



ONWARD OXFORD

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE RESIDENTS OF OXFORD



MESSAGE FROM MANAGER

Jennifer M. Callahan, Town Manager

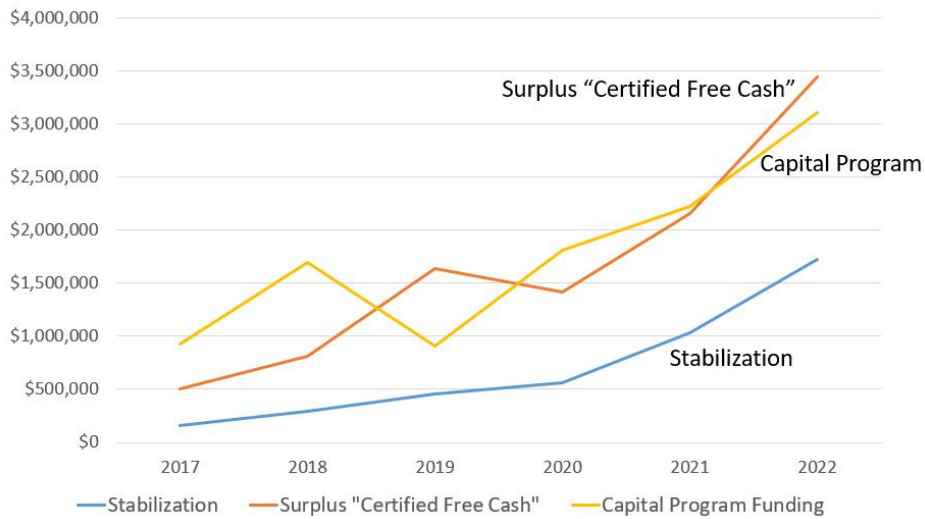


Welcome to the first edition of Onward Oxford! As part of my commitment to increase communications between municipal services and residents, you are receiving this newsletter which is also posted on www.oxfordma.us and will be sent out electronically to anyone who subscribes to our website's Public Notices. This will be a quarterly electronic newsletter and one edition each year shall be mailed to all residents and businesses. The issues and responsibilities each of our Town Departments oversee are diverse. A goal of this newsletter is to share important information, and timely updates about recent past and upcoming town-wide events along with important departmental services and achievements.

When I became Town Manager in 2018, I was very concerned about the overall financial stability of the community. The Town had previously spent down almost all of its reserves, was not generating any substantial new revenues, had no comprehensive financial policies in place, had very low end of year surplus (free cash) numbers and had not avidly pursued existing grant opportunities. Since becoming Town Manager, I have had a laser-focus on the following several Strategic Management Goals: 1) Conservative Financial Forecasting and Balanced Budgeting, 2) Increasing Revenues, 3) Building Reserves, 4) Leveraging Grant Assistance and 5) Investing in Town Infrastructure.

Achieving a balanced budget means the Town cannot increase expenditures greater than recurring available revenues, cannot use one-time revenues for operational expenses and must provide realistic, yet conservative budget projections to meet town needs. In addition to producing balanced budgets since 2018, I am very proud of the Financial Team we have in place because we have totally

Financial Indicators By Year



Manager Message Continued

turned around the fiscal outlook of the Town and all of our financial indicators have significantly improved! In 2017, Oxford's "Rainy Day" Stabilization Fund had a paltry \$163K. Today, we have grown it 11 fold to more than \$1.7M to help with unexpected or emergency matters! Likewise our Other Post-Employment Benefits Liability Fund was only at \$3.6M. Today, the fund totals over \$5.0M!

In 2015, the Town's available Certified Surplus Funds were only \$501k. In the past 4 fiscal years, we have continuously grown our Certified Free Cash numbers and this year is set to come in at a record \$3.5M which is a 7 fold increase. This has allowed the Town to triple its spending to address a huge backlog in deferred maintenance and major infrastructure projects without increasing the taxes on residents. In 2019, at my direction we established the Town's first Capital Stabilization Fund and completed a comprehensive

5-Year Capital Plan which we have been following to the greatest extent possible. All of these actions have allowed us to finally address crumbling infrastructure problems, modernize

Snapshot of Grants Secured by Categories in Past 3 Years!

