



ONWARD OXFORD

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE RESIDENTS OF OXFORD



MESSAGE FROM MANAGER

Jennifer M. Callahan, Town Manager



Welcome to the second edition of Onward Oxford! The first edition was met with overwhelming positive reviews and we are excited to keep this communications project going! 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.

If you have not seen it already, check out our new Electronic Communication Board in front of Town Hall! This has been a strategic capital planning project associated with improving communication with the public. Since becoming Town Manager, we have worked hard to increase our revenues in order to establish and implement a Comprehensive Five Year Capital Improvement Plan in which this new communications board was an objective to meet. Since July, this has been in the planning and design phases. This new board allows us the ability to communicate in more real time than the previous 1940's hand-lettering marquee board and has already significantly improved communications.

Since becoming your Town Manager, I have worked actively alongside staff members, to pursue one-time revenue sources, including grants. If you listen to my Town Manager's Report given at Board of Selectmen meetings, you will often hear me talking about grants that we have applied for or received. Residents should understand grant writing is no small task and takes significant effort and legwork. However, once awarded, the benefits make the process worthwhile. We are incredibly proud of the successes we have had in securing grants, which allows the Town to tackle a multitude of projects outside of the operating budget. Turn to the next page to read about grants that have been announced just since the Fall Edition of this newsletter. As always, Onward Oxford!

RECENT GRANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

\$37,000 Complete Streets

\$20,000 Brownfields Grant- Phase I Assessment of abandoned mill site on Moscoffian Property

\$50,000 N. Firestation Roof (Rep. Joe McKenna state grant)

\$19,200 Bullet Proof Vests

\$32,000 911 Training Grant

\$30,000 Open Space Recreation Planning Grant

\$47,500 Community Compact IT Grant- Dispatch Console

\$26,900 MVP Planning Grant

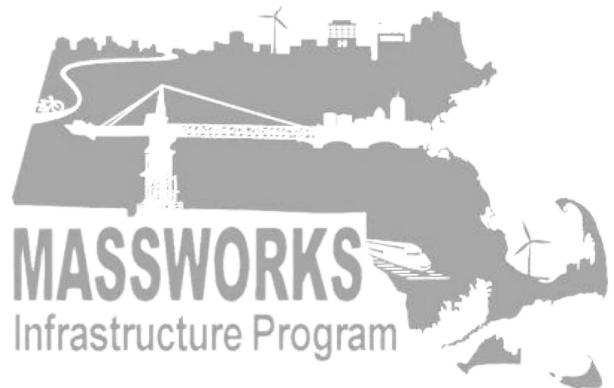
\$31,000 Community Message Board

\$9,200 Dog Park Security

\$2M NextGen Leicester St. Bridge

\$16,700 Fire Safety Grant

\$50,500 Bandstand ADA Ramp



OXFORD SECURES \$2.8M MASSWORKS GRANT FOR RT. 20 SEWER

I am thrilled to officially announce the Town of Oxford will be receiving a \$2.8M grant for the Route 20 Sewer Extension and Improvements Project. This project was recommended by the MassWorks team during the 2019 round and it took several years to align with MassDOT's timeline. This sewer project will help spur Economic Development along the Rt. 20 corridor. Many businesses include sewer as a key component in site selection. New business means new growth!

This was a highly competitive round and our proposal was selected based on the level of shovel-readiness and high impact. I would like to thank former DPW Director Sean Divoll, and current DPW Director Jared Duval, for their work on advancing this project. I also would like to express my gratitude to Juan Vega, Assistant Secretary for Communities and Programs for taking my many phone calls and emails to ensure that Oxford remained a top priority project! Rep. Paul Frost was a terrific advocate to help get us the grant!

OXFORD DEEMED "BIO-READY"

Oxford's Director of Planning & Economic Development, Tony Sousa and Town Manager Jennifer Callahan worked together this past year in applying to the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council to be designated as a BioReady®! Community. From biotech-zoned science parks to streamlined permitting,

to robust infrastructure and pre-permitted biotech sites, Massachusetts has created a directory for companies looking to relocate to do biotech-related business. The Council has developed BioReady Ratings for municipalities who submit details on their zoning practices and infrastructure capacity.

The focus with these ratings is to help biotechnology companies find the most favorable destinations in the state and to enable the state and its cities and towns to effectively tell their stories to the biotechnology industry. BioReady-rated cities and towns have made a commitment to the life sciences industry. There are currently only 84 BioReady Communities across the Commonwealth. "I am thrilled to announce we have received word Oxford is to become the 85th and be designated a Silver Community for BioTech businesses," exclaimed Callahan.





FUN, FROST, AND FAMILY WINTER FESTIVAL!

