



Winter 2024 Edition

ONWARD
OXFORD

THE PRIMARY SOURCE FOR EVERYTHING OXFORD



MESSAGE FROM MANAGER

Jennifer M. Callahan, Town Manager



Welcome to the Winter 2024 edition of the Onward Oxford newsletter! I am honored to share all of the important updates on projects, news on community events, departmental services, and town achievements with the residents of Oxford!

The New Year started with all things planning! We received great news from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs which designated the Town as a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Community for climate change resiliency. This welcomed designation allows the Town of Oxford to apply for MVP Action Grants for the next five years. The grants are used to support critical planning and infrastructure needs identified in the Town's first MVP Plan. The preparation of the document was a yearlong effort with various municipal staff, state agencies and community stakeholders. I would like to thank Fire Chief Laurent McDonald, Assistant Town Manager Tony Sousa, and Conservation Agent Judy Lochner, for all their hard work and dedication to prepare Oxford for climate change resiliency. Thank you also to the many residents and board members who provided invaluable feedback throughout the planning process!

I am also pleased to announce in January our Open Space and Recreation Plan received conditional approval from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs! Since becoming Town Manager, an state-approved OSRP plan has been a goal after discovered Oxford's OSRP had expired in 2017. The Open Space and Recreation Committee will be addressing final revisions of the plan. Once approved, Oxford can participate in State grants that it was previously ineligible through January of 2031!

Looking ahead, the Town of Oxford and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission will be hosting a Housing Plan Community Forum to discuss housing needs, challenges and opportunities. The event will be held at the Oxford Senior Center on March 28, 2024, from 6:00-7:30PM. All are invited to attend this event. The information shared at the forum will help us in the development of Oxford's first Housing Production Plan to be completed later this year.

NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH ANNOUNCEMENT!

We are extremely pleased to finally announce the launch of the new Town website! The new website contains all the same great information and functions of the old website, but with a new design, new layout, upgraded graphics and new images! The Home Page was designed with "one click" navigation as the guiding foundation. We used Google analytics to identify traffic counts and created links for easy navigation to the most visited pages within the previous Town of Oxford website. We have also added some items with residents in mind such as an embedded social media feed, combined meeting and event calendar, and Town News all in one location. In addition to all of the previous features, we are excited to announce some of the new benefits and tools residents can use to stay connected!

TEXT NOTIFICATIONS:

Stay in-the-know with text notifications! Users can now subscribe to receive email and/or text message updates for a variety of topics including news, meeting agendas, community events, employment opportunities and more!

IMPROVED ADA ACCESSIBILITY:

The Town of Oxford strives to be an inclusive environment. In designing the new Town of Oxford website, tremendous efforts were put forward to increase accessibility for users with disabilities including vision impairment and hearing loss. Some of following ADA Accessibility enhancements include:

Menus and buttons are organized to be clearly separated from one another. This is to help users easily navigate the website. Linked and scanned documents now include their file extensions. Lastly, contrasting text and background colors were used to improve readability.

Non-compliant text has been updated. This includes an effort to eliminate any characters that are used in place of words, acronyms and any text-based links that do not clearly describe the link such as "click here".

All images on the website have improved alternative text. Alternative text describes a picture, image, or graph and what is being displayed. Alternative text allows users with disabilities to read or hear descriptions of a picture, image or graph and also supports screen readers or other assistive technologies.

NEW FEATURES:

Report an issue in the Town of Oxford using **SeeClickFix** - an easy website or mobile application that allows users to report and track an issue including potholes, illegal dumping, graffiti, streetlights, and more! Residents without a computer or mobile device, may still call the Department of Public Works at (508) 987-6006.

The Town of Oxford's accounts payable records are now available online using OpenCheck. Users may search by category, department, vendor, fiscal year, and more! Data may be exported to multiple formats for easy reporting and viewing.

NEW ONLINE FORMS:

Motorists not stopping for pedestrians in the crosswalk? Need a police detail for your next event? Forms are now available on the Oxford Police webpage to submit requests for everything from traffic enforcement to police detail requests.

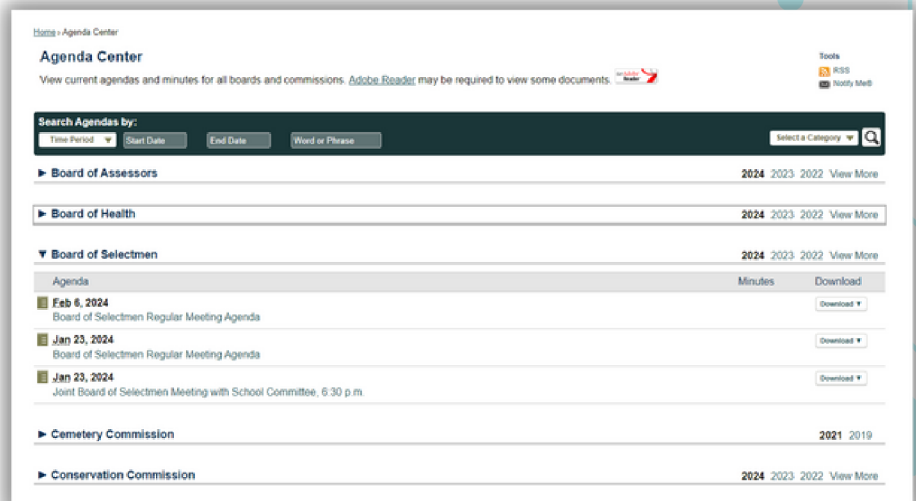
MOBILE RESPONSIVENESS:

The new Town of Oxford website is optimized to be visually and functionally attractive on devices of different sizes. This is different than our previous website that was "mobile friendly" where the information was shrunk to fit the screen. The shrunken version of the webpage often resulted in hard-to-click buttons and links. The new website provides the same experience as one would find on a desktop computer, but with resized pictures and links as well as the capability to resize when the screen is tilted vertically or horizontally.



