

COMMISSIONERS OF OXFORD
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 28, 2023

The Commissioners Meeting was held in the Oxford Community Center on Tuesday, February 28, 2023. Commission President Jimmy Jaramillo called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Attending the meeting were Commission President James Jaramillo, Commissioner Brian Wells, Commissioner Tom Costigan, Town Manager Cheryl Lewis and Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan. Approximately 200 people were in attendance.

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Wells motioned to adopt the minutes of January 24, 2023 as distributed, Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion carried.

Attorney Ryan presented a statement on behalf of the Commissioners, stating the Commissioners understand many of those present were there to raise concerns about Chief Maxwell's retirement. The Commissioners extend their gratitude to Chief Maxwell for his 34 years of service to the Town of Oxford and the Department and wish him the best in his future endeavors. The Commissioners were happy to have so many people present, and while appreciative and welcoming of the public participation, there would be no discussion regarding the circumstances of Chief Maxwell's retirement or his employment with the town, as these are confidential matters. To alleviate concerns about public safety, they want to assure you that the Talbot County Sheriff's officer is assisting our Dept while we are in the process of hiring a new Chief and are working to have the Police Department fully staffed as quickly as possible. This evening we are limiting public comment to 3 minutes per person so that we have the opportunity to hear from all citizens. Speakers are asked to approach the podium and provide their name and address. Defamatory remarks will not be permitted. Additionally, speakers were advised that disrespectful and disruptive behavior would not be tolerated. Ryan advised that while opportunity was being provided for public comment, the Commissioners would not be engaging in dialogue about presented comments at this time.

Commissioner Costigan motioned to open the meeting for Public Comment, Commissioner Wells seconded the motioned to accept Public Comment, all were in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Warren Davis stated we find ourselves at an impasse. He inquired as to the details of a retirement agreement.

Jan Greenhawk, 50 year resident, why did he retire, it was cruel, why are new people hired without posting jobs, the Commissioners are subject to our will.

Dan Kordell, it is abundantly clear the Commissioners do not represent the will of the people and request that the Chief be reinstated.

Richard Schmidt, I have no idea what is going on, you ask where we live, where do the Commissioners live, you stabbed him in the back, give us a reason.

Emily Knud Hanson, there are some parliamentarian issues here, the residents were not consulted in anyway regarding the Chief's retirement, the Commissioners made arbitrary decisions, rumor has it you have hired somebody. We have safety issues and traffic issues, but you should not have made decisions without asking the public.

Kim Baldwin, the only constant in this town is Pat Maxwell and he is gone because of personal differences and we know another person is being put in his place, because he made an announcement that he would be the new Chief.

Connie Greenhawk, Pat Maxwell has done more for this town than anyone sitting here, he does things behind the scene that you don't know about. Addressing the Commissioners, you are in deep doo-doo.

Jan Greer, 10 year resident, I don't know the details about hiring, but I can't imagine you would fill a public position without a public posting, a highly compensated position. Why just pick a name out of a hat to give a job is not the way to fill a position.

Jane McCarthy, when was the last time the town was audited, what are people being paid?

Patricia Greer, what are the best management practices for hiring, the town manager hired her daughter and a relation of her significant other, the public has not seen a copy of the audit for 10 years.

Jim Wilcox, a new resident who was impressed with how informal and amicable everything was here, this has been a slap in the face and he is reconsidering his opinion, he understands the details of a settlement cannot be disclosed, but why can't details regarding the first time the Chief was approached about his performance and his records prior to retiring be disclosed?

Kelly Greenhawk, where is the transparency, the officials have not been transparent and need to improve, the boat slip list for town slips for example, why is it not published, people wait 25 years to get a slip, why not publish it on the website, why have recent town positions not been advertised, where is the transparency?

Louisa Griffin, regarding transparency, what are the plans to follow up on what has been brought up tonight, is there a plan, is there a plan to make a plan?

Nancy Fogerty, need to improve the our community, has been a member of a leadership team who was never able to fire someone for no reason, had to give them a chance to be successful, its baffling, you are not giving answers, you are cowards hiding behind your lawyer.