\$13,450,000+

Parks, Seniors, Historic, Trees, Playgrounds
\$0.4 Million

Best Practices: Green Communities, Finance & IT
\$0.5 Million

Public Safety, MEMA, Covid
\$2.3 Million

Brownfield, Environmental, Climate
\$2.0 Million

Dam & Bridge Safety
\$3.25 Million

Transportation, Pedestrian Safety & Sewer
\$5.0 Million

our building maintenance systems and begin saving for future capital needs. Increasing revenues does not happen by merely waiting around for new businesses to come to town or hoping contracted services do not increase too much each year. It takes management direction and leadership to negotiate terms of existing and new contracts to be more favorable and save the Town hundreds of thousands of dollars in costs. It requires reorganization of the workforce to achieve greater efficiency and improved work performance and services. For example, the Town had been without a full-time Planner for more than a decade and did not have a full-time Building Commissioner. By strategically budgeting for these professional positions, we have become more capable of recruiting, planning and processing new businesses for greater economic development to help grow the tax base and provide more local jobs.

To supplement all of these positive financial trends, I have worked aggressively to pursue countless one-time revenues such as grants, financial agreements and even legislative earmarks. Since the Fall of 2018, I have worked with each department to collectively apply for and receive an unprecedented \$14+M in grant funding to help us tackle many deferred capital projects including such things as repairing our buildings, roads, dams and bridges as well as reducing our municipal carbon foot print with new LED lighting, HVAC systems and weatherization improvements. In terms of our "human capital" needs, grants have allowed us to provide our



SLATER'S SHEEP FLOCKING TO OXFORD

Swisburn/USA, a manufacturer of precision machined products, located in Oxford has partnered with the Samuel Slater Experience to sponsor a "Community Art" sheep. Twenty-five sheep, that have been designed by local artists, will soon be dotting local towns.

Oxford's sheep (seen above) will grace the front lawn of the Oxford Free Public Library. Artist Rebecca Hope, also of Oxford, painted the sheep and Corey Mitchell provided the metal work. The sheep is designed to invoke the idea of the industrial process. For more information, please visit www.samuel Slater Experience.org.

Thank you to Swisburn/USA for bringing art to the Town!

Manager Message Continued

first responders with lifesaving equipment, fix major cybersecurity and town wide communications vulnerabilities, build new sewer lines for neighborhoods and businesses, create new parks and playgrounds and to address serious pedestrian safety issues, a historic pandemic and emergency management crises.

I hope you enjoy learning important things about our Town as you read this newsletter. Please know all of the staff across every department care deeply about this community. We are all dedicated to improving the quality of life in this Town through the very work we do each day in service to residents and businesses alike. This newsletter and future editions of it will help us better share our achievements and provide updates about important town matters.

This is **Onward Oxford!**



OXFORD FIRE-EMS CYCLING TEAM

On Saturday, August 7th, members of Oxford Fire-EMS cycling team took to the streets to ride in 2021 Pan Mass Challenge. This year, the ride was different with sixteen possible routes. Our team chose to ride 100 miles in Western, MA.

With high temperatures, and difficult terrain, the riders dug deep to remember "why they ride". Whether riding for loved ones or friends who have battled cancer, or to support the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, they thought about how cancer has impacted each of their lives.

This year, Firefighter Sean Bowes, rode for his uncle John G. Saad, Jr. who lost his battle with cancer on July 9, 2021. Mr. Saad served the Town in numerous capacities, most notably as a member of the Board of Selectmen for 43 years.



Pictured from L-R are FF Jeffrey Morris, FF Sean Bowes, Chief Laurent McDonald, Deputy Chief Kenneth Sellers, and FF David Sheridan



Photo Courtesy of Heather Frongillo

A VARIETY OF CHANGES FOR THE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Brittany McDougal, Library Director

This past year certainly brought many obstacles to our library, but with the support of our loyal patrons and dedication from our hardworking staff, we were able to pull through! While being closed to the public for most of Fiscal Year 2021, we were still able to provide services via our Contactless Lobby Pickup, which was a great success. We also offered virtual storytimes, take and make crafts, book groups and virtual programming via Zoom. We began offering in-person services, with limited hours, beginning on May 25, 2021. It was joyous to see patrons in the building once again! The

library began expanding hours to what they were, pre-pandemic, on Monday, August 16, 2021, with Saturday hours returning Saturday, September 11, 2021.