**Saturday, February 19, 2022
10AM - 4PM**

Oxford is holding its first "Fun, Frost and Family Winter Festival" on Saturday, February 19, 2022 from 10AM to 4PM. An entire day of cold weather activities has been planned for children of all ages!

You may have seen the ice skating rink pop up on the Common! There will be festival skating from Noon to 4PM and the event is B.Y.O. Skates. Residents are also welcome to enjoy the rink at any other times when the ice is solid. The reusable rink was funded in part by Aquarion Water Company and East Coast Metal Roofing.

Also on the Common will be Fire Pits, S'Mores, Games, an Ice Sculpture Demonstration as well as hot coffee and chocolate to warm up those chilly hands!

Families are encouraged to participate in the Snowman Building Contest. Bring your own decorations from home to make sure your snowman stands out! The winner will receive a Family Four Pack to the Blue Man Group at the Hanover Theater in Worcester. Special thanks to Mark Steina and the Hanover Theater for this generous donation!

If you want to earn some bragging rights, sign up for the Polar Plunge at Carbuncle Pond at 10AM. The Oxford Fire Department will be on hand to make sure everyone stays safe while taking a chilly dip. Pre-registration is available at www.oxfordma.us/oxford-community-center. Donations to participate in the Polar Plunge are in support of the OHS Student Council's fundraiser for the Special Olympics.

The Army Corp of Engineers will be holding a trail hike at Greenbriar at 10:50AM. The 45 minute hike will be

guided by Ranger Erskine. Bring snow shoes, cross country skis, or hiking boots with a good tread. Enjoy the natural winter beauty of Oxford and learn interesting tidbits from Ranger Erskine.

From Noon - 4PM there will be a Vendor Fair located inside the Community Center if you need a place to warm up while supporting local vendors. Also at the Community Center, there will be a Succulent Workshop from 1PM - 2PM hosted by Bemis Farm. Pre-registration is required for the workshop. Kids can pop into the Craft Room and make Free Crafts with Community Center staff.

A huge thanks goes out to all involved in planning and funding this special event for the Town of Oxford. Funding support for the event has also been provided by the Mass Cultural Council and the Smolenski/Millette Charitable Trust.

We hope you can make it out for a fun-filled day of winter activities and that this event carries on for years to come!





HAPPENINGS IN THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Laurent McDonald, Chief

Oxford Takes Delivery of Pierce PUC Rescue Pumper

The Oxford Fire and EMS Department took delivery of a new Rescue/Pumper recently. The funding was approved at the May 2021 Annual Town Meeting and was designed to replace two older vehicles, Rescue 1 and Engine 1, reducing our carbon footprint and operating costs, while increasing efficiency in service delivery. This modern, efficient vehicle features a Waterous 1500 gallon per minute pump, 1000 Gallon Water Tank, Husky 30 gallon Foam System, Hatch Compartments, TAK-4 Independent Front Suspension, FRC 12V Visor & Scene Lights, multiple tool boards, battery and hydraulic rescue tools, rescue air bags, and other compartment accessories. The cab is designed to seat six, with numerous storage cabinets and tool mounting surfaces to secure tools and equipment.

The vehicle was designed by a Committee made up of the following career and on-call staff members:

Firefighter/EMT Kevin Holstrom, Chairman; Lieutenant Michael Hudon; Firefighter/EMT Jeffrey Morris; Firefighter Tyler Desautels; and Firefighter/Paramedic Shaw O'Neill. Deputy Chief Jon Belanger and Deputy Chief Kenneth Sellers served as senior advisors to the committee. They all worked hard to design and customize this stock demonstrator vehicle to fit the needs of our Town while remaining within our \$685,000 budget. By combining two vehicles into one, they saved our hardworking taxpayers an additional \$600,000!

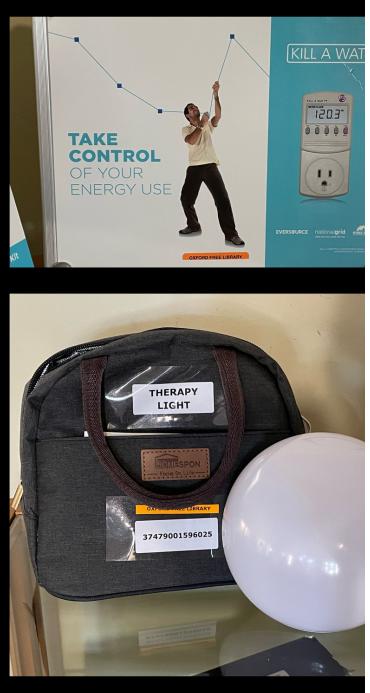
Department Receives Equipment Grant

Our Oxford Fire and Emergency Services Department was selected to receive \$16,738.79 from the FY22 Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant Program. This program enables fire departments to purchase a variety of equipment that makes firefighters' jobs safer. This is the second year that funding has been awarded for this purpose as part of a \$25 million bond bill filed by the Baker-Polito Administration to support firefighter safety and health.

