



THE CITY OF
OXFORD

Memorandum

A Meeting of the Oxford Affordable Housing Commission will be held on **Wednesday, May 20, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.**, in the City Hall Front Conference Room. The following items are on the agenda:

1. Call to order
2. Approval of agenda
3. Approval of minutes from Work Session on February 18, 2026 and Special Meeting on March 18, 2026
4. Updates from city staff and planning commission
5. Guest presentation: Graham Bodie, Braver Angels recap and vision for next steps (10 min)
6. Market update (Cissell)
7. NOI project update (Rutledge and Antonow)
8. Commission Education (Ryals)
9. Other business and discussion
10. Next Meeting Time and Date: Wednesday, 7/15/2026, 11am to 12pm
11. Adjourn

Auxiliary aids and services may be available to individuals with disabilities upon twenty-four (24) hours request by contacting Braxton Tullos, City of Oxford ADA Coordinator at 662-232-2454.



Memorandum

RE: Affordable Housing Commission Regular Meeting

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Should you have any questions, comments, or need assistance with accessing the meeting, please feel free to contact me directly at bjrequet@oxfordms.net.

Thank you,

Benjamin Requet, AICP
Director of Planning

Worksession Note Affordable Housing Commission

February 18, 2026

Call to Order – Chair, Josh Cissell

Attending: Josh Cissell, Stewart Rutledge, Janice Antonow, Alonzo Hilliard, Suzanne Ryals, Donna Zampella (remote), Teasha Sanders (remote)

Absent: Brooke Worthy, Marilyn Barnes, Duncan Gray, Josh McGlowan

Staff: Ben Requet, Robert Baxter, Judy Daniel

Approval of Agenda

Approved on motion of Janice Antonow, seconded by Stewart Rutledge.

Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

November minutes approved on motion of Janice Antonow, seconded by Stewart Rutledge.

Updates from City Staff

Ben Requet and Robert Baxter reported on the progress of the Housing Accelerator zoning effort. An application is under review. Stewart Rutledge stated a good opinion of the developer and a very good opinion of the planner/landscape architect working with the developer. Ben noted that working with an actual development has highlighted that some parts of the regulatory process may need to be somewhat modified.

Discussion

Chair Cissell started a discussion regarding the overall direction for the Commission for the coming year, the structure of the Commission and how it is operating, the work of the Subcommittees, and leadership model considerations. He has met with all the Subcommittee chairs to discuss the potential for some changes.

He summarized the accomplishments of the Commission since 2021, but despite those efforts, there has been little progress in seeing substantial changes to the affordability of housing in Oxford. It was generally acknowledged that the Commission has been making these efforts in the face of a rapidly expanding housing market in Oxford, with little incentive for developers to build more affordable options. He wants the Commission to consider what else could be done, and what the role of the Commission should be.

He reviewed the role stated for the Commission in the city ordinance that created it (Sec. 22-259); which is to research ways to increase affordable housing options, advise the Planning Commission and Aldermen, and recommend strategies for progress so the City leaders can make better informed decisions. Another role is to be a “conduit” to strategically bring people and organizations together to achieve progress toward affordability.

Stewart Rutledge stated the way to accomplish more would be to propose more “carrots” or more “sticks”, or perhaps bigger carrots and sticks. He suggested perhaps putting an incentive for more density into the higher density zoning districts (like Suburban Center). He acknowledged that would be a political decision.

Janice Antonow noted that the political will seems pretty limited just now, and asked about the current status of the tax abatement effort. There was then a discussion of what had happened with that effort since the November meeting. It was eventually determined that Stewart would speak with the Supervisors to see if they still support the effort, and that Ben would start the process for the Aldermen to consider the ordinance change, and that the Supervisors could be told that the City was moving forward on that change. Stewart and Ben will report back to the Commission and hopefully a date will be set for the Supervisors to vote to support this change. It was noted that there may be a good potential for existing smaller rental properties to consider using this option.

Next, Rutledge presented another idea for consideration; the city building roads in subdivisions in exchange for providing affordable housing. This seemed to be difficult for the city to consider given the existing plans for road repairs and expansions.

Ben Requet mentioned the Housing Trust Fund effort the staff saw in Arkansas, which seems to be progress. It is oriented to creating developments with affordable housing by contributions toward infrastructure, in exchange for a percentage of dwellings being at workforce housing levels. He suggested that some of their staff might come over and meet with the Commission. It was agreed that he should look into that.

Stewart Rutledge volunteered to create a summary of his ideas for improving the “carrots and sticks” that the Commission could use.

