

Oxford Township Meeting
March 25, 2024 10:00 am; Oxford Town Hall
Special Meeting Minutes

At 10 am everyone stood for the pledge of allegiance.

Road Supervisor Mike Miller called the meeting to order with Clerk Linnea Lentz, Deputy Clerk Paula Bensen, Supervisor Mike Miller, and Supervisor Harlan Bellin present at the town hall. Treasurer Peggy Nelson attended the special meeting via zoom. Mike Miller asked the clerk to read the notice for special meeting.

Road Supervisor Mike Miller made a motion to re-bid the Pigeon Loft Paving project and Harlan Bellin seconded the motion. Chair Jennifer Perkins was not in attendance, but did send a statement that she requested be read at the special meeting and included in the minutes.

Oxford resident Jason Miller asked for clarification on why the township is re-bidding for the project. Mike Miller explained that state statute said that the bid has to be listed in the local paper for 2 weeks and this was not done, so the contract with Knife River is void.

Bart Perkins asked the clerk to address why chair Jennifer is not here. Clerk Linnea Lentz described the process of scheduling the meeting, which included the Chair saying she could make it at 8am, 10am. The meeting was scheduled and posted when later the Chair asked to change it to 5 pm. The Clerk shared that she has been in close contact with both MSA and the town attorney throughout the process to make sure all statutes were correctly followed. Bart Perkins then read a statement from Chair Jennifer, which is recorded below in its entirety:

“Please read this statement from Jennifer Perkins and include it in the minutes.

Due to prior work obligations, I regrettably could not adjust my schedule enough to attend today with the uncertainty of the meeting duration. Calling a non-emergency special board meeting during standard business hours also makes participation difficult for many residents.

Concerns raised at the Annual Meeting about transparency and comprehensive planning deserve our consideration. The 2025 levy reduction signals residents' lack of confidence in the township's current budgetary priorities. If this board's goal is to uphold the principles of representative governance, then each member must listen to & reflect on constituent's input.

I urge my fellow supervisors to pause and consider the comments we've received from surveys & board meetings over the past year. Oxford residents want collaborative board decisions, following a coherent plan, backed up by careful budgeting & financial forecasting.

I cannot support continuing on this path without meaningful attempts to rebuild trust within the community first. We should encourage respectful public participation. Its time to slow down and do things right.

Many thanks.”

Oxford resident Paul Sheibel from Typo Creek Drive asked the board why we are wasting money this way and why are we pursuing the bid right now. Mike Miller explained that this project was originally bid before the annual meeting and that last year, the residents at the annual meeting voted to increase the levy to put toward road improvements. Once the board was informed that we did not follow the statute for submitting for bids properly, the board took steps to re-bid the projects.

Laurie Vadnais an Oxford landowner who lives on Constance Blvd NE in Ham Lake would like to note that she heard the original vote was to not pave Pigeon Loft Road. Mike asked for the minutes where it was voted not to pave Pigeon Loft because without having that information in front of the board, Mike was unable to answer Laurie’s question. Numerous people at the meeting didn’t remember it ever being voted down.

Danielle Wiener, an Oxford resident asked “What specifically is the reason why we have to re-bid this?” Mike stated that the board is following the advice of our attorney and engineering consultants.

Connie Thorpe, another Oxford resident stated that she spoke with Supervisor Miller on Friday and said that Mike indicated there was a possibility that Oxford could be sued if we didn’t re-bid. Connie had information from MAT that said once the contract has been voided, full payment can’t be demanded, so she asked why the township would be sued. It was also asked if the contract had been signed. Mike Miller indicated that he had signed the contract. It was then asked why since it was in the minutes that Steve Winter would send the contract to the chair. Mike clarified that any member of the board can sign contracts and that it is not an exclusive duty of the chair. Another resident asked if he knew that the statutes had not been followed when he signed the contract and Mike stated that he did not know that at the time he signed the contract.

Gloria McDonnell, an Oxford resident that lives on Pigeon Loft road stated that if our attorney and engineering consultants advised the board to re-bid that project as soon as possible, it makes sense for the board to follow their advice.

More discussion occurred with the residents stating that since Pigeon Loft is a dead end road, it is not available for most of the township to use. Supervisor Miller said that Pigeon Loft is a public road and open for anyone to drive on.

Mike Miller then summarized the roads that have been paved in the township. He mentioned that Lyons was among the first paved roads in the township as that was a shared road with Stacy-Lent and that there was no controversy with that road. He

discussed Typo Creek Drive and that even though a grant paid for much of the road, Oxford taxpayers also paid for the cost not covered by the grant. As for the paved roads for new developments (Upper Birch and Graphic Homes), the developer paid to pave those roads. Mike also stated that Oxford taxpayers paid to pave Baylor and ½ mile of Pigeon Loft last year. Mike Miller stated that he owns land at the end of Pigeon Loft and publicly stated he does not have a personal interest in paving Pigeon Loft road.

The residents asked why the board will not pause at this point and wait until the road planning committee has recommendations for the board, as voted for at the annual meeting. Mike reminded the group that even with over 100 voters showing up at the annual meeting, this is not even 1/3 of the voters registered in Oxford township. He also mentioned that there will be a change for the annual meeting next year and Oxford will have voter registration for the next annual meeting.

Bart Perkins asked Mike Miller why he signed the contract for Knife River because the original instruction from Steve at MSA to Chair Jennifer was to sign at the next meeting. Steve Winter was present at the meeting and addressed Bart's comment.

Jenny Honlick, an Oxford resident summarized saying that there was a contract issue that was shared in an email after it was missed. Linnea confirmed that in a March 14 email sent to Linnea and Steve Winter, Chair Jennifer asked Steve to confirm that some things were missed. The lawyer recommended having the meeting and rebidding as quickly as possible. The lawyer knew the meeting was today, but wasn't invited as he confirmed that he would be at the April meeting. Paul Sheibel continued to push on why we were having the meeting at this time. Linnea shared that she talked to the township lawyer after the above email was sent because at the end of the letter was a reference to whoever didn't follow the statues listed could be accused of a misdemeanor and should be removed from office. At the advice of the lawyer, the meeting was scheduled as soon as possible.

Wayne Johnson, a landowner along Pigeon Loft had a number of questions regarding the history of the road, and confirmed that in 1962, the Holiday Beach development was platted. He asked Supervisor Miller when the access from the south was changed to access from the north. Mike replied that there was never a time in Mike's lifetime that the road went through.

Wayne also asked Mike if Pigeon Loft is paved, can you plat your land? Mike answered yes, but also indicated that he could plat the land now if he wished to plat it.

Austin Larson, a resident off of County Road 10 attended via zoom. He stated that he understands the legal side. He said that earlier Bart read a message from Jennifer disagreeing with moving forward. Austin said that this implies that she is not getting advice from the lawyer. Austen wanted to know if Jennifer is on board with moving forward? He also asked Mike how can the residents can be confident when we are pushing a vote to re-bid that it will not be rejected? Mike Miller stated that he cannot speak for Jennifer and that the board has no idea what the bids will be coming back as. Mike asked everyone to please come to the April meeting, and stated that our attorney

Bob Ruppe will be at the April meeting. Mike also stated that the board will work on finding a venue that can accommodate more people inside.

Mike Miller made a motion to adjourn. Harlan seconded the motion and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Linnea Lentz
Oxford clerk
March 25, 2024