Meeting, 28 May, 2024

Dear Ms. Lewis, Ms. Ryan, and Oxford Commissioners,

This is a formal request for a map indicating the location of all lead pipes as well as gooseneck pipes in the Town of Oxford. Should you have this information incorporated into the town plan, it would be good to share on the Town website.

If a comprehensive map doesn't exist, please share with us a map indicating those areas you suspect may still have such pipes/joints/goosenecks for the conveyance of water. It has been brought to my attention that some sections remain on Tilghman, Mill, and Pier Streets.

Please share with us your plans of how you intend to prepare such an essential document to protect the health of all citizens of Oxford. Thank you in advance.

With All Good Wishes,
Yours Sincerely,

Barbara Paca

Barbara Paca, PhD, OBE

cc:

The Honorable Serena C. McIlwain, Maryland Secretary of the Environment
Ms. Aneca Atkinson, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of the Environment
Ms. Mariah Davis, Environmental Justice Officer, Office of the Secretary, Maryland
Department of Natural Resources

101 AND 103 MILL STREET, POST OFFICE BOX 144, OXFORD, MARYLAND 21654 USA
MOBILE/WHATSAPP +1 (917) 282-7102 BARBARAPACAART@GMAIL.COM



BARBARA PACA, PH.D., O.B.E.

Dear Ms. Lewis, Ms. Ryan, and Oxford Commissioners,

This is a formal request for a map indicating the location of all lead pipes as well as gooseneck pipes in the Town of Oxford. Should you have this information incorporated into the town plan, it would be good to share on the Town website.

If a comprehensive map doesn't exist, please share with us a map indicating those areas you suspect may still have such pipes/goosenecks for the conveyance of water. It has been brought to my attention that some sections remain on Tilghman, Mill, and Pier Streets.

Please share with us your plans of how you intend to prepare such an essential document to protect the health of all citizens of Oxford. Thank you in advance.

With All Good Wishes,

Yours Sincerely,

Barbara Paca

Barbara Paca, PhD, OBE

cc:

The Honorable Screna C. Mellwain, Maryland Secretary of the Environment
Ms. Aneca Atkinson, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of the Environment
Ms. Mariah Davis, Environmental Justice Officer, Office of the Secretary, Maryland Department of Natural Resources



BARBARA PACA, PH D., O.B.F.

29. May, 2024

Ms. Cheryl Lewis, Lindsay Ryan, Esq., and the Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office, Oxford, Maryland 21654
townoffice@gocaston.net

Good Morning Cheryl,

I am puzzled as to why you would have elected not to read my letter (please find below) at last night's town meeting in spite of my polite request for you to do so.

This is a formal request for you to read the letter aloud at the next town meeting and to enter it into the minutes. Kindly confirm receipt of this message as well as your intention to read the letter aloud at the next meeting and record it in the minutes.

Sincerely,
Dr. Barbara Paca.

cc:

The Honorable Serena C. McIlwain, Maryland Secretary of the Environment
Ms. Aneca Atkinson, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of the Environment
Ms. Mariah Davis, Environmental Justice Officer, Office of the Secretary, Maryland Department of Natural Resources

28 May, 2024

Ms Cheryl Lewis, Lindsay Ryan, Esq., and the Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office, Oxford, Maryland 21654
townoffice@gocaston.net

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION:
LEAD PIPES AND PIPES WITH LEAD JOINTS IN THE TOWN OF OXFORD**

REQUEST: Kindly read aloud at the Oxford Town Meeting, 28 May, 2024

101 AND 103 MILL STREET, POST OFFICE BOX 144, OXFORD, MARYLAND 21654 USA
MOBILE/WHATSAPP +1 (917) 282-7102 BARBARAPACAART@GMAIL.COM



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

7 July, 2024

Lindsay Ryan, Esq. and the Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office
Oxford, Maryland 21654
(410) 226-5122

townoffice@gocaston.net

oxfordclerktreasurer@gocaston.net

lr.ryan@bbcmlaw.com

katrinahgreer@icloud.com

dc2ox4d@verizon.net

nombell45@gmail.com

***LETTER TO BE READ ALOUD AND RECORDED INTO
THE OXFORD TOWN MINUTES DURING THE
NEXT TOWN MEETING ON 9 JULY, 2024**

Dear Oxford Commissioners Costigan and Greer, Commissioner-Elect Bell, and Ms. Ryan,

As someone who is an Oxford voter and who pays property tax on two properties in the Town of Oxford, I strongly urge the Commissioners to engage a professional recruitment firm specializing in local government management to seek a competent Town Manager.

The previous search failed on myriad levels, threatening the security of the youth of our town, and I hold Commissioner Tom Costigan and Ms. Lyndsey Ryan responsible for that oversight.

I am requesting that this letter be read during the upcoming Town meeting and recorded into the Town Minutes.

With All Good Wishes,

Yours Sincerely,

Barbara Paca

Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E.

* Note: If the Town Staff should accidentally forget to bring this letter (as has happened in all recent previous meetings), it will be read aloud by a citizen of Oxford at the end of the meeting. The request will also be made to record this letter as a part of the Town Minutes.



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@gocaston.net

oxfordclerktreasurer@gocaston.net

lryan@bbcmlaw.com

katrinahgreer@icloud.com

norbell45@gmail.com

***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.



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

16 July, 2024

Lindsay Ryan, Esq. and the Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office
Oxford, Maryland 21654
(410) 226-5122

townoffice@goeaston.net
oxfordclerk@goeaston.net
lyan@bbcmllaw.com
katrinahgreer@icloud.com
dc2ox4d@verizon.net
norrbell45@gmail.com

***LETTER TO BE READ ALOUD AND RECORDED INTO THE OXFORD TOWN
MINUTES DURING THE NEXT TOWN MEETING**

Dear Oxford Commissioners Costigan and Greer, Bell, and Ms. Ryan,

I am writing to request that the Town of Oxford consider allocating funds for our Chief of Police, Officer Chris Phillips and his family to have a perimeter fence around their property as well as the installation of trees to provide shade for his family and help cool the earth. What better way of welcoming the person who has taken care of us for so many years than by giving him the peace of mind knowing that his young family and pet are able to live in a safe, healthy, and beautiful environment!

I would be happy to provide a wholesale source for trees—and would be grateful for input from Mr. Bob Burgner and any other arborists and/or gardening enthusiasts. 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

With All Good Wishes, Yours Sincerely,

Barbara Paca

Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E.



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

18 July, 2024

Lindsay Ryan, Esq. and the Staff and Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office, Oxford, Maryland 21654 (410) 226-5122
townoffice@gocaston.net
oxfordclerk@treasurer@gocaston.net
lryan@bbcmllaw.com
katrinalgreer@icloud.com
dc2ox4d@verizon.net
normbell45@gmail.com

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 Hombeam, 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,



Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E.

cc: Robert Burgner robert.burgner@mc.com



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

25 July, 2024

Lindsay Ryan, Esq. and the Commissioners of Oxford
Oxford Town Office, Oxford, Maryland 21654 (410) 226-5122

lr.ryan@bbcmlaw.com

katrinahgreer@icloud.com

de2ox4d@verizon.net

norumbell45@gmail.com

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT ON THE PART OF STAFF PAID TO REPRESENT OXFORD

Dear Oxford Commissioners and Ms. Ryan,

I am writing in response to the post made on social media by Marilyn Williams on 24 July 2024 (please see below). Ms. Williams's social media post is unprofessional, undignified, and represents a clear lack of respect for others. Disturbingly, her words reveal a level of animosity for the very people whom she as Staff has been engaged to represent.

As one who pays tax on two properties in Oxford, I am shocked at her rambling sentences, which I find mocking, insulting, and mildly threatening to those who continue to believe that there could one day be a return to transparent management practices in Oxford.

The citizens of Oxford are united in seeking the truth—based on her performance on FB, I should like to submit that the only person who is “grandstanding” (as she put it) is Ms. Williams. From her erratic, verbally abusive behavior, I believe that this individual is not fit to serve the Town of Oxford, and that it would be an appropriate next step for her to be placed on notice.

With All Good Wishes, Yours Sincerely,

Barbarapaca

Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E.

FB POST 24 July 2024: Energetic Marilyn Williams is gone. Last night did her in. To get the good, hardworking, energetic Marilyn Williams back, the following has to happen: The complaining has to stop. The crazy accusations have to stop. The steady stream of FOIAs and letters to the Commissioners have to stop. Citizens contacting State agencies instead of working with Town staff has to stop. The me, me, me, me has to stop. The grandstanding has to stop. We cannot serve the community and make positive changes because of this constant bombardment of time consuming negativity. It's your choice, folks. This is your chance to make the choice to move forward.



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

14 August, 2024

Oxford Commissioner President Norm Bell
cc: Lindsay Ryan, Esq, Commissioner Katrina Greer and Tom Costigan
Oxford Town Office
Oxford, Maryland 21654
(410) 226-5122
townoffice@gocaston.net
oxfordclerktreasurer@gocaston.net
ryan@bbcmllaw.com
katrinahgreer@icloud.com
dc2ox4d@verizon.net
normbell45@gmail.com

Dear Norm,

I am writing to you now for the **THIRD** time with regards to an email sent to you and your esteemed colleagues on August 8, 2024.

Thus far, you have not replied with the most basic courtesy of a "received" or "noted." Perhaps you are new to professional etiquette such as this, however, I must insist that this letter be made a part of the Town Minutes at the next meeting. As you/your staff has been derelict in this duty in the past, please be reassured that I intend to follow up as required.

To help refresh your memory, please see below a screenshot below of the message you sent via email on 8 August at 2:14 pm:

----- Forwarded message -----
From: Norman Bell <normbell45@gmail.com>
Date: Thu Aug 8 2024 at 2:14 PM
Subject: Follow Up
To: Robert.burner@ow.com <Robert.burner@ow.com>, RON WALKER <ronwalker@psdillforded.com>, Carol Richardson <carolrichardsonpsacell1@gmail.com>
& C: Katrina Greer <kgreer@gocaston.net>, Tom Costigan <dc2ox4d@verizon.net>, Vickie Sharp <vsharp@psdillforded.com>, Marilyn Williams <mwilliams@psdillforded.com>, Lindsay Ryan <lryan@bbcmllaw.com>, Norman Bell <normbell45@gmail.com>, <bell@oweeeb.com>

Folks - as a follow-up to today's meeting with the state, I'd like to get together with you to talk about possible temporary solutions for access to the Strand beach while permanent solutions are explored. Please let me know your availability for an in-person meeting on the following

- Wednesday 8/14 - 1pm-3pm
- Thursday 8/15 - 10am-noon, 1pm-3pm, 3pm-5pm
- Friday 8/16 - 10am-noon, 1pm-3pm, 3pm-5pm

Thanks
Norm

RESPONSE MESSAGE TRANSMITTED AUGUST 8, 2024, 3:15 PM

Dear Norm,

May I ask why I was excluded from the follow-up meeting you outline below?

I believe that as Tilghman's mother I have rather a lot of experience working with people who experience disabilities. His brief life as a paraplegic presented certain challenges, however we overcame barriers one step at a time—and as stated in today's meeting he certainly would have been an advocate for his friends who experience disabilities wishing to visit the Strand beach.

Furthermore, I offer significant experience as a professional—from leading a successful 40-year practice in landscape design/implementation, to serving on state, federal, and international commissions dealing with landscape, environment, and historic preservation, my work embraces accessibility, inclusion, and sustainability.