George Morris, there are things here we don't know, I am waiting to give my neighbors, people I voted for, the benefit of the doubt. We need to stay together and remain a village, we have seen plenty of police officers around town, and we just need to have faith in the people we voted for. Thank you for taking the time to hear all the vent up feelings. I love living here.

Leslie Howells, it is utterly rude to sit there like stones, there should be back and forth going on, you look like you don't give a shit.

Susan Kordell, I was led to believe questions that were submitted by email would be read (Attorney Ryan stated she would read them following in person comments). When will answers be published? What about the subsidized town house, would it remain for police use only? What about the hiring decision and process, when are we going to get answers?

Chris Kalinsky, it is remarkable that this is the most people I have seen gathered since the debate I participated in, and I wouldn't want to be in your seat right now. A lot of issues have been brought up and it needs to get fixed quickly.

Ed Cassidy, these are divisive issues, in reference to transparency, the Commissioners and Town Manager have been incredibly transparent about how they feel about the people they represent.

After everyone in the room had the opportunity to speak, Attorney Ryan began reading the submitted comments, but the noise level was such as to not allow it. She stated the submitted comments would be included with the minutes.

Commissioner Wells motioned to close the Public Comments, Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor.

There being no further business, Commissioner Wells made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Costigan seconded the motion, all were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 6:41 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Lewis, Town Manager

From: [John Fairhall](#)
To: oxfordclerk@goeaston.net
Cc: [John Fairhall](#)
Subject: Question for the commissioners public meeting Feb. 28 at 6 pm at the Community Center
Date: Friday, February 24, 2023 8:57:15 PM

Dear Commissioners:

As you know, Oxford residents would like to know why and how longtime Police Chief Maxwell was fired. His position is critically important and residents deserve to know what happened behind closed doors and why. If there's a legal impediment to discussing a personnel move please indicate what local, county or state law or regulation requires that taxpayers not be told — and what procedures are required to be followed. I've lived in a number of different communities and in none of them would the firing be viewed as a secret to be kept from voters.

Thank you,
John Fairhall
108 W. Pier St.
202 446 7219
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From: [Catherine Kelly](#)
To: oxfordclerk@goeaston.net
Cc: [Amy Freeman](#); [Cathie Kelly](#)
Subject: Fwd: Please read at Commissioners of Oxford Town Meeting February 28, 2023.. Thank you
Date: Sunday, February 26, 2023 3:29:11 PM

Dear Patrick Maxwell,

Amy and I are part-time Oxfordites at 216 S. Morris St.

We remember an incident when you helped us a few years ago. Your respect and kindness to a woman in serious distress sealed our admiration for you, our town police chief.

The woman was walking down S Morris St. She was yelling at cars as they passed. She was crying, dragging her suitcase along. Neighbors were concerned and frightened.

Amy and I, being nurses “from Baltimore City,” were asked to intervene. We did and invited her to come to our house to use the bathroom and tell us how we might help her.

She told us that following a dispute, her family told her to leave.

She wanted to be taken to a shelter in Easton. She didn’t know where the shelter was located; she was distraught over how to get to Easton.

I called our Chief of Police asking where the shelter is located so that Amy and I could drive her there. Pat indicated that he knew

the background of the woman's plight. He offered to research shelter bed availability. "I'll be right over," he said.

This is the beautiful part of the story, friends — Chief Officer Maxwell drove to our house, parked in front of the house next door; got out of the car, removed his police uniform hat, walked casually up the side walk to our porch and said "Hello, I'm Pat Maxwell; can I help you?" The woman tearfully explained her need for a bed at the homeless shelter. Pat replied, "There is one available for you this evening. I will drive you there now. How will that be?" The woman agreed. Pat walked her to the police car, removed a few articles from the passenger seat, and helped her into the car.

How respectful and gracious Police Chief Maxwell was to this distraught woman.

This is our story and tribute to you, Pat Maxwell. We are very sad that you are no longer Oxford's Chief of Police.

We ask God's blessing on you.

