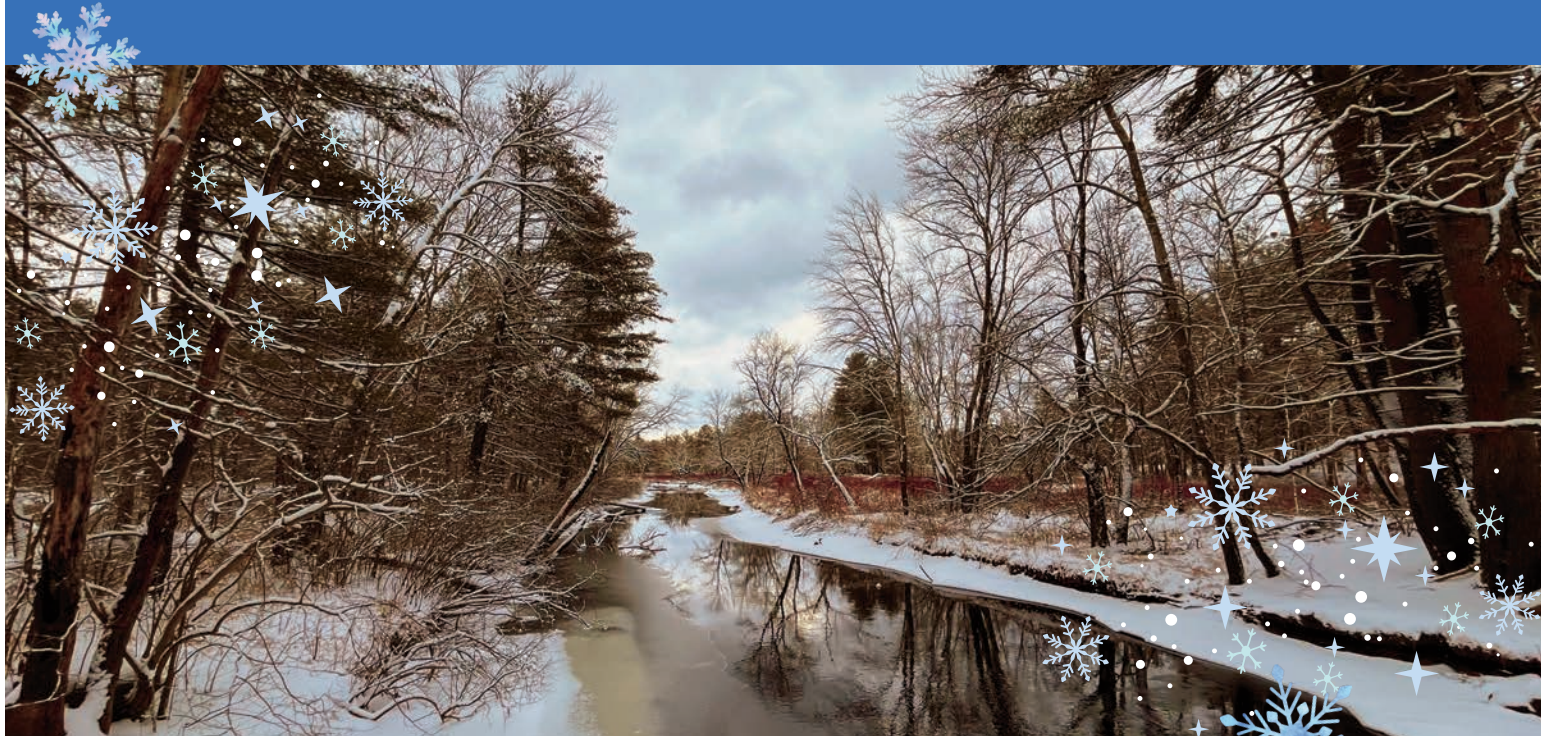




Winter 2025 Edition

# ONWARD OXFORD

THE PRIMARY SOURCE FOR EVERYTHING OXFORD



## MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGER

**Jennifer M. Callahan, Town Manager**



Welcome to the latest edition of Onward Oxford! As we embrace 2025, we have so much to look forward to such as exciting community projects, impactful grant awards, and continued progress on major Town initiatives. Whether you are enjoying this season or planning for warmer days ahead, Oxford is moving forward with energy and purpose!

I am thrilled to share that we have been awarded \$233,000 from the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) Green Communities Division to support critical energy efficiency projects. These funds will bring vital improvements, including transformer replacements at Oxford High School and LED lighting and weather stripping at the Community Center. These investments will help reduce energy costs, while making our public facilities greener and more efficient. This is the 5th and largest Green Communities state grant Oxford has received bringing our total awarded to just shy of \$1.0 million!

Another notable announcement is that Oxford was recently informed it is receiving another Complete Streets grant award of \$215,775! This grant funding will be applied this coming construction season to new sidewalks, curb ramps and crosswalks on Wheelock Street. I want to thank both our Assistant DPW Director Peter Gerhard and DPW Director Kevin Duffy for moving this Tier 3 Prioritization Project forward. These improvements will improve pedestrian safety and enhance connectivity to downtown.

Progress is also being made on some of Oxford's larger community projects. Construction at Lowes Pond is set to begin this spring. Meanwhile, the Barton Street Park Project is in the design phase following the successful demolition of the outdated and blighted DPW structure. The community will have the opportunity to provide input on the park's design later this spring, ensuring it becomes a welcoming space for all to enjoy.