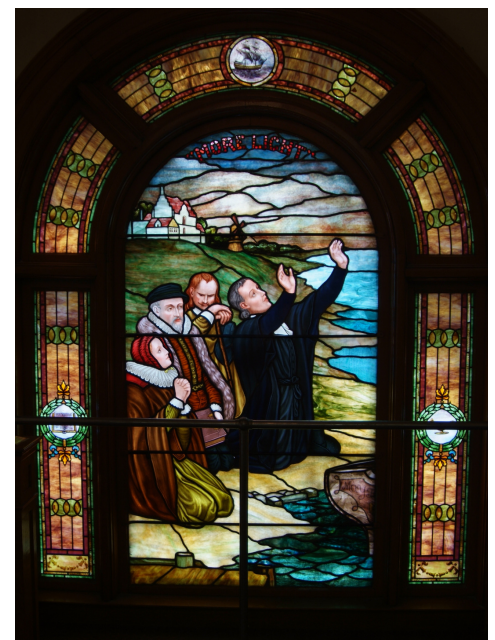
A new addition to our collection this year were Wireless Internet Hotspots. Patrons are now able to borrow them for a week, in order to have internet access regardless of location. The Hotspots have proven to be quite popular and are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. If you are in need of Internet service, we encourage you to stop in and check one out!

While the library was closed to the public, staff were able to give our Teen Room a much needed update, which included new paint, carpeting and furniture – all thanks to State Aid funding the library receives each year. We were also able to purchase a mobile device charging station, compliments of the Friends of the Library. Our goal was to create an

even more welcoming environment for our teens which we believe we have done. We hope our teen patrons enjoy the updated space and we welcome any feedback!

This past year also brought the completion of the library's Preservation Project, which took place in the old section of the building – you may have seen scaffolding on the library for a few months while it occurred. The wall of the southern part of the old building was repaired to address water damage that occurred over the past years and to prevent it from happening again in the future. The front door was also replaced with a new handcrafted door and our historic stained glass windows were preserved. This project was able to be transpire, thanks to a grant the Town Manager's Office was able to receive for the library. We are thrilled to preserve part of our Town's history!

I would like to thank our loyal patrons for their continued support – the Oxford Library Staff look forward to seeing you soon!



"The Departure of the Pilgrims from Holland in 1620", stained glass window by Redding, Baird & Co., Boston

BRINGING THE COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Shelley Lambert, OCC Director

WELCOME BACK! We are thrilled to be offering up some fun for the residents of Oxford and surrounding towns!

The staff at the Oxford Community Center has worked diligently to reopen the facilities to all manner of activities and programs. Our online registration tool and information for all programs can be found at <https://oxfordma.myrec.com/>.

AT OCC: The Fitness Program resumed classes in August 2020 and staff is working toward resuming our full class schedule. For a list of the full course offerings, please visit: www.oxfordma.us/oxford-community-center. The cardio/weight room is also open!

For athletic programs, Summer Basketball enjoyed over 70 players participating in weekly games. Start Smart Basketball and Start Smart Soccer will be back for kids aged 3-6, as well as drop-in dodgeball for teens. The Winter basketball league will return with registration opening in November.

This Fall we will be offering several arts and crafts classes for all ages. There will be Fall and Halloween wreath making for children ages 6 and up and an adult wreath making class! For younger children, we are offering a class where they can make simple Fall luminaries! Stay tuned for additional offerings!

At Carbuncle Park: The Summer Program returned this year with 6 weeks of Half-Day programming. We look

forward to offering 2 weeks of Full-Day and 4 weeks of Half-Day programming next summer. When the weather cooperated, the beachfront and splash pad were popular places to cool off and spend the day. The new playground, funded through the Recreation Commission's submission to the Smolenski/Millette Charitable Trust and installed by Oxford DPW, is providing fun for toddlers to tweens.



Being introduced this fall are Carbuncle TWEEN and TEEN Nights! This is a drop-in program, with different themes, allowing kids to get together in a supervised environment to play yard games, board games, foosball, air hockey, etc.

When the snow starts to fly, look for our Snowshoeing Treks. We will go out around Carbuncle Park and the trails behind OHS and around Hodges. Please, start hoping now for a snowy winter!



On the Common: Our inaugural Teddy Bear Picnic on July 10 was a great success. Families enjoyed a picnic lunch, storytime with Kathy from the Library, a visit from Smoky the Bear, and a parade around the Bandstand. We hope you'll join us for the next one, July 16, 2022!

Each Wednesday in August movies were shown on the common as part of the 'Movies on Main' series. This year Jumanji, Shazam, Guardians of the Galaxy 2, and Maleficent were featured. The season ends on September 19th. Remember the Titans to close out the movie season and ring in football season.

Concerts also returned to the Bandstand this summer with the Oxford Women's Club hosting the local teen band Don't Tell Dan. Also featured were the folk stylings of Mark Mandeville and Raianne Richards, Throwback to the 60s, Grade "A" Fancy, and the Ted Yoder Band.

In October, we'd love your help in decorating Joslin Park (our town common) with your homemade scarecrows during our Second Annual Scarecrows on the Common contest.