AGENDA CENTER:

Want to know the outcome of the 40B housing vote? Meeting agendas and minutes are now organized in one central location for easy discovery and viewing! The *Agenda Center* is organized by board & committee, meeting agenda, and meeting minutes for easy navigation and perusal.





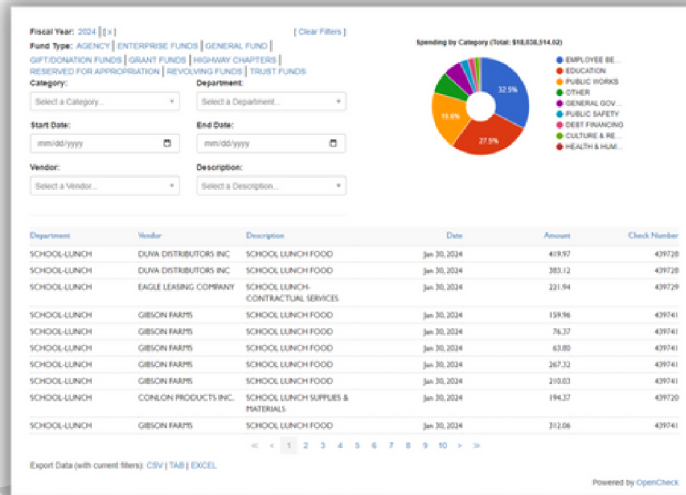
Town of OXFORD MASSACHUSETTS

We hope everyone gets a chance to browse the new Town of Oxford website and enjoy all of the new features we have to offer! Your feedback is important to us so please contact us with questions and concerns by emailing webhelp@oxfordma.us. We look forward to hearing from you and continuing to offer the highest quality services for the residents, visitors and businesses of Oxford.

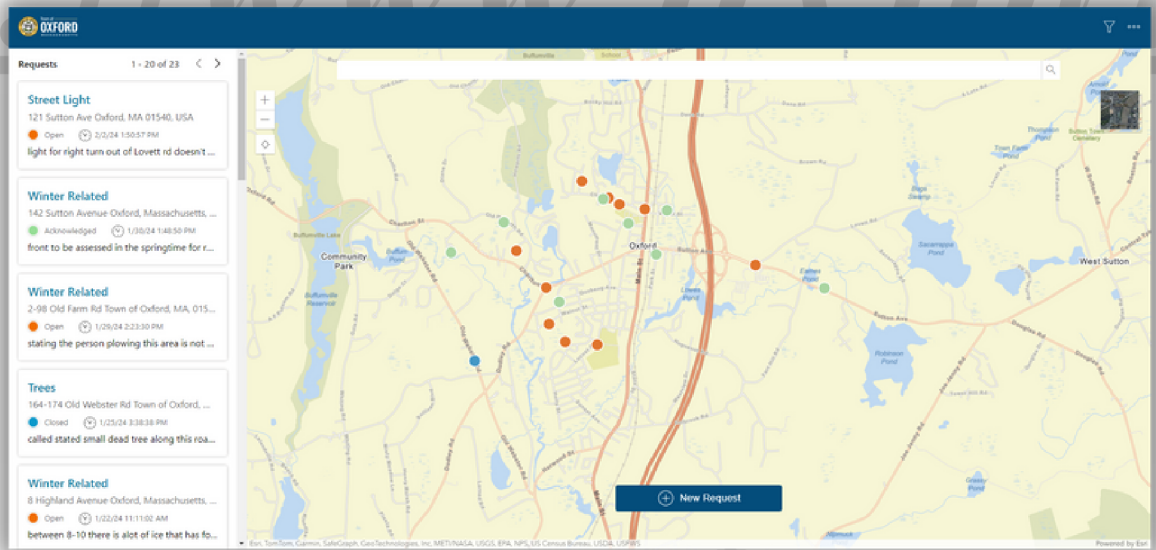
Scan this QR code with your smartphone to check out the new website!



See ClickFix (pictured right) offers a whole new way for residents to report and track Public Works requests through the Town website or using a mobile application!



OpenCheck (pictured left) offers residents transparency in governmental spending by allowing users to see payable transactions as they are processed in real time!



IMPORTANT DATES

MAR 5: PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

APR 1: REAL ESTATE & PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX BILLS DUE

APR 2: ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT CLOSES

MAY 8: ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

MAY 21: ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION

SEPT 3: STATE PRIMARY

NOV 5: PRESIDENTIAL/STATE ELECTION

FROSTY FESTIVITIES WITH OXFORD POLICE

Michael K. Daniels, Chief of Police

Some exciting things have been going on here at Oxford PD. I hope this message finds you all in good health and high spirits! First, I am excited to announce two valuable additions to our team; Officers Mark Harris and Jeff White who joined us in the second week of January. Officer Harris comes to us from Wilbraham Police Department. Officer White is a lateral transfer from Hopedale Police Department. Officers Harris and White will be the first Officers hired since the removal of the Oxford Police Department from Civil Service.

