

**OXFORD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MEETING MINUTES**

February 17, 2026

Meeting Convened

At the Court of Oxford County Commissioners begun and held at Paris, Maine within and for the County of Oxford at 9:00 am on Tuesday, February 17, being a regular session, there were present:

Lisa Keim	Chair
Sawin Millett	Commissioner
Timothy Turner	Commissioner

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Minutes for Approval

The following action occurred regarding sets of minutes of previous meetings:

February 5 approved with amendments

Agenda Adopted

The agenda was adopted with amending the addition of an executive session for negotiations.

Public Comment

Patricia Shearman of Norway, who served 8 years as Oxford East Register of Deeds, feels elected vs appointed treasurer is best for county, stating that the people need to know they have a player in the game. She recommended that there be citizen involvement if it becomes an appointed position.

Janet Jamison of South Paris noted that in the Legislature, the party in power appoints treasurer and doesn't want to take voice away from the people here in Oxford County.

Commissioner Keim explained that there is a statute laying out process of changing the Treasurer from elected to appointed. She confirmed that there had only been one brief conversation and that no real plans to pursue this change have occurred. She noted that the Commissioners would first vote and then the public would vote, which previously failed.

Richard Gagne, who is running for Sheriff, applauded the collaboration.

Don Berry said he feels treasurer position should stay elected.

Commissioner Kiem explained that the discussion with current Treasurer Beth Calhoun will be about duties and an appropriate salary. She noted that the bulk of treasurer duties handled by finance director who is hired based on qualifications; the Treasurer is more of an oversight

Commissioner Millett stated that he felt the current situation between the Treasurer and Finance Director was working well so why bother changing it.

Annie Curran of the Unorganized Territory requested help to make the Dresser School Road more accessible.

Ken Willie of the Unorganized Territory stated that since 90s, road has fallen apart, citing difficulty for an ambulance to reach him at one point, stating it's almost impossible to plow.

Unorganized Territory Supervisor Tony Carter explained that the County doesn't maintain that road in winter, but that a contractor, Wilson Excavating, spends a week each spring maintaining road and will make sure they give special attention this year. He also agreed to look into the matter of accessibility and get back to the residents with his findings.

Department Heads

Department heads met with the Commissioners to discuss a variety of topics, some being unique to specific departments and other topics being of concern to several or all departments.

Commissioner Keim referenced letter that was sent out the previous Friday, noting that County offices will likely close less due to inclement weather, stating that if the people paying County staff salaries are going to work, so should County employees. She encouraged employees to take their own responsibility to look after their safety risk and utilize PTO if they deem it too unsafe to travel. She feels the County side of the building shouldn't rely on whether the State side of the building is open.

Treasurer Beth Calhoun noted that the closing due to inclement weather policy was last updated in 2007 and should be periodically reviewed, especially because construction of courthouse has changed layout of parking lots which should be part of consideration. She is also concerned about confusing the public who don't understand the difference between State and County closing as we are in the same building and there is no public access when the State side is closed due to security.

Chief James Urquhart raised safety concerns if the County is open and State is not there is not performing security at entrances, citing the Sheriff's Office doesn't have the extra resources to help with that during a storm.

Probate Register Jenn Dilworth cited safety concerns about County employees escorting the public in and out of the building in lieu of security.

Deeds Register Cheri Crockett also raised safety concerns about being open when the State is closed, expressing that there are too many places to hide, not all doors are locked, and referenced a recent incident involving a blade that was removed from a gentleman at security who then reached through the door of the Deeds Office when he became upset. She pointed out that liability insurance went up 18% this past year and suggested that the County should be proactive in being safe to protect taxpayers who pay for insurance premiums and claims. She also noted that if mail doesn't come in, she can't record due to race to record laws.

Jail Administrator Dana Dillingham questioned how many days per year the County actually closed due to inclement weather but the exact answer wasn't readily available.

Commissioner Keim clarified that the building would remain closed to public if the State side was closed, so there is no security threat to employees.

Commissioner Turner said that he would previously monitor weather report with Administrator before making a unified decision but that he fully supports Commissioner Keim's decision as Chair to be more cautious about calling closures.

Commissioner Millett noted that the policy may warrant a review which could be discussed at a later date.

Sheriff's Report

Administrator Loper updated the Commissioners on the enhanced patrol contract with Bethel and the cost of the renewed contract.

The Commissioners acknowledged the reassignment of Dennis Lowe from Deputy to Detective effective March 23 with a wage rate of \$37.93 (15-year rate).

The Commissioners authorized the transfer of Bode Gray from Corrections to Patrol effective March 1 with a wage rate of \$30.62 (entry rate). The Commissioners then authorized the opening of a full-time Corrections position.

The Commissioners approved the submission of a grant application for bodycams.

The Commissioners accepted the resignation of part-time Corrections Officer Andrew Dameron effective February 11.

Treasurer's Report

Finance Director Lindsay Kay announced that the ARPA audit is complete and there are no findings but there was suggestion to update the procurement policy. It was noted that she will work on that policy for the Commissioners review and approval.

Treasurer Beth Calhoun spoke on staffing in the office which currently consists of the Finance Director and a part-time temporary employee but there is a need for a full-time position to keep up with the workload and to serve as backup for the Finance Director, noting that the current Finance Director is processing payroll during her time-off because there is no replacement.

Commissioner Keim asked Treasurer Calhoun to describe her role and duties to get a better understanding of the position's responsibilities. Salary was also discussed, but Treasurer Calhoun pointed out that it's difficult to assess because it depends on the next Treasurer's commitment to the role. She noted that the salary should be attractive enough to engage qualified candidates. Commissioner Turner said that the salary should reflect more than just time worked, noting that the position ultimately oversees the entire county budget which is a big responsibility.

The Commissioners authorized Treasurer Calhoun to begin the tax anticipation note (TAN) process.

Personnel Updates and Actions

The Commissioners reviewed and adopted a code of conduct policy.

Items for Discussion and Action – Considered as Time Permits Throughout Meeting

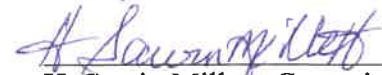
1. Reviewed Administrator’s work sheet.
2. Received update on alternative negotiators. Deputy Administrator Abby Shanor explained that Maine Municipal will not be able to assist as previously indicated. It was noted that she would email her HR contacts to see if anyone knows of independent negotiators.
3. Administrator Loper updated the Commissioners on requested increases for fire and ambulance services in the UT.
4. The Commissioners approved the submission of the 2026 Wellness Works grant application.
5. The Commissioners entered an executive session (1 M.R.S.A. § 405-6 D) to discuss union contract negotiations. No action was needed upon returning to open session.
6. The Commissioners entered an executive session (1 M.R.S.A. § 405-6 A) to discuss union contract negotiations. No action was needed upon returning to open session.

Adjournment

The Commissioners adjourned at 1:06pm.



Lisa M. Keim, Chair



H. Sawin Millett, Commissioner



Timothy G. Turner, Commissioner

Notes:

- 1) *These minutes are intended to be a brief description of meeting actions to provide, in a general sense only, an account of what was discussed.*
- 2) *Unless otherwise noted, all votes taken by the Commissioners were unanimous.*