

**Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee
6:30PM, Wednesday, February 19, 2025
Emergency Services Facility Conference Room**

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Present: Chair – Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Ruth Konigsberg,
Louis Pashman, Alex Meleney, Elaine Miller, Rachel Orr,
Allan Rogers,
Others: Recorder – Marni Lipke,
Town: TSB Chair John Cahill, Finance Director Jonathan Snyder,
Exec. Assist. - Elena DeFoe, Moderator Deborah Medders,
Personnel Bd. - John Schilling, Town Clerk – Hillary Conklin,
BOH– Drew Belski, Town Admin. Task Force – Rick Homans,
Library – Director Amy Ryan, Library Trustee – Arch Smith
* TFC members late arrivals, early departures or absences.

Call Meeting to Order

- The Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) was called to order at 6:34PM. Thanks for being here
(*Recorder's note: Discussions are summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.*)

Review of Town Administrator Bylaw Warrant Article

**Rick Homans, Former Chair of the Town Administrator Job
Description Task Force**

(See documents on file & 10/30/24 Minutes p.1-2.)

Tisbury Select Board (TSB) Chair John Cahill explained that substantive changes were made after December Special Town Meeting (STM) discussions.

- The original initiative was triggered by two April 2024 events;
- Tisbury Master Plan primary finding on Governance:
“Modernize the organization of town government to provide effective leadership, equip Town staff with the authority and resources to do their jobs, and provide support for local government volunteers.”
- and Town Administrator Jay Grande’s choice not to renew his contract. Consequently a Task Force and consultant, drafted an updated job description.

Task Force Chair Rick Homans explained the situation.

- 65% of the 251 Massachusetts municipalities adhered to best practice professional town managers for accountability, stability and continuity.
- Among multiple sources that advised Tisbury to resolve the same governance problems, the Department of Revenue/Division of Local Services (DOR/DLS) Capital tutorship prioritized modernizing and formally codifying leadership.

“We recommend Tisbury codify the town administrator through bylaw.

Tisbury operates with a town administrator position whose duties and responsibilities are defined only by job description. The town administrator

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lacks any formal authority over departments, policies, and procedures. Oversight responsibilities are distributed amongst numerous elected boards and committees with the town administrator position often acting as a liaison between elected and appointed stakeholders and town departments. Additionally, with the position only defined through job description, tasks and responsibilities delegated to the town administrator are subject to change with each election cycle. Formally defining the town administrator through bylaw will outline clear lines of authority and ensure core job responsibilities are vested in the position and not vulnerable to the fluctuation of boards and committees. This will provide a strong foundation for the town to codify its fiscal management and annual budgetary process through official assignment of financial roles and duties.”

- Mr. Grande’s job description had many best practice components but conflicting Tisbury Bylaws compromised or negated his authority. The proposed Bylaw and amendments sought to resolve or eradicate conflicts.
- Special State Legislation was a further route not being pursued at this point.
- Many responsibilities were fairly standard: Information Technology (IT), Chief Procurement Officer, Facilities, Personnel, etc.
- The Bylaws found a middle ground between TSB and Town Administrator hiring/firing/personnel matters by having authority go to the Town Admin. but requiring a 15 day waiting period during which the TSB could veto an action.
- The amendments made significant modifications including extending this 15 day waiting period/veto to other boards.

“In the case of elected boards the Town Administrator shall consult with the elected Board prior to making any appointment or removal under this subsection. Unless otherwise provided by law, appointments or removals shall become effective 15 calendar days after written notice thereof has been provided by the Town Administrator to the elected board....The elected board was responsible for directing the employee’s job duties, including establishment and monitoring of annual goals and objectives”

The Planning Board very much liked the modification.

- Instead of the Town Admin. as Personnel Director reporting to the Personnel Board on recruitment, selection, application of policies, periodic reviews... “He may assign any responsibilities and duties under this bylaw to the Human Resources Director.”
- Then a separate article would define other Personnel changes: shifting the Personnel Board to advisory, retain their authority to set the annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in consultation with the Finance Director and Town Administrator. If the separate Personnel amended article failed the main Bylaw would still be in effect.

There was an extensive discussion.

- Liaison to the Master Planning Committee Ruth Konigsberg disputed the December STM accusation of “power grabbing” by clearly stating that the

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changes would allow the Town Administrator to function, and that without the changes the Town Administrator and Town would continue serious inefficiencies and be unable to execute much of its business.

- Tisbury was now a \$40,000,000 complex municipality making it important to have professional management with the necessary expertise to take responsibility and be held accountable, while relying on volunteer boards for serious advisory and oversight.

- The TSB did not have the time to fulfill further responsibilities, and volunteer boards did not have the knowledge or training/certification needed for much municipal business. The change would leave the TSB in a guidance and oversight capacity.