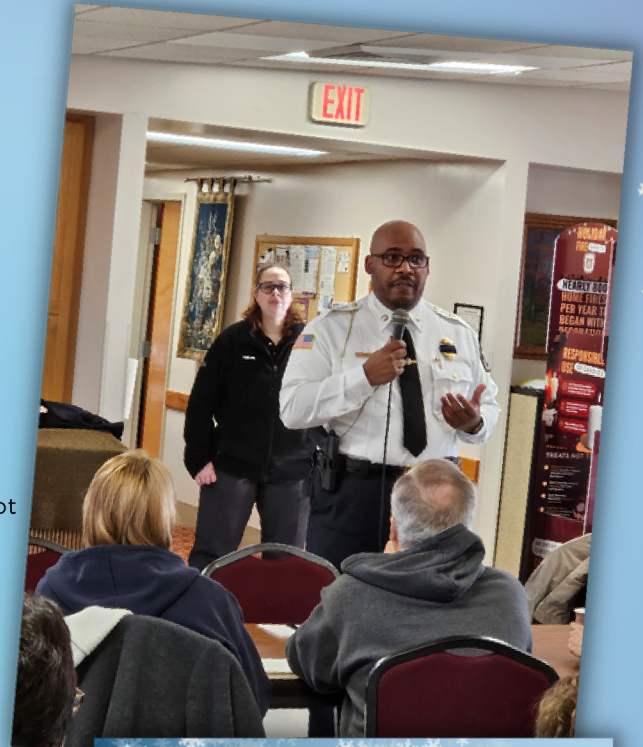


Our holiday lights parade, and tree lighting brought our community together in a spectacle of lights, laughter, and unity. It was a remarkable sight, and its success would not be possible without the teamwork of the Fire Department, Department of Public Works, and our Community Center Director Shelley Lambert.

Their tireless preparation and collaborative spirit ensured that every float dazzled, every street was safe, and every face in the crowd wore a smile!

For our seniors, a new and exciting initiative began late fall. A collaboration with Senior Center Director Laura Wilson called "Breakfast with the Chief" began. It is a monthly breakfast where I join our Seniors to give department updates, highlight town services, and address concerns.

As we continue into 2024, let us carry the spirit of the holidays with us—remembering that kindness, collaboration, and communication are not just festive traditions, but the pillars of a thriving community year-round.



WINTER PARKING BAN

The Town of Oxford's Winter Parking Ban will be in effect from November 15, 2023 through April 1, 2024. On-street parking is prohibited between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

The Parking Ban will also take effect when there is an accumulation of three (3) or more inches of snow, day or night. Fifteen (15) minute parking is allowed for postal and package delivery.

2024 Dog and Cat Licenses Now Available

Please be advised that as of January 1st, 2024, 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.**

FIREFIGHTER/EMT & FIRE OFFICER OF THE YEAR

Laurent McDonald, Chief, Oxford Fire and EMS Director



As Fire Chief, I am always humbled by the dedication and commitment to serve that our men and women of the Department demonstrate every day in an effort to protect the lives and properties of Oxford. It is with great pleasure and pride I announce our Officers of the Year awards!

For their outstanding performance of duty to the Oxford Fire & Emergency Services in 2023 Firefighter/EMT Jeffrey Morris was nominated for and selected as Firefighter of the Year and Lieutenant Nicholas Lambert was nominated and selected as the Fire Officer of the Year.

Firefighter Morris is currently assigned to Station 2 in the North end of Town. He is the senior firefighter for Group 1 Station 2 and serves as the Union Steward for Station 2 personnel. He has devoted much of this time to professional development and is working on obtaining his paramedic certification. He is also responsible for ordering all Emergency Medical Services supplies and inventory. His former career was in Information Technology, and he uses his computer acumen to help us maintain our complex data management systems.

Lieutenant Lambert serves as the Group 3 Officer-in-Charge and is the department's training officer. He devotes many hours on and off duty ensuring our members meet the requirements for training. For every hour we spend training, Lt. Lambert spends four hours in preparation. His efforts serve a significant part in keeping our Insurance Service Organizations rating low resulting in lower insurance costs for property owner.

Thank you both for your dedicated service to the Town of Oxford!



**Change your clocks.
Check your batteries.**

**Don't forget to turn
your clocks forward
on March 10, 2024!**



**2024 Burn Permits Now Available at
the Oxford Fire Department!**

*Burning Season is
January 15, 2024 through
April 30, 2024*

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

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

ROUTE 20 SEWER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

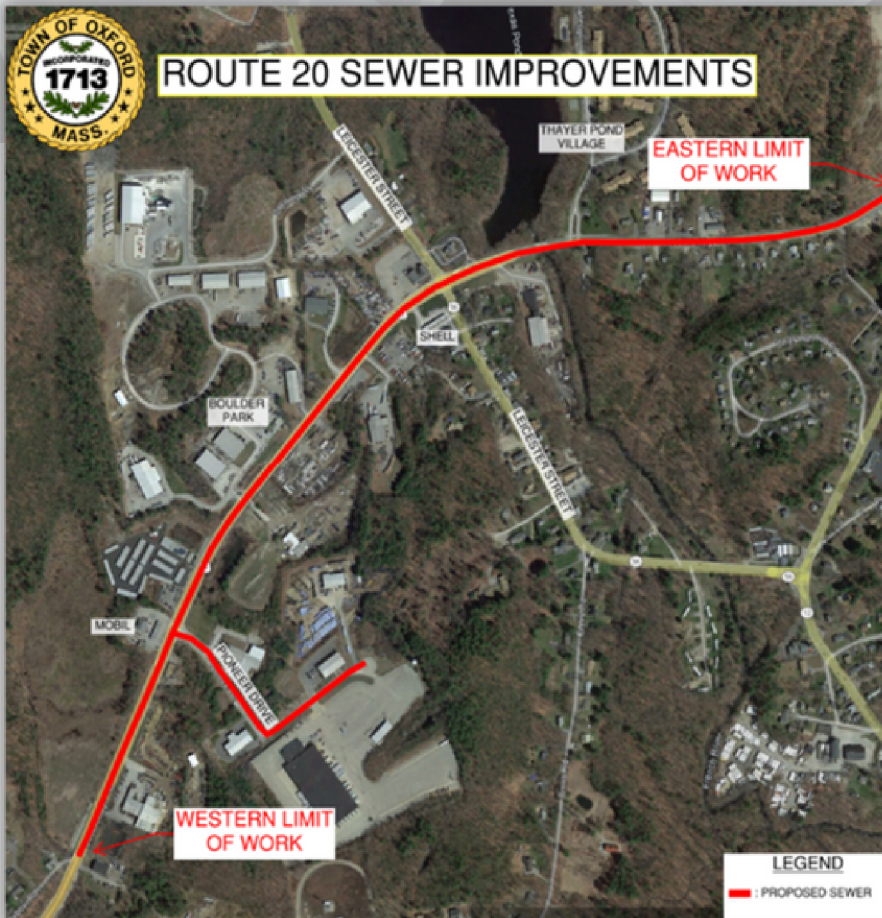
Peter J. Gerhard, Assistant Director of Public Works

