

OXFORD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING MINUTES

August 19, 2025

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, August 19, being a regular session, there were present:

Timothy Turner	Chair
Lisa Keim	Commissioner
Sawin Millett	Commissioner

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Minutes Approval

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

August 7 approved

Agenda Adopted

The agenda was adopted with the addition of authorizing audits and reviewing vehicle bids.

Public Comment

None.

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 encouraged the department heads to be extra cautious with this year's budget requests and that although there isn't frivolous spending, to look for areas that could be cut.

Sheriff's Report

Chief Jim Urquhart and Major Dana Thompson updated the Commissioners on departmental matters. Sheriff Wainwright was not in attendance due to medical reasons.

Commissioner Millett inquired about the Sheriff's absence and how long it was expected to last. Chief Urquhart said that the Sheriff has remained in contact with his administrative staff and plans to return on Monday of next week.

The Chief expressed his concern about several vehicles being high in mileage and needing costly maintenance. He noted that there are only two spares in the fleet at the moment but that seven vehicles that were ordered are going to be available very soon. Commissioner Keim said that she'd like to see an equal number of vehicles leaving the fleet as vehicles get added, so that the fleet size doesn't increase.

Commissioner Keim raised concerns that the SRO contracts only require the school districts to pay 75% of vehicle costs instead of 100%. County Administrator Zane Loper said that he understands both sides of the issue because the schools shouldn't pay for the vehicles while they are not being used for SRO purposes, but that the rest of the county shouldn't supplement those contracts.

The Commissioners approved SRO contracts with MSAD #55 (Officer Groetzinger and Officer Blauvelt) and RSU #10 (Officer Turner).

The Commissioners authorized the submission of an impaired driving grant application.

The Commissioners authorized the cash out of excess vacation time for Lieutenant Justin Brown up to one week per the labor contract.

The Commissioners reviewed bids for two vehicles for sale. Administrator Loper advised that one bid from a gentleman in Limington came in for much higher than the vehicle is worth and that the County can't in good faith allow that sale. The other two bids were significantly lower than the vehicles' value. It was determined that the vehicles would go back to bid and that the three people who submitted bids would be notified that they were too high or low in their proposal.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Beth Calhoun and Finance Director Lindsay Kay updated the Commissioners on financial matters and provided written reports.

The Commissioners authorized RHR Smith to conduct 2024 General Fund and the FY25 Unorganized Territory audits.

The Commissioners agreed to declare Constitution Week and read a proclamation at the September 16 meeting.

Discuss Enhanced Patrol Contract with Town of Bethel

The Commissioners met with Town Manager Sharon Jackson and Selectboard member Michelle Varuolo Cole of Bethel regarding the contract for enhanced patrol services. Mrs. Varuolo Cole expressed concern over the new contract rate that went into effect July 1, especially in regards to the depreciation of vehicles. She recommended the county transition to July-June fiscal year to match the town, and that Bethel should only pay 80% of the cost of the contract because having enhanced patrol benefits the surrounding municipalities as well. She thanked the deputies that work under their contract for their professionalism, and called for mutual respect between Town and County officials, referencing a report that a message is being spread that Bethel's contract is costing the County money.

Treasurer Beth Calhoun explained that it was true that the County had been expensed more on the Bethel contract than it received in revenue, and that the cost of vehicle depreciation has to be passed on, citing state statute that prohibits contracts with municipalities from being supplemented by the general tax levy.

Commissioner Keim also defended the contract, explaining that the county officials spent a lot of time and money determining the true costs, and noted that other towns are watching to be sure they don't get costs passed on. She also noted that the cost of contracting for enhanced services shouldn't be much less than if Bethel had its own police department. She explained that the County has no desire to overcharge or make money from this contract but emphasized that it must be fairly accounted for, pointing out that when Mexico approached Rumford for a quote for a similar contract, the cost was much higher.

Commissioner Millett thanked her for her time and noted that the board will reflect on her comments.

Commissioner Turner also thanked her for her time and clarified that although it was accurate that the Town's contract had cost the County money, it was understood that it wasn't intentional on Bethel's part and was due to the County not properly accounting for all costs.

Airport/UT Supervisors Report

The Commissioners authorized the publication of a cross-jurisdictional forum notice regarding Albany Township. Commissioner Keim expressed concern about the \$1,200 fee for the moderator, of which the county is being asked to pay half (\$600).

Personnel Updates and Actions

The Commissioners authorized decreasing the stipend for Deputy Deeds Register Darren Goyette from \$250 per week to \$50 per week, effective this pay period, as his assistance is no longer needed at the level previously required.

The Commissioners authorized the posting of two full-time Dispatcher positions.

The Commissioners ratified an MOU with the Corrections Union regarding vacation carryover.

The Commissioners reviewed a draft policy regarding non-routine travel. It was noted that it will be reviewed further at the September 4 workshop after some changes have been made and feedback from Department Heads has been received.

Recessed 1:05pm and reconvened 1:30pm

Meet with Employees from RCC (Regional Communications Center)

The Commissioners invited the dispatchers to provide feedback about working in the Communications Center and for Oxford County in general, which they plan to do with all departments one by one at their regular meetings.

Amanda Hebert, Lexie Ficks, Payton Berry, Beverly Stevens, and Doug Fillebrown attended. Tamara Bisbee provided written comment. A lot of feedback was provided, including a request for more outreach from administration, more recognition for high stress incidents, assistance with stress relief, enhanced cleaning services, and easier access to certain departments during nights and weekends (ex: IT). They also expressed their disappointment that building upgrade plans have ceased.

The Commissioners thanked them for their time and for the work they do. Commissioner Keim encouraged them to propose ways to improve their current workspace because if the public safety building plans ever resume, it will be many years out before anything comes to fruition.

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

1. Adopted Administrator's report.
2. Discussed updated on Damon Road complaints in Sumner and determined there is nothing for the County to do at this time as the Town has deemed the road a public easement, not a public road.
3. Approved changes to the CAB (Communications Advisory Board) bylaws as proposed at their July 10 board meeting.
4. Confirmed September 16, 2025 as the date for two grievance hearings.
5. Authorized the submissions of two federal homeland security grant applications. Commissioner Keim noted that the Board is aware of the new requirements regarding ICE, but pointed out that the County is only applying for the funds at this time, and can still reject the grant if awarded. She also noted that due to current legal proceedings, the current wording on requirements may not be an issue by the time they are asked to accept the funding.

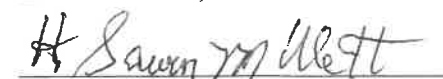
It was noted that the Commissioners would work on a plan to recognize employees for years of service.

Adjournment

The Commissioners adjourned at 2:13pm.


Timothy G. Turner, Chair


Lisa M. Keim, Commissioner


H. Sawin Millett, 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.*