

Unapproved

Oxford Township Meeting Minutes Regular meeting August 20, 2024 6:30 pm

At 6:30 pm, everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. Following the pledge, Chairperson Mike Miller called the meeting to order with Linnea, Harlan, Mike, and Jennifer present at the town hall.

Public Forum

Ryan Hondlik stood to announce that he is running for the supervisor seat that is on the ballot for the November general election. Ryan wanted to introduce himself to everyone and shared that he moved to Oxford township 3 years ago, and that he lives on 259th between Danube and Potomac. He invited neighbors to stop by if they are in the area to say hi.

Oxford Board Business

Approve agenda

Action requested: Supervisor approval of the August 2024 agenda

Supervisor Perkins made a motion to approve the August 2024 agenda and Supervisor Bellin seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Clerk's report –

Action requested: Approve the minutes of the July regular meeting.

Supervisor Perkins made a motion to approve the July regular meeting minutes and Supervisor Bellin seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Treasurer's report –

Action requested: Approve the accounts receipts and payables for the month of July 2024

Peggy gave a treasurer's report with an itemized list of bills paid. She reported that township aid came in and that Oxford had a lot of claims this month. Our Couri and Ruppe charges all fell under the general category, and Oxford posted 3 notices in the County News Review. Supervisor Perkins remarked that last year the board discussed approving expenditures prior to engaging our consultants (attorney or MSA). Supervisor Perkins would like to see board discussion as there may be things that the board can look into as opposed to always consulting with the attorney. She worries that we will run out of money. Clerk Linnea Lentz countered with her opinion that due to resident scrutiny of board actions, she felt more comfortable having the town attorney review things. Linnea brought up the fact that Oxford has been involved in 4 serious legal issues in the past year and feels it's best to consult with the town attorney. Chair Miller stated that he feels we are doing a better job than last year when the supervisors were calling the attorney- sometimes about the same issue. He said at least now it funnels through the clerk. More discussion occurred regarding if we could use the MAT attorneys for some things since they are free. Bart Perkins remarked that the Clerk and Treasurer attended MAT training and brought back examples and asked why Oxford wouldn't utilize that expertise more often. Chair Mike replied that MAT only has 3 attorneys on staff and they represent the entire organization. In addition, they don't always have the best interest of the township in mind and advice given may not be appropriate for our situation. At training sessions, they are able to give examples of lawsuits and recommend verbiage for policies but that for serious legal issues the township attorney would be who represents our township.

Supervisor Perkins made a motion to approve the account receipts and payables for the month of July and Supervisor Bellin seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Consent Agenda

- Public Meeting Rules Resolution
 - **Action Requested: Supervisor approval of Public Meeting Rules resolution.**

Supervisor Perkins made a motion to establish a resolution for public meeting rules and Supervisor Bellin seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Roads

- Pigeon Loft update [Mike](#)

The Pigeon Loft Road project has been completed and Chair Miller has inspected the packing and compaction. Supervisor Bellin has driven it many times and feels the road looks good.

- Monthly Road report [Jennifer/Mike](#)

- Discuss road maintenance performed.

Supervisor Perkins reported that the road grader went out today and that Danube needs gravel. She stated that Josh Anderson has done a great job filling in potholes and taking care of down trees. Chair Miller requested a printout of the Gustafson invoice for next month. Supervisor Perkins also reported that North Branch will be laying down gravel on our shared road (277th) in the next couple of weeks.

- Vendor discussion – skipped.

- Dust Suppression- [Jennifer](#)

Mark Faust addressed the board inquiring whether or not the board has come up with recommendations regarding how we are going to approach dust suppression. Chair Miller admitted that this has fallen off of the agenda. Supervisor Perkins feels we should create an application process, and Chair Miller asked if she would be willing to work on this. Supervisor Perkins stated that she did work on an application last fall and it wasn't approved by the board. Chair Miller shared that Mark Faust went down all of the roads with Mike and created a spreadsheet that Mike is sharing with the rest of the board. Supervisor Perkins indicated that she has her own spreadsheet as well.