Look for more fun events on the Common in 2022 such as a Circus Day!



OXFORD JOINS 'SAFE KEEP' PROGRAM

Anthony P. Saad, Chief of Police

In July, the Department was able to enter into an agreement with the Worcester County House of Corrections to participate in their 'Safe Keep' Program. Safe Keep will allow the Department to bring 'long term' (weekend) prisoner holds to the jail.

The new program has a team of medical and mental health professionals on staff. They also have a detoxification center. By transporting our prisoners to their facility, Oxford will realize a cost savings and reduce the burden placed upon our dispatchers to monitor long term hold prisoners.

Our liability implications for holding prisoners will be greatly reduced. I want to sincerely Thank Sheriff Lew Evangelidis and Superintendent David Tuttle for offering this long, sought after resource.

K9 ZAX IS LEARNING THE ROPES!

Your new K9 Zax has recently completed 17 weeks of training with his handler, Officer Ryan Kasik. We are excited to have them both back on patrol assigned to the 3p-11p shift. Zax will be readily available for tracking and missing persons searches. Officer Kasik and Zax look forward to introducing themselves to the community! Please let us know if your group or organization would like to meet them, we will gladly accommodate the request.



K9 Zax First
Official Tour
was September
20, 2021.

K9 officers
were first used
in America in
1907 in New
York City.

You know that
K9s have a good
sense of smell,
but did you
know that their
sense of smell
is 10,000 times
stronger than
ours? It's true!

DPW ADDS NEW TOOL TO THE TOOLBOX

Jared M. Duval, P.E., DPW Director

Over the past year the Oxford Department of Public Works (DPW) has piloted a new addition to our pavement repair 'toolbox' to stretch our roadway budget and make the greatest impact feasible on neighborhood streets. While not new technology, this repair alternative consists of grinding existing gutters, shimming and/or leveling with hot mix asphalt (HMA), and installing a HMA overlay to provide an improved roadway profile and wearing surface.

So far, this "shim and overlay" alternative has proved to be a cost-effective means to cover more ground within our paving program. Since this alternative does not address the pavement subbase it is not meant to fix the worst streets in Town, but it does provide a significant structural improvement and restores the wearing surface for smoother travel. DPW performed this repair on the following neighborhood streets over the past year:

- Quobaug Avenue
- Nottingham Road
- Bounty Street
- Maid Marion Street
- Friar Tuck Lane

The DPW will continue to incorporate the 'shim and overlay' repair alternative in our arsenal and plans on programming future local streets for this repair. The DPW is in the midst of updating its pavement management plan for the next few years and looks forward to sharing this information with the public once available. Oxford's roadway pavement network is one of the biggest, if not the biggest assets the Town owns. It is through thoughtful budgeting, planning, and execution that the DPW, along with resident support, can ensure the Town's interests in enhancing this asset are furthered.



Maid Marion Street Before Shim and Overlay



Maid Marion Street After Shim and Overlay

SHIM AND OVERLAY COMPLETE



Quobaug Avenue



Nottingham Road



Maid Marion Street



Bounty Street



Friar Tuck Lane

UPDATING THE 2007 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

Tony Sousa, Director of Planning and Economic Development

This past spring, the Town applied for a state technical assistance grant to update the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. The plan serves as the guiding document in open space planning for a municipality. The plan must be updated every seven years and must be approved by the state to be eligible to apply for capital related open space grants (park renovations, trail improvements, land acquisition, etc).

Should the grant request be approved, a consultant specializing in open space planning will be hired to conduct a community vision process, develop goals and objectives, and update our current open space inventory. All work will be done in alignment with state requirements, guidelines, and best practices. We expect to hear shortly on the status of our grant application.



MALSER HUMANITIES TRUST GRANTED TO OXFORD

The Janet Malser Humanities Trust recently awarded their eleventh annual distribution of grants totaling just under \$150,000 to thirteen entities. This year Oxford has been awarded \$24,000 for streetscape beautification improvements of the Main Street Historic District. The funding will be used to replace old benches and add additional planters along Main Street. The funding will also be used to purchase several picnic tables for Joslin Park.

In 2019, the Town successfully completed improvements at Joslin Park thanks to the \$30k Malser Trust grant. The scope of work included new park benches, self-watering flower planters, signage, and other amenities.

These ongoing improvements will continue to make the Main Street Historic District a welcoming place for families and visitors to enjoy for many years. We thank the Janet Malser Humanities Trust for their continued support to our community!