Fire departments in Massachusetts were able to apply to this program for 118 different types of eligible equipment, including personal protective clothing, gear washers and dryers, thermal imaging cameras, assorted hand tools and extrication equipment, communications resources, hazardous gas meters, fitness equipment, and more. In many cases, the purchase of this equipment will help departments attain compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration or National Fire Protection Association safety standards.

"Best practices for firefighter safety are constantly evolving as technology advances and our understanding of the short- and long-term health impacts of the work improves," said State Fire Marshal Peter Ostroskey. "This program is so important to help fire departments modernize their equipment and get firefighters the protection they need. The long-term health outcomes realized from these grant awards will have a truly immeasurable benefit."

"The job of the modern firefighter requires a plethora of new tools and technology to accomplish our mission. We are fortunate to use these funds to upgrade our outdated Infrared imaging cameras and to buy Firefighter Personal Protective Equipment", said McDonald. "We are so thankful to the Baker/Polito Administration and State Fire Marshal Peter Ostroskey who have made this funding available to help with the challenges we face each day, especially at a time when so many departments are facing increased call volumes and budget constraints due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic."



OXFORD FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY- MORE THAN BOOKS!

Brittany McDougal, Library Director

Did you know the Library offers numerous online databases you can access from home? All you need is a library card! Whether you're in need of today's newspaper, conducting genealogy research or building a resume for a new job, we've got you covered. Checkout a few highlighted below!

Looking for records on your family's heritage? Check out HeritageQuest and have access to billions of records! Our library also offers Ancestry.com, for in-house use only.

Trying to build a new job resume or come up with answers during an interview? Then check out our database Brainfuse JobNow. One of the best ways to prepare for a job interview is to practice. With Brainfuse JobNow, you can connect with a live interview coach to help you prepare with common interview questions and how to answer them, body language tips, and other skills related to acing your interview.

Need assistance with school work? We have the database Brainfuse HelpNow to help you out! Sometimes getting started on a paper is the hardest step. Connect with a live writing expert for help brainstorming. You can even get a review of your paper in a live session or through the writing lab. Use your library card to connect with a free online tutor.

To learn more about other online databases we have to offer, visit our website at www.oxfordmapubliclibrary.org. If you don't currently have a library card, stop in anytime we are open and we will be happy to assist you.

And don't forget, your library offers more than books! We currently loan DVDs, audiobooks on CD, videogames, magazines, discounted museum passes, wi-fi hotspots, and a collection of "Library of Things" which include a telescope, Kindles, a ukulele, a kilowatt reader, and a light therapy lamp. We're adding more and more to our collection all the time, so be sure to stop in and browse - we can't wait to see you!



TO PERMIT OR NOT TO PERMIT? THAT IS THE QUESTION.

Patrick Dahlgren, Building Commissioner

Its cold out, and there is snow on the ground. Winter is a time homeowners are planning for the Spring and Summer home improvement projects. We procrastinated a project last summer. Wait! Will we need a permit? Do I need a contractor? These are great questions.

The state of Massachusetts has their own State Building Code- Ninth Edition of the State Building Code (780 CMR). The Ninth edition code is based on modified versions of the following 2015 codes as published by the International Code Council (ICC):

- International Residential Code (IRC);
- The International Building Code (IBC);
- International Existing Building Code (IEBC);
- International Mechanical Code (IMC);
- International Energy Conservation Code (IECC);
- International Swimming Pool and Spa Code (ISPSC);
- Portions of the International Fire Code (IFC).

A building permit is an approval by a local governmental agency that certifies that work was performed to a certain standard. Because it is styled as a permit (that is, a permission), it needs to be

obtained before the work begins. After the work has been completed satisfactorily, the permit needs to be closed out and signed off by a Building Official.

Building permits are often divided into several categories including, electrical, mechanical, and plumbing or new construction work. Before you apply, you should have plans drawn up that comply with state codes and regulations. That is because certain renovations will alter the structure of your property. Building Officials want to make sure that your property will be able to support the work you plan to do.

A homeowner can acquire their own building permit if they are living in the home. If a homeowner obtains their own permit, the homeowner is expected to know the building codes. This can carry the burden of potential liabilities, many of which can be serious. Hiring a licensed and insured contractor better insulates you from these liabilities. If you hire a contractor, make sure you physically see the permit card before they start work. If your project requires a permit, get a permit. If you are working with a contractor who suggests skipping this step, consider moving on to another contractor. In the State of Massachusetts, **the liability for obtaining a building permit falls on the homeowner** even if you hire a contractor!

It can be very tempting to ignore the permit process and to hide the work you are doing, especially if it is inside the home where you can work without

anyone seeing it. While you might get by with this, it is equally likely that such short-cuts will cost plenty in the end.