In Spring 2023, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and their design-build contractor, D.W. White Construction began construction on the \$93 million dollar Route 20 Reconstruction Project in Charlton and Oxford. Approximately, 26,000 vehicles per day travel along Route 20 through Oxford. MassDOT is redesigning and reconstructing Route 20 in Oxford and Charlton to improve safety, multi-modal mobility, and replace functionally obsolete bridges. The work proposed includes widening the roadway, replacing bridges, adding accessible sidewalks and shared use paths, installing a median barrier, improving safety, modernizing traffic signalization, reconfiguring multiple intersections, introducing best management practices for stormwater treatment, as well as completion of sewer main reconstruction and a sewer main extension.

Except for the sewer infrastructure improvements, the project is being funded by MassDOT. In 2022, the Town of Oxford was awarded a \$2.8M grant from the MassWorks Program to complete the Route 20 sewer improvements. The Town has now partnered with MassDOT to construct the sewer improvements as part of the Route 20 project.



The proposed sewer work will replace and extend gravity sewers East of Route 56, replace the force main pumping from Thayer Pond Village Pump Station to Auburn and extend sewer infrastructure West of Route 56 to 100 feet East of Oxbow Road. Approximately, 8,500 feet of sewer main will be installed as part of the project.



Not only will these sewer infrastructure improvements increase the availability of the sewer system along Route 20, but they will also greatly increase the life of the existing system. By alleviating costly repairs due to aging infrastructure, the project helps reduce impacts of Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) that currently impacts our existing infrastructure.

Construction for the project began in 2023. Work completed to date includes the following: mobilization, erosion and sedimentation controls, utility relocations, and bridge reconstruction in anticipation of the upcoming sewer and roadway construction portions of the project.

MassDOT expects 80% of the sewer work to be completed in 2024 and completion of the sewer system infrastructure in 2025. Roadway reconstruction will continue through 2027. Although MassDOT approved Traffic Management Plans will be implemented, traffic continues to be impacted throughout the course of construction. Construction hours are Monday through Friday from 7:00AM to 3:30PM whenever possible with work times sometimes extended until 7:00PM as necessary for the safe and efficient completion of work.

On some occasions, planned critical work activities may be completed overnight and/or on weekends to minimize the impacts to traffic and the community at large. For additional project information, please visit MassDOT's project page at <https://www.mass.gov/route-20-reconstruction-project-in-charlton-oxford> or call the District 3 office at (857) 368-3000. If you have any further questions with respect to the sewer improvements, please contact the Department of Public Works at (508) 987-6006.

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR!!!

The 2023 Employee of the Year award goes to longtime DPW Operations Manager, Steven Esposito! Numerous staff nominated and recognized Steve for his outstanding dedication and contributions to the Oxford Department of Public Works. He received passionate acknowledgement for his unwavering support of staff across all departments as well as his detailed oversight of and attention to all highway operations. Did you know Steve is also an accomplished woodworker? Steve used pieces of the renowned Huguenot Oak to create beautiful furniture and artifacts to be enjoyed for years to come! Thank you Steve for your heartfelt community contributions, team spirit and love for your hometown. Congratulations on being a community shining star!



Oxford 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

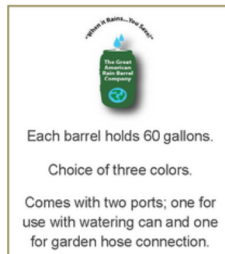
Online at: www.tgarb.com order by April 7, 2024. Click on Community Programs and then select Oxford. Choose color, quantity and any accessories. Pay online. Or call The Great American Rain Barrel Company at (800) 251-2352.

Pickup Info

You must come and pick up your rain barrel on Saturday, April 20th, 10:30 am - 12 noon at DPW Garage, 34 Charlton St., Oxford

Deadline for ordering: April 7th 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



OXFORD HOUSING PLAN COMMUNITY FORUM

AN INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION ABOUT HOUSING NEEDS, CHALLENGES, AND OPPORTUNITIES IN OUR COMMUNITY.

