

Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee
6:30PM, Thursday, February 26, 2025
by Zoom Cloud Conference

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Present: Chair – Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Russ Hartenstine, Ruth Konigsberg, Alex Meleney, Rachel Orr, Allan Rogers,
Others: Recorder – Marni Lipke, Jeffrey Canha,
Town: TSB Chair John Cahill, Shellfish Constable – Danielle Ewart,
* 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 Deputy Shellfish Constable Position

Danielle Ewart, Shellfish Constable

(See documents on file & 2/5/25 Minutes p.4-5.)

- Shellfish Constable Danielle Ewart, the only full-time employee for 14 years, reviewed current staffing:
 - 20 hr./wk seasonal worker spread throughout the year,
 - 32 hr./wk seasonal worker (retiree) mid-May – mid-October,
 - 2 Tisbury Waterways, Inc. (TWI) funded summer interns;and full-time staffing of other Island Towns:
 - Edgartown – Constable and 3 Deputies at \$37.65/hr.
 - Oak Bluffs – Constable and 3 Deputies (1 is 32 hrs.) at \$31.80/hr.
 - Chilmark – Constable and a part-time Assistant.
- She reviewed the job description/skill set and went on to justify the request.
 - A good worker was lost to a full-time job, but would be glad to return.
 - As aquaculture/propagation expanded the workload/inspections increased.
 - Harbor demand precluded Natural Resources Assistant cross-training.
 - Heavy physical work required a second person for safety.
 - Unlike other Down-Island towns there was no Shellfish Committee, and only 2 aquaculture representatives on the Natural Resources Committee.
 - The Deputy could fill in, in the Constables absence and would be part of succession planning
 - Other increased or planned programming included annual family shellfish education, increased seed production, build/operate an upweller, and recreational plant/harvest oyster area.
 - The recreational, commercial and aquaculture shellfishing industry brought substantial revenue and resources to the Tisbury economy.
 - In deference to the FinCom, Ms. Ewart had delayed the request for some years—last year it was requested and withdrawn (see 3/13/24 Minutes p.3).

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- The Budget would increase by a partial salary (~ \$50,000) plus benefits—i.e. if approved, a seasonal salary (\$23,000) would be cut on Annual Town Meeting (ATM) floor.

In the drive to contain new positions, FinCom considered several factors.

- Shared positions often did not work. On the other hand, the matter could be returned to the Personnel Board to enforce the sharing. This iteration of a Natural Resources Dept. was unsuccessful; cooperation/sharing in the field was not enough to cover Shellfish duties.
- Tisbury had many small or 1 person departments, and it was unsustainable to increase all of them. Some form of regionalization or sharing was necessary.
- Succession planning as a department head responsibility was briefly debated.
- There was a ~ \$12,000 difference between a 32 hr/wk position and a 40 hr/wk position. The position should be able to grow to full-time over the years.

- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO RECOMMEND A 32 HOUR PER WEEK DEPUTY SHELLFISH CONSTABLE POSITION; LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION WITHDRAWN.

- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON CREATING AND FUNDING A 40 HOUR/WEEK DEPUTY SHELLFISH CONSTABLE FOR \$70,512 AS PRESENTED; LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION **PASSED: 5 AYES, 1 NAY, 1 ABSTENTION**: ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—ABSTAIN, RACHEL ORR—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—NAY. (There was some reluctance.)

Discussion and Potential Votes on Budgets

(See documents on file & below: Actions.)

Public safety increases were another concern. Without official philosophical approval or ATM vote the Fire and Ambulance Departments had morphed from volunteer to professional or semi-professional personnel (see 1/29/25 Minutes p.2-4). It was hard to know where the conversation should take place.

- Refusing budgets was a flawed tool resulting in adversarial relations with the department, service users and voters.

- IT WAS THE CONSENSUS OF THE TISBURY FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO MAKE A STATEMENT ON ANNUAL TOWN MEETING FLOOR AND IN THE VOTER GUIDE ADDRESSING CONCERNS ABOUT RISING BUDGETS AND THE DIFFICULTIES OF PROVIDING SERVICES INCLUDING SUCH ISSUES AS HOUSING, CHANGES IN VOLUNTEER AND PART-TIME REQUIREMENTS, LACK OF TECHNICAL OR CERTIFIED CANDIDATES AND THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE AND REGIONAL COOPERATION.