As we move forward into 2025, our town continues to shine thanks to the efforts of residents, businesses, and dedicated municipal staff. Each investment, whether in energy efficiency, community development, or public spaces, brings us closer to an even stronger Oxford. We look forward to an incredible year ahead. Onward we go!



# OPD SERGEANT RECEIVES MEDAL OF VALOR

**Michael Daniels, Chief of Police**

During the month of November, one of Oxford's own, Sergeant Kenneth C. Mead Jr., was honored with the Medal of Valor by Governor Maura T. Healey at the 41st Annual Trooper George L. Hanna Memorial Awards for Bravery in Boston. This incredible achievement reflects the courage, and dedication Sgt. Mead exemplifies in service to our community.

On the morning of May 14, 2023, at around 6:00 a.m., Sgt. Mead encountered a man on Main Street behaving erratically and wielding a sword. Unable to retreat due to a civilian vehicle behind him, Sgt. Mead exited his cruiser and faced the armed individual head-on. Despite repeated commands to stop and drop the weapon, the man continued advancing, forcing Sgt. Mead to discharge his firearm to neutralize the threat and protect those nearby.

What truly defines Sgt. Mead's character is what he did next. He immediately secured the sword, called for emergency medical help, and began providing lifesaving first aid to the injured individual. His quick actions in such a stressful moment neutralized the threat and demonstrated his unwavering commitment to preserving life. Sgt. Mead's actions that day were nothing short of heroic. His bravery, composure, and compassion reflect the highest ideals of law enforcement.



We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Oxford community for your unwavering support of the police department. Your commitment was evident this past spring when you voted at the Town Meeting to approve funding for upgrades to our weapons systems. Investments like these ensure that our officers are equipped with the tools they need to handle dangerous situations safely and effectively.

Your trust and support make our work possible, and we are honored to serve this great town. Thank you for standing with us as we work together to keep Oxford safe.

**Know Any Oxford Resident Who Is A Student Majoring In Medicine or Allied Health Sciences? Let Them Know About This Scholarship!**

**April 1st Deadline to Apply!**

**NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR THE HANNAH HARWOOD FUND SCHOLARSHIP**



**APPLY NOW!**

**FOR AN APPLICATION PACKET PLEASE CONTACT THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN OFFICE AT (508) 987-6038 X. 6 OR GO TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN WEBSITE**

**[HTTPS://WWW.OXFORDMA.US/250/HANNAH-HARWOOD-FUND-SCHOLARSHIP](https://www.oxfordma.us/250/HANNAH-HARWOOD-FUND-SCHOLARSHIP)**



# FROZEN POND SAFETY

**Laurent McDonald, Chief, Oxford Fire and EMS Director**

There are multiple ponds in Oxford that can provide a great space for recreational activities over the winter months! Some winter activities on frozen ponds include ice fishing, ice hockey, snowmobiling, ice skating, and curling. But before going out on the frozen ponds, please make sure the ice is thick enough! The tips below can help keep you safe while out on the ice.

## How thick does ice need to be safe?

The thickness of ice on ponds depends upon water currents depth, and natural objects such as trees or rocks. Daily changes in temperature cause the ice to expand and contract, which impacts the strength of the ice. Because of these factors, frozen ponds are never completely safe.

Now that we have established that frozen ponds are never completely safe, a minimum thickness of 4 inches is acceptable for ice skating, ice fishing, ice hockey, and curling. A minimum thickness of 7 inches is acceptable for ATVs or snowmobiles.



## How dangerous is cold water?

Cold water drains away body heat 25 to 30 times faster than air. Any water that is cooler than a normal body temperature (98.6° F) is considered cold water and could cause hypothermia. The difference during colder temperatures is frozen ponds cause hypothermia exponentially faster.

## What is hypothermia?

Hypothermia is the excessive lowering of body temperature. Reducing the core body temperature below 95°F causes shivering, confusion, and loss of muscle strength. If hypothermia is not treated and reversed, it will eventually lead to unconsciousness and death.

## Dress properly:

Clothing that is made from man-made fibers does not protect the wearer for long when wet. Wool insulates better from the effects of hypothermia when dry or wet. Keep your head covered as 50% of body heat is lost through the head.



## What to do if you fall through the ice:

- Bring your knees to your chest, hold your arms to your sides and clasp your hands. Cover your head if possible to protect your body from heat loss.
- DO NOT try to swim unless a boat, floating object, or the shore is close by. Swimming causes warm blood to circulate to your arms and legs, where it cools off quickly and reduces survival time by as much as 35-50%!
- If you are in the water with other people, huddle tightly together with your arms around each other to preserve body heat.

## What to do if someone else falls through the ice:

- Call 911 immediately. Only properly trained and equipped personnel should rescue the victim.
- DO NOT go out onto the ice. Many would-be rescuers have become victims themselves!
- Reach, throw, or row. Extend a branch, pole, rope or ladder to the victim. Throw them a flotation device such as a life ring or float tied to a rope. If a boat is nearby, use it to get to the victim.