The PIA that I submitted for Strand Beach in March 2023 produced unclear results—what a shame that the Town didn't offer more professional oversight between the stamped approved drawings and the confused mess that has resulted!

I look forward to working with my fellow citizens as well as the appropriate State and Federal officials to gain clarity in this regard and a path forward for inclusion.

Your action—or rather lack of action—reminds me of the former Town Manager who closed the door when I offered my assistance on a pro bono level yet chose to bring potential grantors to my Gold-LEED fully accessible facility, and also listed me as a partner on grants about which I was unaware.

Do let me know whether or not your decision to exclude me from the follow-up meeting was a mere oversight on your part or intentional.

Sincerely,

Barbara Paca, PhD, OBE

Please confirm receipt of this message via email (BarbaraPacaArt@gmail.com) and kindly state your intention as to whether or not you plan to follow professional protocol.

With All Good Wishes, Yours Sincerely,
Barbarapaca.
Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E.



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

11 September, 2024

Oxford Commissioner President Norm Bell
cc: Lindsay Ryan, Esq, Commissioner Katrina Greer and Tom Costigan
Oxford Town Office
Oxford, Maryland 21654
(410) 226-5122
townoffice@gocaston.net
oxfordclerk/treasurer@gocaston.net
ryan@bbcmllaw.com
katmahgreer@icloud.com
de2ox4d@verizon.net
norbell45@gmail.com

FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY: DOES OXFORD REALLY NEED FOUR POLICE OFFICERS?

Dear Commissioners,

This letter is to express opinion re. the hiring of a fourth police office in Oxford. The recklessness of even discussing the decision to hire a fourth officer in a time of deficit makes no sense to me as a properties owner, taxpayer, and person who votes in Oxford.

Perhaps I am just fiscally conservative. Maybe one would consider rehiring Chief Maxwell who ran a tight ship, keeping all of us safe with limited resources and staff. I suppose that as with Mrs. Lillian Lord, he did the work of many, with a smile, confidence, and a firm belief in the dignity of doing his job properly.

For some reason, members of staff appear to be unable to respond to letters with even the most basic courtesy of a "received" or "noted." Perhaps one is unfamiliar with etiquette/professional practice, therefore I must insist that this letter be made a part of the Town Minutes at the next meeting.

Kindly confirm receipt and state your intention as to whether or not this commission plans to follow professional protocol re. documenting letters written by concerned citizens.

With All Good Wishes, Yours Sincerely,

Barbarapaca.

Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E.



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

15 September, 2024

Oxford Commissioner President Norm Bell
cc: Lindsay Ryan, Esq, Commissioner Katrina Greer and Tom Costigan
Oxford Town Office
Oxford, Maryland 21654
(410) 226-5122
townoffice@govaston.net
oxfordclerktreasurer@govaston.net
ryan@bbcmllaw.com
katrinahgreer@icloud.com
dc2o\4d@verizon.net
normbell45@gmail.com

OXFORD REVISED MEETINGS POLICY

Dear Commissioners,

I live in a quaint town in the United States. Or at least so I thought, until I received new guidelines re. (poorly written) revised protocol for Oxford Commissioner Meetings.

Is there a new unwritten prerequisite requiring staff to write directives to try to further swindle the population responsible for paying their salaries out of basic truths and the fundamental American right of requesting so when they are merely requesting transparency?

These bizarre amendments are not only counterproductive, they are un-American!

With All Good Wishes, Yours Sincerely,

Barbarapaca.

Dr. Barbara Paca, O.B.E.

N.B.: For some reason, members of Oxford staff appear to be unable to respond to letters with even the most basic courtesy of a "received" or "noted." Perhaps one is unfamiliar with etiquette/professional practice, therefore I must insist that this letter be made a part of the Town Minutes at the next meeting. Kindly confirm receipt and state your intention as to whether or not this commission plans to follow professional protocol re. documenting letters written by concerned citizens.

9 September 2024

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

Re:

Dear All:

I trust that this note finds each of you well and I respect your individual service to our community. As a relatively new and very happy resident of Oxford, one finds a wonderfully embracing community of most intelligent residents. Oxford has wisely chosen, given its small size and minimal population growth, to outsource public education of its young citizens. Recently, we had a storied Inn and Pope's Tavern close its doors. My understanding is that a number of small towns in Maryland have also been quite innovative in addressing the challenges of reducing their budgets, ie "tightening their belts" while maintaining solid services for their residents.

At a recent Saturday breakfast, we were informed by a standing Commissioner of Oxford, That consideration is being given towards hiring a fourth police officer for our town of 550 residents. A number of attendees at the breakfast asked the Commissioner questions about this potential decision.

I would like to respectfully ask the following questions about this potential hiring consideration.

- Individual police officers' salary, benefits, and vehicle would run around \$175,000 for his or her first year of employment and some \$145,000 a year thereafter. Where would this money come from to fund this expense??
- Was a justification study formally submitted for this additional post with a corresponding funding source??
- To my knowledge Oxford has not experienced any sort of crime wave, quite to the contrary it is a most peaceful town, in my humble opinion.
- If a fourth officer is added, would the overtime current earned by our present police officers be reduced?? If so, would they embrace such a change to their total pay packages??
- Was the decision to hire a fourth police officer a legacy of the past Town Manger?? Has consideration been given to engaging a professional hiring firm chosen, for a formal selection process??
- Is there a master financial plan regarding the most impactful financial priorities needed for our community. If such a plan exists, where does this particular request stack up against other priorities??

Oxford Commissioners
9 September 2024
Page 2

Respectfully, preserving the fiscal health of our community is a vital responsibility of our Commissioners, our administrators, and our citizens. My understanding is that our towns operating expenses have dramatically risen over the last years. I have learned that we have awarded lifetime health benefits to a number of past employees. Can Oxford truly afford such expense inflation while preserving its bond rating for potential future borrowings. I would simply judge Oxford from the inside looking in, one of our police officers is driving a Chevrolet sedan that has needed considerable maintenance. Oddly, our maintenance crew drives Ford heavy duty pickups, our police force drives Dodge pickups and a Chevy sedan!!!

Shouldn't consideration be given to first getting our macro fiscal house in order before making a micro decision to hire an additional police officer at \$180,000 the first year. It would be most helpful to understand the justification for this new position.

Kind regards,



Berkley Cone
215 South Street
Oxford, MD 21654

Cc: Ms. Vickie Sharp

10 September 2024

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

Re: Oxford expenses – More taxation?

Dear All:

Good morning and I trust that each of you are well. I failed to mention a critical point yesterday and pardon that I have troubled you again with a note. My maternal grandfather was a WWI combat veteran, a successful entrepreneur, a wise man, and he was a man of patience. He counseled about expenditures; do not spend the financial resources that you do not have. He also counseled that “cash is king” and about conserving one’s liquid assets for lean times.

I wish to ask you, our respective commissioners, what will happen when the unabated increases in expenditure growth results in a cash shortfall? What will happen if our banks decide that our financial health is being compromised by unchecked expense growth that is not in keeping with our sources of income? Will the day come soon that Oxford has to raise the tax rate on its virtually static population base, its rental properties, water services, trash services, etc. to keep our credit rating? All the while, we have our #3 police officer still driving around Oxford in an old Chevrolet sedan.

In conclusion, this amendment to yesterday’s note is to question the justification and financial capability to support the hiring of a fourth police officer. I sincerely trust that our community’s fiscal good health is the focus of our commissioners, our administrators, and our citizens.

Respectfully



Berkley Cone
215 South Street
Oxford, MD 21654

Cc: Ms. Vickie Sharp

From: Catherine Bitter <catherinebitter@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, September 30, 2024 10:15 AM
To: oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net; nbell@goeaston.net; tcostigan@goeaston.net; Katrina Greer
Subject: Opportunities for Public Comment

September 30, 2024

Commissioner Norm Bell
Commissioner Tom Costigan
Commissioner Katrina Greer
PO Box 339
101 Market Street
Oxford, MD 21654

Dear Commissioners:

I would like to express my concerns about recent commissioners meetings and the Public Comment Resolution that was voted on at the September 24th meeting. I am not writing about the legal rights of citizens regarding public comment, as I'm certain you've already received many letters from citizens in that regard. Rather, my concern is focused on when and how we are allowed to make public comment during meetings and how that affects our spirit of community.

I've lived in Oxford for over twenty years, and during that time I've attended many Commissioners meetings, as well as those for other committees. I can recall many years when there were only a handful of citizens in attendance at most meetings, and other times when the room would be filled to capacity because of a major town issue.

You may remember some of those issues - the moorings and annexation of land under the river, the short term rentals, and the swimming pool, for example. Those were controversial and caused a certain amount of division among citizens, as well as between citizens and the commissioners. There was much heated discussion inside and outside of public meetings. Some occasional bad behavior also occurred, like eggs being thrown at Commissioner Klair's house. What we are experiencing now feels similar to what we experienced during those controversies (minus the eggs), but with some differences.

Zoom meetings during Covid and now live streamed meetings, combined with social media have allowed many more citizens to stay informed and participate in town meetings. More people participating regularly in town meetings means more opinions. More opinions means more time is necessary to allow for people to be heard. And they deserve to be heard.

Allowing time for public comment on a topic prior to taking a vote is essential. So is allowing time for reasonable questions to help citizens understand the details and ramifications of topics you are discussing and/or voting on. If there are questions that you can't answer during the meeting (aside from legal or confidentiality issues), that is an indication that the vote should be postponed until you can provide citizens with further information.

Holding public comments on each agenda item until the end of the meeting seems counter productive. Citizens may have great suggestions and or solutions to offer on a topic before the meeting moves on to the next agenda item. Citizens or commissioners may also lose their train of thought on specific points when it is time for comment at the end.

Whether they are new or longtime residents, most of our citizens are passionate in their love of Oxford. Along with that, comes various opinions about what is best for our town. I think the occasional outburst, clapping or booing demonstrates that passion. However, civil behavior during meetings is important and a gentle reminder vs. a stern admonishment would go a long way when discussions become heated.

We have a level of citizen engagement in our town's government and management that I haven't seen in a long time, and I think it is wonderful. But events over the last two years have also created a deep divide throughout the town. I think

allowing reasonable time for public comment on each agenda item before moving on to the next would be a step in the right direction to help heal the divide, and will support Oxford's spirit of community.

I would ask that this letter be read during the commissioners workshop scheduled for this Wednesday 10/02/24 at 10am, and also included in the minutes of the next commissioners meeting on 10/08/2024.

Respectfully,

Catherine Bitter
102B Bonfield Ave.
PO Box 279
Oxford, MD 21654

From: dc2ox4d@verizon.net
Sent: Tuesday, September 24, 2024 8:32 AM
To: Vickie Sharp
Subject: Fw: Rules for Order at Commissioners Meetings

Vickie,
This email (and one other that I will forward) were sent to LISA on Sunday. They should be added to letters received.
Thanks,
Tom Costigan

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Curt Reintsma <creintsma2@gmail.com>
To: "townoffice@goeaston.net" <townoffice@goeaston.net>
Cc: Katrina Greer <katrinahgreer@icloud.com>; Norm Bell <normanbell45@gmail.com>; Tom Costigan <dc2ox4d@verizon.net>
Sent: Sunday, September 22, 2024 at 03:35:12 PM EDT
Subject: Rules for Order at Commissioners Meetings

Here on my views on this topic, raised during the Commissioner's meeting on Sept 10, and currently under discussion around town.