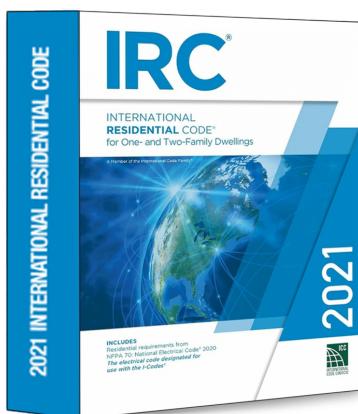
If it comes to light that you have done work without a required permit, you could be forced to apply for a permit after the fact, at a greatly increased cost and you might even have to tear out walls or ceilings for work to be inspected. If you made any mistakes, you may be forced to demolish the entire job and start over.

Your homeowner's insurance coverage can also be affected. For example, should you have a flood or fire due to poor plumbing or electrical work, your insurance policy has a case for denying coverage if the work was done without a permit.

Many home insurance companies investigate building permits issued. Also, if it is obvious that work was performed and there is no record of a permit, it could put a snag into selling your home. I have personally seen this happen.

The Building Department exists to ensure that home improvements are done safely and pose no risk to residents and to the public. Our first responsibility is Public Safety. We are here to help, and the permit process is not a roadblock. You can apply for a permit from your couch or office with our online permit portal.

If you are not sure if your project needs a permit. Just give us a call. Our office is always available to answer any building related questions!





BOARD OF HEALTH BULLETIN

Rike Sterrett, Director of Public Health Services

The COVID-19 pandemic remains a main focus of the Board of Health as we continue to monitor the spread and respond as needed. Getting residents vaccinated and boosted is a top priority in fighting COVID-19 and by the end of January, 74% of Oxford residents had at least one dose, 67% were fully vaccinated, and 34% have received the booster. We continue to encourage all eligible residents to be fully vaccinated and boosted and are happy to help any resident find a vaccine clinic or answer any questions. This is a community effort, and we hope our fully vaccinated percentage reaches above 80%.

The Board of Health received over 2,000 test kits in December to distribute to our residents and we've held multiple distribution events around Town. We started distributing the test kits to low-income residents first and then expanded to residents 60+ before making the test kits eligible for all residents. Additional test kits are expected by the end of February to provide to residents; look out for additional distribution events!

We are also pleased to announce that the Board of Health has entered the new century by having all our permit applications fully online as we are moving towards becoming paperless. Additionally, we now have a social media presence on Facebook and Twitter. We want to encourage all residents to follow us to be kept up to date on all public health related information.

As Paul Farmer said, "with rare exceptions, all of your most important achievements on this planet will come from working with others—or, in a word, partnership." Collaboration is what solves problems, and the Board of Health continues to work with other town departments and our residents to work towards addressing the public health needs and concerns of our community.

BOARD OF HEALTH PERMIT TYPES AVAILABLE ONLINE

- Funeral Director
- Bathing Beach
- Body Art
- Food Establishment
- Recreational Camp
- Refuse Haulers
- Septage Haulers
- Septic Installers
- Tobacco Sales
- Donation Bins
- Swimming Pool Operation
- Tanning Facility
- Portable Toilet
- Emergency Beaver or Muskrat Trapping
- Body Work Practitioner
- Perc Test
- Title V
- Septic System
- Well



ADDRESSING HAZARDS IN OXFORD

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

In October of this year, the DPW and several Town departments including Land Management and Fire, started the planning process to update Oxford's Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), and to complete its first Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) planning process. The Town received a MVP Planning Grant in the amount of \$26,900 to facilitate this planning effort. An updated HMP will help the town identify strategies to reduce its vulnerability to hazards like flooding, winter storms, and drought. Climate change may shift the extent and severity of certain natural hazards, including those that already impact Oxford. Through the MVP Plan, we hope to create a comprehensive roadmap for climate resilience that can be incorporated into future plans and policies.

Once Oxford completes the HMP and MVP planning processes, it will be eligible for additional state and federal grant programs that fund projects to reduce disaster risk and build resilience to climate change. Eligible projects for funding include but are not limited to culvert replacements, storm drainage system improvements, green infrastructure, and climate action planning.

Town officials request input from residents to inform both plans. To submit your thoughts on natural hazards (like flooding, snowstorms, or hurricanes) and your concerns about climate change, please participate in a brief survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/OxfordMVP.

By participating in this survey, you will help us understand the current and future natural hazards residents are most concerned about.

The public is also invited to attend a presentation and provide comments on the HMP and MVP projects during the Planning Board meeting on February 14th at 7 P.M. in the Selectmen's meeting room at Town Hall.

