

**Unapproved**  
**Oxford Township Annual Meeting**  
**March 12, 2024 6:30 pm; Oxford Town Hall**  
**Meeting Minutes**

Clerk Linnea Lentz led the pledge of allegiance. Moderator Connie Thorp called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm and read off the meeting agenda for approval. Barb Snee made a motion to accept the 2024 annual meeting agenda, and Bob Kollmer seconded the motion. The motion passed.

William Snyder made a motion to approve Oxford's 2023 annual meeting minutes and Jack Sawatzky seconded the motion and it passed.

Clerk, Linnea stated that the town treasurer, Peggy Nelson has posted receipts and disbursements if the residents are interested in reviewing. Then the clerk read the 2023 balance for road and bridge (\$302,295.89) general (\$32,282.12), and fire (\$114,826.07) funds with a total balance of \$449404.08. Bob Kollmer made a motion to accept the report and Barb Snee seconded the motion. Motion passed. Next, Chair Jennifer Perkins handed out a draft budget that all the supervisors have been working on for the last few weeks. She described using the actual expenses for 2022 and 2023 to try and prepare for Oxford's 2024 budget. She went over the numbers that were put into the excel spreadsheet and mentioned that these numbers were presented at the February regular meeting. One resident asked for clarification on what our 2024 balance will be following completion of the road projects and maintenance work. Mike Miller stood to explain our budget from last year. He introduced Margie Theiringer, an Oxford resident that has expertise in road data management and forecasting. He mentioned that he has been working with Margie on a verifiable forecast using tools that MNDOT has made available. He said that based on money that has carried over from last year, Oxford does not need to raise the levies this year. Margie and Mike will be going through our historic road spending numbers to help create a solid road spending plan. Oxford has been collecting more for fire than we have been spending so it would be safe to keep that flat or even go down with the fire levy this year. We have also been looking into other fire service options. Mike stated we are trying to do the best we can with the dollars we have. Mike talked about how things have been historically and what some of the other townships have for a levy. He asked that the residents give the board a year to see if Margie can help us be smarter about Oxford's capital investments. For example, the board is learning that if we make investment projects like spending on a big road, we need a certain amount of working capital. Mike stated that up until this point, Oxford has been able to keep our finances in the black and that we are allowed to carry cash over from year to year. He acknowledged that we have to be smarter, be able to explain where tax dollars are going, and to provide clarification on what we are spending in 2024. He then talked about the 3 different levies and how the residents earmark money for each fund.

Next, Connie led the contract for services spending discussion. She requested the residents decide on a spending cap and said that currently the cap is at 1% of Oxford's total annual budget. A question was raised as to how much that amounted to last year

and Peggy answered that last year's contract for services total was around \$3,600. Connie clarified that these are our tax dollars that we are giving to charities in exchange for services provided to the township. A resident requested that Linnea add the dollar amounts for contracts for services on the website in the minutes so there is visibility to how much money the various organizations are receiving. Vicki Nielson made a motion to keep the spending cap at 1% and Bob Kollmer seconded the motion. Another resident asked what organizations Oxford township usually gives monetary support to and Linnea said that in past Family Pathways, The Refuge, Isanti Safety and Rescue, Isanti Historical Society, Senior Federation, Vikings Vittles, Isanti 4-H, and Cambridge Surplus Food were a few of the organizations that we have given money to. Connie called for a vote, and the motion passed.

Next the residents heard from a number of organizations that supply services to the township. First, a representative (Tom Broeckert) from **Isanti Safety and Rescue** talked about the fact that last year the team spent 1500 hours helping the sheriff's department with volunteering and patrolling the various townships. Currently they have 10 volunteers. Next Taylor from **Family pathways** talked about their 3 main programs, Caregivers/Aging, food shelves, and DVSA (formerly known as The Refuge). She mentioned that their organization served about 22 people in Oxford township last year. Next, we had a representative from the **Isanti Fire District** go over the 2023 annual report. He said that they currently have 30 firefighters in the district and that Oxford township is serviced out of station 3. He said that 5 firefighters are deployed out of Station 3, but any time there is a call, they can also come from the station in Isanti. He mentioned that they are looking for volunteers to join Station 3. Last year they had 536 calls which is down quite a bit since the call protocol was changed last year. The big change in protocol was that the fire department no longer responds to minor medical calls since the sheriff's department already responds to those calls. Of the 536 calls, 18 were in Oxford. Overall, 10% of their responses were fire calls, they still had quite a few medical calls (53%), and 10% were false alarms. Additionally, a good number of "good intent" calls also happen. The team did a lot of trainings last year- fire fighter fitness and agility, rescues, pump training, and auto rescue. He mentioned that they are constantly training as part of their duties. In the report, there is a breakdown of cost and valuation of our area. They also list their capital assets. At station 3, there is a pumper truck from Mound fire department that they purchased for only about \$25,000 because the old one was having a difficult time passing inspections. They also got a Dalmatian named Ember donated and the handler brings Ember to PR events. Budget information for 2024 is on the back page of the report and \$790,000 is their 2024 budget. Oxford's share is just shy of \$45,000 and last year Oxford was 3% of their calls for roughly 6% of their budget. Next Donna Setter spoke about the **Vikings Vittles** program. She said that the program costs about \$55,000/year and currently services 280 food insecure students. The kids sign up through various schools for backpacks with food in them. This organization has many community supporters, and if anyone is interested in personal donations, Donna will leave her pamphlet with information on who to contact and how to make donations.

