

OXFORD PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 7, 2010

A joint public hearing of the Oxford Planning Commission and Commissioners of Oxford was called to order by the Planning Commission Chairman, Donald Silliman, on Tuesday, September 7, 2010, in the meeting room of the Oxford Community Services Building.

Also in attendance were Planning Commission members Carol Abruzzese, James Reed, David Baker, and Anthony Passarella, as well as Commissioner President Timothy Kearns, Commissioner James Klair, and Commissioner Peter Dunbar. The Town Attorney, David Thompson, was also in attendance at the hearing.

The purpose of the public hearing was to receive public comments on the draft Town of Oxford Comprehensive Plan dated July 1, 2010.

Mr. Silliman began the hearing by asking if any State or County representatives were in the audience who would like to comment on the comprehensive plan. No one from either government agency was in attendance at this hearing.

Mr. Silliman then addressed the members of the audience and asked if anyone would like to speak on the comprehensive plan. Mrs. Pamela Baker addressed the group and offered the following comments on the plans:

- On pages 61-62, the discussion on options for upgrading the wastewater treatment plan seem heavily weighted on the "Pumping to Easton Plant" option. She noted that there was a very brief paragraph on each of the other options, but almost a full page of the Pump to Easton option. It would appear to make it the preferred choice even though the estimates that have been presented show that pumping to Easton is the most expensive choice. Mrs. Baker suggested that on page 62, the first paragraph stand as written and that the rest of the page be deleted except for the last paragraph, "With a population of....and the environment." She suggested that in the future when a choice needs to be made, that all arguments for and against all options, along with updated cost estimates will need to be developed and presented to the community.
- Page 41 addresses Recreation. While all of the town's recreational space is listed, Mrs. Baker thought the emphasis should shift so that the initial statements will list what the town already has to offer. For instance, there is no mention that the Town Park allows water access or that a living shoreline is being created there. The second and third paragraphs on the page talk about a pool and a community recreation facility that would include both a pool and a gym facility under the auspices of the Talbot YMCA. While this was discussed conceptually at one Commissioners' meeting, Mrs. Baker stated that she had been told by the Commissioners that no proposal or plan has been presented to them and therefore the Town Commissioners cannot say whether it is a good idea or not. She suggested that the two paragraphs be modified so that it does not seem that a pool-YMCA facility on town-owned land is a "done deal." Mrs. Baker

suggested changing the order and wording in this section to emphasize the extent of recreational space in town along with comments about future use of town land.

- The last concern on which Mrs. Baker spoke was that of Affordable House/Workforce Housing. She noted that the need for affordable house is mentioned throughout the Plan – under Public Services, Housing and Population and such a need is in the implementation portion of the Plan. However, there is no mention of Town involvement in affordable housing. The draft Comprehensive Plan that was sent to the Commissioners in 2006 stated: “To meet the need for affordable housing to support the delivery of essential public services, the town should consider setting aside a portion of town owned land for development of affordable housing.” Mrs. Baker believed that a similar commitment should be stated somewhere in the Implementation chapter, probably under “Housing.” Without that commitment, she felt that any words about affordable housing are just words. If the Comprehensive Plan states that town owned land could be used for a pool and a YMCA facility, it also needs to say the same for affordable housing.

Mrs. Baker added, as a note of interest, on page 66, under Economic Development, it states that properties zoned for one use (commercial or residential) should not be converted to another use. That would seem to preclude using the Second Street property for a parking lot (which the Community Center is looking to do) as that is not an allowed use in any residential zone. While the property could then be zoned EGS (then anything done with it), that seems in conflict with the intent of the Plan and with keeping like zones together.

Town resident Bruce Long next addressed the group and offered his comments on the Plan as follows:

- Mr. Long referred to page 65: Population, page 66: Public Services; and page 67: Housing. All of these sections refer to affordable housing. Mr. Long pointed out that unfortunately, these sections use “soft” language such as “evaluate,” “encourage,” and “support.” If affordable housing is a priority, which Mr. Long believed that should be for Oxford’s economy, its safety, and its culture, then the Plan should direct that a plan for the development of affordable housing be developed by a certain date. If the Commissioners want Town property to be considered as a development option, it should so state.
- Page 65: Natural Resources. Mr. Long asked what was intended by “Tidal and non-tidal wetlands should be protected?” He questioned what was the threat – Encroachment? Runoff? Invasive plant or animal species? Changes in water flows or levels? All of the above? He noted that it would be helpful if the Plan were more clear, so that people with responsibility or interest would know what to look for and what sorts of options for protection might be developed. He suggested that the Commissioners should also consider adding the word “restore” to the section. In particular, he pointed out that what appears to have originally been a natural wetland on the right side of Bachelors Point Road now is crisscrossed with ditches that drain the land. He noted that there is a

lot of scrub growth including trees in the area. In the long run, Mr. Long suggested that perhaps some water management steps and clearing of trees and other non-wetland plans could be evaluated to help restore its natural values.

- Page 67: Transportation. Mr. Long questioned the meaning of “to monitor town-owned access to the waterways....?” If access includes all of the end-of-street access points, what is one monitoring for? He noted that this is another area where more specific language would be helpful to the people responsible for the site, the public, and planners. He suggested that perhaps direction should be given to “monitor for encroachments, physical and visual deterioration, and possible improvements with grass or plantings.”

Mr. Silliman thanked Mrs. Baker and Mr. Long for their comments and asked if they would be willing to submit their written statements to the Planning Commission and Commissioners for review. Both parties agreed to do so. Mr. Silliman then addressed the audience stating that the Planning Commission and Commissioners would be accepting written public comments up until the close of the town’s business hours on Friday, September 10th.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Willoughby
Assistant Clerk