While the DPW looks forward to contributing to this important planning effort, the MVP/HMP planning process really is a joint venture between Town officials and the Town's residents and business owners; the ultimate value in our plans relies on input from stakeholders throughout the community. Please consider contributing to the planning process to build a more resilient Oxford!



POLICE DEPARTMENT PROFILE

Anthony Saad, Chief of Police

Traffic Enforcement Grant

I am pleased to inform you the Department continues to apply for grant opportunities to enhance patrol visibility and enforcement. Enforcement areas that are directly impacted include pedestrian and bike safety, impaired driving, distracted driving, click it or ticket, seat belt violations, and Speed Enforcement. This past years' FY 21 Grant was awarded in the amount of \$18,630.00. Included in that amount was the purchase of three (3) new speed signs.

We will continue this effort in FY 22, as we have received an award for traffic safety in the amount of \$15,988.00. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Officer Kevin Mercier for his efforts in the preparation and execution of these funds.

Firearms Qualifications



For those of you who live in the Rocky Hill Road area, you may have heard gun shots earlier this spring and again this past October. This was your Police Department conducting the required bi-annual qualification shoot. Your officers are mandated to qualify twice a year in both proficiency and accuracy. 'Use of Force' parameters are also reviewed and discussed. This mandate is required by the Mass Police Training Council and the Police Officer Standards and Training (P.O.S.T.) Commission. All Massachusetts officers are required to complete and pass this qualification to be considered a 'certified' law enforcement officer.

We have begun to use the 'code red' system to alert residents in the Rocky Hill Road area of future qualification shoots.

National Faith & Blue

National Faith and Blue Weekend is based on the premise strong communities are built on mutual respect and understanding. Law enforcement and faith institutions are key pillars of each community, and when they work together, neighborhoods thrive.



In Oxford, on October 10th, we partnered with the Oxford Ecumenical Council to participate in a food drive. I want to thank Chris St. Martin and her staff for helping us with the event.

HANNAH HARWOOD FUND SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

A photograph of a woman with curly hair smiling. In the foreground, a scholarship application form is visible with the text "HANNAH HARWOOD FUND SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE".

\$1,000 Scholarship for students entering medicine or allied health fields!

Visit www.oxfordma.us/board-selectmen or email selectmen@oxfordma.us for more info!

WHAT MAKES A TAX RATE?

Chris Pupka, Town Assessor

Many folks think that the Town's Assessor sets a tax rate. What most don't understand is that the tax rate is set by a mathematical equation where the variables are driven by both the Town's budget process and the Real Estate market.

The variables are 1) the levy, or total amount of Real Estate and Personal Property taxes to be collected by the Town, which is a component of the budgeting process, and 2) the total value of all taxable Real and Personal property in Town as measured by Assessor. The Assessor determines the value of all properties and divides the levy amount by the total assessment, then multiplies by \$1,000 to determine the tax rate for any given fiscal year.

For Fiscal Year 2022, the levy is \$26,332,633, and the total assessment is \$1,629,494.675, creating a tax rate of \$16.16 / \$1,000.

To calculate your own tax bill, take the assessed value of your house, divide it by \$1,000, then multiply it times the tax rate. For example, the tax bill on a \$200,000 house would be:



$$\begin{aligned} \$200,000 / 1,000 &= 200. \\ 200 \times 16.16 &= \$3,232 \end{aligned}$$



IMPORTANT DATES

FEBRUARY 1: ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT OPENS

FEBRUARY 14: HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN & MUNICIPAL VULNERABILITY PREPAREDNESS PRESENTATION

FEBRUARY 19: FUN, FROST, AND FAMILY WINTER FESTIVAL

MARCH 29: ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT CLOSES

APRIL 1: SEMI-ANNUAL ACTUAL REAL ESTATE & PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX BILLS DUE

MAY 4: ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

MAY 27: ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION



THE CLERK'S CORNER

The "Hub" of Town Hall

Michelle Jenkins, Town Clerk

As the saying goes, there is never a dull moment in the Town Clerk's Office! This has been proven time and time again. With a Special Town Meeting in October, a Special Town Election in November and another Special Town Election on Tuesday, January 4, 2022, we have been quite busy!

Many people say, "Well, you must be happy, the Election or Town Meeting are over"? Most don't realize, it's far from over in the Town Clerk's Office. By-Law changes passed at a Town Meeting must be sent within 30 days to the Attorney General (AG) for approval. This can be somewhat challenging at times; it involves collecting and creating numerous documents for each article submitted in order for the AG to approve the change. The finalization of the meeting minutes needs to be completed, so when the AG either approves or disapproves the article(s), the minutes can be released. As for Elections, the results are never "official" on the night of an Election. It could take days to release "Official" Election results. Once the results have been finalized, they are input into the Voter Registration Information System (VRIS), a special State Computer connected with the Elections Division for the Secretary of State. In addition, all participating voters' activity must be individually scanned into the VRIS for each particular Election/Town Meeting to register each voters' activity/attendance.