- Mowing Pigeon Loft ditches – [Mike](#)

Chair Miller stated that when Total Asphalt repair submitted their estimate, it was for all of the township roads. He stated that Pigeon Loft was not done due to the construction. Chair Miller also said that there have been resident concerns raised about the Montana address on their invoice and the observation that Supervisor Perkins was seen in a vehicle with Montana plates. To address the resident concerns and be transparent, Chair Miller stated that the town attorney advised asking if anyone on the board has a conflict of interest with Total Asphalt Repair. Supervisor Perkins replied that she had no conflict of interest and requested that this section of the minutes be very detailed. She also shared that someone contacted the insurance company

for Total Asphalt repair and asked questions regarding the insurance coverage. She shared that the company owner was not happy about this and she was also very disappointed that concerns weren't raised to her since she was the one who recommended the company. Chair Miller said that the board does not want to get in the middle of this and will follow attorney advice on how to address the residents concerns. Supervisor Perkins stated that she will ask Total Asphalt Repair for a refund since they did not mow Pigeon Loft, and they will not return to work for the township. Supervisor Perkins asked if MSA has given the township a refund for Pigeon Loft bid work, and Peggy replied that she just received the MSA bill and notification of the refund right before the August meeting.

- RFP for Road Improvement Plan – [Jennifer](#)

There was discussion regarding which vendor Supervisor Perkins is looking at to form the road improvement plan. Chair Miller remarked that Mark Faust did the spread sheet, and potentially a plan could be formed without engaging a vendor. Supervisor Perkins stated that the residents do not trust decisions made by the board and that there have been many requests to create a long term vision plan, and not just fight about it every month. Chair Miller stated that Pigeon Loft is done, and that he feels the vast majority of residents enjoy living on a paved road. Mike stated he would like to look forward long term and requested the board put the road discussion on hold and move to Old business.

Old Business

- Isanti Fire District update [Harlan](#)

Supervisor Bellin reported there were 40 runs last month, which is a decrease from last year. He also stated that the rodeo sponsored by the fire district had record crowds this year and had standing room only despite putting up additional bleachers. The team held training this month that was focused on traffic control. Harlan and Jennifer both made the request to Al Jankovich to use fire station 3 for our meetings while the board decides what to do about the mold issue at the town hall. The fire district gave permission to use Station 3 for free while we are figuring out what to do about the hall.

- Town Hall maintenance update [Mike](#)

- Quote update
- Discuss potentially building a new hall and parking lot
- Form Committee to gather data on building new hall vs remediation cost for existing hall
- Discuss necessity of using an alternate venue for meetings (Station 3)

Chair Miller had 2 abatement companies come in and both said that they would most likely have to do extensive work on electrical and drywall. The quote that was received was \$112,500. Mike suggested forming a committee to examine whether or not we should put the money into repairs or build a new building. He mentioned that we will also need a new roof, and we do not have a quote for this yet. He felt this will most likely be another \$20,000 on top of all of the estimates that we already have. Mike asked if we could get 4 or more volunteers that will be on a committee to examine all of the facts and make a recommendation to the board. Due to the costs, he felt there is a good chance that we will have to bond for repairs because whether we

are looking to repair or build new, the township will most likely be spending more than \$100,000. Supervisor Perkins stated that she finds it fascinating that we have been so proud that we are debt free up until now, and after spending so much money on Pigeon Loft, Mike is swaying people on how to think. Danielle Wiener stated that the statute is clear- if there is a surplus in the budget the board can make a unanimous decision to move money. Barb Snee stated that in the past the residents have been told the board can't move money and now we are saying we can. What is true? She hopes the board makes a careful decision. Gloria McDonnell cautioned the board to use legal counsel to interpret the statute. Austin Larson suggested is to wait until the end of the year to see what the budget looks like. It was brought up that we know we have to spend the money so let's have people involved in that conversation and then figure out how to finance it. Chair Miller asked for everyone's opinion and recognized multiple individuals that were interested in providing an opinion:

- Austin Larson- number 1 thing he would like to see is a long term road plan of 5 years (minimum) that outlines what we are going to do. He stated he is happy to pave roads if there is a long term maintenance plan and he knows that we have studied potential options. Running a road budget month to month and year to year is insane in his opinion. Chair Miller asked Austin if he had thoughts on the town hall. Austin stated that he hasn't been at many meetings, so didn't have specific recommendations other than to caution the board against making quick decisions, but set a timeline that by a certain date, we need to have the decision made by. He felt the board shouldn't let the decision drag on long term.
- Peggy Nelson stated that from the point of view of an election judge, we have a major problem accommodating the number of people coming in to vote. She stated that the judges are making mistakes because of the congestion. We are trying to filter the people through other ones and in addition, for at least 10 years we have been hearing about the parking problem. There have been times when election judges are standing on County Road 12 to allow for curbside voting. She asked why the township would put a bandaid on fixing the mold problem, when we have the opportunity to address the parking and space issues as well.
- Ryan Hondlik recommended that the board gather the information and costs, then develop the scope of the work. He feels the board needs to know the full scope of the problem before making any decisions. He advised the board to develop some SMART goals and set timelines that are precise. Very important to gather the information before we make any decisions- for example are we talking \$200,000, \$300,000, or more?
- Gloria McDonnell stated that this is such a big project, we should start with some open meetings because we don't know who in the community has expertise on building/construction or bonding. She felt we should start with a few open meetings and let people get involved to the extent they want to. Following the open meetings, then perhaps pare the number of people giving input down to a committee. Also, if we have open meetings, we can hear from people that might want to be on the committee.
- Danielle Wiener asked where are we going to meet and suggested that we have a healthier place for our election. Finding an alternative place will give the board time to plan. She feels the board should send out postcards on what the plan will be to everyone in the township because not a lot of people probably check the website.
- Barb Snee asked how long can we meet at the Fire station. Supervisor Perkins replied "indefinitely". In addition, Barb stated that Supervisor Perkins sent out a survey a while ago and asked if we really need to hire an outside vendor to come up with a road improvement plan. Or can we use the information the board received from the survey? Supervisor Perkins stated that she is talking about a more

- comprehensive plan. Barb Snee asked “can’t we as a community come up with that plan”? Supervisor Perkins said that last year there was a lot of argument, and that the road improvement plan would also have a financing plan. Supervisor Perkins said that we are not experts on roads. Barb Snee said that we have the data and Supervisor Perkins agreed that we have the data but we ignored that last year. Everyone had a chance to fill out the survey so voices could be heard.
- Bob Kollmer stated that we have an engineer on staff and that they are experts on traffic control. To go out and hire someone else will cost more money and he questions if there could be a conflict of interest. His recommendation is to stick with MSA. When it comes to buildings, Bob also stated that he has been involved in mold removal and that chemicals only work for a little bit. He said that when he moved out here 26 years ago, it was lucky if there were “3 of us” in the audience. In the last year, we have had people standing outside. Bob feels we need a bigger, more modern facility and recommends tearing the town hall down and designing a multi-function building. He recommends having a group of 4-6 residents and 1 board member on a committee and that this committee report to the board at the regular meetings every month. He felt we should add 40% to all estimates we receive. He also said the board should consider whether we need to plan for 500 people or 200 people showing up at meetings in future.
 - Supervisor Perkins wants to make a suggestion- can we notify through the agenda and on the website that we will start gathering information regarding what the residents would like to see in a town hall? We could meet 30 minutes before the next regular meeting to start the discussion. Chair Miller stated that we should not be in a hurry since we have alternatives and that Fire station 3 has a nice meeting area. An Oxford resident stated that the supervisors should go knocking on doors to inform residents instead of spending money on sending out postcards.
 - Bob Kollmer stated that he has heard a lot of comments that residents don’t know the supervisors. Supervisor Perkins replied that she has held 2 National Night out meetings so that people can meet our board and that they have been sponsoring the market place events at the town hall. She encouraged people to come to these events because it is a great way to meet people.
 - Chair Miller stated that we will put this on the agenda for the next meeting (September) to discuss what to do about the town hall.
 - Barb Snee asked how much land the township owns and Chair Miller replied that that is a great question. Before we do anything, we need to find out what we have. Bart Perkins said that Onyx says the township owns 2.5 acres. Supervisor Bellin does not feel like it has ever been surveyed. Danielle Wiener asked if we got the sheeting replaced and if we got the dehumidifier, and Supervisor Perkins replied no. Chair Miller made a motion to get this land surveyed to find out where the south line is. Supervisor Bellin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.
 - Chair Miller thanked everyone for the discussion.
 - The board came to a consensus that starting in October, Oxford regular meetings will be at Station 3. Linnea will check with Angie Larson at the County Auditors office about how to change Oxford’s polling place resolution so we can hold the November general election at Station 3. One of the residents asked if the polling place can be outside of the township. Linnea will check with the county auditor to see if our situation will allow this.
 - Another resident asked what it will cost to do the survey. Chair Miller will get a couple of quotes, but felt it will probably \$500-1000.