First, I support the need for such common-sense rules. It is unfortunate, but we seem to be in a time period in Oxford (and America) when once-standard norms of courtesy and respect are often not followed—hence the need for additional rules to endure the Commissioners can get their work done without unpleasant and unnecessary disruptions.

Where such rules become tricky, however, is in regard to issues like: 1. ensuring that citizens have an opportunity to express their views (preferable before the Commissioner's vote on complicated topics), and 2. citizens can get simple straightforward questions answered.

Trying to address these concerns can become problematic during the actual Commissioners meeting.

For example, responding to citizen's questions during the meeting, particularly questions with a hostile or grievance-based intent, can quickly lead to unproductive tit-for-tat and back and forth.

On the other hand, some questions that are simply factual in nature can be quickly and easily answered, and not responding at all gives the public the impression of stonewalling or that there is something to hide.

I don't have the perfect answer to this dilemma, but here are a couple suggestions.

1. Consider adding a "Public Update" section to the agenda for each meeting where short, factual updates are proactively given to the public. A current example would be a quick update on the status of the search for a new town manager. This new part of the agenda would preferably come at some point before the public comment section, since it could save time by proactively addressing some questions citizens would otherwise feel the need to ask.
2. Set up clear, simple and institutionalized ways for citizens to express views and ask simple questions/get answers, outside the actual Commissioner's meetings. If done electronically, others could see the question and answer, thus avoiding potential duplication when multiple people ask the same question. This would be for straightforward, fact-based questions. Such a system would probably have to be re-evaluated some months after starting it, to assess whether it is effective or too much of a time drain on staff.

Curt Reintsma

DAN & SUSAN KORDELL
P.O. BOX 231
OXFORD, MD 21654
PHONE: 703.963.6577

9/23/24

Commissioners of Oxford
PO Box 339
Oxford, Md 21654

Commissioners of Oxford,

We heard today through the "Oxford Grapevine" that Town Planner Marilyn Williams has resigned from her position. Since she was hired this past spring, we have heard from multiple people that she is very skilled and knowledgeable about planning and permits, so we think that it is unfortunate that she feels the need to move on. We both wish her the best of luck in her next position.

With her resignation we are predicting that some in our community, including perhaps one or two of you Commissioners, will try to blame the people of Oxford for her departure.

We caution everyone not to do so.

Anyone who blames townspeople for Ms. Williams' independent actions is, in essence, calling her a weak person who could not stand up for herself. We think that would be an unfair and mean characterization of someone who, from what we can tell, is an intelligent, independent, strong woman.

Ms. Williams has made clear, in her own words, that she feels that our citizen's efforts to ask for and understand the facts about how our Town government operates is a "constant bombardment of time consuming negativity." No one should stay in a job that causes them undue stress. If this is her view of the people she is employed to serve, it is a good choice for her to find another community. We applaud her commitment to finding the right position for her, her family, and her career. It shows courage and initiative.

Unfortunately, both Ms. Williams and Ms. Sharp inherited a Town Office that has many flaws and problems, which surely increase their workload considerably, just trying to overcome existing inefficiencies. However, **not a single person** we have talked to in Town blames either of them for the actions of their predecessors. Everyone we have talked to has been watching over the last months, to see if Ms. Williams and Ms. Sharp acknowledge shortcomings of how we do business

and strive to work with the people that they serve with as much openness as possible, or whether they persist in the existing inefficiencies and staunchly defend even obvious flaws.

Now that the Commissioners have a decision to make about opening another job requisition for a new Town Planner, **we urge you to be deliberate in your search and not rush to hire someone just to have the position filled.**

There are professional agencies that can provide talented temporary help to keep our Town running while we find the right fit. Since the Town is doing a search for a new Town Manager, **we believe that it would be prudent to use temporary help** until the new Town Manager can look at the office workload and be part of interviewing and hiring a new Town Planner.

Face facts: the Town of Oxford has not had a good year so far when it comes to staffing. Do not keep making the same mistakes over and over.

Sincerely,


Dan Kordell


Susan Kordell

**Dave & Rose Donovan
203 N. Morris St.
Oxford, MD 21654**

October 1, 2024

Re: Proposed Meeting Procedures

To the Commissioners:

Please accept this as our public comments on the Resolution that was passed at the last Commissioners Meeting concerning Rules for Conduct at Commission Meetings, and the proposals to amend that Resolution that we understand will be discussed at the workshop on October 2. To be clear, we are asking that this letter be made part of the public record.

The existing Resolution was passed by the Commission without any opportunity for public comment at the meeting in advance of the vote. We believe that doing so – and only inviting the public to comment on the Resolution at the end of the meeting, after the vote was already taken – is in violation of both the letter and the spirit of Section 3C-4 of the Oxford Town Charter, and that the Resolution should be amended to at least provide for a presumption that public comment be permitted at any meeting *before* a vote is taken regarding a municipal question.

The reasons for this suggestion are two-fold.

First, although the Charter provides that the Commission shall determine its own rules and order of business, it specifically requires in Section C3-4 that those rules “shall” provide a “reasonable opportunity to be heard at any meeting in regard to any municipal question.” That the Charter does not further specify *when* in the meeting such opportunity to be heard shall be provided is beside the point: an opportunity to comment on matters up for a vote only after the matter has been decided does not, on its face, provide a “reasonable” opportunity to be heard.

Second, we don't believe that postponing public comments until the end of a meeting advances any legitimate objective. The only reasons articulated in the Resolution enacted last week for deferring comments until the end of the meeting was that allowing comments during the meeting interferes with “efficiency” and “fairness.” But postponing comments until the end of the meeting, after the vote has been taken, achieves neither of those goals. Three minutes of commentary by any person during a meeting takes no more time than three minutes of commentary by any such person at the end of a meeting. Indeed, the only obvious consequence of deferring any opportunity for public comment until the end of the

meeting – after the vote already has been taken – is to discourage any comments at all. While that may make Commission meetings more “efficient,” it does so at the expense of an opportunity for citizens to be heard and for Commissioners to take those comments into account when deciding how to vote. Certainly, a procedure whose sole consequence is to *discourage* public participation is contrary to the requirement of the Town Charter that the Commission’s rules provide a “reasonable” opportunity to be heard. Moreover, even if some few minutes were saved by postponing public comments until the end of a meeting, the Commission’s typical agenda is neither so action-packed nor time-consuming that public comments on matters set for vote should be routinely postponed until after a vote has been taken.

Refusing to hear any public comment at the last meeting before the vote on this Resolution was passed was unjustifiable and, in our view, a violation of the Town Charter. *Even if* the Town Charter did not require an opportunity for public comment before that vote, nothing about this issue is so urgent for the Commission to have proceeded with a vote without first hearing from those in attendance.

Speakers at recent meetings have (justifiably) decried the sometimes acrimonious atmosphere at Commission meetings. The Commission’s refusal to hear from those present at these meetings before a vote is taken – especially on a matter, like this one, where there was clear public interest and a desire to be heard – simply exacerbates any bad feelings or ill-will. As we have said before, the Commissioners should be taking steps to reduce the temperature and ensure that citizens feel that they are being heard. Not providing for an opportunity for citizens to speak at a time when comments might actually impact the decisions being made simply exacerbates existing bad feelings and drives a further wedge between the citizens of Oxford and the Commission.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dave & Rose Donovan", with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Dave & Rose Donovan

**Dave & Rose Donovan
203 N. Morris St.
Oxford, MD 21654**

September 18, 2024

Re: Proposed Meeting Procedures

To the Commissioners:

We are writing to comment on the proposed new procedures governing meetings of the Commission.

As a preliminary matter, it is unfortunate that we need such procedures at all. Although the little dust-up at the meeting a few weeks ago was unfortunate and inappropriate, it was a pretty unusual event (at least, from what we have seen or heard about in the past year or so) and does not seem to warrant any drastic regulation of public participation at Commission meetings.

As to the details of the proposal, we strongly object to any restrictions on the subject matter on which citizens may address the Commission and, even more so, to the proposed prohibition on answers by the Commissioners/staff to questions posed by citizens at Commission meetings.

With respect to the subject matter restrictions, it is not apparent what the point even is. Public comment should be solicited – and certainly not prohibited – on any matter that comes before the Commission. The notion that “the people’s work” should be conducted *without public comment* is (or should be) anathema to the very notion of the work of an elected Commission. Perhaps the proposed procedures are just poorly worded and something else was intended by this language, but we would be far better off saying nothing at all than to prohibit public comment “unless the meeting is opened for a public hearing.”

With respect to the procedures governing public comment at the end of a meeting, the blanket prohibition against any answers to any questions asked of the Commission or staff is as bad an idea as any that could be proposed. This sort of prohibition is exactly what led to so much of the public outrage during the aftermath of the firing/retirement of the police chief last year. There are almost no circumstances that justify a refusal by the Commissioners to respond to any and all questions by the public about any matter that is or has been before the Commission. Certainly, there will be topics that the Commissioners may be prohibited from addressing due to, for example, legal prohibitions (such as certain

employee matters), but a procedural rule requiring that Commissioners simply sit mute in response to questions or concerns raised by the public is fundamentally disrespectful of the voters.

We are a community of fewer than 700 residents, only a small handful of whom typically attend public meetings. The notion that the Commission is too busy or has too many matters before it to take the time to hear *and respond* to questions and concerns raised at meetings does not bear scrutiny. If one or more Commissioners decides that they simply are not going to respond to a question raised, we can let voters decide at the next election (or even sooner on a recall petition if warranted) whether that refusal to speak is acceptable behavior. But the language in the proposed procedure is that questions asked “*will not be answered,*” and no Commissioner should be permitted to fall back on such a prohibition as an excuse to hide behind for a failure to respond.

We also disagree with the suggestion that it might be appropriate to require commenters to pre-register. This is a very bad idea for at least three reasons: First, the agenda often is not released sufficiently in advance of a meeting to enable people to “pre-register” to make a public comment. Second, even if it were, there is no good reason to bar anyone who did not see it in time to seek to pre-register to make a comment. Third, comments often spark a desire by others to speak either in agreement or disagreement with the comments made. This proposal seems designed to discourage public comment rather than to encourage it.

We do agree, however, with the proposed requirement that those seeking to comment sit at the table and speak into the microphone. The current practice of requiring staff to move around the room with the microphone both causes delay and leads to repeated disagreement about who gets to hold the microphone while speaking.

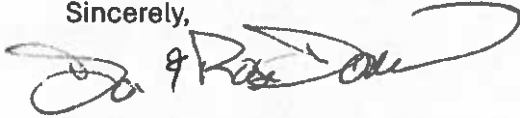
The proposed three-minute time limitation on public comments also seems reasonable.

We also very much agree with the proposed prohibition on “cheering, booing, [or] interrupting during the meeting.” Given how relatively few people attend these meetings, there is no reason to believe that those who do so are representative in any respect of the views of the broader population. The vocal support (or opposition) by those in attendance to the comments of others certainly could discourage some individuals from commenting at all, even though their opinions may well reflect the view of a significant number (and perhaps even a majority) of those not in attendance.

Finally, the proposed requirement that anyone who wants to record the meeting do so from a designated area also seems like a very good idea. There is no reason that anyone should be allowed to stick a recording device in front of someone offering a public comment, which is both rude and could discourage people from commenting at all.