- A level of trust and collaboration was expected between the Town Admin. and staff, boards and committees; without which no one could function well.

- The change would help employees by clarifying roles, mentorship and most of all accountability.

- There were a number of requests to clearly list the major Boards that fell under “unless otherwise provided by State law or by-law” as “including but not limited too”: Tisbury School, Vineyard Haven Public Library, Tisbury Water Works, etc.

- The Library Board of Trustees requested more specific language as to their authority and special circumstances, e.g. oversight of public computers requiring other forms of IT security.

- Town Admin. maintenance oversight should specifically exclude the school.

- If the Town Admin. oversaw Emergency Management what was the role of the Emergency Management Director.

- The FinCom set the Budget; the TSB set the Warrant; and Town Meeting was the final authority.

The Personnel Board/Town Admin. status remained controversial.

- Town Clerk Hillary Clinton advocated for Personnel Board authority/ autonomy as the:

- only recourse for employees with some conflict with the Town Admin. or in the case of Town Admin. incompetence;

- and an employee advocate for COLAs.

- Personnel Bd. Chair John Schilling explained the following.

- The Board retained authority over COLAs and over Compensation/ Classification reviews. However he agreed with the new bylaw that more voices should contribute to reviews, citing the FinCom-protested steep FY24 COLA (see Minutes: 2/22/23 p.4, & 3/8/23 p.3).

- The Board only oversaw Management & Professionals (M&P) employees.

- The Board had handled employee complaints in the past because there was no qualified, certified professional. However, it had no access to personnel

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records, nor the requisite knowledge, nor certification, and consequently should not be the final authority. Human Resources now handled union employees and complaints—greatly reducing the number of grievances.

- As an example of conflicts: the Personnel Bd. Bylaw gave them authority to evaluate the Town Administrator but when the Board set up an interview it was immediately contacted by the TSB about usurping their authority.
- Even personnel policies had become so technical they had to be vetted or drafted by legal counsel.
- A Town Admin. could supervise shared personnel who were now answering to 2 different supervisors.

Review of Leaf Blower Warrant Article

Zada Clarke, Vineyard Conservation Society

(See documents on file, & 2/12/25 Minutes p.2, & below: Actions.)

- The FinCom questioned police enforcement, since the police were severely understaffed and considered their presence heavy handed. Other possibilities were suggested with the police as secondary enforcers:

- Select Board recommendation,
- Board of Health (BOH) or Department of Public Works (DPW),
- Building Department/short-term rental position,
- neighbors, or a complaint form on the Town website.

Any new bylaw compliance was boosted by word of mouth and experience as it was enforced, as well as by industry direction e.g. by 2028 Home Depot planned to sell 80% electric blowers.

- Extensive outreach to landscapers found some in favor for worker health. Although initial equipment switch could be costly, the ByLaw granted 3 years for the change.

Review of Select Board Budgets and Warrant Articles

John Cahill, Chair, Tisbury Select Board (TSB)

Elena DeFoe, Executive Assistant

(See documents on file & below: Actions.)

- Budgets – Select Board – The previously unfunded Human Resources Coordinator was being morphed into an administrative assistant shared with the Town Administrator.

- The new job description listed many small duties that were hindrances to the current team, for example constant interruptions to sell parking permits while drafting a Town Meeting warrant.
- For accounting ease it was in the TSB budget.
- The position would shift from union to M&P.
- There was space in the main room for a desk.

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- Funds for the Finance Director search were included under Consulting (see Minutes: 1/8/25 p.4-5, & 2/13/25 p.3).
- Town Admin. salary line reflected new Town Admin. Joe LaCivita's contract. Administrative Assignment was the housing subsidy—to be paid until the move to Spring St. where he would pay utility costs.
 - Median salary for town administrators was \$218,000 on the Cape to \$280-320,000 around Boston.
 - There was rumor of rising requests for housing subsidies among staff.
- Select Board Other – The Town was running up against its \$90,000 Town Counsel annual costs, much of it on personnel matters.
- Building Maintenance – was 7.5% down. Computers and Office Supplies were centrally purchased for bulk savings.
- Municipal Housing Trust – The FinCom pointed out the Fund parameters were flexible, advocating for more creative forms of support: fee subsidies, mortgage assistance, shared equity, etc.—a useful tool that was idle in a crisis.
- Park & Ride – In response to complaints from clientele with year-round permits, Executive Assistant Elena DeFoe periodically drove around the lot and called Police Chief Habekost—which resulted in about 20 parking tickets.