**2025 Burn Permits Now Available at  
the Oxford Fire Department!**

*Burning Season is  
January 15, 2025 through  
April 30, 2025*

*Open Burning hours are  
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM*

*Call (508) 987-6012 for more  
information*



# LOWES POND DAM RECONSTRUCTION

**Kevin Duffy, Director of Public Works**

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (MassDCR) Office of Dam Safety (ODS) and the Town of Oxford have partnered to design and permit repairs to Lowe's Pond Dam on Huguenot Road. The repairs are required to bring the dam into compliance with the Massachusetts Dam Safety regulations. During an early review for this project, the dam was found to have been abandoned for decades with no identifiable owner of record and the dam was classified as representing a hazard to downstream abutters.

Following construction being completed by MassDCR on the nearly four-million-dollar project, the dam will be turned over to the Town allowing the Town and its residents to benefit from its improved condition and for use as a recreational destination. The Lowes Pond Dam project is the first of six pilot projects being completed under the DCR Abandoned Dams Program. A public meeting presenting the final dam and site design was held at Oxford Free Public Library on September 19th, 2024 which provided an opportunity for input from the community as the design was being finalized.

The dam repairs include reconstructing the dam's 42-foot spillway into a 70-foot spillway, building a reinforced concrete support wall, and constructing a new riverfront embankment. In addition to the dam repairs, improvements geared towards passive recreation will be incorporated into the site, including native plantings, stormwater best management practices, accessible parking, and an accessible pedestrian walkway and bridge downstream of the dam.

MassDCR has contracted with T Ford Company, Inc. of Georgetown, MA to complete the project. Mobilization is scheduled to begin in mid-March.



Drawdown of Lowes Pond is tentatively scheduled to begin in early Spring with excavation and demolition through the Spring months. The dam will be reconstructed through the summer months with final site improvements being completed at the end of the Fall. The work is anticipated to be completed in one construction season with substantial completion by the first week of December 2025.

Throughout the course of the project, there may be periodic closures of a portion of Huguenot Road in support of construction activities. Detours for roadway closures will be posted with MassDCR and the Town providing project updates as available.

The project will be overseen by MassDCR with support from the project engineering consultant AECOM. For more information, please contact the Office of Dam Safety at [DAM.Safety@mass.gov](mailto:DAM.Safety@mass.gov), or (617) 620-8583.



**Rendering of Lowes Pond Dam**





# Happy Retirement

Debra J. Light



Thank you for your 38 years of dedicated public service to the Town of Oxford!

Police Chief Michael Daniels | Board of Selectmen | Town Manager Jennifer Callahan

*"Retirement is not the end of the road. It is the beginning of the open highway."*

Author Unknown

## HOME OCCUPATION PERMITS

Patrick Dahlgren, Building Commissioner

### Who Needs a Home Occupation Permit?

Anyone running a business from their home that involves providing services and selling products. Most common examples of home services include bookkeeping, counseling, teaching, and tutoring. The selling of products includes goods made elsewhere and goods produced at your property. Examples of this type include artwork, jewelry making, furniture, clothing, and electronics.



### Why is a Home Occupation Permit Required?

Certain types of businesses may disrupt residential neighborhoods by creating noise, odors, traffic, or other disturbances. The Home Occupation Permit process ensures that businesses operating from homes meet the town's standards and maintain the character and livability of residential areas.

### Want to Learn More?

For additional information about Home Occupation Permits:

- Email: [building@oxfordma.us](mailto:building@oxfordma.us)
- Phone: Call the Building Department at (508) 987-6038 ext. 4
- In Person: Visit the Building Department on the second floor of Town Hall.







# WHAT IS “FREE CASH”?

**Katie McKenna, Finance Director**

Simply put, “Free Cash” is not free - it only means that the funding is no longer restricted to a specific expenditure or program. For example, Town Meeting appropriates or devotes funding for specific purposes as outlined for the fiscal year’s operating budget. When the fiscal year is over, any leftover funding is considered “free” as it is no longer restricted to its original purpose. Free cash is also known as “unrestricted” as it may be used for any legal purpose that is authorized by Town Meeting.

Free cash can come from many sources, not just leftover operating budgets. However, despite where it comes from, the idea is the same: the funding is not earmarked for a specific item. Free cash could be leftover funding from a completed capital project that came in under budget, excess revenues that were not anticipated, additional revenues from the sale of equipment, or expired funding from a project that was never initiated. Once the source(s) of free cash are identified, it is not available for use until the Massachusetts Department of Revenue officially certifies the funding.

It is a best practice that free cash be used to fund one time expenditures such as capital projects or reserve accounts (savings). Due to the nature of free cash being infrequent and nonrecurring, so should the expenditures made from free cash. Communities can run into trouble when nonrecurring revenues are used to fund recurring expenditures such as labor in their operational budgets. The free cash may not be available in the subsequent fiscal year - often resulting in layoffs!

## PROPOSITION 2½ LIMITATIONS

There are limits to how fast any community can grow to support all its needs. While the growth of local services is generally supported, there are limitations to which the Town government can grow. In Massachusetts, proposition 2½ limits how much local government may tax residents in a fiscal year. Local taxation funds essential public services such as Public Education and Law Enforcement. When inflation and rapidly growing costs outpace the ability of Cities and Towns to tax residents, budget gaps are created. For those unaware, the Town of Oxford is facing a \$760K budget shortfall for its FY26 budget requiring Town Departments to “tighten their belts” so to speak to put forward a budget that is within a 2½% increase. This creates a challenging situation where both budget reductions must be made while simultaneously preserving essential programs, mandates and services for residents.