New Business

- Election report- [Peggy](#)

Peggy reported on the number of voters that came for the primary (143/739 registered voters) and said that the results tape is posted for anyone who is interested in seeing how Oxford voted. Linnea mentioned that a resident came to the polling place to file an affidavit of candidacy and she felt this put Deputy Clerk Paula Benson in a tough position. There were two weeks allowed for filing and it was requested that anyone wanting to file make an appointment with the clerk or deputy clerk. She asked the board to support denying requests to file if the clerk or deputy clerk is approached while they are acting as election judges. Supervisor Perkins stated that we should be encouraging residents to file for office and not put up barriers. Connie Thorpe stated that we cannot deny a request to file just because it is inconvenient. Chair Miller stated that this comes down to a staffing problem and agreed that attention should not be distracted while performing duties of election judge. Bob Kollmer asked why anyone would want to wait until the last minute to file in case there are problems. Also there could be several people wanting to file, if people do not call. Connie Thorpe stated that for elections, if you are in line before 8, you can vote. This should be the case for having the affidavit filed by 5 pm. In addition, we should be encouraging people to run not talking about denying requests. Chair Miller said that in this particular instance, there were problems with the affidavit form, now the county is reviewing if it is acceptable. Chair Miller said that his name was not on the ballot one year because he made a mistake filling out his affidavit of candidacy. Supervisor Perkins feels the clerk should be available to take affidavits of filing the whole day even during the primary election. The board has agreed that in future they will staff appropriately so this is possible.

- Results of 5 person board question/next steps – [Linnea](#).

The 5 supervisor board question was incorrectly placed on the primary ballot and by judge's order will now be on the November general election ballot.

- State Auditor Special Investigations case – [Linnea](#)

Bob Ruppe was busy with the court case for the 5 supervisor board question issue so has not answered the State Auditor Investigator as far as Linnea knows. Linnea has not had time to speak with Bob before the meeting but will hopefully have an update in September.

- Chair Miller stated that he is going to circle back to roads. He stated that what Supervisor Perkins expresses as a surplus, Mike views as tax dollars that people that voted to pave their roads with. Chair Miller would like to get quotes on how far Potomac can be paved for \$165,000 since the Pigeon Loft Project came in under budget. Supervisor Perkins stated that she has seen him do this before and she thinks it is fiscally irresponsible to push a road through with all of the things going on at the town hall. Supervisor Bellin stated that he doesn't think it hurts to look. Chair Miller would like to find out what it is going to cost for paving 1/10 of a mile of Potomac since the road still has a good covering on it. He said that we do have the money in the budget and doesn't want to have to re-gravel it. Supervisor Perkins stated that she feels like this is a last minute effort to get this done before people go out of office. It was stated that the township already spent \$280,000 on Pigeon Loft and the question was asked if we just going to be irresponsible? "Be smart about what you are doing". There was a lot of public comment that the clerk tried to capture despite the comments becoming increasingly chaotic:

Danielle Wienter: the first time you requested an increase in R&B was in 2019 so that tax went into effect in 2020. Our taxes have been raised for 4 straight years. Those people did not vote on black top. A lot of people interpret road improvement differently than just paving and Danielle gave some details regarding the current levy. She feels we have already spent this money - the money is gone.

Donna Setter stated that the 2023 levy money being spent this year was requested to be specifically for blacktop. Donna said she was the one who made the motion.