Warrant Articles

- Park & Ride revenue was ~ \$14,000+ per year and could be used to maintain the lot which was currently in bad shape. Separation of departmental revenues was a recurring issue (see 1/8/25 Minutes p.1).
- Renovation of the old Water Works/Spring St. house would probably include an Innovative/Alternative (IA) septic system (see 2/13/25 Minutes p.6) increasing the total to ~ \$300,000.
 - The project had to go out to bid for Division of Capital Asset Management & Maintenance (DCAMM) certified contractors.
 - Architectural consultation was currently pro-bono.
- The new off-Island vehicle would come from the State bid list. Mr. LaCivita would have use of the old car for his 6 month transition, then it would be sold.
- A formal grant application for a \$160,000 cyber security Massachusetts Community grant required a 25% (\$40,000) match.
- The Federal/Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (FEMA/MEMA) grant for Beach Road flooding was entirely reimbursement based, requiring the town to spend \$1,200,000 in order to get returned funds. Tisbury was working with Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) Director Adam Turner and the FinCom suggested this was a regional/Islandwide project.
- Contributions to stabilization funds were adjusted according to Free Cash and article spending.

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

- Thursday, February 20th would be on budgets with increases under 5% as well as recurring issues:
 - compliance/enforcement;
 - departmental revenue separation—dept revenues available from accountant;
 - fee level review—including a fire inspection bylaw.
- Tuesday, March 4th would be a hybrid meeting with the TSB to review Town budgets and articles.
- The Tisbury share of the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) budget was down ~ \$200,000 due to a drop in Tisbury student enrollment.
- The Select Board office would be closed for school vacation week.

Items Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair – None

Adjournment

• *ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:51PM; ELAINE MILLER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Appendix A: Meetings/Events

- **TFC – 6:30PM, Thursday, February 20, 2025 – Zoom**
- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, February 26, 2025 – Zoom**
- **TFC/TSB – 6:00PM, Tuesday, March 4, 2025 – ESF In-person/Hybrid**
- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, March 12, 19, 26, 2025 – TBD**
- Ballot/Override deadline – Tuesday, March 25, 2025
- TFC Recommendation Deadline – Friday, March 28, 2025
- STM/ATM – 7:00PM, Tuesday, April 29, 2025 Tis. Sch. Gym

Appendix B: Actions

Town Administrator ByLaw –

- revise Budget Calendar date to October 1st.
- include list of major boards as designated by State or Local law.
- consult Library Trustees.
- exclude the School from maintenance oversight.
- submit to Town Clerk by March 18th.

Leaf Blower Bylaw –

- tweak responsible person language to homeowners, etc.
- consider other enforcers and police as secondary;
- consult John Cahill re: final draft.

Nancy – are there FY25 funds to cover Joe LaCivita's housing?

Nancy – request Municipal Housing Trust Balance.

continued

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Appendix B: Actions (cont.)

John C. – consider multiple uses for Housing trust funds.

– ask other towns for Beach Rd. flood funds & will grant be available in 1 yr?

Nancy – request tax levy update from Jon S.

- ask about the casualty insurance reduction.

- Why is short-term registry fee an article?

All – Please remember not to hit “Reply All”.

Future Agendas – Minutes: 2/19/25,

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 2/19/25

• Article XXX – Town Administrator (7 p.) 1/23/25

• Appointing Authority...(3 p.)

• Revised Proposed Article Regulating Leaf Blowers (Tisbury) Date: 1/24/25
(4 p.)

• FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 122 Select Board (4 p.)
1/8/25 (2 copies)

• FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 122 Select Board (14 p.)
1/8/25

• FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 122 Select Board (*Revised*)

• Select Board, Human Resources Coordinator and administrative assistant to
Personnel Director/Town Administrator (4 p.)

• FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 123 Selectmen-
Other (4 p.) 1/8/25

• FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 123 Selectmen-
Other (2 p.) 1/8/25

• FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 481 Park & Ride Facility
(2 p.) 1/8/25

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Appendix C: Documents on File (cont.)

- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 189 Housing Trust Fund (2 p.) 1/8/24 *(2 copies)*
- Article Submission Form – ATM – Article: Park and Ride Revenue Appropriation 2/14/25
- Town of Tisbury Capital Improvement Program, Project Request Form, Off-Island Vehicle (4 p.) 9/19/24
- Article Cybersecurity Grant Match
- Beach Road Flood Mitigation Grant Match
- Article Renovation of the Spring Building 12/13/25
- Article Submission Form – ATM – Article: To Fund Renovation of House at Spring Building Overlook 1/10/25
- Town of Tisbury, 2025 Annual Town Meeting, Article – To Amend Registration Fee for Short Term Rentals to Two Hundred Dollars (\$200,000) 2/10/25

Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

Date

Minutes approved as amended 3/5/25