We all need to do things to take the temperature down a few notches at these meetings. As discussed above, key aspects of this proposal would restrict public comment and discussion on matters that either are before the Commission or of concern to members of the public. Doing so simply exacerbates existing bad feelings and drives a further wedge between the citizens of Oxford and the Commission. The Commission cannot do the "work of the people" by hiding behind procedures that prevent the people from having an open dialogue with their government.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave & Rose Donovan". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Dave & Rose Donovan

From: Davenport West <davenportwest3@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 29, 2024 2:22 PM
To: Norman Bell; tcostigan@goeaston.net; Katrina Greer;
oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net; Lyndsey Ryan
Subject: For the record of Oct 8th meeting

9/30/24

Dear Commissioners.

I am asking these 3 questions well in advance of the next meeting in hopes of getting a response, also that it be **entered into the record**.

FROM MEETING MINUTES JULY 23, 2024

*"Currently reviewing on how to streamline office duties, one being transcribing meeting minutes. 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 delivery of meeting packets by sending them via email. It is an annual or monthly subscription and you can cancel at any time. Will request a demo."*

1. I believe that currently the agendas are supposed to be available on Thursday with a deadline of Friday for public comment and questions to be submitted. Doesn't seem to give the public much time. **Will not the BoardPAC program assist in getting agendas done quicker?**
2. Turboscribe was approved but apparently not being used, since the last minutes posted are July 23. **Why is this not being used?**
3. There still seems to be confusion about getting letters into the record, I believe Lindsey cleared that up at the last meeting, but what about past letters that never made it. I have several, leads one to

believe that our letters are being censored. I even asked Vicky to correct this before a meeting and was told it was taken care of – but it wasn't. I know all letters cannot be read, but they do need to be acknowledged and posted for that week's meeting minutes. **Will this begin to happen -or be ignored again?**

Davenport West

From: Davenport West <davenportwest3@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 3:13 PM
To: Norman Bell; Katrina Greer; Lyndsey Ryan; oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net; Tom Costigan
Subject: Fwd: Committee membership

For October 8th record

RE SENDING BECAUSE THIS WAS NEVER PUT ON RECORD OR ANSWERED

On Wed, Sep 4, 2024 at 12:36 PM Davenport West <davenportwest3@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Commissioners,

I read in past minutes that for committee openings there would be interviews. Having just received a rejection letter for both Planning and Zoning and the Historic committee, I am curious as to when the interviews were and did I miss something? I am still waiting to hear about the Ethics Board vacancy.

see below:

4/11/2023

"She also noted there were several board openings coming up and if citizens were interested, they should send an email expressing such and also note if they are interested in a specific board. As was done six months ago, interviews would be arranged for the interested citizens and information would be provided to the Commissioners."

Since the Historic Board members have not changed (On the web site) I wonder if a new member has been chosen yet.

If there is not an interview I would like to know what the exact process is. I am especially interested because I spent 10+ years renovating historic homes in Oxford, and an additional 7yrs of renovation work in Historic Annapolis. Naturally, along with this work there were lots of permits.

This information was included on my volunteer application.

Looking forward to an answer from someone.

Davenport West

From: Davenport West <davenportwest3@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 3:14 PM
To: normanbell45@gmail.com; Katrina Greer; Tom Costigan; Lyndsey Ryan;
oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: Re: Committees

AGAIN NEEDS TO BE PUT ON RECORD. OR ANSWERED for Oct 8th record

On Sat, Sep 7, 2024 at 8:06 AM Davenport West <davenportwest3@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Commissioners,

I have just noticed in the next meeting agenda that Jenny Stanley is being sworn in for another term on Historic. I am curious as to why this is happening since she has already completed a term and others have expressed interest in becoming a member.

I would like an explanation, rather than the standard procedure of ignoring these inquiries.

Davenport West

From: Davenport West <davenportwest3@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 3:14 PM
To: Norman Bell; tcostigan@goeaston.net; Katrina Greer;
oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net; Lyndsey Ryan
Subject: Was sent earlier and never acknowledged

TO BE ENTERED INTO THE RECORD

Dear Norman,

According to the town charter

– ***“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.”***

Other rules or regulations have been developed over the years and became effective by tradition. Which I might add is a concept that you do not agree or abide by as evidenced by the fact that you are Commission president, breaking a long-standing tradition.

Now it appears you are also forgetting one of your primary election platforms of bringing more “openness” The proposed new meeting protocols is a good example of shutting down the citizens. At the last meeting you told a citizen who had a statement or question “*I’ll give you a minute*” It was insulting at best.

Now you are trying to add things like relevant business –who decides that - isn’t any citizen’s question relevant? And worse yet you are trying to eliminate questions, by saying they will not be answered. Isn’t that how we got in a transparency mess in the first place. What happened to your “openness”? Now you are trying to limit the time allowed to speak, this is completely unreasonable. Why should you have the power to shut down comments and leave people out, it could be viewed as biased.

Your words “***Obey the direction of the President as to when and how long you may speak***” You are not a dictator, you are an ELECTED official of the people. We put you in office and we can remove you from office. But if you continue to try to stifle the voice of the people you may have a recall on your hands.

You say the meetings are to do the work of the people, isn’t the work of the people to be heard and to ask questions?

This may be corny, but as Abe said “***government of the people, by the people and for the people***” you would do well to remember that.

This attempted repression of the public will not stand.

Davenport West

oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net

From: David Ober <cedarbrookfarm@me.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 24, 2024 8:24 AM
To: oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: For Public Comment

I support the "Commissioners' Meetings" protocols outline as presented by President Bell on September 10th.

DAVID OBER
104 Tred Avon Ave

From: David Russell Poe <davidrussellpoe@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 11:11 AM
To: nbell@goeaston.net; Katrina Greer; tcostigan@goeaston.net
Cc: oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: Draft Entitled, "A Resolution for the Commissioners of Oxford Defining Commissioner's Meeting Procedures and Norms Related to Public Comments and Questions"

To the Commissioners of Oxford:

Please accept the following as my public comments as an individual on the Draft Resolution entitled, "A Resolution for the Commissioners of Oxford Defining Commissioner's Meeting Procedures and Norms Related to Public Comments and Questions", that was published on September 30, 2024 ("the Draft Resolution"), with notice that it will be taken up during the Workshop scheduled for October 2, 2024.

The Draft Resolution contains many flaws, only some of which are discussed below:

- (1). The Draft Resolution is based on unfounded assumptions and premises. The first WHEREAS clause quotes the Oxford Town Charter as granting residents "a reasonable opportunity to be heard at any meeting with respect to any municipal question." However, subsequent WHEREAS clauses confuse the opportunity to be heard with the opportunity to speak. They are not the same. The opportunity to be heard is granted to citizens who decide to read the posted agenda for any meeting, and thereafter to make their views known to the Commissioners by letter or email prior to the meeting to which the agenda relates.
- (2). The subsequent WHEREAS clauses assert that meetings of the Commissioners are for the purpose of allowing oral comments from citizens regarding town business coming before the Commissioners. That is not only incorrect, but it is also a misapprehension of the function of Commissioner meetings. The purpose of Commissioner meetings is to conduct the business of governing the Town. The Maryland Open Meetings Act requires such meetings to be conducted within the full view of the public, with only limited exceptions, but it does not require that members of the public be allowed to speak at such meetings.
- (3). Section 1 of the Draft Resolution is largely duplicative of the provisions relating to decorum in existing Resolution No. 2417, and thus unnecessary.
- (4). Section 2 of the Draft Resolution would completely undermine the agenda process for conducting town business, and thus may well be unlawful under the Open Meetings Act. Moreover, it effectively would mean that what would be discussed at Commissioners' meetings would be utterly unpredictable as to subject matter, regardless of the priorities of Town business or the needs of the public.
- (5). Section 3 of the Draft Resolution, operating in conjunction with Section 2, would deprive the Commission President of the discretion to manage the meeting by restricting his/her ability to control the extent to which public comment is permitted at the meeting as well as the matters discussed at the meeting, as well as agendas of future meetings. As with Section 2 of the Draft Resolution discussed in the preceding paragraph, this provision may well be in violation of the Open Meetings Act.
- (6). Section 4 of the Draft Resolution relating to media recordings, to the extent that it prescribes standards that go beyond what is set forth in Resolution No. 2417, provides detailed guidelines that are unworkable. It is not reasonable to expect the Commission President to determine what would "obstruct the line-of-sight between the Commissioners and the area where the majority of attendees are seated", as would be required by Section 4.b.(1). Nor would it be

reasonable to require the Commission President to determine "the average eye level of a seated attendee" as Sections 4.b.(2) and 4.b.(3) would require.

For all of the foregoing reasons, the Draft Resolution should be rejected in its entirety.

Respectfully,

David R. Poe
301 North Morris Street
Oxford, MD 21654

Sent from my iPad

David R. Poe
301 N. Morris Street
P.O. Box 163
Oxford, Maryland 21654

September 19, 2024

Commissioners of Oxford
PO Box 339
Oxford, MD 21654-0339

**RE: Comments On Proposed Meeting Procedures Circulated at the
Commissioners' Meeting of September 10, 2024**

Dear Commissioners:

The following represent my comments as an individual to the proposed Meeting Procedures that were circulated at the last Commissioners' meeting on September 10, 2024.

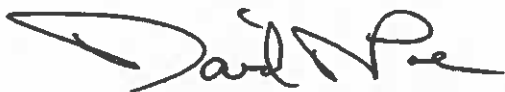
First, the fundamental approach of having meetings of the Commissioners being driven by an agenda published ahead of time is sound and consistent with the Maryland Public Information Act. There should be an established cut-off date by which agenda items may be proposed so that the agenda may be made available to the public by posting/publication. This procedure will allow all interested citizens to be aware of items coming before the Commissioners for decision, and to express their views to the Commissioners before the meeting during which the items are to be considered. Of course, there needs to be provision for the Commissioners to consider items on an emergency basis, without prior publication, but that should be only if exceptional, unforeseeable circumstances require it.

The preferred method by which citizens should pose their questions and/or state their concerns regarding Town government should be in written form, either in written documents or emails, addressed to all Commissioners. Again, this is consistent with the Maryland Public Information Act. Of course, the Commissioners have the discretion to schedule meetings for the purpose of receiving public oral comment, or to allow a portion of any regular Commissioner meeting to be devoted to receiving such public comment. However, the proposed Meeting Procedures have it essentially right that the regularly scheduled Commissioner meetings should be mostly for the open process of Town government to operate: i.e. to receive information relevant to the needs of the

Town, to consider solutions to the issues presented and to make decisions in the Town's best interests.

Third, reasonable restrictions on personal conduct of members of the public attending meetings of the Commissioners are not only appropriate but necessary. There are dozens if not hundreds of meetings, at all levels of government within Maryland, in which the public is permitted if not encouraged to attend, and most of them have rules of public conduct. Some are judicial, such as the various courts, some are legislative and some are administrative. But all require that public participation and dialogue not be disruptive. In all that I am aware of, the presiding officer has the authority to rule on the orderly conduct of individuals and exclude from further participation those whose conduct is determined to infringe on the rights of others in attendance. Without commenting on the specifics of the public conduct provisions of the proposed Meeting Procedures, I wholeheartedly support the concept.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David R. Poe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "P".

David R. Poe

oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net

From: Debbie Krolicki <oxfordrebellion@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 29, 2024 9:12 AM
To: oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: Fwd: Limiting Public Comment

I misspelled your email, and am resending this to you Vickie.