Municipal budget gaps occur when a city or town's spending exceeds its revenue, thus creating a budget shortfall. There are many factors that can cause this to happen. However, in Oxford, there are two main drivers of the upcoming Fiscal Year 2026 budget gap which include the following:

- One-time Stabilization Reserve funds were authorized at the May 2024 Town Meeting to increase the FY25 School Budget beyond what the Town of Oxford could legally tax residents. The \$509,796 that was authorized beyond 2½% needs to be taxed in FY26 to meet level funding for the FY26 budget. In other words, the Town of Oxford now has to “catch-up” with taxing residents to fund this - reducing the amount of revenues that would have normally been available for FY26.
- The cost of Employee Health benefits has increased exponentially due to rising market rates and the high cost of claims by participants - resulting in increased premium rates to pay for these claims. The Town of Oxford pays 75% - 80% of employee premiums, resulting in a FY26 budget increase of \$1.5M for employee benefits.

In summary, the Town of Oxford has fixed costs that have risen beyond 2½% due to prior year’s budget authorization and employee benefits that exceed the available revenues for FY26. This now requires all Town departments to make reductions to fill the budget gap.





# OXFORD'S "TOP DOG" CONTEST

Michelle Jenkins, Town Clerk

Starting in 2025, the Town Clerk's Office is pleased to present Oxford's Top Dog contest!

The Top Dog contest is a friendly competition to encourage residents to license their furry friends. Residents who license or relicense their dogs may participate by submitting a photo of their dog during licensing for a chance to have their loyal companion named Oxford's Top Dog. Photos should be recent and contain the image of only one dog. Residents who own more than one dog may enter each of them separately. Please include your name and telephone number with the photo.

Licensing helps prevent rabies outbreaks by requiring a certificate of vaccination for all dogs. It also increases the chance that you will be reunited with your dog in the unfortunate event they are lost.

## To vote:

- Voting will be open until March 31, 2025
- All Oxford residents are eligible to vote
- Voting will take place in the Town Clerk's office
- The winner will be announced March 31, 2025



## The winner will:

- Receive a custom pet sash
- Be featured in parades
- Have its picture displayed
- And more!



Just a friendly reminder that a copy of a valid rabies certificate is required for licensing. Please contact the Town Clerk's Office with any questions at 508-987-6032.

# WINTER PET TIPS

Kathleen Flynn, Oxford Animal Control Officer

*Ensuring your pets stay warm during winter is essential for their health and comfort. Here are some practical tips!*

**Provide Adequate Shelter:** Ensure your pets have a warm, dry, and draft-free resting place. For outdoor pets, insulated shelters elevated off the ground can offer protection from cold temperatures.

**Use Appropriate Bedding:** Supply soft bedding materials like blankets or pet-specific beds to help retain body heat. Heated pet beds or pads can also provide warmth, especially for older animals or those with thin fur.

**Dress for Warmth:** Consider pet sweaters or jackets for short-haired breeds or smaller animals more susceptible to the cold. Please make sure the clothing fits properly and does not restrict movement.

**Protect Their Paws:** Use pet booties to shield paws from ice, snow, and salt during walks. After outdoor activities, clean and dry their paws to prevent irritation or injury.

**Maintain Indoor Warmth:** Keep your home at a comfortable temperature and place your pet's bed away from cold drafts or uninsulated areas. Adding rugs or carpets can also help insulate floors and provide warmer surfaces for your pets.

**Monitor Health and Behavior:** Watch for signs of discomfort due to cold, such as shivering, lethargy, or reluctance to go outside. If you notice any of these signs, take steps to warm your pet and consult your veterinarian if necessary.

*By implementing these measures, you can help ensure your pets remain warm and healthy throughout the winter!*





# EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR!!!

The Town of Oxford is proud to recently recognize **Shelley Lambert, Director of the Oxford Community Center**, as the 2024 Employee of the Year! This well-deserved honor celebrates Shelley's dedication, leadership, and unwavering commitment to enhancing community life in Oxford.

A Certified Park and Recreation Professional, Shelley has been instrumental in expanding and enriching programs at the Community Center, ensuring that residents of all ages have access to engaging recreational, cultural, and wellness opportunities. Her passion for community engagement and her ability to bring people together have made a lasting impact.

Shelley was nominated by Laura Wilson, Director of the Oxford Senior Center, who highlighted her exceptional collaboration, innovative programming, and steadfast support for the town's senior population. Together, Shelley and Laura have strengthened the bond between the Community Center and Senior Center, fostering a welcoming environment where residents can stay active, connect, and thrive.

Beyond her daily responsibilities, Shelley's leadership has been key in developing new initiatives that promote inclusivity, wellness, and community spirit. Whether she is organizing special events, advocating for improved recreational resources, or simply going the extra mile for residents, Shelley's dedication shines.

Oxford is fortunate to have such a passionate and committed leader in Shelley Lambert, and we are thrilled to recognize her contributions with this honor. Congratulations, Shelley, and thank you for all you do for our town!



L-R: Dir. Laura Wilson, Dir. Shelley Lambert & Town Mgr. Jen Callahan



## 2025 Dog and Cat Licenses

Please be advised that as of January 1st, 2025, the cat and dog licensing fees are as follows:

- Spayed/Neutered - \$10.00 per animal
- Unaltered - \$15.00 per animal

A current rabies certificate will need to be included if a new vaccine was recently administered. In addition, if an animal was recently altered, a certificate will be required.