THE MVP PROGRAM



The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program provides funding to cities and towns in Massachusetts for planning climate change resiliency measures and implementing priority infrastructure projects (such as culvert improvements, dam repairs). For a community to be eligible for infrastructure funding, they must first complete a series of vulnerability assessments and develop action-oriented resiliency plans through the MVP Program. Communities who complete the MVP Program become certified as an "MVP Community." The MVP designation is required to tap into infrastructure dollars. Over the years, many municipalities throughout the state have taken advantage of this opportunity to address their local needs. With this, we will work with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission to secure the MVP designation.



OXFORD FIRE-EMS SAFETY INITIATIVES

Chief Laurent R. McDonald

Things are moving forward at the Oxford Fire and Emergency Services. The Department was successful in applying for and receiving a \$200,000 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) to replace outdated and obsolete Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus. These grants, offered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), are extremely competitive. The 3M/Scott Aviation units replace 15-year-old ISI units that have reached the end of their service life.

The Town of Oxford recently launched the Oxford Fire and Emergency Services "Address Indicator" program as part of our Community Risk Reduction program. The Address Indicator program provides a highly visible, reflective street number sign to households in the community. The program has already become a big hit with many people in our community much to our delight.

Through this program, residents can request a 6" x 18" aluminum sign which indicates the street number with 3" reflective numbers. Self-mounted signs can be purchased for \$12.00 and fully assembled signs on a 4' post can be purchased for \$16.00. A member of the Oxford Fire-EMS Department will install the sign at a location indicated by the homeowner.

"The Community Risk Reduction initiative is an all-hazards approach to reducing the overall risk in a community," said Town Manager Jennifer M. Callahan. "This new program is just one tool in the toolbox to keep our citizens and their property safe from the devastating effects of fire and other emergency situations. I am pleased with the effort put forth by Chief McDonald, Deputy Chief Sellers and the men and women of the Oxford Fire and Emergency Services to bring this program to fruition".

For more information on the program or to place an order, please contact Fire Headquarters at 508-987-6012 option 1.

"I am excited to announce the launch of this new program to assist first responders in locating you and your loved ones' homes in the event of an emergency. This program is used in communities throughout the country to support public safety efforts and I am pleased to be able to offer it to Oxford as I did in my previous community of Monson."

- Chief McDonald

IT'S YOUR MONEY

Chris Pupka, Town Assessor

Did you sell, trade, junk, donate, gift, or otherwise dispose of a motor vehicle? Did you pay excise taxes or have an outstanding bill on that vehicle? You may be entitled to a motor vehicle excise abatement. It's your money!



The Assessor's Office is happy to help with the process when presented with the appropriate documentation. As a taxpayer you need to show two things, what happened to the vehicle, and what happened to the license plate. There may be different documentation depending on what happened to the vehicle and plate (e.g. trade, totaled, sold, etc.), so if you call our office we'll let you know what we need. At its simplest form, we need a copy of the bill of sale and the plate return receipt. This documentation combined with a signed abatement application is all we need and it only takes a few minutes to process.

The deadline for filing is the later of three years after the bill is issued or one year after it is paid, but you don't have to wait! You can apply as soon as you get rid of the vehicle provided the bill for the disposed of vehicle has already been issued. For example, if you trade in car for a new car, you don't need to wait for the bill for the new car to get your money back on the old car. If you have any questions, please call us at (508) 987-6038 x1051, email us at assessor@oxfordma.us, or view our informational flyer at <https://www.oxfordma.us/assessor>.

OXFORD AIMS FOR NATIONAL BUDGET AWARD

Katie McKenna, Finance Director

Through a grant awarded from the State's Community Compact Best Practices Program, the Town hired the Collins Center to help with the design and production of Oxford's first comprehensive budget document for FY22 which was submitted for consideration to the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Awards Program.

This GFOA program is described on their website as: "a program established in 1984 to encourage and assist state and local governments to prepare budget documents of the very highest quality that reflect both the guidelines established by the National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting and the GFOA's best practices on budgeting and then to recognize individual governments that succeed in achieving that goal. Over 1600 governments, including states, cities, counties, special districts, school districts, and more have been recognized for transparency in budgeting. To earn recognition, budget documents must meet program criteria and excel as a policy document, financial plan, operations guide, and communication tool."

Oxford's budget document can be found on the Town's website here:

<https://www.oxfordma.us/accounting/pages/budgets>
"Town of Oxford Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Budget"





THE CLERK'S CORNER

The "Hub" of Town Hall

Michelle Jenkins, Town Clerk

It has been quite a busy year in the Town Clerk's Office with many significant changes related to modernizing into the 21st Century! The implementation of new systems and technologies has proven to be financially beneficial and a tremendous time saving tool that also improves accuracy. With the improved technical modernization, the need to use a typewriter has been eliminated! The new Vitals Database changes the archaic way marriage certificates were processed. Digitization of historical data which was stored in books is also now being stored in the database. This has proven valuable to address the influx of requests for Vital records due to the state-mandated issuance of Real ID's.