Sincerely,

Amy Freeman and Cathie
Kelly

From: [Warren Davis](#)
To: brianpwells@gmail.com; jamesjaramillo42@gmail.com; dc2ox4d@verizon.net
Cc: [Dick Deerin](#); [Dorothy Fenwick](#); [Mark Lacey](#); [Dan Henning](#); [John Pittman](#); [Madge Henning](#); oxfordclerk@goeaston.net
Subject: "Retirement" of Chief Maxwell and Commissioners Meeting on 2/28/23
Date: Sunday, February 26, 2023 9:37:56 PM

Dear Oxford Commissioners,

In response to an email inquiring about Pat Maxwell's removal as Chief of Police in Oxford, Cheryl Lewis, the Town Manager, responded as follows: "Pat has retired after serving 34 years in the department. The Commissioners applaud his years of service and dedication to the town."

Given this response, how would we expect the early retirement of a 34-year dedicated employee who is the town's Chief of Police to proceed. At the outset, we would expect town representatives and Pat to sit down and discuss a future retirement date. This would include a discussion of the town's efforts to hire a new Police Chief and how Pat could assist in that transition. It would seek assurance that there would be no gap between the date of Pat's retirement and the transfer of policing responsibility to the new Police Chief. That discussion would also include how the town would address Pat's health insurance and housing needs, as well as any early retirement benefits the town would offer Pat. If a non-disclosure agreement was part of this discussion, it would be limited to the economic terms of early retirement.

We know little about what actually transpired with Pat's "retirement," but we do know that it was not handled in the manner described above. WHY NOT? It is our hope and expectation that the Commissioners will answer this question when we meet this coming Tuesday at the Community Center.

Respectfully submitted,
Warren Davis
Dick Deerin
Dorothy Fenwick
Madge Henning
Dan Henning
Mark Lacey
John Pittman

From: [Jan Greer](#)
To: oxfordclerk@goeaston.net
Subject: Questions For Tomorrow's Commissioners Meeting
Date: Monday, February 27, 2023 3:19:09 PM

I will attend the meeting, but thought it might be useful to submit my questions beforehand so they are clearly stated and the Commissioners have sufficient time to consider their answers beforehand.

(1) In the February 12th issue of The (Easton) Star, on page 2, Commissioner Jaramillo is quoted as having stated, "'Chief Patrick Maxwell has retired from the Oxford Police Department after serving 34 years in the department.'" The article went on to state, "No reason was announced for Maxwell's retirement by the town." Use of the word "retirement" might lead residents of the town to believe Chief Maxwell's departure from the department was voluntary. Was this in fact the case?

(2) In the event the Commissioners' response to Question (1) is that the Commissioners are advised by the town attorney, for example, or any other legal authority, that under the law they **may not** respond to questions concerning personnel matters, **or words to that effect**, do they declare that by law they are **enjoined** from doing so, or they **cannot by law be compelled** to do so? These are distinctions with a difference, and if the first answer is the case, will they please cite the legal basis upon which this answer rests?

(3) The State of Maryland, Talbot County Maryland, and various other cities and towns in Maryland and Talbot County publicly post job openings so that anyone seeking such positions may apply. Upon knowledge and belief, it is my understanding that Town Planner, Maria Brophy, was (a) hired without her job being posted publicly so that other aspirants for the position might apply, and (b) that Ms. Brophy is Town Manager, Cheryl Lewis's, daughter.

If I am mistaken about either or both of those presumptions, I would like to have it (or them) corrected. If they are in fact correct, I would like to know why the position was not publicly posted. Should the latter be the case, albeit not prohibited by the Town Charter or other authority, it would lamentably appear to be an unfortunate example of nepotism, hardly meant to inspire confidence amongst the residents of Oxford that our town government operates based upon high ethical standards, impartiality, fairness, and good judgment.

Jan Greer

From: [Daniel Kordell](#)
To: [Cheryl Lewis](#); [Susan](#)
Subject: 2/28/2023 Oxford town meeting questions
Date: Monday, February 27, 2023 4:19:13 PM

Good afternoon Cheryl,

Please see below, questions that we would like to ask the Commissioners of Oxford in the upcoming meeting to be held on 2/28/2023 at 6:00PM at the community center.