Mark Faust stated that Supervisor Perkins sent out a survey last year and asked what the highest item on the survey that residents wanted improvement with. He seemed to recall it was road improvement. Supervisor Perkins stated but at the time of the survey, we didn't know the town hall has mold problems. Mark Faust said that R&B money won't solve the mold problem. Supervisor Perkins stated that she feels like a lot of conversations go on outside of the meetings. Donna Setter then stated that she disapproves of Jennifer's accusations. She routinely attends meetings as do others and she isn't relying on outside conversations for input. Connie Thorpe stated that residents can't legally say what the money is used for at the annual meeting. Residents can only put the money in the fund but can't say what it is for. It is the supervisors job to decide where the money is spent.

Ryan Hondlik stated that over the last year and a half we have taken pride in not going into debt. He drives Potomac every day and would like pavement. But at the same time, we didn't know about the mold problem. He feels like we have to deal with the mold problem for the health of everyone. It's public safety. The dust is an issue but paving Potomac is not public safety issue. In addition, Danube is very sketchy. Dust suppression would be more important for that road than paving it. Dealing with the town hall situation is more important in his opinion.

Laurie Faust stated that dust is also a public health concern.

Ryan Hondlik said that blacktop is not the only solution for dust suppression.

Austin Larson discussed that there are multiple things we want to tackle including a potential spend of hundreds of thousands of dollars on the hall. He reiterated to proceed cautiously, to set goals so we see where we are at by the end of the year. If we spend it, we will not have it. Now we are talking about paving a road that will be good in the near future and we have not yet come up with a road plan. He would like to see a road plan before we spend that much money on another road. Let this sit for another 6 months while we deal with the mold problem.

Peggy Nelson stated that if we don't blacktop, the estimate for dust suppression is \$170,000 anyway and that is the other side of it - Chloride is spendy too.

Ryan Hondlik said that the other concern he has is that this discussion feels like how Pigeon loft went. Chair Miller got bids and then all of a sudden we were off and running on Pigeon Loft. He is concerned that Mike will get quotes, and it feels like we are off and racing down the same path. It doesn't sit right.

Danielle Wiener said we should cut to the chase. Mark Faust has a sprayer and knows how to use it. Can we give permission for him to put down dust suppression?

Colt Bellin stated that dust suppression is cheap – he does Isanti township for just over \$ 4000 a mile. Peggy stated that many of the residents that live on Potomac don't want chloride on the road.

Supervisor Perkins stated that this item was not even on the agenda and feels Potomac should have been done the first time instead of Pigeon Loft road. She stated to Chair Miller that if he is going to be transparent, let's put it on the agenda for a future meeting after we solve our mold problem. She would like to deal with one problem first. Chair Mille disagreed and thinks we have to be able to multitask.

Bart Perkins stated that Supervisor Perkins made a motion last year to pave Potomac and her motion did not pass at that time.

Brad stated that the reality is this: He does financial planning and feels the township got caught off guard not planning for the what if's and emergencies. He stated that there is not enough money in the town funds to cover this problem, and he feels it is a bonding issue. If the town bonds for the town hall issue, this will not effect the R&B and fire budgets. He cautioned that the board shouldn't think that they can take all of the money out of the other

budgets to address the mold issue. Taxation over a 5 year period if we borrow money at 7% will ease the tax burden. Everyone is bickering over how to do stuff and arguing about where the money is going. Let everyone in the township know what is going on and talk about it. Supervisor Perkins made a motion to adjourn and Chair Miller said that there was a motion on the table so we couldn't adjourn. Supervisor Perkins stated that there didn't need to be a motion to get quotes. Danielle Wiener stated that the board can not get official quotes for that much money. Chair Miller's motion was to see how far we can go for 165,000. He felt that it was appropriate to get a quotes when the amount is under \$175,000. Danielle cited contract law and stated that the board could not just get quotes. Chair Miller asked what is the number for bids if it's not 175,000. Danielle stated that if the dollar amount is \$25,000-175,000 you still have to get bids.

Supervisor Bellin said that he is tired of everyone bickering all time. One of the residents stated that we could avoid this bickering if we only had a comprehensive road plan. Chair Miller made a motion to adjourn and Supervisor Perkins said she already made that motion. Supervisor Bellin seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Linnea Lentz
Oxford Clerk
August 20, 2024