The new Permits System, which includes, Business Certificates, Underground Storage Tanks, Raffle/Bazaar Permits and Non-Criminal Citations, has also been a great improvement. With the Business Certificate program, we now have the ability to capture more information relating to businesses and can proactively email/mail renewal notices. This system not only generates more revenue for the Town, but allows for the generation of numerous custom reports detailing the demographics of businesses in the Town, types of businesses, and other data.

The Town Clerk's Office, aka the "Hub" of a Town, needs the ability to "Tell the Story". This is one of the most important features of the Town Clerk's Office since after all, the Clerk's Office is the "Keeper of the Records". The ability to file and organize documents according to the nature of record begins the story and allows us to track modifications to that individual story. There has been a complete, thorough overhaul of the filing systems in the Town Clerk's Office to accurately tell Oxford's "story". An example of this is the way in which the appointments of town officials are now being filed, which show the history of that a Board.

A long-standing tradition of the Town Clerk's Office has also been revived. That is, assisting with issuance the Boston Post Cane, a treasure for all of the 351 Cities and Towns in the Commonwealth. The Cane is given to the oldest resident in the Town. The Clerk's Office had the replica cane made and engraved, which the Historical Commission graciously purchased. A beautiful display case was made by a member of the Commission to house the cane, which will soon be hung in Town Hall. It is hoped in the very near future that the Board of Selectmen will be issuing a proclamation to oldest resident in the Town of Oxford!



IMPORTANT DATES

OCTOBER 1: SEMI-ANNUAL TAX BILLS DUE

OCTOBER 6: SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

OCTOBER 23: SCARECROWS ON THE COMMON

NOVEMBER 11: VETERANS DAY

NOVEMBER 16: SPECIAL TOWN ELECTION

THE YEAR OF THE SWIMMING POOL

Patrick Dahlgren, Building Commissioner

2021 has been the year for new swimming pools. We have seen a double in permit applications. Last year, Covid had shut down manufacturing. Customers could not purchase a pool anywhere! This year, Homeowners are taking "Staycations". The money we normally save for vacation are being spent on comfort items like pools and decks.

With safety in mind, pools over 24" in height require a Building Permit. An above ground pool with a wall height less than 4 feet requires a guard around the pool. Yes, if you purchased one of those inflatable or plastic pools from a big box store a permit is required. These pools also have special electrical wiring requirements.

One of the best parts of summer is the longer days—which is just another reason outdoor party time is popular in the summertime. Though, it doesn't stay light forever, and we are coming into the end of the season, for this reason, if you do have a pool, you should also invest in pool accessories like lights. LED lights have become a great value.

When you decide to "close up" for the season, please store all your pool chemical in a safe place out of the reach of children. Secure your pool cover and drain the pool to your manufacture specifications.

"Safety is a joint responsibility!"



Building Permit Required for this type of Pool



GOING ONCE, GOING TWICE, GONE!

Jillian Connor, Treasurer/Collector

On May 7th, 2021, the Town of Oxford held a public auction for properties obtained through tax title foreclosure. A total of seven properties were available for auction and six were sold. Nearly 50 bidders registered for the auction which resulted in most properties having fierce bidder competition. When the bidding finally stopped and the dust settled, the Town netted a welcomed sum of \$650,000. These six properties are now all brought back onto the current tax rolls.

The auction was a team effort which set the stage for success and allowed the Town to address a host of legal challenges and other intricacies.

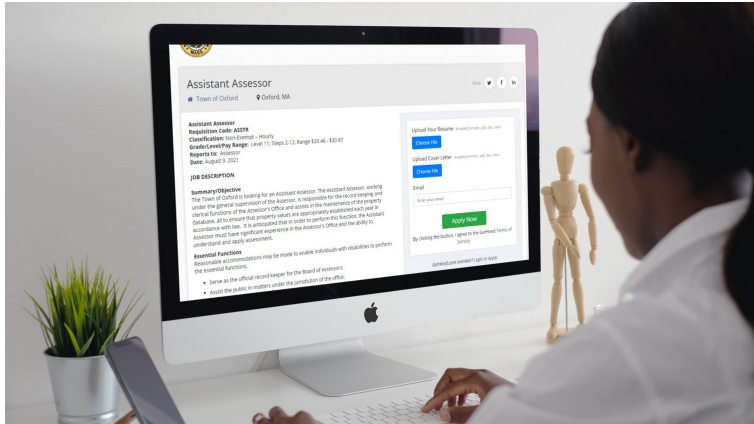
We were very pleased with the outcome and could not have done it without the help of our Auctioneers, the Zekos Group. Their advertising and diligent research resulted in a large crowd and seamless process. The Town closed the sale of all six properties before the end of June thanks to the meticulous work of our new Tax Title Counsel, D'Ambrosio Brown LLP.

