

**Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee
6:30PM, Wednesday, February 12, 2025
By Zoom Cloud Conference**

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Present: Chair – Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Ruth Konigsberg,

Elaine Miller, Rachel Orr, Louis Pashman,

Others: Tony Peak, Recorder – Marni Lipke,

Town: TSB Chair John Cahill, COA – Catie Blake,

Police – Chief Chris Habekost, Lt. Bill Brigham,

Harbor – Gary Kovack, Morgan Reitzas,

Planning Board – Ben Robinson,

* TFC members late arrivals, early departures or absences.

Call Meeting to Order

- The Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) was called to order at 6:31PM.

(Recorder's note: Discussions are summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.)

Review of Council On Aging (COA) Budget and Warrant Article

Catie Blake, Director (See documents on file.)

- Budget: A personnel study would determine a promotion/increase for the Program Director, so funds were added to Overtime on Finance Dept. advice.
- Actual spending of the \$100 Dues/Subscription line was at \$1,400 (to be increased in Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) covering such things as \$400 movie licensing, and Massachusetts Council on Aging dues for 2 staff. In the meantime the shortfall would be paid out of the Elder grant.

Warrant articles: \$29,500 for a new electric vehicle (EV)—See below: Actions.

The full time Elder Companion position was always in the car serving Tisbury elders' transportation needs: prescriptions, grocery runs, doctor's visits, ferry delivery/pickup, etc. The original grant-funded EV (see Minutes: 10/19/16 p.1-2, & 1/30/19 p.6) had aged out. The Senior Center had a charger and an EV saved on gas/fuel, especially with the imminent solar roof installation.

Review of Police Department Budgets

(See documents on file.)

Chris Habekost, Chief

Bill Brigham, Lieutenant

- The FY26 Budget returned to FY24 levels, after the FY25 cuts to avoid an override.
- The FinCom was shocked to hear there were 5 vacancies plus the Executive Assistant and that consequently Overtime (OT) was budgeted high—funds could also be drawn from unfilled vacancy salaries. The FinCom expressed concern about stress and burnout for the remaining staff.

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- The Exec. Asst. position attracted good candidates, but an Islandwide police shortage was about many causes: retirements, housing, Island cost of living...
- Police Officers (even Specials) were less popular positions and now required 6 months at the Police Academy, 3 month training, and physical strength/stamina testing—hurdles that discouraged part-time or community service members.
- Despite current Tisbury policy to pay for the Academy, equipment and training plus full time salary/benefits, there were only applications for traffic police. (Edgartown offered an addition \$7,500 sign up bonus.)
- The new National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) trained School Resource Officer (SRO) answered outside calls when necessary.
- If the Department lost 1 or 2 more officers they would be under the minimum. State Police might be able to lend Tisbury 1 or 2 officers this summer.
- In searching for solutions Chief Habekost noted:
 - regionalization—a complex matter of and the purview of Select Boards/Town Administrators;
 - advocating at the Massachusetts Police Association and with Congressional representatives;
 - Town sponsored/subsidized year-round housing.
- The annual police cruiser itself was \$57,000 but siren, lights, graphics, back seating, mounted computer, rifle and equipment storage, etc. brought it to \$80,000. Cruisers got hard use, 24/7 and with dirt roads. The funding source (budget or Free Cash) would be determined by the Finance Director.
- The Police were not consulted about enforcing the proposed Leaf-Blower Bylaw (probably a noise-enforcement component). Chief Habekost suggested it would be more tactfully regulated by a Building Inspector or Conservation Agent. Police presence seemed heavy-footed and confrontational for a minor offense, and the short-staffed Department had more urgent matters to cover.
- The FinCom and Police representatives exchanged thanks.

Review of Harbormaster's Budget and Warrant Articles

Gary Kovack, Harbormaster (See documents on file.)

- Budget: Staffing was reviewed. Full-time staff were:
 - Harbormaster Gary Kovack,
 - Asst. Harbormaster & Natural Resource Officer Morgan Reitzas, and
 - Natural Resource Administrative Assistant Sarah Codding (vacant since October 2024 retirement).
- Seasonal staff from May – October Bluefish and Striped Bass Derby:

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- Harbor Assistant Nelson Siegelman who worked strictly in Tashmoo and helped with Shellfish enforcement,
- 7 or 8 dock assistants on 3 hr. rotating shifts in the Inner Harbor, Outer Harbor, Lagoon and Tashmoo,
- a new Harbor Assistant as a growth opportunity for a mature dock assistant.
- Shifting Town leadership resulted in unclear parameters of the 2016 Natural Resources Dept. (see 1/11/17 Minutes p.1-2). Shellfish and Harbor worked together e.g. Tashmoo and the Amin. Asst. however Natural Resources personnel worked primarily for the Harbormaster.
- New Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) regulations required every boat be checked for registration, secure heads, etc. Some expenses were funded by Embarkation.
- This year the Department planned to fully institute Dockwa on-line booking which should greatly facilitate bookings.
- FY24 revenue generation was \$407,455 (excise, mooring applications, moorings, new moorings, transients, parking permits, etc.) some into Waterways and some into the General Fund.