**Please contact the Town Clerk's Office at (508) 987-6030 for more information.**



# HOLIDAY LIGHTS PARADE & ANNUAL TREE LIGHTING

The 2024 Holiday Lights Parade and Annual Tree Lighting had over 40 floats in the parade and attracted thousands of residents to see both the parade and Joslin Common bandstand lighting. This event would not have been possible without the support of town departments, local business, and of course the residents of Oxford.

Thank you to the Oxford Fire and EMS Department for organizing the parade and the Oxford Community Center for coordinating the Joslin Common festivities! Following the Light Parade, the Fire Department's Tower 1 delivered Santa and Mrs. Claus to the bandstand where they were greeted by hundreds of residents. The Oxford Police Department provided hot chocolate to the crowd and over 700 cups were given out! The Oxford Department of Public Works was truly in the holiday spirit by providing everyone's favorite characters such as the Yukon Cornelius, the Grinch, the Abominable Snowman, Cindy Lu Who, the Cowardly Lion, Santa's Reindeer, Buddy the Elf and Santa's Elves!



This event was even more special thanks to the generous donations provided by local businesses. Thank you to Robbins Garden Center for donating the tree for over 25 years! Additionally, thank you to N&J Donuts for donating donut holes, Jess' Sweets & Treats for donating cookies and BDJ Entertainment for providing the music!

Thank you to the Oxford Community Center for handing out hundreds of jingle bell bracelets, necklaces and cookies! A huge thank you to the Oxford Fire and EMS Chief Laurent McDonald and Deputy Chief Jon Belanger for throwing the switch to light the tree! Lastly, thank you to everyone who volunteered and the residents of Oxford for making this a momentous holiday event!



HOMETOWN  
*spirit*





# MUSEUM PASS PROGRAM AT THE LIBRARY

**Brittany McDougal Bialy, Library Director**

Did you know the library offers a variety of discount museum passes that patrons can borrow to use on their next trip? Please bring your library card and visit the Oxford Library first floor Adult Circulation Desk to obtain a pass! Below is a full list of passes that are currently offered. Call the library at 508-987-6003 ext. 1 for more information or stop by anytime we're open!

## Children's Museum

Sponsored by the Oxford Woman's Club and the Friends of the Library  
Half off general admission (Up to 4 people)  
617-426-6500  
Boston, MA

## Davis Farmland and Davis Mega Maze

Sponsored by the Friends of the Library  
\$10.00 off general admission (up to 4 people)  
978-422-MOOO  
Sterling, MA  
Pass valid weather permitting April-October. NOT VALID on holidays.  
Tickets MUST be purchased at the gate the day of your visit. The discount pass must be present at the time of admissions to receive the discount.  
\*Pass must be returned to the Oxford Free Public Library the next day.

## Discovery Museum

Sponsored by the Smolenski/Millette Trust  
Half off general admission (Up to 3 people)  
978-264-4200  
Acton, MA  
www.discoveryacton.org  
Visit one Museum at a discount and get into the second museum free.  
\*Pass must be returned to the Oxford Free Public Library the next day.



## Ecotarium

Sponsored by the Taft Charitable Fund  
Half off general admission (2 adults and 2 children in one vehicle)  
508-929-2700  
Worcester, MA  
(Closed Mondays)

## Eric Carle Museum

Sponsored by the Friends of the Library  
Free admission (2 adults and 4 children)  
413-559-6301  
Amherst, MA

## Massachusetts State Parks

Sponsored by the MA Dept. of Conservation and Recreation  
Free parking for one passenger vehicle  
617-626-1250 (Dept. of Conservation)

## MASS MoCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art)

Free admission (2 adults and 2 children under 16)  
For gallery admission only.  
413-662-2111  
North Adams, MA

## Museum of Fine Arts

Sponsored by John J. Bowes  
\$10.00 per person (Up to 2 people)  
617-267-9300  
Boston, MA

## Museum of Science

Sponsored by the Smolenski/Millette Trust  
50% off Exhibit Halls admission (Up to 4 people)  
617-723-2500  
Boston, MA

## Mystic Aquarium

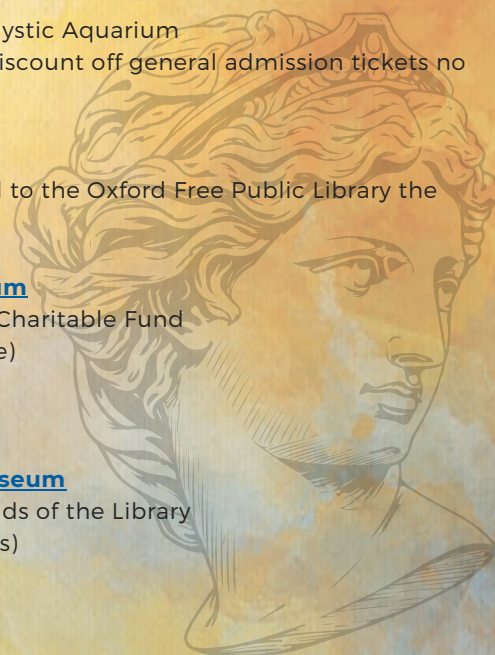
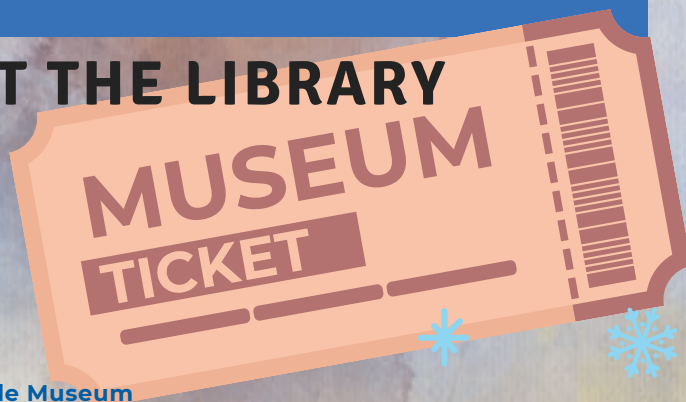
Pass provided by the Mystic Aquarium  
15% off Membership \*discount off general admission tickets no longer available  
860-572-5955  
Mystic, CT  
\*Pass must be returned to the Oxford Free Public Library the next day.