MARCH 28, 2024
OXFORD SENIOR CENTER
323 MAIN STREET
6:00PM - 7:30PM

This event is sponsored by the Town of Oxford and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

GROW NATIVE FOR POLLINATORS Campaign Forum

Wednesday, March 27th at 6 p.m.
at Oxford Middle School Cafeteria
497 Main Street, Oxford



WINTER HEALTH TIPS

Rike Sterrett, Director of Public Health Services

The Oxford Board of Health's mission is to protect and promote the physical, mental, and environmental health of the Oxford Community, reduce health inequities and respond to and prepare for public health concerns. This includes supporting a Farmer's Market to allow for healthy, local food options.

In September, the Board of Health, with assistance from the Community Center and local residents, organized an Oxford Farmer's Market Day on the Oxford Common. Despite being postponed by a day due to the weather, we had a great turnout with 12 local vendors in attendance. The Farmer's Market will continue this summer on the 3rd Friday of every month June through October (6/21, 7/19, 8/16, 9/20, and 10/18) from 2:30-6:30pm on the Common.



Town of Oxford Farmer's Market

Every 3rd Friday of the month from June through October from 2:30-6:30pm on the town common



WINTER HEALTH UPDATE

Respiratory Season

Current Vaccine Recommendations

COVID-19



- Everyone aged 5 years & older should get 1 dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine.
- Children aged 6 months-4 years need multiple doses of COVID-19 vaccines to be up to date, including at least 1 dose of the updated COVID-19 vaccine.

FLU



- Routine annual influenza vaccination is recommended for all persons 6 months and older.

RSV



- The CDC recommends 1 dose of maternal RSV vaccine during weeks 32 through 36 of pregnancy.
- If not given during pregnancy, RSV vaccine is recommended for all infants aged 8 months and younger born during or entering their first RSV season.
- Adults aged 60 years and older may receive a single dose of RSV vaccine.

WINTER HEALTH REMINDER

Fall and winter make up our respiratory season where we are seeing higher numbers of COVID-19, flu, and RSV. These diseases are mainly spread through droplets produced when someone who is sick coughs, sneezes, or talks.

PREVENTION

- Getting vaccinated is one of the best ways to protect yourself and those around you from getting sick. There are new RSV vaccines available for pregnant women, infants, and older adults.
- Consider wearing a mask in public indoor spaces, crowded places, and when you are sick and around others.
- When you are sick, stay home! Do not go to work and keep children who are sick at home from daycare and school.
- Wash your and your children's hands often, avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth and clean frequently touched surfaces often.

Winter Self-care

6 Natural Treatments for Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)



LIGHT THERAPY
SIT WITH A LIGHT BOX FOR 30 MINS A DAY



DIET
BLUEBERRIES, RASBERRIES, STRAWBERRIES, CAN REDUCE CORTISOL. FISH, DAIRY, EGGS, NUTS, SEEDS & BEANS PROVIDE ENERGY THROUGH PROTEIN



VITAMINS
VITAMIN B12 AND OMEGA-3 TO FIGHT SYMPTOMS OF SAD



SUN
GET SUN DAILY, GO FOR A WALK, SIT OUTSIDE OR GO ON A VACATION



MEDITATION
MEDITATE FOR LOWER STRESS, ANXIETY, & BETTER SLEEP



EXERCISE
EXERCISE TO INCREASE ENERGY AND ENDORPHINS

COMMUNITY CENTER UPDATES

Shelley Lambert, Oxford Community Center Director

OCC staff was excited to once again participate in the annual Holiday Lights Parade and Tree Lighting. This is one of our favorite events, and the response from the Community was overwhelming! We are actively planning the 2024 Winter Festival, Summer Program at Carbuncle, Bandstand Concerts and Movies on Main, the Teddy Bear Picnic, and much more.

As always, the Community Center gymnasium is bustling! Our Winter Recreational Basketball Program is in full swing. StartSmart Soccer and Basketball for ages 3-5 have filled up for 2 sessions. Softball and baseball clinics have begun. Our Holiday Break youth program reached full capacity, and after-school drop-in basketball is busier than ever.

In hot demand, though, is PICKLEBALL! It's taking the nation, and Oxford, by storm! What is pickleball?

Pickleball is a sport that combines elements of tennis, ping pong, and badminton into one family-friendly game. Imagine playing tennis using a low badminton net with a ping pong paddle and a wiffle ball! That's what pickleball looks like.

Like any game, it has its own unique set of rules, scoring system, and players choose groups to join based on skill ranking.

But, from what we see at OCC, once you play you are hooked! Our Fall Beginners' class reached maximum capacity for back-to-back sessions. We will offer another round of beginner lessons in late February.

Please call OCC for more info - 508-987-6002

The Community Center is a licensed provider of SilverSneakers® Fitness Classes. Our instructors have several years of experience working with actively aging adults, providing motivational classes to improve strength, balance, coordination and range of movement in a welcoming social setting. Please check with your health insurance provider for proof of coverage.

If your insurance provider does NOT participate in the pay-direct plan, you may still attend classes with a fee-based monthly Fitness Membership. Call or visit the Community Center, or scan the QR code below, for membership options.



DO YOU HAVE SILVERSNEAKERS?

1 in 4 Medicare enrollees' do.

SilverSneakers® can help seniors live their best lives. Participants may experience greater energy, increased strength and improved balance and flexibility*. The benefit is included with many Medicare Advantage plans and select Medicare Supplement plans.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

The Town of Oxford's Open Space and Recreation Plan recently received conditional approval from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs! This approval allows

Oxford to participate in open space and recreation grants through January of 2031! We will be applying for PARC grants for the enhancement of parklands and conservation grants for the preservation of open space. We anticipate that we will have some exciting announcements coming soon!