Warrant articles:

- Owen Park Pier work was now fully permitted and these last articles (both Waterways and Free Cash) along with the \$1,000,000 Seaport Economics grant would complete the \$1,877,500 funding (see 12/11/24 Minutes p.1 & below: Actions) so the project could be put out to bid and work possibly from fall 2025 to spring 2026. Floating docks would be repaired this year.
- The following capital project articles were eliminated: \$35,000 for Town-owned moorings, \$75,000 to re-grid the mooring field and a \$75,000 truck.
- Total Waterways article spending were within the current Fund balance.
- After an eelgrass study and Army Corps of Engineers application, 4 areas were authorized as mooring fields. Mr. Kovack planned 40 in Tashmoo, 20 in Lagoon and 10 in the Outer Harbor.
- From the block to the mooring ball cost \$2,800. A transient moorings at \$70/day, paid for itself in 45 days, and became a significant revenue source.
- The FinCom questioned the ability of staff to cover 70 new moorings this year given the Owen Park Pier and Harbormaster building renovation.
- Mr. Kovack assured the FinCom he had a strong soft spot for Tashmoo and listened attentively to abutters, so most new Tashmoo moorings would be permanent for Town residents—reducing the waitlist.
- On being asked, he endorsed the Fire Dept. rescue boat as providing needed service to Tashmoo as well as flexible maneuvering in emergency situations.
- Thanks were exchanged.

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Review of Planning Board Budget (See documents on file.)

Ben Robinson, Planning Board

- Since Pat Harris' tenure the Planning Board had been on the cusp of needing another position (see 2/8/17 Minutes p.1), particularly in view of the Master Plan process and the current Zoning Bylaw re-codification. A position was created but not funded. Mindful of rising Town finances, the Board experimented with various solutions (changing the Administrator position, contracting a minute-taker) none of which worked so they were currently in a holding pattern—with some members taking minutes. (The Master Plan recognized a possible shift from Administrator to Planning Director.)
- Pending conversations with the new Town Administrator, this budget shifted money from Purchased Services (minute contractor) to pay for a 20 hr/wk position with limited benefits, in the hopes of attracting new young staff and maybe some succession planning.
- They were open to sharing staff with Building or Conservation.
- The FinCom appreciated the presentation and thoughtfullness.

Review of Finance Director's Budgets and Warrant Articles – Tabled

Jonathan Snyder, Finance Director

Discussion and Potential Votes on Budgets and Articles Previously Reviewed (See above p.2-3.)

- The following updates were noted:
 - The Finance Dept. provided preliminary levy limit information which indicated the possibility of an override, and a ~\$5,000,000 Free Cash estimate.
 - Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) would reduce their budget again—this time due to health insurance actuals.
 - Lifeguards would be shifted back to the Dept. of Public Works (DPW) as part of Parks & Recreation and some duplication was found to further reduce the Fire Dept. budget.
 - Conservation Commission revised budget was expected shortly.
 - The Tisbury Select Board (TSB) closed the Annual Town Meeting (ATM) warrant yesterday. Further articles might include Information Technology (IT) security grant matching funds to add to the IT consultant (see 4/10/24 Minutes p.2-3)
- ***ELAINE MILLER MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HARBORMASTER DEPARTMENT WARRANT ARTICLES ON WATERWAYS FUND PROJECTS AS PRESENTED;***
 - ***FUTURE DREDGE (\$75,000),***
 - ***NEW PUMP-OUT VESSEL (\$53,750),***
 - ***OWEN PARK PIER (\$50,000),***

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- **TOWN OWNED MOORING MAINTENANCE (\$35,000),**
- **HARBOR WORKING SKIFF OUTBOARD REPLACEMENT (\$15,000),**
- **HARBORMASTER WORK TENT CEMENT SLAB (\$15,000),**
- **DISPOSAL OF ABANDONED VESSELS (\$2,000);**

LOUISE CLOUGH AND LOUIS PASHMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ELAINE MILLER—AYE, RUSTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

The FinCom briefly reviewed the long history of Owen Park Pier from needing repair to the current replacement.