"It is never the goal for the Town to own properties through tax title. However, it is imperative to get properties current with their taxes whether through the current owner or through foreclosure and auction."

- Jillian Connor

HUMAN RESOURCES GETS TECHNICAL

Joanne Frederick, Human Resources Specialist



In February of 2021, the Human Resources Department took great strides in upping its technology game by implementing new employee hiring and onboarding software. This new system allows applicants to apply for positions online and directly interface with the Town's payroll system.

All prospective employee information is captured in the module and Department Heads have easy access to the applicants' resumes, cover letters and applications. Interviews can easily be set up in the module and hiring is streamlined by creating workflows within the software.

Since implementation of the Human Resources Department in 2018, HR has hired twenty-six new employees, filling seasonal positions as well as other key openings for the Town. Applicant feedback has been extremely positive. The HR Department looks forward to continuing the process of automation!



SENIOR CENTER IS BACK IN ACTION

Laura Wilson, Director

The Senior Center is thriving in 2021! The Center managed through 2020 and COVID-19 by checking in on seniors, providing transporting to appointments and grocery shopping, and assisting other seniors with getting appointments for COVID-19 vaccination.

After updating our kitchen, the Senior Center now offers lunch on Tuesdays and Fridays for a low cost of \$4.00 per meal. We offer both dine in and take out. We currently serve approx. 70 meals each day. Reservations are a must for both dine in and take out and are very popular, so please try one!

The Senior Center is back to offering activities such as: cribbage, walking group, needleworkers, adult coloring, pitch, quilting class, book club, monthly movie, monthly Fire Department presentations and monthly BEANO.

Check out the Senior Center on the Town of Oxford website at www.oxfordma.us and follow us on Facebook @ Oxford, MA Senior Center.

Come join us and meet new friends, our hours are Monday thru Friday 8:30PM to 3:30PM!



COMMITMENT TO OXFORD'S TREES

The Town of Oxford was incorporated in 1713, after the first Huguenot settlers in the 1600's. The Town has had both a proud agricultural and industrial history. Trees have actually had a prominent place in the history books for the Town of Oxford. For example, the Huguenot Settlers used three very large Oak Trees to mark their way to and from their village established on one of the highest hills in town. There is still a last remaining one which is almost dead and town officials are considering taking the tree down and repurposing the wood in meaningful ways to commemorate the tree's historic life. The first of these Oak's was removed in the 1940's to make room for a Gas Station adjacent to Fairlawn Avenue. The second one was removed in the 1950's to make room for the widening of Main Street. The girth of this tree measured nearly six (6) feet at the time of its removal.

Additionally, the Main Street of Oxford was once lined with large specimen trees, including the majestic Three Sentinels (American Elms) which crossed from Joslin Park into the actual street (see above right)! Despite that trees have had such a major part in the Town's history, unfortunately, many trees have been lost over the years and not replaced. Today, there is a renewed strategic focus on the importance of trees to the community.

Over the past 5 years, Oxford has experienced repeated years of community-wide Gypsy Moth infestation. This infestation has resulted in the premature deaths of hundreds, if not thousands, of large and small specimen trees. In particular, red and white oak trees have been very hard hit. The community can now see the detrimental impact an increased tree mortality rate has had in significantly altering the look of the historic landscapes and tree-lined streets of the Town. The Town Manager, DPW Director, Conservation Agent and Tree Warden have made this a priority issue in order to actually save, replant and/or maintain the beauty of Oxford's trees.

Oxford now has a full time Certified Tree Warden, Mr. Wayne Burlock, who completed a comprehensive training program in 2018. The Tree Warden has an ongoing inventory of all Priority Hazard trees as well as a Strategic Downtown Tree Plan. Furthermore, at the 2020 Fall Town Meeting, residents approved the Town Manager's proposal to add an additional \$100,000 to the DPW tree budget to address the backlog of all of its Priority #1 and #2 Hazard Trees across the community.