Town of Oxford
Open Space and Recreation Plan
2023



Oxford Community Center presents



During the day, it's just a bookstore. But at night, it's a place where magic happens & the characters inside the books come alive.

Oxford Middle School
Friday, March 15th at 6:30pm
Saturday, March 16th at 1pm

Directed by Tamara Beland. Donations @ the door. Made possible by: Janet Malser Humanities Trust, Taft Charitable Trust & Oxford Cultural Council.



DO YOU QUALIFY FOR... VETERAN TAX EXEMPTIONS

Alexander Sendzik, Principal Assessor



Cities and towns may give property tax exemptions to some individuals as defined by state law. An exemption discharges the taxpayer from the legal obligation to pay all or a portion of the tax assessed for the fiscal year. Exemptions are found in various clauses of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Section 5 (M.G.L. c. 59, § 5).

Clauses 22, 22B, 22C, 22D, 22E and 22F provide exemptions to some veterans, their spouses who own the domicile and their surviving spouses, and some surviving parents and spouses of active duty military personnel who died during or due to military service.

You must file an application for each fiscal year with the assessors in the city or town where your property is located. The application is due on April 1, or three months after the actual tax bills are mailed, whichever is later. Filing on time is required. By law, the assessors may not waive this filing deadline, nor act on a late application, for any reason. Filing an application does not entitle you to delay your tax payment.

Veterans must have (1) been domiciled in Massachusetts for at least 6 consecutive months before entering military service, or (2) lived in Massachusetts for at least 5 consecutive years before the tax year begins.

CLAUSE 22 - MINIMUM \$400 - MAXIMUM \$600

1. Veterans with a service-connected disability of 10% or more.
2. Veterans awarded the Purple Heart.
3. Surviving parents of military personnel who died in military service (Gold Star Parents).
4. Spouses (where the domicile is owned by the veteran's spouse), and surviving spouses (who have never remarried), of veterans entitled to exemption under Clause 22.
5. Surviving spouses (who have never remarried) of World War I veterans as long as their assets (whole worth), less any mortgage on the property, do not exceed \$20,000.

**CONTACT THE
ASSESSOR'S OFFICE
TO FIND OUT
(508) 987-6038**

CLAUSE 22B - MINIMUM \$1,250 - MAXIMUM \$1,875

1. Veterans who suffered in the line of duty the loss or permanent loss of use of both feet, both hands or both eyes.
2. Spouses (where veteran's spouse owns the domicile) or surviving spouses of veterans entitled to exemption under Clause 22B.

CLAUSE 22C - MINIMUM \$1,500 - MAXIMUM \$2,250

1. Veterans who suffered total disability in the line of duty and received assistance in acquiring "specially adapted housing" which they own and occupy as their domicile.
2. Spouses (where veteran's spouse owns the domicile) or surviving spouses of veterans entitled to exemption under Clause 22C.

CLAUSE 22D – FULL EXEMPTION

Surviving spouses (who have never remarried) of (1) military personnel (including members of the National Guard on active duty) who went missing in action during active duty and are presumed to have died, or (2) military personnel (including members of the National Guard on active duty) or veterans who died as a proximate result of an injuries sustained or illnesses contracted during active duty service.

CLAUSE 22E - MINIMUM \$1,000 - MAXIMUM \$1,500

1. Veterans who have a service connected disability of 100%.
2. Spouses (where veteran's spouse owns the domicile) or surviving spouses of veterans entitled to exemption under Clause 22E.

CLAUSE 22F – FULL EXEMPTION

1. Veterans who are paraplegics, or have a 100% disability for service-connected blindness.
2. Spouses (where veteran's spouse owns the domicile) or surviving spouses of veterans entitled to exemption under Clause 22F.

NEW APPLICANTS WILL NEED THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS:

- Discharge paperwork (DD214)
- Certification letter for service-connected disability; or for surviving spouse, letter pertaining to deceased spouse from the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA)
- Copy of Trust (If Applicable)
- Veterans Exemption Application: Mailed each year to repeat applicants. NEW applicants can call or email the Assessor's Office for an application to be sent, stop by the office to pick one up, or visit www.oxfordma.us for more information.

TOWN OF OXFORD'S 3RD ANNUAL *Fun, Frost & Family* WINTER FESTIVAL Saturday January 27, 2024

This year's Winter Festival was a rousing success! More than a thousand visitors came out to enjoy the day's activities. While this event is planned and hosted by the Community Center staff, many Town departments, local businesses, and volunteers work together to make the event possible. OCC staff is tremendously grateful for each of those involved.

Events began with 77 people plunging into Carbuncle Pond to raise funds for Special Olympics of Massachusetts. The total amount raised was \$4,453. From there, hungry hoards visited the Congregational Church for a pancake breakfast with Elsa and Anna. Over 175 breakfasts were served by a group of hard-working volunteers!

The Common was lined with food trucks, free hot chocolate and smores stations, local youth sports offering registration info and treats, minute-to-winit games, local Army Corps of Engineers rangers, our annual Wishing Trees and fire pits, 104-5 provided music and their Prize Wheel. Ice sculptor, Eric Fontecchio, carved both a penguin and a polar bear sponsored by the Oxford Business Association. Horse-drawn wagon rides were, again, one of the most popular features.

Families stopped by the library to participate in "The Wishing Tree" storytime and Book Bingo with Miss Kelcy and the Senior Center was the host site for the Festival's first art exhibit, with live music by Nancy Marshall.

