

**Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee**  
**6:30PM, Thursday, February 20, 2025**  
**by Zoom Cloud Conference**

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**Present:** Chair – Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Russ Hartenstine\*,  
Ruth Konigsberg, Alex Meleney, Elaine Miller\*, Rachel Orr,  
Allan Rogers,  
**Others:** Recorder – Marni Lipke,  
**Town:** Finance Director Jonathan Snyder, Moderator Deborah Medders,  
Building Commissioner – Greg Monka,  
\* TFC members late arrivals, early departures or absences.

**Call Meeting to Order**

- The Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) was called to order at 6:33PM.

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

**Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) Levy Limit Discussion**

(See documents on file & below: Actions.)

- Finance Director Jon Snyder explained that Select Board Budget Insurance line dropped because the new School facility insurance was much lower than projected.
- The tax levy limit was still in flux. This draft did *not* reflect:
  - ~ \$200,000 Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) reduction;
  - \$323,190 new growth set by Assessor Anne Marie Cywinski;
  - Substance Abuse article at \$0.00.

The FinCom explored Free Cash. \$3,500,000 from last year, plus this year's projected \$1,800,000 brought the total to a conservative ~ \$5,000,000.

- Free Cash came from unspent budgeted funds including staffing vacancies or actual versus projected spending (e.g. see above insurance), as well as under-estimated local revenues—such as the short-term rental tax.
  - The sheet did not reflect revenue from 70 new moorings since the moorings would have to be installed before July 1, 2025 to collect fees—and at least 50% would go into the Waterways fund (see 5/30/18 Minutes p.1).
- Tisbury used \$700,000 to reduce the tax rate but Mr. Snyder hoped to gradually decrease it to \$500,000 to reduce Town reliance on Free Cash, which was a precarious income source.
- The State website showed Tisbury Free Cash at 20% of its Budget for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024 (FY23 & FY24), 15% for FY22 and 10% for FY21—extremely high numbers clearly indicating residents were overtaxed. Mr. Snyder acknowledged the accuracy stating balances were the accumulation of several years.

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- Tisbury used Free Cash for its capital expenses, but it could also be said it used it as another reserve fund.
- This year's \$1,800,000 residual was less than previous years and a rough tally of proposed articles came to \$4,000,000 of the \$5,000,000 total.
- FinCom suggested a possible Free Cash policy to set a limit either similar to regional school districts' 5% maximum, or connected to stabilization levels.
- Town reserves included several stabilization funds sometimes needed for emergencies and also as a factor in bond ratings—Free Cash did not affect bond ratings. However stabilization withdrawals were cumbersome requiring a 2/3 Town Meeting vote.
- In FY25 some budgeted items (police cruiser, OPEB) were shifted to Free Cash to avoid an override, however they were returned to the FY26 budget because:
  - they were too small to effect the \$1,279,000 projected override, and
  - were regular operating expenses that belonged in the budget.
- Mr. Snyder stated the major driver of the override, was a debt exclusions drop from \$6,100,000 to \$5,041,000.

Staff increases (totaling ~ \$3-500,000) whether in budgets or as articles were funded through Raise & Appropriate, i.e. within the levy limit.

- Fire Dept. shift coverage (budgeted) – \$67,310
- Tisbury Select Board (TSB) Administrative Assistant (budgeted) – \$81,473
- Shellfish Assistant Constable (article) – \$70,512
- Conservation Agent (article) – TBD,
- Harbormaster seasonal workers (budgeted) – \$17,741,
- Planning Bd position – no additional funding except benefits,
- Building Dept. Short-term Rental Inspector (article) – TBD,
- Library Assistant Director – no additional funding.
- In the larger picture a new position could be seen as costing \$1,000,000 in years of salary and benefits.
- The Health Insurance line was fluid (vacant positions, staffing shifts) but might be revised up for so many new positions.
- FinCom members suggested a more conservative approach.
  - Stagger new positions over 2 or 3 years.
  - Departments with vacancies should see how they function fully staffed before requesting new positions. The FinCom looked forward to the new Town Administrator.
  - Shifting the new TSB administrative assistant from union to Management and Professional (M&P) was questioned. Other Dept. Heads shifted people into M&P in order to increase their pay.
  - For some departments regionalization might be the only way to save funds and cover burgeoning workloads, e.g. building inspectors.