- RACHEL MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING HARBORMASTER DEPARTMENT \$150,000 WARRANT ARTICLE ON OWEN PARK PIER FROM UNRESERVED FUND BALANCE AS PRESENTED; ELAINE MILLER SECONDED; MOTION WITHDRAWN.
- Chair Nancy Gilfoy asked if the FinCom wanted to vote department budgets with less than 5% increases. The FinCom discussed global Town issues:
 - Tisbury's excessive Free Cash balances;
 - (Free Cash rose Islandwide due to short-term rental tax revenues but after 5 years of data estimates should be more accurate. Vehicle excise income increased with the number of cars.)
 - reliance on the new Town Administrator (starting March 3rd);
 - many new positions (Conservation, Harbormaster, Shellfish, Planning Board, Building Inspector...)
 - shared positions and inter-departmental collaboration;
 - the difficulties finding seasonal or specialty trained hires;
 - the shallow nature of Town Hall staffing,
 - other Towns' approach to short-term rental agents;
 - and as always the housing crisis.

Committee Reports

MVRHS Building Committee met every 2 weeks (see documents on file).

Future Meetings (See below: Meetings/Events, & Actions.)

- Thursday 2/13/25 – Library with 2 articles, Board of Health,
- Wednesday 2/19/25 – Meeting on TSB Budgets and warrant articles, including the Town Administrator Bylaw (after the discussion at the December Special Town Meeting (STM)) and the Leaf Blower bylaw.
- Thursday 2/20/25 – To Be Determined

Items Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair – None

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Adjournment

- *ELAINE MILLER MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:34PM; LOUISE CLOUGH & LOUIS PASHMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:*

Appendix A: Meetings/Events

- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, February 19, 2025 – In-person ESF**
- **TFC – 6:30PM, Thursday, February 20, 2025 – Zoom**
- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, February 26, 2025 – TBD**
- **TFC/TSB – 6:30PM, Wednesday, March 5, 2025 – KCT In-person/Hybrid**
- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, March 12, 19, 26, 2025 – TBD**
- **STM/ATM – 7:00PM, Tuesday, April 29, 2025 Tis. Sch. Gym**

Appendix B: Actions

Catie B. – contact Climate Com. Re: new EV vehicle funding.
Catie B. – increase Dues/Subscriptions for FY27.
Jon S./Chief Habekost – determine Police Vehicle funding source.
Chief Habekost/TSB – reconsider leaf blower enforcement.
Gary K. – Research if Owen Park Pier grant is State or Federal.
Nancy – ask re: 70 new moorings, staffing/timing harbor bldg., Owen pier, etc.
All – Please remember not to hit “Reply All”.
Future Agendas – Minutes: 1/29/25, 2/5/25, 2/12/25,
Budget Season Notes

- Request data on how much each Department turned back in FY24.
- Request projects for grant funding.
- Request capital projects.
- Attach budget/narrative modules to agendas.
- Request/demand foundational information, levy, free cash estimates, etc.
- include fee revenues (offsetting expenses) in budget interviews;
- ask departments to project 5 years of needs i.e. like a capital plan but on other factors—staffing, program changes, etc.

\$200,000 FY25 Reserve Fund spending tally – Balance: \$160,000
- 12/11/24 – Accounting - \$40,000 – Ongoing Consultants

Appendix C: Documents on File

- Agenda/Revised Agenda & Gilfoyle cover email (3 p.) 2/12/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 541 Council on Aging (3 p.) 1/3/25

Article Submission Form – ATM – Capital Appropriations and Other New Equipment (2 p.) 12/11/24 – Sr. Center EV

continued

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Appendix C: Documents on File (cont.)

- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 210 Police (11 p.)
1/8/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 211 Police Hiring & Training (2 p.) 1/8/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 212 Police Vehicle (4 p.) 1/8/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 295 Harbormaster (7 p.) 1/8/25
- Town of Tisbury, Harbor Department, FY2026 Warrant Articles (Waterways Fund) 12/13/24
- Town of Tisbury, Harbor Department, FY2026 Warrant Articles (General Fund) 12/13/24
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 175 Planning Board (6 p.) 1/8/25 & Revised 2/5/25
- Gilfoy email re: School Building Committee Meeting Tuesday, February 18, 2025 5:30PM, MVRHS Library and Zoom (2 p.) 2/12/25

Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

Date

Minutes approved as amended 2/20/25