

OXFORD TOWN BOARD MEETING
Wednesday, December 10, 2014

The Monthly Meeting of the Oxford Town Board was called to order by Supervisor Lawrence Wilcox at 7:30 pm at the Village Hall for the transaction of such business that may lawfully come before the Board. The meeting opened with the salute to the flag of the United States of America.

Present were:

Supervisor: Lawrence Wilcox
Council: Jerry Locke
 Alan Davis
 Ron Charles
 John Hofmann
Town Clerk: James W. Hemstrought Jr.
Highway Superintendent: Timothy Tefft

Absent:

Others Present: Ed Downey, Attorney; Oxford Residents Mina Takahashi, John Knapp, Fred Lanfair as per sign-in book.

Minutes Previous Monthly Meeting:

Jerry Locke made a motion to approve the minutes of November 6, 2014. Motion was seconded by Ron Charles and carried with 5 Ayes.

Supervisor's Monthly Report:

Supervisor Wilcox handed out the Financial Accounting Information Sheets, Investment and Certificate of Deposit Reports, as of November 30, 2014. He also gave the following Revenues, Appropriations and Checkbook Balances:

November 2014

Revenues	\$ 6,384.10
Appropriations	45,823.18
Check Book Balances:	
General	\$30,301.02
Highway	67,502.38
T&A	4,629.39
Water District #1	1,331.94
Cemetery Restoration	2,643.30

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

John Knapp read his letter concerning methane baseline testing and the unintended but inevitable consequences of drilling for natural gas. John said he attended an informational presentation concerning methane baseline testing held right here in Oxford. It was conducted by Gas Safety USA, a Massachusetts based company. Thanks to new technology, they now have the means to test for naturally occurring methane levels throughout our town, and to provide us with baseline readings that could be used in a court of law should any resident of the town, or the town itself, experience damage to property, water or health.

John left information and a DVD of Dr. Bryce Payne explaining the risk of methane migration and an estimate for what a town-wide baseline test would cost. He recommended that the Board members look over the documents and make a determination on whether or not to fund a baseline test for Oxford. The full text of John's letter is on file in the Town Clerk's office for public reading.

Anne Altshuler asked why we don't have a Comprehensive Plan to go along with the zoning regulations. Supervisor Wilcox stated that the Village and Town are working on the Comprehensive plan and that the Town of Oxford has contributed \$9,500 toward this project.

Mina Takahashi read her request that the Town Board obtain a legal opinion in writing from our town attorney regarding the legality and enforceability of the town zoning ordinance with regard to the inclusion of gas drilling and material staging areas as permitted uses by special exception. Mina said that in speaking with municipal attorneys it is her understanding that while the New York State Court of Appeals definitely upheld a town's legislative authority to regulate land use, a town still does not have the judicial authority to regulate the gas industry. The full text of Mina's request is on file in the Town Clerk's office for public reading.

COMMUNICATIONS:

The November 2014 collateralized deposit account information report was received from BNY Mellon.

Information was received concerning the County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Attorney Edward Downey was present at our Town Board meeting to address the changes to the Zoning Ordinance in response to Supervisor Wilcox's request. He said he has represented clients on both sides of the gas drilling issues and wanted to meet with the Town Board to make sure he understands their reasons for the various changes. He went through the various steps we need to go through to make changes to our zoning laws, especially concerning the assessment of environmental impact and the proper forms to use. He said that since the Town Board is the lead agency when it comes to town law, he is willing to work with the whole Board or a committee to fill out the proper forms. Attorney Downey answered several questions that were posed to him by Town Board members and made suggestions for better clarity of the changes being proposed. He felt that the Staging Area should be in our Ordinance but needed to be better defined. He also stated that the removal of the word "drilling" from the residential areas was okay. One other suggestion was to hold separate public hearings on the "zoning changes" and the "special exception".

Supervisor Wilcox appointed Jerry Locke and Ron Charles as a committee to meet with Attorney Downey to fill out the proper environmental assessment forms.

HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT:

Supervisor Wilcox gave the report for the Town Highway Superintendent and stated that everything was going well during the current snow storm.

BILLS & CLAIMS: December 2014

Claims #194 thru #215, General Fund:	Total: \$20,803.47
Claims #193 thru #212, Highway Fund:	Total: \$48,931.63

Motion was made by Alan Davis and seconded by Jerry Locke to pay the bills and claims.
Motion carried with 5 Ayes.

The Town Board Re-organizational meeting will be held on January 14, 2015 at 7:30 pm in the Village Hall.

Meeting was adjourned by Supervisor at 8:45 pm.

James W. Hemstrought Jr.
Town Clerk