The next item of business was to set town board wages. Mike Miller talked about the salary that each of the board members make and that it was increased for the clerk and

treasurer last year. Sue Kreitz made a motion to keep town board wages the same and Wally Nielson seconded the motion. A resident asked if the board feels like this is fair. Chair Jennifer Perkins said the board does this as a service, not for the money. Another question asked was when the dollar compensation for meetings was raised. The meeting salary was raised two years ago, and the board is not asking for more. Moderator Connie asked for a vote and the motion passed.

The next item on the agenda was to set Oxford township meeting times. Currently the board meets the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm. Austin Larson made a motion to keep Oxford's regular meeting times the same. Sue Kreitz seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Next the residents set the annual meeting time, which is currently the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of March at 6:30 pm. Bob Kollmer made a motion to keep the annual meeting time the same. Barb Snee seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

For visibility, the board disclosed that the current Town Engineering firm is MSA Professional Services. Bob Kollmer said they are a good engineering firm and that he approved of the fact that they took core samples of Typo Creek Drive and "did it right". He stated that in his opinion the county did not do it right on Cty Rd 20 or Cty Rd 9. Moderator Connie talked about the fact that the county will be working on 9 this year. Danielle Wiener asked when the last time the contract was looked at by the board. Mike Miller answered that MSA charges by the hour, so we currently do not have a contract in place with them. Danielle asked when the board last reviewed who our engineering firm is. Mike talked about the issue with our previous engineering firm and why we switched. Residents in attendance asked what Oxford's engineering costs were last year. It was answered that we spent \$11,000 plus an additional \$5,000 that we were reimbursed for. Bob Kollmer mentioned that our partners call in to Oxford's regular meetings via zoom so that has been a cost savings on mileage and time. We also discussed that the Town Lawyers are Couri and Ruppe. The question was asked if this firm is local. Mike Miller replied that they are based in St. Michael. Residents asked how much was spent on lawyers last year and it was answered that Oxford spent \$7,000 last year, with some of that being reimbursed. It was clarified that the lawyers are also paid strictly by the hour.

Next item of business was to set the preferred method of posting notices. Currently notices are posted at the town hall and on the website. In addition, notices are published in local newspapers (Isanti County News Review and Scotsman). Chair Jennifer also mentioned that there is an unofficial Facebook page with Oxford news, and a MailChimp email list that people can sign up on to receive notifications. Deputy Clerk Paula Bensen talked about her MailChimp notice ended up in junk, so she advised people to check in their junk mail if they signed up and are not receiving the notifications. Donna Setter made a motion to post notices at the town hall and on the township website and not in the County News Review or Scotsman unless it is a requirement. Matt Dosser seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Township resident updates

Fire District Update- the fire district representative spoke during the contribution for services portion of the meeting, but in summary, he went over the 2023 annual report.

Next the residents discussed continued funding for the Oxford water monitoring program. Mike asked if everyone was familiar with this program, and many people attending the meeting were not. He talked about the fact that Isanti Soil and Water has been testing Oxford's clean shallow lakes for the past 8 years as they wanted to get a base of the water quality in our township before development. At the start of the partnership, they asked for funding for 10 years to get a complete data set. Mike mentioned that since all the water levels have gone down in recent years, they weren't able to get all of the lakes tested last year. A resident asked how much this monitoring costs the township and Mike said that it costs about \$8,000/year. A resident brought up that it was stated in past minutes that Tiffany recommended that the township not spend a lot of money on making West Twin clear. It was also clarified that last year it only cost \$4,000 for the monitoring since they didn't get to all the lakes. Another resident asked if our drinking water is tested as well. And the answer was no, just the lakes. Paul Schiebel made a motion to discontinue this spending and Mark Faust seconded the motion. Another resident stated that we are in year 8/10 and toward the end of the study and that we have an incomplete data set which was concerning to her. She felt that we all live on a shallow aquifer and should continue the study. Another resident asked if there were matching funds from the state. Mike Miller answered that Oxford could not afford to pay the full bill on the water monitoring program and there are funds contributed from the state. Maurie Anderson reiterated that we are so close to the end of the study, and Oxford is in a special area. What happens to lakes affects the drinking water. He said he can't imagine cancelling the study at this point. Mike Miller said that Tiffany Determan will be attending our April meeting to give the 2023 water monitoring summary and the residents should ask Tiffany what the budget is and where the money comes from. Gloria McDonnell (on zoom) said she agrees that we are 8 years into the study and with the state contributing to the study it would be good to continue. Another resident asked if it is confirmed that lake water gets to the aquifer. Nancy C said that it takes about 1 year for the lake water to get to the aquifer in Oxford. Another resident's opinion is that we are just throwing more money at this and what do we think we are going to get out of it? Danielle W felt that having the data set is very valuable- these lakes are so clean that Oxford's lakes are putting us on the map in a way. Donna Setter moved that we call for a vote. Moderator Connie called for a vote, and "The no's have it". The motion to discontinue funding for the water monitoring program did not pass, and the funding will continue.