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- Staff changes could lose critical functions. Dept. of Public Works (DPW) Procurement Officer/Contract Specialist Marie Maciel was now a foreman instead.
- The FinCom reviewed the attempt at a Natural Resources Department:
  - ° shared administrative position now totally Harbormaster related,
  - ° Harbormaster/Shellfish collaboration in the field, and
  - ° consequently whether both Harbor and Shellfish needed new staffing.
  - ° New State law increasing vessel inspections was also noted (see Minutes: 2/5/25 p.4-5,& 2/12/25 p.2-3).
- Although tempting to only promote departments bringing in revenue, traditions like shellfishing were important to Town culture and economy.
- The FinCom struggled with the conundrum of retaining workers suffering the high cost of Island living while trying to restrain Town spending.
- It was suggested Free Cash tax rate adjustment be increased to \$800,000.

**Discussion and Potential Votes on Budgets** (See documents on file.)

• *ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING FISCAL YEAR 2026 DEPARTMENT BUDGETS AS PRESENTED:*

- **ACCOUNTANT #135,**
- **ANIMAL CONTROL #292,**
- **ASSESSORS #141,**
- **BOARD OF HEALTH #510,**
- **BUILDING MAINTENANCE #192,**
- **DUKES COUNTY REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY #185,**
- **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT #291,**
- **FINANCE COMMITTEE #131,**
- **HISTORICAL COMMISSION #691,**
- **HUMAN RESOURCES #153,**
- **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) #155**
- **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) EQUIPMENT #156,**
- **MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL #693,**
- **MODERATOR #114,**
- **MUNICIPAL HOUSING TRUST #189,**
- **OTHER POST EMPLOYEE BENEFITS (OPEB)**
- **PARK & RIDE #481,**
- **PERSONNEL #152,**
- **REGISTRAR/ELECTIONS #163,**
- **SHELLFISH #172,**
- **TOWN CLERK #161,**
- **VETERANS BENEFITS #543;**

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ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

- Ruth Konigsberg recused herself due to conflict of interest.
- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE **ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS #176** FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET **AS PRESENTED**: RUSS HARTENSTINE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

- Rachel Orr recused herself due to conflict of interest.
- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING FISCAL YEAR 2026 DEPARTMENT BUDGETS **AS PRESENTED**:

- **PLANNING BOARD #175,**
- **LIBRARY #610,**

RUSS HARTENSTINE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE. (See Minutes: 2/12/25 p.4 & 2/13/25 p.1-2).

- The FinCom saluted MVRHS for keeping lean budgets. FY26 assessment at \$5,360,000 was lower than FY25 \$5,452,000 partially due to a Tisbury enrollment dip.
- RUSS HARTENSTINE MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE **MARTHA'S VINEYARD REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, #310** FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET **AS PRESENTED**: ALLAN ROGERS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

\* During the discussion Russ Hartenstine (8:04PM) and Elaine Miller (8:10PM) left the meeting.

- Tisbury School would re-certify its Budget down by ~ \$20,000. While acknowledging the new building and union contract negotiations, members considered the \$1,500,000 increase a major driver of the override.
- Should an override pay for expensive and unknown negotiations reserve.
- Tisbury had the lowest pupil/teacher ratio on the Island.
- IT WAS THE CONSENSUS OF THE FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO REQUEST THE TISBURY SCHOOL RE-EXAMINE ITS FY26 BUDGET.