- The Ambulance budget was only up 5.8%, but the Covid-triggered jump from 2 to 3 person shifts was very expensive (see 2/17/21 Minutes p.1-2).

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- RUSS HARTENSTINE MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 **AMBULANCE BUDGET #231 AS PRESENTED**; ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE. (There was some reluctance.)
- The Personnel Bd. turned down the Building Dept. short-term rental agent request as needing more work (see 1/29/25 Minutes p.1-2). Finance Director Jon Snyder would reach out to Building Inspector Greg Monka.
- The Conservation budget was unchanged and the warrant article requested a 3 day (24 hr/wk) Conservation Agent position (see 1/8/25 Minutes p.1-2).
- **ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING FISCAL YEAR 2026 DEPARTMENT BUDGETS AS PRESENTED**:

- **COUNCIL ON AGING #541**,
- **CONSERVATION #171**,
- **CONSTABLE #299**,

LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE (recused from Conservation), RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

• LOUISE CLOUGH MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING FISCAL YEAR 2026 **DEBT & INTEREST #700** DEPARTMENT BUDGET **AS PRESENTED**: ALLAN ROGERS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

- There was concern about the Harbormaster staff increase without an official warrant article (2/12/25 Minutes p.1-2).
- RUSS HARTENSTINE MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING FISCAL YEAR 2026 **HARBOR #295** DEPARTMENT BUDGET **AS PRESENTED**: LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION **PASSED: 6 AYES, 1 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, RACHEL ORR—NAY, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.
- **At (11% or \$300,000)** the Police Budget returned to FY24 levels after the FY25 cuts (see 2/12/25 Minutes p.1-2). The FinCom asked about:
 - whether funds could be transferred between Overtime (OT) and salaries;
 - boosting OT while retaining fully staffed salaries;
 - unfilled vacancies as an excess Free Cash driver (see 2/20/24 Minutes p.1-2).

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- The Select Board 25% increase was primarily the previously unfunded/unfilled Human Resources (HR)/Town Administrator Administrative Assistant (See 2/19/25 Minutes p.4-5). Issues included:
 - changing an ATM voted position;
 - increased Town Administrator duties requiring additional support;
 - renaming the position and/or splitting the salary 50% HR/50% Tisbury Select Board (TSB);
- The Town Administrator's contract for \$200,000 was budgeted at \$212,000. The increase was more than the \$5-6,000 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).
 - The contract included a housing stipend of \$36,000 for the next 3 years In case the Spring St. House renovation was not completed (see below p.6).
- ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 SELECT BOARD BUDGET #122; RUSS HARTENSTINE SECONDED; MOTION WITHDRAWN.
- Select Board Other was down 8.3% due to health insurance changes.
- RUSS HARTENSTINE MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 **SELECT BOARD OTHER #123** DEPARTMENT BUDGET **AS PRESENTED**; ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.
- ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 **TREASURER/COLLECTOR #145** DEPARTMENT BUDGET **AS PRESENTED**; RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.
- Health insurance increased 6.5% and life insurance 5% (see also 2/20/25 Minutes p.2).

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

(See documents on file & below: Actions.)

- A new levy limit calculation was available.

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- The FinCom asked about spending, residuals and results of previously voted articles for a new Town website (see Minutes: 3/3/21 p.2, & 3/9/22 p.7).
- **RACHEL ORR MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON CYBER SECURITY FOR \$40,000 AS PRESENTED; RUSS HARTENSTINE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:** ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.
- **RUSS HARTENSTINE MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON THE COUNCIL ON AGING NEW ELECTRIC VEHICLE FOR \$29,500 AS PRESENTED; RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:** ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.
- Questions were raised about the off-Island vehicle (see 2/19/25 Minutes p.5).
 - Why does the Town need an SUV?
 - How often is the vehicle used?
 - Is the total cost of the car less than ferry reservations, mileage, etc.?TSB Chair John Cahill agreed to explore a recently used (e.g. rental) car for savings and as a message to voters. A non-plug-in hybrid was the best choice.
- **LOUISE CLOUGH MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON PURCHASE OF AN OFF-ISLAND VEHICLE FOR \$45,000; RUSS HARTENSTINE SECONDED; MOTION WITHDRAWN.**
- The FinCom questioned establishing a Park & Ride account.
 - Why spend all revenue on upkeep, particularly in low maintenance years?
 - This was a TSB article but maintenance was under Dept. of Public Works.
- **LOUISE CLOUGH MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON PARK & RIDE REVENUE SEPARATE FUND; RUSS HARTENSTINE SECONDED; MOTION WITHDRAWN.**
- Ruth Konigsberg recused herself from Library votes due to conflict of interest.
- **RUSS HARTENSTINE MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON THE ASSISTANT LIBRARY DIRECTOR AS PRESENTED; RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:** ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE. (See 2/13/25 Minutes p.2.)