At the Community Center, shoppers visited the vendor fair and listened to live music by Ashley Hensel, decorated sugar cookies, and enjoyed crafts and games.



photo courtesy of Jason Cordeiro



Artist: Kinley Decker, age 7



Thank You Local sponsors:
Oxford Business Association,
Aquarion Water Co, Polar
Beverages, Mass Cultural
Council, Oxford Cultural
Council, Janet Malser
Humanities Trust, Taft
Charitable Trust, 104-5 XLO,
McDonalds, BK Tree Services,
Dunkin, N&J Donuts, P&D
Pizza, Wilson Language
Training Corp, Worcester
Railers

ANNUAL HOLIDAY LIGHTS PARADE & TREE LIGHTING

The 2023 Holiday Lights Parade and Annual Tree Lighting was one for the books! Over 60 vehicles participated in the parade and thousands of residents came out to view the parade and bandstand lighting on Joslin Common. Thank you to the entire Fire-EMS Department for organizing the parade contingent and delivering Santa and Mrs. Claus. Also, a big thank you to the entire Oxford DPW for their amazing holiday spirit by providing special visits from the Abominable Snowman, King of Misfit Toys, the Grinch, Cindy Lu Who, Mr. Giant Gingerbread, Rudolph and Dasher, Buddy the Elf and several Toy Maker Elves! And of course the Oxford Community Center made it a truly festive event by organizing music by B.DJ Entertainment as well as giving out hundreds of cups of hot cocoa, sparkly antler headbands, and jingle bell necklaces! Additionally, thank you to the Disability Commission for throwing the big switch to light up the Common. Last, but certainly not least, thank you to the residents for making this such a memorable event and seasonal tradition!



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)

BLIZZARD OF BUDGETS

Katie McKenna, Finance Director

Winter and Fall bring a whirlwind of activity for the Town Accounting office! Here are just a few of the recent tasks and projects we have been engaged in since the Summer:

- Free Cash was certified on August, 30, 2023. This is approved/certified after submission of a balance sheet and completed checklist to the state for review.
- The Schedule A was submitted to the state on August 31, 2023 and approved on September 6, 2023 (we were 11th out of 351 communities). The Schedule A is a statement of revenues, expenditures and other financing sources, uses, changes in fund balance and certain balance sheet account information prepared annually by the local accountant or auditor.
- The tax rate was approved on November 15, 2023. Work begins on the tax rate recapitulation sheet soon after Annual Town Meeting in May and is ongoing until the tax rate is approved.
- Independent auditors reviewed transactional data at Town Hall the week of October 23rd and with completed audit reports expected soon. All audit reports are posted on our Town website.
- Capital requests were presented by department heads to the finance committee in November in preparation for the FY25 Capital Program to be voted on at the Annual Town Meeting in May 2024.
- The GFOA Budget document that was submitted on June 7, 2023 was awarded the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award on September 20, 2023. This is the third annual budget award that the Town has received!
- Department heads submitted their FY25 budget requests in December and in January we begin the process of building the FY25 budget for approval at the Annual Town Meeting.

GREETINGS FROM THE OXFORD LIBRARY

Brittany McDougal Bialy, Library Director

We've had a busy start to the Winter season here at the Library! Families had their pictures taken with Santa and Mrs. Claus in early December when they stopped in for a lovely visit from the North Pole. We also had the kickoff to our Mitten Drive and Soup Drive, both of which benefit the Oxford Food Shelf. In January and February, we collected **77 pairs** of Mittens and **106 cans** of Soup to donate!

To help keep some of the winter blues away, we are excited to announce the return of our **Artist of the Month** exhibit series. Each month, we will highlight a local artist and have their artwork available for viewing at the library. So, be sure to stop in monthly to see what's new!

Did you know we offer some winter-themed items in our "Library of Things" collection? In the Children's Room, you can borrow a set of snowshoes or a snowman kit for snowy days - and from our Main Collection, you can borrow a light therapy lamp to help with the decreased daylight we experience this time of year. With many preferring to be indoors this time of year, we also offer a record player and vinyl albums available for checkout which is our newest addition to the "Library of Things" collection!

We have many programs in the works for the late winter, so be sure to check out our website and Facebook page to see any upcoming events. We look forward to seeing you at the Library!



Paint Party!

Children ages 5 to 12 and their caregivers are welcome to paint alongside each other!

Tuesday, March 12
@ 3:45 in the meeting room

Register on our website, Facebook page, or scan the code!



REGISTRATION REQUIRED



POPULAR FICTION!

TUESDAY MARCH 5
4:15

Book Talk!

WITH MISS DEB

Children ages 5-12

Register on our website, Facebook page, or scan the code!



NJROTC CHARTS THE COURSE... FOR SUCCESS!

Michael Lucas, School Superintendent

On November 17th, the Oxford High School Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC) had the privilege of an impromptu visit from Commander Eric Humphreys - Senior Naval Science Instructor, Commander Jimmie Miller - NJROTC Area 4 Manager, and Captain Craig Mattingly - Commander, Naval Service Training Command. The Naval Service Training Command oversees Recruit Training Command, Officer Training Command, Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps, and the Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps. Oxford High School was selected for this visit due to its long-running status as a Distinguished Unit with Honors.

Oxford NJROTC was founded in 1995 by Commander Michael Masley and has achieved the highest level of recognition, Distinguished Unit, 25 years out of its 28 years of operation. Captain Mattingly received a unit presentation by the unit leadership, Cadet Lieutenant Commander Reese Reynolds, Cadet Lieutenant Junior Grade Angelica Kopec, and Cadet Captain Chief Petty Officer Alexa Robertson. The presentation outlined the many hours of community service, civic orientation trips, parades, and engagement with the local community. Captain Mattingly enthusiastically commended the Corps of Cadets on their success as a Distinguished Unit, their work within the community, and their demonstration of their patriotism through their support and participation with local veteran groups and in parades. Captain Mattingly recognized Principal Rebecca Czernicki and Superintendent of Schools Michael Lucas for their outstanding support of Oxford's NJROTC Program.