Ben Requet mentioned existing incentives in the zoning code that developers may not even be aware of. There are already density bonuses in some district. After discussion it was determined that the staff could work on creating “tutorials” for developers to better inform them about the existing options in the code. This could become a document and perhaps video options for developers to read or watch. After further discussion about how to ensure that developers would see this information, it was agreed that the staff would start to work on this idea and return to the Commission with an update, and to inform the Aldermen about this project.

After some further discussion, Chair Cissell noted that he would be providing market updates for the Commission about rental rates and vacancy rates. Antonow asked if any funds were available if further data assessment is needed. Requet said he would look into that.

Rutledge then brought up the subject of the potential for city imposed short term rental taxes. That led to a discussion of efforts by state tourism agencies to get the existing taxes imposed on short term rental companies rebated back to the towns and cities. The advantages and difficulties for imposing another tax by municipalities was discussed. (State enabling legislation would be required to all towns to impose such a tax.) This was tabled until efforts to get the existing tax rebates was resolved.

Next Chair Cissell brought up the subject of the existing subcommittees. While each was formed for a good purpose, he suggested that it might be better to just retain the “Annual Report” standing subcommittee; and to consider disbanding the other standing and “ad hoc” committees and instead working more as a full commission on some topics, but forming temporary “working committees” to make progress on specific issues. After discussion it was generally agreed this was a good idea. This would be more fully discussed at the next official meeting of the Commission and a decision made regarding the subcommittees. In the meantime the committees (other than Annual Report) would go dormant, and not meet regularly until a decision has been made.

Next the meetings schedule was discussed. It was determined that there may be more worksessions, and fewer official meetings; as worksessions can be called in a shorter timeframe, allowing more nimble action and discussion.

Next Janice Antonow asked about the housing report done by Bob Barber last year and if that had been presented to the Mayor and Aldermen. She asked for an update on the current AMI.

Antonow then brought up the current status of the Trust Fund, It was created but has been having problems getting underway, as a possible major donor was not comfortable with the plan for funds to be funneled through a third party. The Trust Fund may need to be restructured. After substantial discussion it was determined that Antonow and Duncan Gray should meet with Ben and Chair Cissell to discuss the Trust Fund and options for it to evolve and function.

Rutledge left the meeting.

Chair Cissell then summarized the meeting and suggested that a list of the ideas discussed was needed, and then priorities for action and who would be in charge of those efforts. It was agreed that Judy Daniel would provide a meeting summary in order to create that list.

Chair Cissell then noted the resignation of Commissioner Laura Martin, whose term is not up until July. He asked for suggestions for filling her position. Any suggestions can be sent to Ben Requet, and the position will be appointed by the Mayor and Aldermen.

The worksession was then adjourned.

Other Business

Next Meeting – April 15, 2026 at 11am

Worksession Note Affordable Housing Commission

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The worksession was then adjourned.

Other Business

Next Meeting – April 15, 2026 at 11am

**City of Oxford Affordable Housing Commission
Summary Meeting Minutes**

(Recordings of Commission meetings available through the Planning Department)

March 18, 2026

1. Call to Order

Chair Josh Cissell called the meeting to order at 11AM

Notice that certain commissioners may be included in the meeting via teleconference, subject to the City of Oxford Code of Ordinances, Section 2-82.

Present: Josh Cissell, Stewart Rutledge, Josh McGlawn, Brooke Worthy (virtual), Janice Antonow, Alonzo Hilliard, Duncan Gray (ex officio), Donna Zampella (ex officio), Suzanne Ryals (Ex officio)

Staff: Ben Requet, Robert Baxter

- 2. Approval of Agenda:** The agenda was approved unanimously after a motion by Josh Cissell, second by Brooke Worthy.

- 3. Discussion:** Janice Antonow announced that the ordinance revision the commission had been working on was voted on and adopted by the Board of Aldermen the previous evening, passing in two readings rather than three. The ordinance becomes effective 30 days after adoption. Next steps discussed: The next major commission action identified is the adoption of a resolution to formally establish the 50(4)d program. Continued coordination with the county on the NOI assessment program. Working through the mechanics of program administration. Applications and forms have been drafted. Strong existing interest from property owners was reported. Suzanne Ryals noted she had already received calls and messages from interested parties. A potential media or publicity push was discussed, possibly involving Josh McCoy preparing on-camera or video material. Suggested timeline of 45 to 60 days. Antonow suggested also preparing a handout explaining how property owners can use the program, similar to the developer materials Stewart Rutledge had requested at the previous meeting.
 - a. **Carrots and Sticks Report:** Stewart Rutledge presented his memo to the commission, framing it as a menu of seven nationally accepted strategies and not a recommendation list. The Chair asked Rutledge to summarize each item and proposed that the commission place each item into one of three categories: short-term (achievable this year), long-term or parking lot, or out of scope for the commission.