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- Town Administrator housing and the Spring St. House renovation was explored (see 2/19/25 Minutes p.4-5).
- The Town Administrator should be considered as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a \$40,000,000 organization.
- Subsidized housing for high level officials would generate some bitterness among voters and requests from other staff.
- Whereas the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) purchased a house for its Director, the Director paid rent.
- The Island's geographic isolation forestalled any close lower cost housing. Tisbury did not want a Town Administrator that lived on Cape Cod.
- It was an unfortunate fact and a growing trend that housing was such that subsidy or provision was required in order to get good candidates. (Mr. LaCivita's New York house was \$600,000—an equivalent Vineyard house would be \$1,800,000.)
- It was Joe LaCivita's suggestion that instead of spending taxpayer funds on a landlord that the Town invest in property and maintain Town infrastructure.

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

- Mr. Cahill commended FinCom teamwork, and recommended that as many FinCom members as possible attend the March 4th joint meeting in person.
- In view of the remaining work to be done a March 5th meeting was scheduled.

Items Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair – None

Adjournment

- *ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:50PM; LOUISE CLOUGH AND ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.*

Appendix A: Meetings/Events

- **TFC/TSB – 6:00PM, Tuesday, March 4, 2025 – ESF In-person/Hybrid**
- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, March 5, 2025 – Zoom**
- **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**

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Appendix B: Actions

Budget questions

- new drafts of Fire & DPW with lifeguard switch;
- are Police OT and salary lines transferable;
- split HR/Town Admin. Asst 50% HR – 50% TSB;
- explain \$212,000 Town Admin. salary;
- should the Town Administrator pay rent?

Article questions

- Off-island car: why SUV, frequency of use, recently-used, cost savings math.
- Cyber-security grant match – Town website residuals from previous articles.
- Park & Ride separate fund justification.
- Why is the Short-term Rental registration fee an article?
- HR/Adm. Asst. - rename? Split 50/50.

Nancy – request someone to help Greg Monka.

Nancy – draft general statement on budget to read on ATM floor & Voter Guide.

All – try to attend Tuesday 3/4/25 meeting in person.

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

Future Agendas

- Minutes: 2/19/25 amended, 2/20/25 amended, 2/26/25 corrected

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 2/20/25
- Proposed Personnel Bylaw Amendment 2/24/25
- Gilfoy/Kovack emails re: Follow-up questions for Harbormaster (2 p.)
2/22/25
- Tisbury Shellfish, Deputy Constable (3 p.)
- Year-Round Union Position Tisbury Shellfish Deputy Constable
- 2025 ATM – FY26 Budgets (2 p.)
- 2025 ATM/STM – Articles (3 p.)
- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 299 Constables 2/14/25

continued>

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Appendix C: Documents on File (cont.)

- FY 2026 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 171 Conservation (2 p.) 2/20/25
- Gilfoy cover email re: Conservation Commission budget and article 2/26/25
- To Establish and Fund a Conservation Agent Position for the Town of Tisbury Conservation Department
- Gilfoy/Snyder email re; Seminar Tomorrow, Thursday 2/26/25
- Select Board, Human Resources Coordinator and administrative assistant to Personnel Director/Town Administrator (5 p.)
- Town of Tisbury – FY2026 Budget & Levy Limit (3 p.) 2/26/25

Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

Date

Minutes approved 3/12/25