During Captain Mattingly's conversation with the cadets, he addressed their role as being a student and that being a student is job number one, the need to care for one another, to respect everyone's beliefs, and support each other. Using personal examples, he discussed the importance of resiliency and having the ability to accept defeat, learn from the struggle, and persevere through the hard times. To cap off the event, Captain Mattingly promoted three cadets and awarded them with his challenge coin. The challenge coin is a long held Naval tradition where the awarding of a coin is considered one of the highest forms of recognition an individual leader can give to his subordinates. Captain Mattingly's visit was both memorable and an inspiration to the cadets and staff.



*Pictured Left to Right:
Commander
Humphreys,
Master Chief Kay,
Master Chief
Youngsman,
Superintendent Lucas,
Principal Czernicki,
Cadet Reynolds,
Cadet Kopec,
Cadet Robertson, and
Captain Mattingly*



Board of Selectmen Vice Chairman, Mr. John Eul, arranged for nine students from the Oxford NJROTC to represent the Town of Oxford at the Army Navy Game on Saturday, December 9, 2023 at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough! The young men and women volunteered at the game for the Toys for Tots Program. A special thank you to the Patriots Organization and a very special thank you to Vice Chairman Eul for working for several months to make this happen! What a wonderful holiday gift for the students!

ARBOR DAY SAPLING GIVE-AWAY

Oxford Department of Public Works is excited to host the annual Arbor Day celebration again this Spring. Town Tree Warden, Jacob Mackowiak, has selected Eastern Redbud as the bare root tree species to be distributed to residents as part of the festivities. Eastern Redbuds are often referred to as the harbinger of Spring with beautiful flowers to kick off the growing season. In general, Eastern Redbud trees grow approximately 20-30 feet tall and are suitable for planting in hardiness zones 4-9 (Oxford is Zone 6).

Bare root trees are saplings that will measure up to 1-2 feet tall upon pick up. The trees do not have a root ball and instead are provided with visible tree roots making this a great learning experience for children interested in everything trees. Tree Warden Mackowiak recommends planting your sapling in a well-drained area that receives full sun for optimal blooms. The Arbor Day Foundation provides step by step instructions on planting bare root trees, just scan the QR code here:

With the proper care, it will not be long before these trees become the centerpiece of your landscape and we know you will enjoy the blooms for years to come. We look forward to the event and helping Oxford grow onward! Final event details are being finalized and will be announced in the coming weeks on the Town website.



**ARBOR DAY
SAPLING
GIVE-AWAY:
APRIL 26TH**

EASTERN REDBUD FACTS:

- Eastern Redbuds are excellent with spring-flowering bulbs such as daffodils and tulips that are in bloom at the same time
- Can be trained to grow as a single or multi-stem trunk
- 3-5 inch across green leaves with pink flowers (sometimes white) with leaves turning yellow in the fall
- Moderate growth rate with expectations of growing 7-10 feet in the first 6 years
- Drought-tolerant tree after proper establishment period of 1-2 years
- Prune to desired shape and trunk stem in the winter before blooming
- Eastern Redbuds attract hummingbirds and butterflies
- Plant in full sun to encourage optimal flowering
- Eastern Redbuds are not picky to soil type (will tolerate sandy and clay soils) but the soil must drain well

- Water about 1-2 times a week, whenever soil is dry at a depth of 2-3 inches (water more frequently during dry spells)
- Eastern Redbuds are listed on Eversource Energy's "30 Trees Under 30 Feet Tall List" as a low growing tree that may even be considered for planting near overhead utility lines
- Eastern Redbud is the State Tree of Oklahoma

POLLINATOR TEAM IS BUZZING AGAIN!

Judy Lochner, Conservation Agent

The Oxford Grow Native for Pollinators Team has announced this year's Pollinator Forum will be held on Wednesday, March 27th at the Oxford Middle School Cafeteria at 6PM. Guest speaker Ellen Scheid will be returning again and will present how to create a pollinator-friendly yard. Informational stations will be set up with topics about butterflies, bees, native plant listings, gardening ideas and more.



To encourage the community to include habitats for our important little pollinator friends (butterflies, bees and birds) the first 50 attendees to the Forum will receive a free Pollinator Garden Design Kit! The Pollinator Team is a partnership between the Oxford Conservation Commission and other local organizations and volunteers. Details about community events being planned for this spring and summer and volunteer opportunities will be available at the Forum. You do not have to be an Oxford resident to participate, all are welcome!



**The Spring Yard Sale will take place on April 27, 2024
from 8:00 am - 3:00 pm.**

Rental space is available on the Town Common for a small fee.

If selling from your home, you
must obtain a **FREE** Yard Sale
Permit from the BOS office -
Yard Sales | Oxford, MA
(oxfordma.us)

To have your address listed on
the OCC map, register here:
Oxford Community Center:
Register for Activity
(myrec.com)

PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY MARCH 5, 2024



EARLY VOTING

**AT THE OXFORD SENIOR CENTER
323 MAIN STREET (BEHIND TOWN HALL)**

Saturday, February 24, 2024

Sunday, February 25, 2024

Monday, February 26, 2024

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Wednesday, February 28, 2024

Thursday, February 29, 2024

Friday, March 1, 2024

10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Closed

9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

9:00 AM – 7:00 PM

9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

9:00 AM – 12:30 PM