Residents should have received their Annual Town Census/Street Listing in the mail at the end of December or in the beginning of January. Aside from being a valuable tool to gather statistical information, it provides proof of residency to protect voting rights, veterans' bonus, housing for the elderly and related benefits. Completing this form does not register you as a voter, but failure to answer this annual listing shall result in a voter's name being removed from the active voter list and may result in the removal from the voter registration rolls. By answering the census, you will help us maintain an accurate voter list. By not answering the census it costs the Town thousands of dollars each year. By State Law, any voter that has not answered the Annual Town Census must be mailed a postcard, a confirmation mailing if you will, which ultimately could have saved the Town money by answering the initial mailing. In addition, by not answering the Annual Town Census, when a voter goes to polls on Election Day or to a Town Meeting, their will appear on the "Inactive" List, which requires showing proof of identification and the completion of a "Current and Continuous Residency" form in order to vote. For your convenience, last year I created an email address, census@oxfordma.us, for those wishing not to mail it back.

If you recall in the past, at the bottom of the Annual Town Census, there was a tear off, to register your cat(s) and/or dog(s). I have changed that this year and a full page insert, "Animal Licensing Application", will be mailed along with your Census form. This is our continued effort to assist in making sure that all cats and dogs are licensed within the Town. More importantly so that the residents are not issued a \$50.00 violation fee for not registering their cat or dog.

The New Year brings on preparations for the 2022 State Elections, which often results in certification of petition papers. The Town Clerk's Office received thousands of petitions with numerous names, all of which have to be entered into the State Voter System.

In closing, I am very happy to report that our new Senior Clerk, Amelia Lupis, has started and has hit the ground running, especially in such a busy time of the year. She has already proven to be a great addition to the Town Clerk's Office, and we very much welcome her to our "Team"!!!!



TOWN CHANGES HEALTHCARE COVERAGE

Joanne Frederick, Human Resources Specialist

On July 14, 2021, Human Resources notified all benefit eligible employees/retirees that Fallon Health, Oxford's Healthcare Insurer, had announced it will be focusing on providing plans for individuals enrolled in government sponsored programs like Medicare and Medicaid and not municipalities as a whole. This meant that Fallon Health will be discontinuing certain employer-sponsored health insurance plans over the next year and a half, such as coverage in Oxford.

This effects the Town of Oxford's current Direct Care, Select Care, and PPO plans. As of June 30, 2022, these plans will no longer be offered.

Since receiving this notification of discontinuation, the Human Resources department in conjunction with NFP Corporate Strategies, sent out a Request for Proposal to tap into what other plans would be available as a replacement for Fallon Health.

In October of 2021, we received the results of the RFP and have since scheduled multiple Insurance Advisory Committee (IAC) meetings to review these results.

On January 6, 2022, the Insurance Advisory Committee met to vote a new health insurance provider which will be the Massachusetts Strategic Health Group (MSHG). On January 11, 2022, the Selectboard approved the IAC's recommendation to move to MSHG for the Town's health benefits. Just this week on Wednesday, February 2, 2022, the HR department held its first kick off meeting with MSHG. Over the next few weeks correspondence will be going out to Town employees and retirees regarding this new health implementation. Stay tuned!



RETAIL MARIJUANA LICENSE AVAILABLE

The Town of Oxford invites all interested parties to submit applications in response to a Request for Information (RFI) to operate a retail marijuana establishment. The Town will use the RFI process to gauge interest and determine the suitability of respondents using specific review criteria. Each submission must include a team profile, an operations plan, project timeline, a local hiring strategy, and a plan to support local businesses. Additional information and requirements are included in the RFI document.

The successful respondent(s) may be invited to negotiate a Host Community Agreement with the Board of Selectmen later in the year.

A copy of the RFI is available on the Town of Oxford website at oxfordma.us/bids.

The deadline for submission is May 1, 2022.



COMMUNITY CENTER ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

Shelley Lambert, Director

On the Common

Our 2nd Annual Scarecrows on the Common was held Oct 23rd. This was a true COMMUNITY event! Businesses and residents of all ages were involved and instrumental in its success. Considering we added a vendor fair, childrens' games, and live entertainment, we needed many hands. Several Oxford High School students volunteered their time to entertain the children by playing games, crafting, and leading our costume parade. Thank you to Happy Garden Restaurant for sponsoring our live band, Throwback to the 60s. Also to N&J Donuts and P&D Pizza for donating prizes and to Terry Cummings, Matt from Jess' Sweets & Treats, and Sue Bray from Sue Bray Photography for judging the

scarecrows. Many thanks, as well, to John Reckner and his carvers for donating a beautifully carved pumpkin depicting the flag raising at Iwo Jima.