Thank you.
Debbie Krolicki

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

From: **Debbie Krolicki** <oxfordrebellion@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Sep 29, 2024 at 9:09 AM
Subject: Limiting Public Comment
To: <tcostigan@goeaston.net>, <nbell@goeaston.net>, <oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net>

Please thoughtfully consider an amendment to the resolution that you proposed and passed on limiting public comment. The premise that the meetings are unruly is exaggerated. One meeting seemed to get testy, but you were able to easily tame it. To pass a resolution to squelch public comment is not demonstrating transparency or exercising the 1st Amendment. Please reconsider a counter proposal that will allow citizens to have a voice in their local government.

I am also voicing my regret that the workshop that you will be discussing this is held at 10AM, when many of our active residents are working and cannot attend. I hope you will allow public comment at this workshop to hear and heed what those in attendance might contribute.

Thank you.
Debbie Krolicki

Please enter this as an attachment to the next meeting minutes.

From: deborah pulzone <deborah.pulzone@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 4, 2024 7:42 AM
To: Norman Bell; Tom Costigan; Katrina Greer
Cc: Lyndsey Ryan; oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: Town meeting

Dear Commissioners,

First I'd like to thank you for the workshop last Wednesday. It displayed your ability to work together and to make compromises.

Since we currently have an ordinance that was passed in the last regular town meeting regarding decorum, in my opinion, taking your time to tweak this is fine. Having an ordinance already in place allows you to not rush on the changes being made which in turn allows you to focus on more timely issues while the process is underway.

Because you took the time for the workshop and are possibly still giving this your top attention I am hoping that at Tuesday's meeting we will have a definitive answer as to whether or not the strand project is in compliance with the contract. If it is, great. As I rode my bike by there yesterday this seems questionable. Plus I did miss the walk around that I think took place and keep forgetting to ask how it went. If the project is not in compliance we should know who have you spoken with and what is the time line for completion. This can't wait. It is the fall planting season and if more grasses are needed it must be done very soon. Mother Nature is on her own time schedule and is not paying any attention to ours.

I thank all of you for your hard work.
Deborah Pulzone

PS this does not need to be read or posted in any meetings unless you feel otherwise.

oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net

From: Henry Hale <henryshale@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 12:14 PM
To: Norman Bell; Pat & Tom Costigan; Katrina Greer; oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: Sad Day in Oxford - Please post

Norm, in my 35 years in Oxford, I have never been so disappointed in our town government.

I have been reading your proposal regarding the Commissioner Meeting conduct and I am absolutely amazed that you would consider this proposal.

I have been in your shoes (two years as President of the Commissioners) so I understand what a difficult job it is. I never cut anyone off and always responded to questions. You are the one that raised your right hand to be President as your very first act as commissioner. You ran for commissioner on a platform of openness. By stifling the resident's questions and concerns you show that you are not willing to govern as you promised

By telling residents that their questions will not be answered or will be answered at a later date shows a total lack of openness or concerns of the rights of the taxpayers in Oxford. This is not openness or transparency!

Your total disdain for a fellow commissioner is palpable. She and the residents of Oxford deserve better. You have the opportunity to move our town forward. What you are proposing is pushing us back in so many ways.

Please do the right thing and make our town government more open, not more closed.

Henry Hale

--
[Henry S. Hale](mailto:Henry.S.Hale@haleproperty.com)
[Oxford, MD 21654](mailto:Henry.S.Hale@haleproperty.com)
[410-829-3777](tel:410-829-3777)
www.haleproperty.com

This email transmission may contain CONFIDENTIAL, PRIVILEGED, and/or PROTECTED INFORMATION. It is intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom it is addressed. The transmission may contain information subject to federal and/or state privacy laws. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender by email immediately, do not disseminate or copy the transmission, and delete it immediately.

From: Jan Greenhawk <jgreenhawk2@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 30, 2024 4:25 PM
To: Norman Bell; Greer Katrina; Tom Costigan; oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net; Lyndsey Ryan
Subject: Letter to be read into the next town meeting minutes

To the Town Commissioners,

I am shocked at the hypocrisy of two of you, Mr. Bell and Mr. Costigan, regarding the right of citizens to ask questions and share opinions regarding agenda items verbally at public meetings.

Our country, state, county, and town are built on the concept of citizen participation and the responsibility and duty of our elected officials to allow discourse at public meetings. Your idea, presented in at least one of Mr. Bell's proposals, is that speech by citizens is restricted in meetings to written opinions sent to the Commissioners prior to the meeting or to public comment at the end of a meeting after all decisions are made. This is contradictory, and quite frankly, nonsensical if you TRULY want citizen input. In fact, I think it proves that you do not want public comment at all, but wish to operate in a vacuum of the two of you and the people you favor in town. You have created a town consisting of those who will be heard and those who will not be heard all based on your personal biases.

Commissioner Bell, you may have forgotten that during your campaign, you vowed "openness." You and your supporters campaigned on the fact that Mr. Coder would not participate in a forum/debate between the two of you. At that time, you told citizens of the town that they should not vote for a man who was unwilling to stand before them and present his positions and answer questions. How odd that you would campaign on that idea and now that you have been elected, do just what you said was wrong. Hypocritical does not adequately describe your recent actions.

In my recent article in the Easton Gazette, I shared a quote from Justice Brandeis:

*Those who won our independence believed . . . that it is hazardous to discourage thought, hope and imagination; that fear breeds repression; that repression breeds hate; that hate menaces stable government; that the path of safety lies in the opportunity to **discuss freely supposed grievances and proposed remedies.***

Even more important than that is the fact that our town charter, the rules you are bound to follow, says the following in section C3-4:

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.

This does not mean for citizens to write you a letter that you can then read privately and post after the meeting and after decisions are made. It does not mean that you get to decide which items and decisions are open to citizen input. It means to be "**at any meeting in regard to any municipal question.**"

I'm not surprised that you have taken this approach to governance of the town. In the past 19 months, the Commissioners have circumvented the will of the citizens of Oxford by forcing the retirement of our respected chief, hired a replacement without proper advertising (he only lasted nine months), approved the destruction of our Strand Shoreline by a company that has deceived the town by promising one thing and delivering another, supported a Town Manager who has unilaterally spent the town into deficit and who hired a replacement for her who was a convicted child molester, appointed the loser of an election to a Commissioner's post without citizen input, allowed a man who

has slandered citizens of the town to remain on the town's ethics committee, allowed town employees to insult the citizens of our town on social media without any repercussions, and appointed those favored by the Commissioners onto town committees and commissions while other more qualified candidates had applied but were ignored.

While not all of you participated in all those actions, Mr. Costigan was in office for all of them. Mr. Bell, you have continued the practice of shutting out the people. Many citizens feel their opinions are being ignored.

And let's talk about your demeanor at meetings. Mr. Bell and Mr. Costigan, you need to examine how you react to the people of the town. At times, both of you have been rude, disrespectful and dismissive. In the latest meeting, Mr. Bell's actions were so bad that a television reporter from WBOC in Salisbury came to Oxford to find out what was going on here. She saw the livestream of the meeting and was shocked at Mr Bell's actions and decided to do a story.

Not only that, but you had the gall to vote on a proposal without people getting to read the alternative before you voted. You knew all the options were either not posted or the wrong versions were posted. The confusion in the meeting should have postponed the vote. Instead, Mr. Bell yelled at people to sit down and "not talk back" because he was frustrated and embarrassed about voting on something when he knew it was wrong.

You have forgotten who you serve. You seem to think you serve a small group of ten to fifteen people, some who no longer live in this town anymore. That is not how it should be.

Now you are having a workshop on a resolution you have already passed and we don't know if you will allow public comment. Unfortunately, you couldn't even commit to accepting what could be good ideas from the citizenry.

You need to hear citizen's opinions, not suppress them. In fact, you should welcome them. Only people who are afraid of what they will hear, are afraid of being exposed, afraid of not being in full control won't accept citizen ideas and questions.

If that describes you, resign your position because you should not be a Commissioner.

Commissioner Greer, thank you for being the only Commissioner who welcomes citizen opinions.

Instead I hope you will do the right thing.

Jan Greenhawk
100 Willows Avenue
Oxford
410-463-3868

From: Carin Starr <cstarr7@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 10:54 AM
To: Norm Bell; tcostigan@goeaston.net; Katrina Greer; Vickie Sharp
Cc: hb
Subject: Town of Oxford Public Comment Resolution

Dear Commissioners and Vickie, Town of Oxford Treasurer,

We urge you to rescind the Public Comment Resolution passed at the last Commissioners meeting. As stated in the Town Charter, *“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.”*

Transparency and encouragement of community inclusion in decisions pertaining to the Town are vital to a thriving community where its citizens feel respected and engaged. Leading by example is imperative and begins with civil, respectful dialogue. The recently passed ‘Public Comment Resolution’ supports neither civility or respect.

Respectfully,
Hugh ‘Jock’ Beebe and Carin Starr

803 S. Morris Street

--
Carin Starr
PO Box 132
Oxford, MD 21654
419-215-8938
cstarr7@gmail.com

oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net

From: susan delean-botkin <sdel@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 23, 2024 6:38 PM
To: Vickie Sharp
Subject: Fw: Commission meetings

I am a fairly new resident to Oxford - nine months. I love living here and want things to run smoothly. I was a math teacher and fully realize how important it is to have rules that can be easily followed. It makes all the difference in the classroom, school and in this case - The Town.

Sincerely,

John Michael Delean
202 3rd St/
Oxford, Md. 21654

From: John Hockmeyer <hockmeyerj@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 30, 2024 3:51 PM
To: nbell@goeaston.net; tcostigan@goeaston.net; Katrina Greer
Cc: oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: Comment on Public Comment Resolution; working sessions

Dear Commissioners of Oxford,

First of all, thank you for serving as Commissioners. The role requires diligence and a servant-leadership mindset to work for the benefit of others. It is with that perspective that I would like to comment on the recent Public Comment Resolution.

I have been one of many quiet citizens in Oxford patiently waiting to see how the new Town Commission will govern. The most recently proposed Public Comment Resolution alarmed me. Transparency is the antidote to Conspiracy, so supporting public debate and making supporting information accessible is a core competency of high-functioning governance.

A proactive governing body should want to empower their constituents to understand both the rationale and costs of any course of action impacting the citizens, more so for persons don't agree with the recommended course of action. It should be anticipated that some citizens will not agree with any given decision, but the *Why* (rationale) and *How* (budget) of decision making should be transparent to all citizens. Our business is not one of a private entity, but rather a taxpayer funded town.

I believe Oxford's Public Comment resolution should support transparency, accessibility, and accountability for both the citizens of Oxford as well as the Commissioners.

- Any town business that is a change from the status quo, or sets a precedent, should have both the rationale and budget impact made available to the citizen taxpayers days prior to a vote.
- Citizens should have the right to speak freely (albeit constructively) in a reasonably time-bound manner. Both support and opposition for any give policy should be anticipated.
- Any discourse of the Commissioners (or a sub-committee) that is not legally required to be addressed in Closed Session, should in fact be discussed in Open Session. This is common in high-functioning organisational governance.
- Any town business for vote should be presented with a 1) policy rationale, 2) both the short and long-term sustainable funding solution in support of the decision, and a 3) risk assessment for taking/not taking the proposed course of action. This would demonstrate to the citizenry that the Commissioners consider the short and long-term needs of all citizens prior to setting policies.

Not every decisions will be universally supported, but every citizen has the right to be heard and to understand the rationale of the town's leadership in proposing new and sustainable courses of action

Thank you again for your dedication to our great little town of Oxford.