Next Danielle presented a summary from the two recently held Oxford resident meetings. She talked about how much her property taxes have increased and concern over this has led her to read through past minutes. She noticed significant increases to the taxes in 2019 and in 2023. She has done a lot of her own legwork and handed out an informal survey at both meetings. She also handed out comment cards, which a lot of people took the time to fill out. She was especially concerned about comment cards that said the board just "does what they want." She mentioned that there are a lot of options to solicit resident feedback and many people said they would like more listening sessions, especially when big projects or decisions are being considered. She has put her phone

number on the handouts and wants to build a connected community for her kids to grow up in. Danielle went on to say that in January it was mentioned that Oxford will be continuing a paving project. She felt this was early and considering there were no plans and no handouts the board was moving too fast. She said Oxford hadn't had our annual meeting to see what our levies will be for this year and suggested that in future the board wait until after March before moving/deciding on big projects. She also has a "call to action page" as part of her handouts for the residents to read. She mentioned that residents can recommend that the board hold a regular meeting (in addition to the annual resident's meeting) in March. She also said that other townships hold reorganization meetings where they assign supervisor roles, decide on consultants, etc. Danielle encouraged all residents to continue to attend meetings and give feedback to the supervisors.

Next item for discussion was for residents to set levies for taxes (Road and Bridge, Fire, General). Colt Bellin stated that Oxford's budget was "incredibly out of whack" and made a motion to decrease the **road and bridge (R&B)** fund by \$150,000. Matt Dosser seconded the motion. Moderator Connie called for discussion. Some residents stated that they want the people that live on roads that will be improved to pay the lion's share of the cost. Gloria M asked the board if anyone has been assessed for road improvements to date. The board replied that Oxford has not assessed road improvements to date. The question was asked: Does this budget decrease impact future road projects or roads that have already been approved? It was clarified that the town taxes voted on tonight are for next year and that the board has to operate within the budget. But yes, lowering the levy may affect future projects. Danielle said that with this decrease in budget, Oxford would have about \$192,000 next year to maintain our gravel roads. There was discussion about the type of gravel (Limerock) Oxford uses and it is more expensive. Danielle stated that it is \$15,000/mile for gravel roads. Another resident said with Danielle's numbers, it averages out to \$10,000/mile to provide all services if we only have \$195,000. Barb Snee brought up that some residents have brought concerns about the dust and that the discussion can't just be about maintaining the roads, since there are a lot of concerns about dust. Another resident brought up if Oxford is going to do improvements in the community, we need to be thinking long-term- what is the plan to maintain the road? Over the life of the road with pavement, he feels it takes more money to maintain. In the short term, paving is an instant savings, but the board needs to consider the maintenance. The discussion turned to Pigeon Loft Road, and a resident stated that the reality is that a third of it is already paved, so why would we stop now and have to maintain 2 different road surfaces. Much discussion between the residents over cost of gravel vs paving long term occurred. The task force addressing dust suppression was brought up and there was a misconception that Oxford paid for the task force. It was clarified that the task force was made up of residents and that they weren't paid. One recommendation that came from the task force was that paving might be a long-term solution to the dust problem for some of Oxford's roads. As the discussion progressed, it is noted that there were residents present in favor of keeping gravel on the roads and residents present in favor of paving roads. The question was asked about the cost to pave the rest of Pigeon Loft. Mike Miller addressed the question and said that it is more expensive than the others because the trucks have to back in. A comment was made that the board has not