Town departments, including the Oxford Free Public Library, DPW, Animal Control, OCC, the Senior Center, and Grade 12 and Project Success at OHS entered scarecrows. We also had many wonderfully creative entries from residents!

Continuing to build a greater sense of community collaboration, Oxford's Annual Tree Lighting with the first Holiday Lights Parade was a huge success and involved multiple departments and community groups - DPW, the Community Center, OHS Band & National Honor Society, Fire-EMS, Police Dept, Town Manager's Office, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts. As in years past, the Bandstand Tree was donated by Robbin's Garden Center and decorated by Boy Scout Troop 147.

At OCC

In Oct/Nov our fitness program offered a 4 session Nutrition Workshop for adults. We are hosting another in Jan/Feb. Information and registration for all our programs is available online at <https://oxfordma.myrec.com/info>.

At Carbuncle

Our first Paint Night at Carbuncle was held Dec 3rd. Artist April Small, who grew up in Oxford, instructed a dozen aspiring painters in creating a lovely winter scene. The painting event was for adults, with a children's game and craft event held in the downstairs section of the beach house for those who wanted to bring their littles with them. We look forward to hosting another in the Spring.



TECH REVIEW FAQ!

Tony Sousa, Planning and Economic Development Director

Technical review consultations are held regularly with interested landowners and developers regarding the local permitting process for residential, commercial, and industrial projects.

The goal is to address any technical questions and issues prior to applicants going before a town regulatory board. The consultation team is composed of town staff, officials, and utility company representatives. Meetings are informal and advisory only.

Prospective applicants must still follow all applicable administrative reviews and approval requirements.



Q

What are the most common reasons for scheduling a meeting?

- If you have questions regarding Oxford's permitting process
- If you have questions regarding building design and site layout
- If you have questions regarding application documents

Q

What are commonly discussed topics at the meetings?

- Zoning bylaw and general bylaw requirements
- Consistency with the 2017 Oxford Master Plan
- Stormwater management best practices
- Public safety requirements
- ADA/AAB regulations
- Wetlands and natural resource protection
- Waiver and variance process

Q

Do I need to attend a meeting?

- Technical review meetings are highly recommended before submitting applications to a town board. If you are unsure whether to request a meeting or simply need to speak to someone on staff about your potential project, please email or call the Department of Land Management at landmanagement@oxfordma.us.

Q

How much does it cost?

- Technical review meetings are free!

Q

How do I schedule a meeting?

- To schedule a meeting, contact the Department of Land Management at landmanagement@oxfordma.us.

Q

How can I prepare for and what should I bring to the meeting?

- Although it is not a requirement to bring fully engineered plan sets or renderings to the meeting, the more detailed the plans, renderings, and project concept and the more specific the questions, the better guidance we can provide to you.

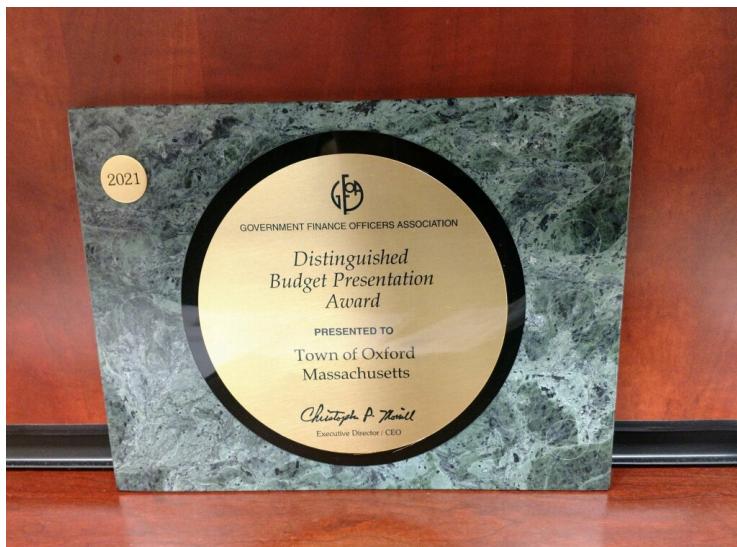
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What if I have other questions?

- Contact the Department of Land Management at landmanagement@oxfordma.us.

FINANCES IN FOCUS

Katie McKenna, Finance Director



Fall and winter are busy times for the Accounting Department with a number of required reporting deadlines to the State along with annual budget and capital planning preparations. We have set a goal to improve on the timeliness of filing required reports to the Division of Local Services. On September 2nd, Oxford's Free Cash figure was certified by the Department of Revenue after the submission of the Town's balance sheet and completed checklist- the earliest certification for Oxford!