- John Hockmeyer

John Hockmeyer
4517 Bachelors Point Court, Oxford MD
hockmeyerj@gmail.com

From: Larry Myers <larrymyers204@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 4:07 PM
To: nbell@goeaston.net; tcostigan@goeaston.net; Oxford Commissioners
Cc: oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: Public Workshop on Resolution No. 2417, Rules of Conduct at Commission Meetings

The Commissioners have scheduled a public workshop on Wednesday, October 2, 2024, to consider possible amendments to Resolution 2417, Rules of Conduct at Commission Meetings, adopted on Tuesday, September 24, 2024.

The undersigned resident of Oxford submits these comments and requests for consideration at the workshop, and for inclusion in the public record thereof.

1. Resolution 2417 was adopted by a Commission majority with no opportunity for advance written public comment on the draft due to late posting, while an alternate proposal had not been posted at all due to limited staffing absent a Town Administrator.. The majority prefaced their approval by promising a public workshop to consider amendments to the Resolution based on the alternative proposal and public input.
2. In my view, Resolution 2417 has both legal and practical defects that could easily be remedied by alternative language. More fundamentally, I share the significant public concern that the basic premise of the adopted rules of conduct for Commission meetings is a misguided perception by some Commissioners and staff that the efficient conduct of public business will be significantly hindered by adequate public participation at Town meetings.
3. Organized and polite/respectful public discussion with Commissioners and staff is indeed a proper and desired component of the conduct of Town meetings. But the current rules of conduct are overkill. They not only impinge upon, but fundamentally deny, the rights guaranteed by the Town Charter and State Law, rights that Oxford citizens know they have traditionally been accorded, are necessary for good governance, and which which will cause a growing backlash if they are not respected. Current political tensions among the citizenry are the result of recent lapses in openness, transparency, and the appearance of evenhanded access to what should be public information by all citizens of Oxford. These mistakes can be corrected.
4. The provisions in the alternative draft in Section 1 (Decorum) and Section 3 (Comments and Questions) should be substituted for corresponding (and conflicting) provisions in Resolution 2417.
5. 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.”
 - a) Asking for advance written public comments on forthcoming agenda items is one efficient way to conduct Commission business, but this process only works to the extent that the agenda items are adequately described, are posted sufficiently in advance of meetings, actionable drafts are posted in their entirety where they can be accessed for public review, and such items are not changed at the meeting. This has often not been the case, and it is made more difficult by the temporary absence of a Town Administrator.
 - b). Actionable agenda items, particularly draft language, can be - and usually are - clarified and modified during the give and take of discussion among Commissioners, staff, and the public. This is a vital part of the process of Commission action, and the public should not be prevented from participating, subject to practical and reasonable rules on speaker identification, time limits, and clear relevance of comments and questions to the actionable item being addressed. It is

also reasonable that each speaker should be recognized to speak, and that they should address the Commissioners and staff, not the public in the room.

c). Legally, advance public comment is no substitute for the opportunity to comment “at any meeting.” The Commissioners can set procedural rules of conduct, but they cannot abridge this Charter right. Nor is provision in meeting procedures for public comment at the end of Commission meetings an adequate substitute for the ability to comment on actionable items (i.e. those to be voted on) before any vote is taken. The practice of allowing public comment at the end of meetings is designed to being forward comment on issues the public may have in addition to actionable agenda items, as a way to alert and educate Commissioners, staff and the rest of the Town to undisclosed matters - problems, challenges and opportunities.

d). For the same reasons, Commissioners and staff should answer germaine questions when asked by recognized speakers, whenever possible. Answering questions promotes clarity, promotes trust, and makes the Commissioners accountable. If an immediate answer cannot be provided, the proper response is to note the question for the record and arrange for a timely response in writing after the meeting, or at the next meeting. Exclusively relying on written answers after the meeting is cumbersome, consumes staff time, and usually does not provide timely information. While it may be positive to avoid “debate” with members of the public during meetings, this is not the same thing as endeavoring to facilitate clarification and the provision of relevant information.

I look forward to a productive discussion by all participants at the scheduled workshop, and, if need be, further meetings. The benefits to town governance, and to the long-run political climate in Oxford will be well worth the effort.

From: rsommerlatte@gmail.com
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 9:25 AM
To: 'Norm'; Tom Costigan; Katrina Greer
Cc: oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: Public Comment

-Please read this at the next meeting and publish it with the minutes of the meeting.-

Honorable Norman Bell, President of the Commission
Honorable Thomas Costigan, Commissioner
Honorable Katrina Greer, Commissioner

The last public comment at this week's Commissioners Meeting was given by Russ Grey. I believe Mr. Grey to be an honorable man and was chagrined by his comments. What was the purpose of his meandering story, laced with misrepresentation of facts, other than to slander Commissioner Greer? By casting aspersions in a public forum, he made an excellent case for not having public comment since it did not advance the discussion but rather disrupted it with unsubstantiated suggestions that Commissioner Greer was not "collaborative." His discourse was in direct opposition to the legislation that was being discussed – civility in communications. Moreover, the assertions he made were incorrect and advanced an intellectually dishonest argument.

In pillorying someone for a lack of cooperation when the evidence is in direct opposition makes one ask the question, "Why would you do that"

What we saw in the discussion of the legislation was a difference of opinion about how public input to the process should occur. I saw no animus in the discussion among the Commissioners. There was a lack of competence demonstrated in the Commissioners' inability to have the documents under discussion in hand. They were not adroit in their discussions and unfortunately came off as arbitrary and capricious. Writing good legislation is difficult and fraught with unintended consequences. It would seem that having the document to be voted on in hand would be a first step. Pushing the unreviewed/discussed latest document to a vote without inspecting the point of concern about how and when public input should occur - could be seen as an uncollaborative approach. I would not but do see it as a demonstration of producing flawed legislation.

To suggest that mistakes made in the past and need be corrected, flies in the face of many of our direct experiences. Take for example the Strand project. Four major components of the project were not completed yet the project was signed off and closed out as complete. All monies for the contract were distributed to the contractor. Identifying this as a problem and working to resolve it is building the Community not tearing it down. In defending the sign-off on the project and instead, focusing on suggesting that soliciting constituents' views at a gathering is criminal is a deflection that at best represents muddled thinking but then leads folks to speculate about why the sign-off happened, tearing down confidence in the governing body.

Thank you,

Mac Sommerlatte
501 E. Strand PO 341
Oxford, MD 21654
302-598-1235

From: Pat <creekside203@atlanticbb.net>
Sent: Tuesday, October 1, 2024 5:25 AM
To: Madi Yates
Cc: oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net; Bill Dial; John Yates; John Devlin; Susan Devlin; Simon Ariston; Devismes Sharp; jennstanley@verizon.net
Subject: Re: Suggestion for South Street left turn to Morris Street

Many thanks Madi for communicating this concern. After living on South Street for almost 25 years I consider it a miracle that I haven't been in an accident at that corner. I wholeheartedly support your suggestion! 🙏 . Pat Ingram
Sent from my iPhone

> On Oct 1, 2024, at 1:12 AM, Madi Yates <hmsindy57@gmail.com> wrote:

>
>

> First of all, thank you for your excellent communication in what is a difficult task! Having worked in corporate as an executive during my career and also in various volunteer opportunities, dealing with people who have decided to be difficult is not easy, nor for the faint of heart. Communication is key and I find your ongoing communication to be very clear and helpful.

>

> I live on South Street. Turning left onto Morris Street is always a challenge and only becomes more difficult when more cars are parked in town. Our vision is generally partially blocked to oncoming cars from the left by parked cars and often completely blocked. This left turn is just "an accident waiting to happen" as the saying goes.

>

> I would like to propose the installation of a circular convex mirror at the diagonal corner across the street. These circular convex mirrors allow one to see if there is any oncoming traffic from both the left and the right before pulling out. I have included a visual example for clarity. One of our town's engineering types would be able to analyze which version is most applicable and how/where it would be mounted.

>

> Are you able to forward this proposal to the Commissioners on my behalf? Does this need to be more formal?

>

> Thank you for your assistance.

>

> Madi Yates at 228 South Street

>

> Copied several other South Street residents

> <Screenshot_20241001_070356_Amazon Shopping.jpg>

oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net

From: dc2ox4d@verizon.net
Sent: Tuesday, September 24, 2024 8:36 AM
To: Vickie Sharp
Subject: Fw: Simple courtesy during town meetings

Vickie,
This is the second letter I referenced that was sent to Lisa on Sunday.
Thank you,
Tom Costigan

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Mary Jordan <mary422jordan@gmail.com>
To: "townoffice@easton.net" <townoffice@easton.net>
Sent: Sunday, September 22, 2024 at 01:59:59 PM EDT
Subject: Fwd: Simple courtesy during town meetings

To All:

I totally support the meeting protocol Norm Bell proposed at the Commissioners meeting.

Thanks.

Mary Jordan

oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net

From: oxfordmanager@goeaston.net
Sent: Wednesday, September 25, 2024 11:05 AM
To: Vickie Sharp
Subject: FW: Commissioners Meeting Management

Thank you,

Town Manager
PO Box 339
Oxford, MD 21654

410-226-5122
oxfordmanager@goeaston.net

From: Dominic Terrone <mickterrone@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 24, 2024 12:31 PM
To: oxfordmanager@goeaston.net
Subject: Fw: Commissioners Meeting Management

Hi Vickie. Please see below.

Mickey Terrone

From: Dominic Terrone <mickterrone@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 24, 2024 12:25 PM
To: Oxford Town Hall Cheryl Lewis <oxfordclerk@goeaston.net>; oxfordplanner@goeaston.net
<oxfordplanner@goeaston.net>
Subject: Fw: Commissioners Meeting Management

Hello Vickie. I want to be certain you have received this email I had sent to the 3 commissioners.

Thanks.

Mickey

From: Dominic Terrone <mickterrone@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, September 22, 2024 11:25 PM
To: Tom Costigan <dc2ox4d@verizon.net>; NORMAN BELL <normanbell45@gmail.com>; Katrina Greer
<katrina4commissioner@gmail.com>
Subject: Commissioners Meeting Management

Dear Commissioners. I hope you will act without delay to protect the integrity and decorum at your town meetings.

The meetings have become a circus of orchestrated showboating of gripes. You should limit the public comments period limiting the theatrics to the written word at meetings and publishing those letters on the web site as part of the meeting follow ups. Perhaps eliminate public comments from the meeting completely encouraging written expressions.

At the very least, I hope you will adopt the protocols suggested by President Bell at the last meeting.

Thank you.

From: Ray Munsch <raymunsch@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 17, 2024 9:42 AM
To: kgreer@goeaston.net; tcostigan@goeaston.net; nbell@goeaston.net;
oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Cc: Margaret Munsch
Subject: Proposed mooring fees

Dear Commissioners,

This is a follow up to the Port Wardens meeting which Margaret attended on 9/12/24.

During the discussion concerning the mooring permit fee, the town planner confirmed that mooring administration includes 1) sending out letters or emails reminding mooring owners to hire Matthias Marine to inspect their mooring and send a report to the town office, 2) receiving and recording the report and 3) sending out bills. It was also stated that there could easily be extra letters/emails to folks who do not comply with the biennial inspections in a timely fashion and extra time spent when a person wants to sink a new mooring.

These extra costs are being passed on to the current compliant mooring holders even though they do not, either directly or indirectly, cause such costs to be incurred by the town.