Thank you for including our questions in the meeting agenda,
Dan and Susan Kordell

1. Pursuant to rumors that are going around town, was Patrick Maxwell forced to resign from his position as Chief of Police under threat of being fired and his pension withdrawn?
2. We strongly believe that it is very important to the safety of the town's residents to have an Oxford police office residing within the town limits. We understand that the town provides subsidized housing to the town police Chief in unit A of a duplex owned by the town at 201 East Pier Street. With this in mind:
 - 2a. Has 201 East Pier St., Unit A, (the town-owned subsidized duplex unit that Patrick Maxwell lived in during his tenure as Sheriff of Oxford) been offered to the incoming Sheriff for the incoming Sheriff to live in?
 - 2b. If the incoming Sheriff has been offered the opportunity to live in 201 East Pier St., Unit A, has that offer been accepted or rejected?
 - 2c. In the event that the incoming Sheriff rejects the offer to live in 201 East Pier St., Unit A, will use of the unit be offered to Officer Chris of the Oxford police force?
 - 2d. In the event that no Police Officers on the Oxford Police force currently want to occupy 201 East Pier St., Unit A, will the unit still be reserved exclusively for police in-town residence (i.e., left vacant until such time as a member of the Oxford Police chooses to reside there)?

2e. Do the members of the Commissioners of Oxford believe, as we strongly do, that it is important and beneficial to the safety of the community that at least one member of the Oxford police force resides within the town limits?

2f. Do the members of the Commissioners of Oxford believe, as we strongly do, that keeping 201 East Pier St., Unit A, reserved exclusively for a resident police officer is a good incentive and employment benefit for recruitment of new officers?

From: [Warren Davis](#)
To: oxfordclerk@goeaston.net
Subject: Recent Developments Regarding Non-Disclosure Agreements
Date: Monday, February 27, 2023 5:09:16 PM

Are the Oxford Commissioners aware of recent developments regarding Non-Disclosure Agreements? Please respond at the Tuesday meeting.

The following is an excerpt from an article in the Feb. 22, 2023 issue of the New York Times:

"The National Labor Relations Board has ruled that it is generally illegal for companies to offer severance agreements that prohibit workers from making potentially disparaging statements about the employer or from disclosing details of the agreement. ...

It's long been understood by the board and the courts that employers cannot ask individual employees to choose between receiving benefits and exercising their rights," the board's chairman, Lauren McFerran, said in a statement."

From: [Daniel Kordell](#)
To: [Cheryl Lewis](#); [Susan](#)
Subject: Additional questions for Commissioners meeting at 6:00 this evening
Date: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 2:22:43 PM

Good afternoon Cheryl,
Can you please add the following questions to the agenda for the meeting this evening:

1. How and when was the vacancy notice for the position of Chief of Police made public in order to ensure fair, equitable, and honest hiring practices?
2. How many people applied and were interviewed for the position of Chief of Police?
3. Given that the Chief of police supervises two deputies, how much supervisor experience was listed as "required" in the vacancy notice, and how much supervisory experience does the new Chief of Police have?

Thank you,
Dan and Susan Kordell

110 Norton Street
Oxford MD 21654
410-924-9564

February 22, 2023

Commissioners Jaramillo, Wells, and Costigan
Oxford Town Office
PO Box 339
Oxford MD. 21654

Dear Commissioners:

I am sure you are aware of the many rumors and speculation circulating around town and online regarding Pat Maxwell.

I would think that the "retirement" of a 34-year veteran from the Oxford Police Department would be announced well in advance of his last day, so we could wish him well. And, knowing Pat, he would be spreading the word. Since this hasn't happened, and with his abrupt disappearance, anyone would reasonably conclude he was summarily dismissed. Or he quit. Or he was offered immediate retirement in lieu of dismissal. Thus, the speculation.

The "official" statement in the local paper on 2/17 actually left room for even more speculation. It is akin to the politician who explains his sudden resignation as wanting to spend more time with his family. Nobody believes it. But everyone believes some serious impropriety - whether personal or professional - took place.

To be honest, if Pat did something so egregious as to deserve being fired, you should own it and announce it without needing to go into specific detail. You should assure us that your decision (in consultation with legal counsel) was justified and in the town's best interest. Yes, there would still be rumors, but at least you demonstrate that your primary responsibility is to the people who live here. Lack of honesty and transparency breed lack of trust. And, in my mind, that is exactly where you now find yourselves.

Sincerely,



Liz Hasbrouck

RECEIVED FEB 22 2023