Last Huguenot Oak



Main Street Historic Sentinels



Certified Tree Warden Wayne Burlock

Trees Continued

In addition to becoming certified, our Tree Warden has participated since in the Massachusetts Tree Warden & Foresters Association Seedling Program and has a strong history of engaging with our Oxford Business Association and Boy Scouts to recruit volunteers to participate in seedling program efforts. Since 2015, 30 trees (Maple and Crab Apple) and 600 shrubs (Rose of Sharon and Lilacs) have been planted and/or distributed to the public for planting. The Tree Warden has held forums and trainings concerning tree care, tree identification and pest management with these community groups. A previous project with Boy Scouts focused on placing, monitoring and inspecting several Emerald Ash Bore Traps with volunteers from this community group.



Seedling Program

This past year, the Town applied for and was awarded its first ever tree/forestry grant! The grant proposal funds our new Trees for Trees Project which is focused this coming year on one street in its downtown, namely Charlton Street, and has prioritized the removal of 22 of its dead Priority Hazard Trees and the replanting of new trees. Additionally, the Tree Warden has identified 6 other places along Charlton Street which have recently lost trees due to road widening and reconstruction in which the Town will be planting new trees.

The Town intends to work diligently in raising the public's awareness of the importance of continuing to provide the necessary resources to not only maintain healthy trees, but also to replace and plant new trees according to its Strategic Tree Plan. The establishment of the Trees for Trees Program and this project's focus on the replacement of dead trees with new healthy ones, along a well-traveled downtown roadway, will serve the community well in solidifying support for such a worthy environmental need.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IS TOP PRIORITY

Oxford's Main Street has one of the State's largest rights of way. It is true the sheer expanse of Main Street affords the community with a beautiful wide downtown streetscape, but it also represents a nightmare for pedestrians of every age, ability and physical fitness to successfully navigate traffic in order to cross safely.

In 2020, the Former DPW Director, DPW Project Manager Peter Gerhard and Town Manager applied for a Shared Streets Program grant to improve pedestrian safety along Main Street, but the proposal was unfortunately not funded. This year again, the Town resubmitted and increased our advocacy on behalf of the worthy proposal after experiencing a tragic pedestrian fatality at the crossing of Main and Fairlawn Streets.

The Town's proposal sought funding assistance for essential safety improvements to pedestrian areas within Oxford's downtown including enhanced crosswalks with Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons, new pedestrian safety islands, ADA/MAAB compliant curb ramps, improved pedestrian signals with Accessible Pedestrian Signal push buttons at the Downtown center, and new transit friendly infrastructure (bus shelters).

This past spring the Town was informed it was being awarded the maximum funding of the program, along with an additional grant from the Mass Department of Transportation, for a total of \$400,000.00 to be applied to address all of the major crossings along the downtown Main Street Corridor! The project has been announced and the construction bid awarded which means work is commencing this fall! When the improvements are completed, the Town will be adding new pedestrian benches along sides of Main Street heading towards Webster thanks to another grant from the Janet Malser Trust!

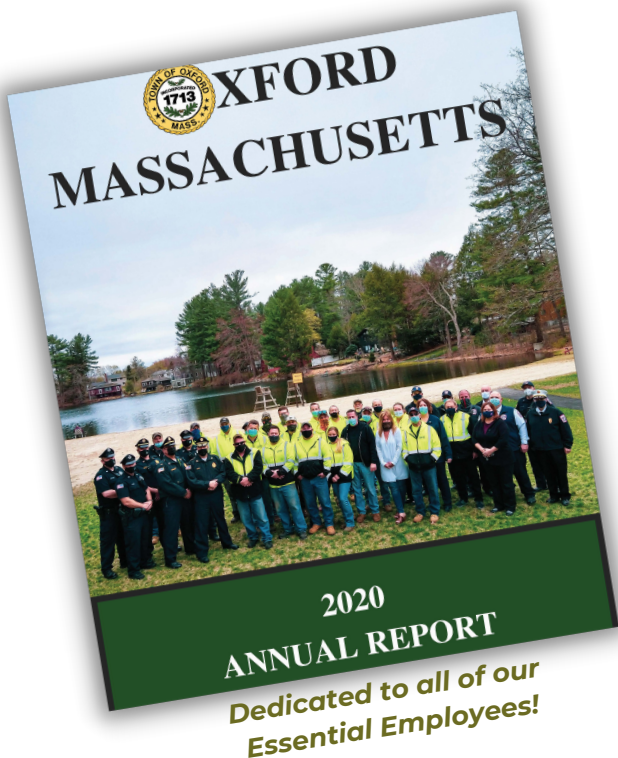


OXFORD TOWN MANAGER
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2020 ANNUAL TOWN REPORT

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check out the 2020 Annual
Town Report?

This Report features a host
of information and is
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