Rutledge's seven items as presented:

Sticks:

1. Inclusionary zoning. Mandates affordable housing in defined zoning designations, typically multifamily.
2. Vacancy tax. A tax on unoccupied housing units. Rutledge noted this is the same proposal JT Thomas published in the Oxford Eagle.
3. Affordable housing fees. Mandatory fee paid by developers, similar to existing tree mitigation, and impact fees.

Carrots:

4. Reform of high-density zoning. Adjust the existing density ceiling so the standard allowance is slightly lower, with additional density earned by including affordable units.
5. Infrastructure subsidies. The city builds roads and utilities to enable development in exchange for the inclusion of affordable units on the property.
6. Change ground floor commercial zoning. Allow ground floor residential by right rather than by special exception in exchange for affordable units.
7. Use of public land for affordable housing. City puts forward city-owned land via RFP, by sale or by long-term lease (for example, a 99-year lease).

Discussion notes:

McGlawn commented that inclusionary zoning would likely be difficult for developers to accept, while affordable housing fees might be accepted as a smaller line item in a development budget. He suggested the carrots are more likely to be taken up by developers already inclined toward affordable housing, while sticks would be needed for broader adoption.

Gray raised the possibility of deed restrictions for workforce housing categories such as healthcare providers, first responders, and educators. He asked whether Fair Housing Act protections would allow this approach. Rutledge was uncertain. Initial research during the discussion suggested government-provided housing for government employees may be permissible, but private developer restrictions on these protected-class-adjacent categories likely would not be. Gray agreed to research further and report back.

Worthy and Antonow asked about the status of JT Thomas's prior affordable housing group and any vacancy tax proposals. Rutledge confirmed the group published an article online and in the newspaper but produced no further substantive action.

Antonow asked whether short-term rental fees could be considered under the affordable housing fees category. The discussion clarified that taxing authority for Mississippi municipalities is limited to ad valorem tax absent legislative authorization, so a vacancy tax or general affordable housing fee would require state-level action. Antonow noted that Ocean Springs has an existing short-term rental ordinance with annual fees, registration, inspections, and contact information requirements, and offered to distribute that ordinance to the commission.

Ben Requet, City Planner, provided detailed background on the existing density bonus provision (Code Section 3.5.5.6), which allows a residential bonus up to 65 bedrooms per acre by special

exception in suburban multifamily, traditional neighborhood business, suburban corridor, and suburban center districts. He explained the practical leverage the city currently has in negotiating ground floor residential approvals with developers, including a recent case at the North Lamar intersection where the Planning Commission pushed back on a proposal with 30 to 35 percent ground floor commercial. The applicant returned the following month at approximately 52 percent commercial. Ben Requet recommended that any affordable housing requirement tied to ground floor residential approvals be codified rather than left solely to negotiation and discretion.

Ben Requet also described the changing retail landscape, including the impact of Amazon delivery and post-COVID remote work, and noted these trends have weakened the commercial component of mixed-use developments while increasing developer interest in residential.

Buckets reached by group consensus (no formal motion or vote):

Parking lot, requires state legislative action or politically not viable at this time:

- Inclusionary zoning (item 1)
- Vacancy tax (item 2)
- Affordable housing fees (item 3)

Short-term study and potential push this year (Q2 to Q3):

- Reform of high-density zoning bonus (item 4)
- Ground floor commercial reform (item 6)
- Short-term rental regulation (added during the meeting following Antonow's suggestion and Worthy's agreement)

Long-term, but begin the conversation now:

- Use of public land (item 7). Public-private partnership models referenced in North Carolina, Maryland, Tennessee, and Alabama, including Huntsville.
- Infrastructure subsidies (item 5), deferred behind public land.

Added for research:

- Deed restrictions for workforce or public servant housing categories (Gray to research).

The Chair indicated he would compile notes and follow up with commissioners about who could take the lead on each item the commission chooses to advance.

b. Annual Report

Donna Zampella raised the status of the annual report to the city. The current cadence is twice annually (April and October), originally set to align with the city budget cycle. The group discussed whether to maintain the twice-annual cadence, move to once annually, or adjust the April timing. No decision was reached. Suzanne Ryals raised the possibility of requesting funding in the next budget cycle for commissioner training or conference attendance.

4. Other Business and Discussion

Following discussion, the group agreed to add short-term rental regulation to the short-term bucket. Antonow noted that while there is no state authority for a vacancy tax, an Ocean Springs-style registration and fee ordinance is achievable, and there appears to be political interest locally in pursuing it. Ryals asked how the fees collected would be allocated. The group clarified that the goal of any such ordinance would be regulation and friction (preserving housing stock for long-term residential use) rather than revenue generation.

5. Adjourn: After a motion by Cissell seconded by Antonow, the meeting was adjourned with unanimous approval.