We have two suggestions which would cover these costs in a way that is fair to those of us who always comply with mooring maintenance and yearly fees:

- 1) The permit fee proposal in front of the commissioners could include a deadline and late fee so that the extra time/cost is passed on to the person(s) causing it.
- 2) The Town could set a Mooring Application fee to cover any time/cost associated with the process of permitting a mooring.

The proposal before the Commissioners is to set the mooring permit fee at \$350 every two years. This is certainly more reasonable than a yearly fee of \$350 but is still excessive considering the time the town office spends in administering our mooring and the amount appears quite arbitrary. It is hard to imagine that it takes more than three hours per mooring every other year for a reminder letter, recording the inspection report and sending the bill. If the rationale for this amount is to cover the potential "extra" costs, then the suggestions above seem more reasonable and fair.

Sincerely,

Ray Munsch
710 S. Morris St.

From: ore@goeaston.net
Sent: Tuesday, September 24, 2024 11:24 AM
To: oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: RE: Support of the meetings protocol as presented in the last Commissioner's meeting

For public comment

Ray

Good morning,

I'm writing in support of the "public meetings" protocol as distributed at the last meeting.

What a shame we have to have a document outlining behavior in our meetings. I might also add that having Commissioner Greer sit away from the other two commissioners only serves to show the divide in the community that needs unifying for the Town's best interest.

Sincerely,

Ray

Ray Stevens

From: Noname <noname.hyberg@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 30, 2024 2:28 PM
To: Vickie Sharp
Cc: Bob Hyberg
Subject: Comments for "Round Table Discussion"

Comments for Round Table Discussion - Ordinance 2417

I have read the information provided on the web site containing the referenced ordinance and the proposed changes. The proposed changes/modification suggest to me an opportunity to create a filibuster opportunity from some of those in attendance; especially the more vocal activist.

I personally have not had difficulty expressing my opinions using the existing methods. I have not experienced a lack of transparency on town issues with the exception of those surfacing at the commissioners meeting. These 'new' issues surfacing at the commissioners meeting should have an opportunity for open dialog between the commissioners and allow for the exchange of ideas and positions without public comments.

It is obvious some of these 'new' issues have not been 'transparent' to the general public and come with a few citizens that have previous purview to said issue(s) ready to express collective opinions.

I do not support modifying Ordinance 2417 as presented and approved.

Sincerely,
Robert Hyberg
112 First St.
Oxford, MD

oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net

From: RON WALKER <ronwalkeroxford@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 30, 2024 3:02 PM
To: Lyndsey Ryan
Cc: TOM COSTIGAN; Norman Bell; oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net; Katrina Greer
Subject: PUBLIC RECORDS.

Hi Lyndsey,

I am following up on something you said at the last town meeting. You clarified that any communication by emails and letters sent to a commissioner or commissioners conducting public business are part of the public record. Would you mind initiating this for me? I'm guessing it has probably never been done before. Norm mentioned "we have had lots of opinions", and Tom mentioned a number of emails as well about the new ordinance 2417. Would you please help get these letters and emails posted on the town site. Please let me know when I may access the website and where I may find them.

Best,

Ron Walker

cc. Tom, Norm, the Clerk/Treasurer.

FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

September 29, 2024

Subject: Workshop Comments on **Conduct Resolution**

Commissioner Greer,

I received a copy of your Saturday, September 28 email from a concerned citizen with the announced subject, "Limiting Public Comment".

They pointed out that in your very first paragraph you stated that a "public comment resolution was voted on without public comment". Because you sent a copy of that resolution with your e-mail, I would like to remind you that the resolution was to "amend the rules for **conduct** at Commission meetings". The resolution passed.

Let's not forget that the announcement of this proposed resolution was discussed at the commissioner's meeting on September 10th, two weeks before the next meeting. Six days later, on September 16th, you sent an email to a targeted list of individuals (not the public) with a rough proposal of your thoughts on a resolution. The very next day, you sent an invitation to the very same group to meet in the park. Two days later, you confirmed the invitation to the same group with two agenda items for discussion that were to appear on the September 24 Commissioner's meeting agenda.

On Friday, September 20, I heard about and attended your meeting in the park with approximately 35 individuals who I assume were the targeted “undisclosed” email recipients. At that meeting, you discussed both resolutions, yet you have previously said and implied that the “public” did not have the opportunity for public comment.

Clearly, your note yesterday is again an opinion about a resolution that was titled and about **meeting conduct**. You have made it clear to the same designated group that you don’t support the **conduct resolution**. Wouldn’t it be more collegial to hold off on your opinion until you have the workshop? This is a dialogue process searching for potential compromise. Please don’t view it as a win or lose situation.

Who do you define as the “public”? Apparently, the “public” is a group of individuals you are singularly aligned with, not the entire town. Anyone who has opposing views is not considered. Effectively, you have created a “we vs. they” scenario that continues to divide Oxford.

The citizens of the Town want governance that serves the needs of all. However, they also want action to be taken. You are correct that the meetings should not be so long, but you often propose tabling items that could be handled in the current meetings (e.g., Resort Tax, Moorings, etc.). From looking at past meetings, the “other” Commissioners have consistently supported your tabling motions in an effort to be collaborative. You are also correct that we have an intelligent and engaged

populace. I would add that we also have the same traits and skills in our Commissioners; all three of them. You would not listen to the exclusive opinion of one citizen. Likewise, each Commissioner should listen to the voices of the other two peers, knowing that agreement is not always certain.

Why do you want to serve as a Commissioner of one? From your recent emails and prior actions, it appears that there is an unwillingness to collaborate with the other two Commissioners. Isn't it the role of a leader to reach out to everyone, whether they agree with you or not? I know for sure that you do not reach out to many town citizens who are not on your select email list. Don't their points of view matter? Don't you think it is time to stop feeding a "we vs they" mentality? The majority has been silent, but that is changing. You should try reaching out to them. Many do not speak up because they feel bullied, threatened and intimidated by those who weaponize social media with innuendos and faulty analysis often leading to inaccurate conclusions.

You might be surprised at what you find. There might be support, or there might be disagreement, but you will never know until you start listening and accepting feedback from individuals who believe something different than you.

Sincerely,
Russ Gray
410 South Morris Street
Oxford, MD 21654

Cc: Commissioner Norm Bell – nbell@goeaston.net
Commissioner Tom Costigan – kgreer@goeaston.net
Vickie Sharp – oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Katrina Greer – kgreer@goeaston.net

Meeting Comments-September 21, 2024

Last Thursday an e-mail was forwarded to me from Commissioner Greer that was an invitation for an informal meeting the next day to discuss two items.

I asked several people if they had received the invitation and some said yes but others said no, so I did not understand how the audience was determined and selected.

Because it was sent by Commissioner Greer, my first assumption was that it was sent to the other commissioners as well. I asked each of them and one individual said yes. He had received a copy of the invitation, and the other individual said no. He had only seen it later in the day because it had also been forwarded to him by another person in town.

As I looked at the agenda, I noticed that it included at least one item that I understand was planned to be on the agenda for the next commissioners meeting, four days later.

I attended that meeting and counted approximately 35 individuals in attendance, but the other two commissioners we're absent.

Because so many individuals have discussed the desire for transparency and openness, it appeared that the approach to this meeting was out of sync with the Open Meetings Act

requirements that need to be followed. First. It does not matter if the meeting is declared to be an informal discussion. After studying the Open Meetings Act Manual, intent and how a meeting is developed and conducted defines whether it is a public meeting.

Thirty - four hours advance notice to a select public audience is insufficient timing for a meeting to discuss the two topics that were on the agenda. Without proper notice reaching ALL the public and the other elected official, there was no opportunity to observe one Commissioner's conducting of public business during a public meeting. This suggests a violation of the OMA requirements.

Secondly if the other commissioner who was invited had attended the meeting, that would have constituted a public body quorum in a public meeting that was outlining preferred legislative action for a resolution that was on the next town agenda. He and Commissioner Greer would have potentially been in violation of the Open Meetings Act so he made the right choice not to attend.

We deserve better than this. Various comments during the Friday meeting indicated that several participants felt they were not being heard. We have all felt that way at one time or another. However, being heard does not mean that our ideas are the only ones that can or will be considered. Another comment referred to meetings approximately 7 years ago where many issues we are facing did not exist. It was

mentioned that there were no rules then and why do we need rules now? Those are great observations for which dialogue should continue, but not in a way that fosters dysfunction in governance or animosity toward those that don't agree with our individual points of view.

The overwhelming majority of the town wants collaborative representatives where differing points of view can be heard to develop a plan going forward. In my pre adult years working in construction, my first boss told me that demolition is much easier than the build out. That counsel has stuck with me over the years as a metaphor for many daily life experiences. Today, I keep asking, how much more demolition of Town governance do we need? Isn't it time we start building? The first step in the process is to identity one's vision with **others**. Once there is discussion and mutual agreement, hopefully, a plan can be developed and then implemented with collaboration from all. Demolition of our community functionality continues but I don't see a vision from the demolition team of what the plan is.

No one will ever feel that all their desires have been heard and implemented. However, I also feel that we have a better chance of meeting the needs of our community if all three commissioners come together and work collaboratively instead of attempted governing by the unilateral actions of one. There is a reason why the windshield is bigger than the rearview mirror. Let's look forward and identify where we are

going before we get so lost we never reach our planned destination.

Norm, please answer these questions.

Sent on Tue, Sep 24, 2024

Please post this letter inside the official minutes for the public meeting on September 24, 2024.

Dear Norm Bell,

It's my understanding, before the 2024 Oxford Town Election voters simply had to register inside the Town office to be eligible. But this year, that long standing practice changed. For some reason in 2024 -- Oxford residents were forced to register with Talbot County and the State of Maryland in order to be eligible to vote in our last Town election.

Who changed this rule? Was it done by the three Commissioners or from inside the Oxford administration office? And, if it was done within the administration office — did Vickie Sharp or Cheryl Lewis have the authority to change the Charter and the way residents vote in Oxford? Norm, can you please point to where it says in our Town Charter that a resident has to register with Talbot County and the State in order to be eligible to vote in a municipal election? Can you show me exactly what changed between 2023 and 2024?

Weeks after the election I saw Pam Baker, the Head of our Election Board, inside the Town office. I tried to ask Ms. Baker a few election questions -- but Vickie Sharp, the acting Town Manager, stopped Ms. Baker from answering anything. According to the Town Lawyer, Vickie Sharp does not have the authority to stop the Chair of our Election Board from talking to residents. In my opinion Vickie Sharp clearly abused her power. At first, Ms. Baker tried to respond but was quickly stopped by our acting Town Manager.

I then wrote to Vickie Sharp asking her how I could contact Pam Baker. But, Sharp refused to give me any information. I have emails that prove this point. However, after obtaining Pam Baker's email and mailing address from other sources I wrote to Ms. Baker -- but she never responded. Perhaps she's still heeding Vickie Sharp's advice.

Currently, there seems to be several conflicting statements that don't fit the rules inside our Town Charter. I've resided in Oxford for 8 years and in those years I've followed the rules. Our Charter states: **"has resided within the corporate limits of the Town for thirty (30) days next preceding any Town election and is registered in accordance with the provisions of this Charter, shall be a qualified voter of the Town."**

I live in Oxford full-time from June to September. But, I do not "reside" in Oxford for thirty days before our mid-June election. So, I've never been allowed to vote. Or, that's what I was told by the town's administration when I first moved into Oxford.