The Schedule A was submitted on September 16th and approved on October 26th which meant we were ranked 22nd out of 351 communities in getting our documents into the State. The Schedule A is a statement of revenues, expenditures and other financing sources, uses, changes in fund balance.

The tax rate was approved on November 11th. Work begins on the tax rate recapitulation sheet soon after Annual Town Meeting in May and is ongoing until the tax rate is approved. Our auditors were reviewing transactional data at Town Hall in November and audit reports completed in January (which are posted on the Town website).

Capital requests were presented by Department Heads to the Finance Committee in October through early December in preparation for the FY23 Capital Program to be voted on at the Annual Town Meeting in May 2022. They have also submitted their departmental requests and we are building the FY23 budget for approval at the Annual Town Meeting.

The Government Finance Officers Association Budget Document was awarded the "Distinguished Budget Presentation Award"! Our existing budget templates are now modified to reflect the award-winning Budget Document pages.

OXFORD SENIORS ON THE MOVE

Laura Wilson, Director



Even with the COVID-19 restriction, the Oxford Senior Center was able to have two successful bus trips in the Fall and Winter.

The first trip was to New Hampshire for a scenic train ride along Lake Winnipesaukee with beautiful fall foliage views and Hart's Turkey Farm served a delicious turkey dinner.



The second trip was to Newport, RI for an amazing luncheon buffet followed by a Christmas Play and Cabaret put on by the Newport Playhouse.

A great time was had by all who attended and we look forward to many more trips in 2022! Make sure to follow the Senior Center on Facebook or pickup a copy of our newsletter to find out about the fun and informative events planned.



TAX TITLE FAQ'S

Jillian Patch, Treasurer/Collector



WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM UNABLE TO PAY MY TAXES?

- IF YOUR TAX BILL REMAINS UNPAID AFTER THE CLOSE OF THE FISCAL YEAR, YOUR PROPERTY WILL BE PLACED IN TAX TITLE FOR THE UNPAID YEAR AND ANY SUBSEQUENT YEARS, UNTIL THE LIEN IS PAID IN FULL AND A RELEASE IS RECORDED.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN MY PROPERTY HAS A TAX TITLE LIEN PLACED ON IT?

- THIS PROCESS CAN BE REFERRED TO AS A TAX TAKING. HOWEVER, IT DOES NOT MEAN THE TOWN INTENDS ON TAKING YOUR HOUSE. THE LIEN IS PLACED THROUGH THE REGISTRY OF DEEDS AND THIS PROTECTS THE TOWN FROM THE HOMEOWNER SELLING OR MAKING ANY CHANGES TO THE PROPERTY WITHOUT THE TOWN BEING PAID FIRST.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I AM PLACED IN TAX TITLE?

-ONCE A PROPERTY IS RECORDED WITH THE REGISTRY OF DEEDS, THE PROPERTY WILL HAVE A SEPARATE ACCOUNT FOR TAX TITLE. THIS PROPERTY WILL ACCRUE INTEREST AT 16% PER DAY WHICH IS GREATER THAN THE TYPICAL 14% PER DAY FOR CURRENTLY DUE TAXES. IF MORE YEARS GO UNPAID, THEY WILL BE ADDED TO THIS ACCOUNT EVERY YEAR AT THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR AS SUBSEQUENT TAXES.

HOW LONG DO I HAVE UNTIL A LIEN IS PLACED ON MY PROPERTY?

- IF YOUR TAX BILL REMAINS UNPAID AFTER THE CLOSE OF THE FISCAL YEAR, YOUR PROPERTY WILL BE PLACED IN TAX TITLE FOR THE UNPAID YEAR AND ANY SUBSEQUENT YEARS, UNTIL THE LIEN IS PAID IN FULL AND A RELEASE IS RECORDED.

WHAT OTHER CONSEQUENCES ARE THERE TO BEING IN TAX TITLE?

-PERMITS THROUGH THE TOWN FOR ANY WORK ON THE HOME MAY BE DENIED. THERE COULD ALSO BE IMPACT FROM YOUR MORTGAGE COMPANY. WE DO NOT REPORT THIS INFORMATION TO THE CREDIT BUREAU.

IF I AM IN TAX TITLE WILL THE TOWN TRY TO TAKE MY HOME?

-IT IS NEVER THE INTENTION OF THE TOWN TO OWN YOUR PROPERTY. WE WANT TO WORK WITH YOU TO REDEEM THE PROPERTY AND BRING IT INTO GOOD STANDING. HOWEVER, IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES THE TOWN WILL PROCEED WITH LAND COURT AND WORK TOWARDS A FORECLOSURE ON THE PROPERTY. THIS TYPICALLY HAPPENS YEARS AFTER THE INITIAL TAX TAKING AND IF THERE IS NO CLEAR INTEREST BY THE HOMEOWNER TO RESOLVE THE PAST DUE TAXES.