## New England Aquarium

Sponsored by the Taft Charitable Fund  
50% off (Up to 4 people)  
617-973-5200  
Boston, MA

## Norman Rockwell Museum

Sponsored by the Friends of the Library  
\$10 per person (2 adults)  
413-298-4100  
Stockbridge, MA





### Old Sturbridge Village

Sponsored by the Smolenski/Millette Trust  
Half off daytime admission (Up to 4 people)  
1-800-733-1830  
Sturbridge, MA  
Pass available Wed. - Sun.  
Hours vary seasonally.  
\*Pass must be returned to the Oxford Free Public Library the next day.

### Roger Williams Park Zoo

Sponsored by the Friends of the Library  
\$3.00 off general admission (Up to 4 people)  
401-941-4998  
Providence, RI  
Pass available March-December  
\*Pass must be returned to the Oxford Free Public Library the next day.

### Samuel Slater Experience

Sponsored by the Friends of the Library  
FREE admission (Up to 4 people)  
508-461-2955  
Webster, MA  
\*Pass must be returned to the Oxford Free Public Library the next day.

### Tower Hill Botanical Garden

Sponsored by the Oxford Cultural Council  
Half off with pass (Up to 2 people)  
508-869-6111  
Boylston, MA  
\*Pass must be returned to the Oxford Free Public Library the next day.

### USS Constitution Museum / Old Ironsides

Pass provided by the USS Constitution Museum  
FREE with pass (Up to 9 people)  
617-426-1812  
Boston, MA  
\*Pass must be returned to the Oxford Free Public Library the next day.

### Worcester Art Museum

1/2 off admission with pass (2 adults and 2 children)  
508-799-4406  
Worcester, MA  
(Closed Mondays and Tuesdays)  
Pass must be returned to the Oxford Free Public Library the next day.

### Worcester Historical Museum

Pass provided by the Worcester Historical Museum  
FREE with pass (2 adults and 2 children)  
508-753-8278  
Worcester, MA  
(Closed Sundays and Mondays)  
\*Pass must be returned to the Oxford Free Public Library the next day.



## Museum Pass Frequently Asked Questions:

### ***What are museum passes?***

Museum passes are a chance to visit local entertainment and educational attractions at a discounted price and are made possible by our generous sponsors.

### ***Can I reserve a pass if I don't live in Oxford?***

Yes, passes are available to anyone age 18 and older with a valid card in good standing from any member library of the C/W MARS network. If you have an overdue fine of more than \$10 on your card, it must be paid before the pass can be taken. Passes may be reserved ahead of time by phone or in person.

### ***When and where can I pick up my reserved pass?***

Passes can be picked up at the Adult Circulation Desk on the day before or the day of your visit to the museum. It must be returned the next day after use. Coupon passes will not need to be returned.

***How much do the passes cost?*** No fees are paid at the library-the discounted rates are payable at the museum.

***What happens if I lose a pass?*** The fee for a lost pass is \$50.00.

***May I return a pass in the outdoor return bin?*** The passes must be returned in person at the Circulation Desk.

***Is it possible to borrow more than one pass at a time?*** Yes, more than one pass can be borrowed at one time.



# CHAIR VOLLEYBALL SERVES UP THE FUN!

**Laura Wilson, Senior Center Director**

Chair Volleyball is a fun physical activity that we play every Wednesday at 1:00 PM at the Oxford Senior Center! Although the game is meant for older adults, people of all abilities and activity levels can play the game.

## **We have Two Rules:**

- Players must remain seated.
- Have fun and laugh a lot!

## **Benefits Include:**

- **Social Interaction:** Like traditional volleyball, chair volleyball is a team sport. It fosters teamwork and camaraderie, making it an excellent activity for building social connections.
- **Low-Impact Activity:** The seated nature of the sport reduces the stress on the knees, hips, and other joints, while still providing an effective workout.



## **NEED A RIDE?**

The Oxford Senior Center Van is available to our seniors and the disabled for travel within Oxford for grocery shopping, going to the post office, pharmacy, etc.

The one-way cost is \$1.75

Call 508-987-6000 to schedule your ride 48 hours in advance!