But currently, there are several conflicting statements that seem to throw our Charter into the trash can. I found one couple who voted from Florida and many residents believe this couple have never actually lived at their Oxford address — not even for one night. After purchasing a small home the property has been undergoing a huge structural project. The last time I checked the house didn't even have a Certificate of Occupancy.

I brought this to the Town's attention and Lyndsey Ryan responded, **"A person is allowed to vote in an Oxford Town Election — if that person is qualified and registered to vote in the Town of Oxford — even if that person has never actually slept inside their primary home, as long as their primary home has become their domicile at least 30 days prior to the election."**

So, if someone owns a piece of land in Oxford and makes it their primary residence they can live anywhere in the world 365 days a year and they'd still be allowed to vote in Oxford. Even if this hypothetical person has never been to the Town of Oxford. But according to Maryland Code Regs. 18.03.06.01 the definition of **"Principal residence" means the one location where an individual regularly resides and is the location designated by the individual for the legal purpose of voting,"**

But perhaps the most puzzling statement I read regarding our voting rules came from Vickie Sharp. Ms. Sharp said, **"The Town of Oxford does not decide who gets to vote in the municipal election."** Norm, I cannot find this language anywhere in our Town Charter. Can you please show me where it's located? Apparently, Sharp is saying it's up to the County or State who votes in municipal elections. So, I visited Tammy Stafford, the

Director of the Talbot County Election Board and Ms. Stafford seemed very clear on this issue — Ms. Stafford said, **"Because Oxford has its own Charter -- Talbot County has nothing to do with an Oxford Town election."**

Norm, do you have any idea how many people have possibly been disenfranchised by statements made by people like Vickie Sharp? There are around 100 residents who didn't vote in Oxford's last election and it's impossible to go door to door and conduct a scientific survey after the fact. Maybe they stayed home because they didn't want to drive to Easton to register. We'll never know and that's my point.

When the voting rule changed from 2023 was it debated in a public meeting? Did the three Commissioners authorize Cheryl Lewis, an outgoing employee, to make this new rule? There are so many unanswered questions. Vickie Sharp also refused to tell me -- who had "control" over the absentee ballots? As it turns out, Cheryl Lewis had full control over the 90 plus absentee ballots and Lewis had the code to the safe 24/7.

Keep in mind, the entire election basically came down to one side who was demanding the Town to conduct a forensic audit on Ms. Lewis's administration. After all, there are 6 grant funds that are currently unaccounted for. Apparently, no one knows where the money went and there are no receipts. If this doesn't warrant a forensic audit I don't know what does. The other half of Town, generally speaking, doesn't want to conduct a forensic audit and Norm you fall into this category. You personally are against such an audit and have called for "openness." But ironically, you are currently trying to stop any public interaction between the Commissioners and the residents of Oxford during public meetings. You might want to look up the definition of openness.

Why in the world would the Commissioners, Vickie Sharp and Pam Baker create this conflict of interest problem with our absentee ballots? Why would the Town give full control to a person who is at the center of several controversial topics and who had already resigned? It wasn't fair to Cheryl Lewis and it certainly wasn't fair to the voters and residents of Oxford.

In St. Michaels the Town Administrator can't go anywhere near the absentee ballots. They're completely controlled by the Town Clerk. By

giving an outgoing employee full control over any ballots undermines our entire election process.

There are other violations. On Election Day Pam Baker didn't follow the strict "no electronics" rule. Talbot County, the State of Maryland and every other Town in America that I've looked into has a very strict no electronics policy inside the voting room. Norm, can you please show me where it says in our Town Charter that electronics are permitted?

And then there's the "no" poll watcher question. Talbot County, the State of Maryland and every other town in America that I've looked into has a strict policy about allowing poll watchers. Who in the world could possibly be against a poll watcher? But, Commissioner Tom Costigan and the unelected Susan Delean-Botkin refused to allow Josh Coder to have one poll watcher. And, to make this situation even more troubling, both of these Commissioners openly supported you — Norm Bell by displaying campaign signs in their yards. Do you have any idea how bad this makes our community look? Can you please explain why the Town of Oxford refused a candidate the same right, the same freedom, that every other town in America seems to cherish? Norm, can you show me where in our Town Charter it says -- poll watchers are prohibited?

The Town of Oxford streamed a 12 hour high-wide-shot recording with no sound of the in-person voting process. But, after I saw one person voting that I was told — doesn't actually live in Oxford — I did a quick online search and according to the white pages this person lives in Easton. I then went to what I believe is her Facebook page and it also says she Lives in Easton. So, I contacted Vickie Sharp and asked her about this possible voting irregularity. Sharp responded by asking me for proof — that this person was actually in our voting room. I sent Vickie Sharp several screen shots of the situation — but she never responded. And ironically, after I gave Ms. Sharp the still screen shots someone inside the Town Office removed the video from the Town's website.

The person in the video is the daughter-in-law of a former Commissioner. A former Commissioner President. I repeatedly asked the Town to put the video back online and after weeks of waiting I was finally told by the Town Lawyer that the video was corrupted and couldn't be recovered. The Town's first version of what took place was that the lady was simply inside the voting room to hand in someone else's absentee

ballot but then the story was updated. I was eventually told that the female actually lives in Oxford but wasn't registered to vote. I tried to ask Pam Baker the Head of the Election Board about this situation but I was stopped by Vickie Sharp. Personally, I have no idea where this lady lives and it might not even matter — once again according to our Town Lawyer a person could live anywhere in the world and vote in Oxford if they claim it's their primary residence.

If the Charter didn't change -- it certainly seems possible that the election is completely illegitimate? And, if the election is illegitimate -- the Town of Oxford should follow the Town Charter and hold a new election. We should also follow the strict policies of the rest of the United States and allow poll watchers and no electronics inside the voting room. The Head of the Election Board should answer questions. If Pam Baker doesn't want to answer questions she should step down. On a personal note, Ms. Baker volunteers her time all over this Town and I have a ton of respect for her. But, we need someone who doesn't allow Vickie Sharp, or someone else, to control the Election Board from giving answers to the taxpayers. I also think, moving forward, all absentee ballots should be in control of the Head of the Election Board.

I first requested the Commissioners to answer these voting irregularities on September 12, 2024. So far, there's been no response. According to our Town Charter the Commissioners have 18 more days left to address my email — where I've requested a new election and follow the Town Charter. If the Commissioners remain silent on this issue I'll continue to follow the Town Charter and I'll ask the Circuit Court of Talbot County to weigh in.

Norm, if you and the Commissioners don't want to answer questions about why the rules were changed before our last election — It's my hope that a judge will step in and make the final decision. With that said, I'm also hoping that you'll finally respond and address the many questions surrounding our past election. That process would be much easier on everyone.

Thank you for your time.

Scott Rensberger
102 Stewart
202-423-9040

From: [Katrina Greer](mailto:Katrina.Greer@goeaston.net)
To: oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: Fwd: We "Shall" take this issue to court.
Date: Friday, October 4, 2024 12:16:48 PM

Sorry, the gmail does not alert me to new messages like the other two.....

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

From: Scott Rensberger <scott.rensberger@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Oct 3, 2024 at 9:32 PM
Subject: We "Shall" take this issue to court.
To: Norman Bell <normanbell45@gmail.com>, Tom Costigan <dc2ox4d@verizon.net>, Katrina Greer <katrina4commissioner@gmail.com>, Lyndsey Ryan <lryan@bbcmllaw.com>

Dear Commissioners and the residents of Oxford,

This week I watched the Commissioners workshop regarding the future rules for our public meetings. I certainly like the idea of allowing people, like myself, to freely speak without being interrupted by inflammatory words by a few of Norm's supporters. This will make our meetings a lot more respectful. Thank you.

But then the workshop went off track and started talking about "may" and "shall." Dear Commissioners, this particular discussion is one big waste of time. This type of nonsense isn't even open for debate. Norm Bell and Tom Costigan don't have the power, or the authority, to change our Charter. End of story.

If two of our three Commissioners continue this entrenched power fraternity grab it'll end up in court and Norm and Tom will lose in under 10 minutes. And according to the State of Maryland, if a town official purposely breaks the rules that individual can be responsible for their own legal fees. The taxpayers of Oxford are certainly not going to pay the legal bills for two Commissioners who have decided to go rogue on our Town Charter.

When are we going to start acting like a wonderful small town where we treat everyone with respect and dignity? This old entrenched power stuff is really wearing thin. If you want to be in a fraternity, and feel important, join the Lions Club. Like all towns, Oxford has real issues and real problems that need to be solved. The town literally hid a 2016 Flood Master Plan for 8 years because the "fraternity" didn't want to help the black part of town.

At the next public meeting we should start a drinking game. Everytime Norm wants to "think about it" we should all take a shot. We'd be drunk before we get to New Business. When Norm needs to think about anything I'm pretty sure he doesn't go home and sit in a chair and think. Raise your hand if you think he goes home and meets with his pals to figure out their next power move? The Town of Oxford is not a toy. We're a community of wonderful people with a variety of ideas and it's time that we're all respected and heard. Hey Norm and Tom, newsflash, the residents of Oxford know how to read.

Sure, if Norm and Tom, on their own, change the Charter and start using the word "may" it'll give them a lot more power and their small group of friends will be high fiving in the back of the room but if these two people continue this absurd carelessness regarding our Town Charter

they will soon learn what the real definition of shall means. Because the residents of Oxford "shall" take this issue to court.

My best to everyone.

--

Scott Rensberger
202-423-9040


oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net

From: sheilah goodman <sag225@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 23, 2024 8:25 PM
To: oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: For public comment

I support the "Commissioners' Meetings" protocols outline as presented by President Bell on September 10th.

Sheilah Goodman
104 Tred Avon Ave

Fw: Commissioner Meeting Protocols letter

 susan delean-botkin <sdel@hotmail.com>
To: Vickie Sharp

 Reply  Reply All  Forward 

Mon 9/23/2024 6:33 PM

I support President Norm Bell's Commissioners' Meeting Protocols as presented. There will be areas that will need refinement. Since we elect our representatives to do what best for the town, I leave it in the capable hands of Commissioners Bell and Costigan.

Sincerely,
Susan Delean=Botkin

From: Suzie Hurley <suziehurley22@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 23, 2024 3:55 PM
To: Vicki Sharp
Subject: FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Vicki, please make sure I'm on your list for any info. you send out regarding town stuff please!!

Hi Norm and Tom,

Just a quick note to lend my support on the Town Meeting protocols you introduced at the last meeting on Sept. 10. They are more than reasonable. We need this done asap so you guys can get to the important stuff, like hiring good personnel and the issues of flooding, etc. Best to you both,

Smiles & Blessings, Suzie

Suzie Hurley, E-RYT 500
Certified Yoga Instructor
www.suziehurley.com

oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net

From: theresa lee <terox4137@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 30, 2024 9:37 AM
To: nbell@goeaston.net; tcostigan@goeaston.net; oxfordclerktreasurer@goeaston.net
Subject: Conduct and questions at meetings

Hello, can you please explain WHY you are sooo hung up on this? We are not a bunch of derelicts, hoodlums or thugs but a reasonably educated group of people who love our town and want to move forward. Every single word is ostracized in the rules of conduct and you've been frightening people about asking questions. We are for the most part ignored and promises/rules have not been kept or enforced...how can we possibly trust any of you? I've been catching up on how so many other small townships are governed and we are so far behind still after almost 2 years. PLEASE move forward and stop the madness and nitpicking so our town can begin to heal. It's the RIGHT thing to do. Respectfully,
Theresa Dejter