**Discussion and Potential Votes on Warrant Articles on Special Town Meeting (STM) and Annual Town Meeting (ATM) Warrants** – Tabled

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**Approve Minutes 1/29/25, 2/5/25, 2/12/25, 2/13/25**

- *RACHEL ORR MOVED TO APPROVE THE:*
    - *JANUARY 29, 2025 MINUTES AS AMENDED,*
    - *FEBRUARY 5, 2025 MINUTES,*
    - *FEBRUARY 12, 2025 MINUTES AS AMENDED,*
    - *FEBRUARY 13, 2025 MINUTES AS AMENDED,*
- ALLAN ROGERS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, ABSTENTIONS AS ABSENT: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.*

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

- February 26<sup>th</sup> meeting would review un-voted budgets & warrant articles—a list would be sent out.
- Tuesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> – hybrid meeting with the TSB to review Town budgets and articles (and Town Administrator Joe LaCivita's second day).
- Updates:
  - Conservation Commission budget and article were expected shortly.
  - Building Commissioner Greg Monka was meeting with Human Resources.
  - The Town Administrator Bylaw was being revised.
  - Further estimates were being solidified for the Spring St.house.
  - The Beach Rd. flood grant match (see 2/19/25 Minutes p.5) was in question, as the Town looked at finding the \$1,200,000.

**Items Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair** – None

**Adjournment**

- *ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:05PM; ALEX MELENEY & LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.*

**Appendix A: Meetings/Events**

- **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**

**continued**

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**Appendix B: Actions**

Jon Snyder – Tax Levy updates:

- New Growth \$323,190
- MVRHS Assessment reduction.
- Substance Abuse \$0.0

Nancy – contact Danielle Ewart re: Deputy Constable job description.

Nancy – contact Tisbury School re: reducing their budget.

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

Future Agendas – Minutes: 2/19/25, 2/20/25

**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 (2 p.) 2/20/25
- DLS, Data Analytics and Resources Bureau, Category 1- Free Cash as a % of Budget 2/22/2025
- Gilfoy email re: MMA Action Alert Call Your Legislators to Make Remote Public Meeting Options Permanent (2 p.) 2/20/25
- Town Clerk memo re: Draft #3 (8 p.) 2/14/25
- Gilfoy/Snyder email re: Article List and stabilization funds (3 p.) 2/19/25
- Town Meeting Articles as of 2/18/2025 (2 p.)
- Date Received, Purpose, Dept., From, Amount...(4 p.)
- Town of Tisbury, Special Town Meeting Warrant, Tuesday, April 29, 2025 at 7:00PM (19 p.) 2/19/25
- Town of Tisbury, Annual Town Meeting Warrant, Tuesday, April 29, 2025 at 7:00PM (16 p.) 2/19/25
- Town of Tisbury – FY2026 Budget & Levy Limit (10 p.) 2/20/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 114 Moderator
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 131 Finance Committee (3 p.) 1/3/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 141 Assessors (3 p.) 1/8/25

**continued>**

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**Appendix C: Documents on File (cont.)**

- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 152 Personnel Board (2 p.) 1/3/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 153 Human Resources (2 p.) 1/3/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 155 Technology (5 p.) 1/3/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 156 Technology Equipment (2 p.) 1/3/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 161 Town Clerk (4 p.) 1/3/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 163 Registrar of Voters (2 p.) 1/3/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 176 Zoning (3 p.) 1/3/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 185 Regional Housing Authority (4 p.) 1/3/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 292 Animal Control (4 p.) 1/3/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 543 Veterans Benefits (3 p.) 2/14/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 691 Historical Commission (2 p.) 2/14/25
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 691 M.V. Cultural Council (2 p.) 2/14/25
- Martha's Vineyard – FY26 Statutory Assessment 2/13/2025, Assessment to Member Towns (2 p.)
- Martha's Vineyard Regional High School District, FY26 Re-Certified Budget #3, February 13, 2025 (9 p.)
- Chat:
  - Deborah Medders (Feb 20, 2025, 7:33 PM) Good evening, FinCom....
  - Russell Hartenstine (Feb 20, 2025, 8:04 PM) I have to leave, Im sorry. Good evening, all!
  - Elaine Miller (Feb 20, 2025, 8:06 PM) My computer is gong in and out.

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Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

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Date

Minutes approved as amended 3/5/25