presented the residents with factual information on the cost of paving vs gravel. Danielle said that if the residents decide to lower the R&B budget to the point the board can adequately take care of the roads, this will give the board time to get the facts together. Another resident asked a number of questions: Who is responsible for road maintenance? Can we assess it? Why should all of us pay for their road? The resident went on to state that paving a road is not a net enhancement for the township, just for the residents on that road. The feeling is that decreasing the budget will force a plan from the board. A question was asked, and dust suppression costs weren't included in Danielle's \$15,000/mile estimate, and past estimates for magnesium chloride/calcium chloride were \$170,000 per year. Moderator Connie called for a vote on the motion to decrease the road and bridge levy by \$150,000. When it was asked if the residents on zoom could vote, there were a few people in the room who objected to allowing them to vote. Connie asked for a show of hands for yes, but it was difficult to count with so many people in the room and spilling outside into the parking lot. She then asked for the yes voters to count off as they left the building. The show of hands for the no voters was then counted. Danielle and Connie both worked to count the votes. Final counts were 73 yes and 34 no votes and the motion passed. The road and bridge levy will be decreased by \$150,000. There was an objection from the room about Danielle's role in the meeting. It was stated that Connie was elected moderator, so let her run the agenda. Moderator Connie stood to remind the group that we are all neighbors here and to please remember to be kind even if the vote didn't turn out as you wanted. She reminded everyone that the annual resident's meeting is a grassroots form of government and congratulated everyone present for showing up to have their voice heard. Another resident wanted to make a motion to set aside money for dust suppression, but Connie said that the residents can't make a motion for specifics like dust suppression, only recommendations to the board on how they would like the money in the budget spent. Joan Lenzmeier made a motion to form a committee to put together a long-term comprehensive road plan for Oxford. Danielle Wiener seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

Austen Larson asked Mike to recap the **Fire** budget, and Mike reiterated that we had quite a bit of money carried over from last year so decreasing the fire levy would not be a problem. Austen made a motion to reduce the **Fire fund** by \$15,000 for 2025. Jack Sawatzky seconded the motion, and the motion passed.

For the **General fund**, Mike Miller stated that this levy was a bit tricky. There will be a question on the August ballot to increase to a 5-member board. If this passes, Oxford will have to budget for a 5-person board. The residents asked the board's opinion on if the general fund levy needs to be increased. There was some discussion around how much we need to budget for extra board members. Colt Bellin made a motion to keep the general levy the same. Wally Nielson seconded the motion. Moderator Connie asked for discussion. Someone asked what happens if we go negative. Mike Miller replied that we could go to an every other month meeting, and look for other ways to decrease cost. Bob Kollmer asked if we have a reserve fund, and Peggy answered no. There was some confusion over this since it was pointed out that Oxford has excess money in all of the funds. Clarification was given that there is not a separate Reserve fund at this time. Moderator Connie called for a vote on keeping the general fund flat and the motion did

not pass. The board was asked for a recommendation and Mike Miller said that an increase of \$10,000 to the general fund should cover costs. Austen Larson then made a motion to increase the general fund by \$10,000. Barb Snee seconded it. A question was asked if the board could transfer money from one fund to another and Mike said that during the year, the board is not supposed to move between funds. He indicated that the only time this is ok is if the residents vote to do that at the annual meeting. Moderator Connie called for a vote and the motion to increase the general fund by \$10,000 passed.

Next up for discussion under resident concerns was Oxford road prioritization. Moderator Connie mentioned that earlier in the meeting Joan Lenzmeier made a motion for formation of a comprehensive road plan. Connie asked if there was other discussion. Gloria M, a resident attending on zoom, had a quick question. She said that at the February regular meeting, the board passed a motion to pave Pigeon Loft. She asked if the contract has been signed and chair Jennifer answered that it has not been signed. Gloria asked when it will be signed and Chair Jennifer said it would probably get signed tomorrow. Gloria asked if there a timeframe/deadline to sign the contract. Chair Jennifer said she has been in contact with Steve Winter from MSA and that she will sign it. Gloria's last question was when the work will be done, and the answer was that it will be done by August 8<sup>th</sup>. Gloria requested that the supervisors send her confirmation when the contract is signed.

For the 5-person board discussion, Chair Jennifer handed out some information to the residents. She stated that the 5-person board question will be on the August primary ballot. Oxford residents brought the idea to the board for consideration. The township will vote on this question on the August primary ballot and if the question passes in August this will mean that we will have extra board members to vote for on the November ballot. Clerk Linnea will work with the county to make sure the question is filed appropriately so that it is on the ballot in August.

The final item on the agenda was to inform residents that the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization Meeting/ Board of Review will be held the week of April 15-19. The meetings are held at the Isanti County Government Center and are for residents to appeal property valuation. People interested in making a case for why they would like their property taxes lowered need to make an appointment with the county during this week.

Sue Kreitz made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Katelyn Miller seconded the motion. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Linnea Lentz  
Oxford Clerk  
March 12, 2024