- **Strength and Endurance:** Playing chair volleyball helps build upper body strength and endurance as players rely on their arms and core to move, pass, and spike the ball.
- **Muscle Engagement:** Even though players are seated, the game requires good coordination and activation of muscles in the arms, chest, and abdominal area.
- **Enhanced Coordination and Balance:** Since the players are seated, they must be mindful of their body position and use their core to stay balanced while playing. This enhances coordination and balance, especially important for those with limited mobility.
- **Mental Health Benefits:** Like any form of exercise, chair volleyball can help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Physical activity triggers the release of endorphins, which can boost mood and improve mental health.
- **Improves Cardiovascular Health:** Chair volleyball increases heart rate through consistent movement and engagement. It's a great way for individuals who cannot engage in high-impact sports to keep their heart and lungs healthy.

**Please join us every Wednesday at 1:00 PM for some Chair Volleyball! Your only regret will be you didn't join us sooner!**





# OXFORD SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS

## OUTREACH COORDINATOR

Outreach Coordinator, Cindy Nagle is available Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays to offer free confidential information and referral services on aging-related issues. She can also help with various paperwork, including SNAP benefits, fuel assistance, MassHealth, etc.

Please call the Senior Center @ 508-987-6000 to schedule an appointment for any of these services.



Tri-Valley Inc. Options Counselor, Brittany, will be at the Senior Center on the 3rd Tuesdays of every month by appointment from 12:30 PM to 2:30 PM. She can help with a wide range of options & resources available for you, your family and/or caregiver.

Tri-Valley, Inc. provides a range of services to seniors and individuals with disabilities in Central Massachusetts, including Meals on Wheels, transportation, caregiver support, and adult day health programs. They focus on helping individuals maintain independence through in-home support, senior centers, and various health and wellness services.

**Please call the Senior Center @ 508-987-6000 to schedule an appointment for any of these services.**

## YOUNG AT HEART CAFE OXFORD SENIOR CENTER

Lunches are available every Tuesday and Friday at 11:45 AM.  
Takeout orders must be picked up by 12:30 PM.

### RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

Please call (508) 987-6000  
48 hours in advance to place your order.

For Tuesday meals, call by the Friday prior, and for Friday meals, call by the Wednesday prior.

\$5.00 for dine-in / \$6.00 for take-out (suggested donation)

If you have any food allergies, please inform our staff.

Please note that consuming raw or undercooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish, or eggs may increase your risk of foodborne illness.

## Oxford Community Electricity Aggregation Renewed for Three Years through December 2027

The Town of Oxford announces the renewal of its Oxford Community Electricity Aggregation (Oxford CEA) program, with new prices for the period December 2024 through December 2027. Oxford CEA is a group purchasing program, operated by the Town since 2017, which provides electricity supply options to help residents and businesses manage costs and increase renewable energy use. Current participants do not need to take any action to remain in the Oxford CEA program and receive the new pricing. The Town is excited that it has secured lower prices for all supply options!

**All new Oxford CEA prices will be fixed for 36 months, from December 2024 through December 2027.**

Oxford Standard
Old Price 15.540 ¢/kWh
<b>New price: \$13.700 ¢/kWh</b>
Provides 10% extra renewable energy from MA Class I sources (62% in 2024)
Our lowest priced option.

Oxford 100% Green
Old Price 18.358 ¢/kWh
<b>New Price: \$15.040 ¢/kWh</b>
Provides 100% total renewable energy from MA Class I sources (100% in 2024)
Go above and beyond! Have all of your electricity come from renewable sources

The Town's recent electricity contract had offered fixed prices since December 2022, providing multiple years of lower price stability. Most participants chose the Oxford Standard and saved about \$887 for the typical residential customer over that time. These new rates are once again market competitive for Oxford residents and businesses.

As a reminder, Oxford CEA prices only apply to the Supply portion of your electric bill and take effect on your meter read date. National Grid will continue to set the charges on the Delivery on your electric bill and will repair outages and manage all billing. Oxford CEA has no impact on any solar benefits, low-income discounts, or budget billing plans.

If you are not currently participating in Oxford CEA, you can join any time. To join, submit a request at [Oxford-CEA.com](http://Oxford-CEA.com). Oxford CEA participants may leave the Program at any time, without penalty and return to Basic Service supply with National Grid. To leave the Program, call Direct Energy at (866) 968-8065, or submit a request at [Oxford-CEA.com](http://Oxford-CEA.com).



# VETERAN SERVICES UPDATE

David Adams, Veterans Agent

The Oxford Veterans Service Office (VSO) continues to be dedicated to supporting Veterans, their spouses, and dependent children by facilitating access to various federal, state and local benefits. Under the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 115, the VSO assists eligible individuals in obtaining financial aid for essential needs such as food, shelter, clothing, fuel, and medical care. This program is designed to provide a safety net for Veterans facing financial hardships.

In addition to Chapter 115 benefits, the VSO helps Veterans navigate the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims process, ensuring they receive the compensation and healthcare services they are entitled to. The VSO also provides information on the Massachusetts Veterans' Annuity, a \$2,000 payment available to 100% service-connected disabled veterans, parents of deceased Veterans, and surviving spouses. As part of the HERO Act, this annuity is set to increase to \$2,500 over two years, with a payment of \$1,250 scheduled for February 2025.

Furthermore, we offer guidance on other state benefits, including sales and excise tax exemptions for certain disabled Veterans, access to Massachusetts Veterans' Cemeteries, and employment preferences for veterans in civil service positions. The office also provides information on the Women Veterans' Network Program, which aims to address the unique needs of female veterans.

Lastly, we are currently working on organizing another resources evening where we will discuss VA Claims, Chapter 115, and other local benefits to help Veterans and their families better understand the full range of assistance available to them. Through these efforts, the Oxford Veterans Service Office continues to improve the well-being of Veterans and their families by connecting them with essential resources and benefits.

## 5 TIPS FOR BOOSTING MENTAL HEALTH

Ivan Kawagala, Public Health Director

The winter months can be challenging for mental health, especially with shorter days and colder weather. Here are some practical tips to help seniors stay connected and maintain a positive outlook:

### 1. Stay Socially Connected

Join Clubs or Groups: Look for local senior groups, book clubs, or crafting circles that meet regularly.

Embrace Technology: Use video calls or social media to keep in touch with loved ones, even from a distance.

Attend Community Events: Enjoy winter programs like exercise classes, potlucks, or movie nights.

Volunteer: Helping others can boost your spirits. Consider volunteering at a food bank or mentoring younger generations.

### 2. Light Up Your Day

Maximize Natural Light: Sit near windows during daylight hours or take short walks outdoors when the sun shines.

Use a Light Therapy Box: These devices mimic sunlight and can help alleviate symptoms of seasonal affective disorder.

### 3. Keep Moving

Indoor Exercise: Join a gentle yoga or tai chi class, or follow online workout videos designed for seniors.

Dance or Stretch at Home: Even small movements can release endorphins and improve your mood.

### 4. Engage Your Mind

Try a New Hobby: Winter is a perfect time to learn knitting, painting, or puzzles.

Read or Listen to Books: Lose yourself in a good story or explore new topics through audiobooks.

### 5. Talk About It

Reach Out: If you feel down, share your feelings with trusted friends, family, or professionals.

Consider Professional Help: Therapy or counseling can be a valuable resource.

By taking small steps to stay active, connected, and engaged, you can make the winter months brighter!



# PETROLEUM TO POLLINATORS

**Judy Lochner, Conservation Agent**

Using nature based solutions, 3 Barton Street, a former Fire Station and DPW Garage, will be transformed into a passive park funded by a Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant. The goal of MVP grants are to implement climate adaption strategies and actions to address climate change impacts. The site recently was almost completely covered with pavement and a building - surfaces that absorb and retain heat and restrict rainwater from infiltrating back into the ground. Converting this area into a green community space will help offset 'heat island' effect and improve stormwater management; two key approaches in preparing for climate change.

Numerous environmental, social, economic and health benefits to the community will also be realized by this Petroleum to Pollinators project. Environmentally, the project meets many of the goals of the Oxford Grow Native for Pollinators Campaign by promoting native plantings and pollinator habitat. The additional trees and plants will also improve air quality, reduce erosion and help protect existing infrastructure. The social and health benefits of the park include the welcoming space for community members to gather and socialize, stay cool on hot summer days, relax and learn about nature in a safe environment. The park will provide seating areas benefiting local restaurants whose customers can take their meal and enjoy being outside.

The site is currently being evaluated for possible soil and groundwater contaminants due to its previous fueling facility. Once sampling data is reviewed, appropriate design concepts will be prepared including remediation of contaminants if necessary. Anticipated nature based solution features in the design of the park will include permeable pathways, expanded tree canopy, native plants and rain gardens. The park will provide comfortable seating with opportunities for passive recreation and environmental education.

A series of workshops and public meetings will be held in the near future with the design firm, Weston & Sampson, to ensure community input in creating a usable space that meets the desires of Oxford residents in addition to the goal of adapting to climate change.

Project details, status and upcoming events are posted on the Town's website at <https://www.oxfordma.us/848/Massachusetts-Municipal-Vulnerability-Pr>

*Scan this QR code with your  
smartphone to learn more  
about the pollinator project!*



**3 Barton Street (Before Demo)**



**3 Barton Street (Dec. 2024)**



**Meeting with Pollinators Group**



# Oxford Community Rain Barrel Program

## Conserve Water and Reduce Stormwater Runoff



### Why use a rain barrel?



**Collect rain water for later use on those dry hot summer days when your plants and lawn need watering**



**Reduce amount of pollutants entering our streams & ponds**



**Save money on water costs!**

**The Town of Oxford has teamed up with The Great American Rain Barrel Company to offer rain barrels at a discounted price of \$89.**

*How much water can you collect?* One inch of rain on a 1,000 square-foot rooftop yields 620 gallons of water. *That's a lot of water!* One full rain barrel will water a 200 square-foot garden. Besides helping the environment, you'll be saving on your water bill.

### Order

Online at: [www.tgarb.com](http://www.tgarb.com) order by March 30, 2025. Click on Community Programs and then select Oxford. Choose color, quantity and any accessories. Pay online. Or call The Great American Rain Barrel Company at (800) 251-2352.

### Pickup Info

You must come and pick up your rain barrel on  
**Saturday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 10:30 am - 12 noon**  
**at DPW Garage, 34 Charlton St, Oxford**

**Deadline for ordering:** March 30<sup>th</sup> at midnight

For more information call Oxford DPW:  
508-987-6006



Each barrel holds 60 gallons.

Choice of three colors.

Comes with two ports; one for use with watering can and one for garden hose connection.



**TOWN OF OXFORD**

**DPW**

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS