

Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee
6:30PM, Wednesday, March 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,
Town: TSB Chair – John Cahill, Finance Director – Jonathan Snyder,
Planning Bd. – Ben Robinson,
Schools – Superintendent Richie Smith, Principal John Custer,
Business Administrator Mark Friedman, Assistant Principal
Melissa Ogden, TSC Chair Amy Houghton
* TFC members late arrivals, early departures or absences.

Call Meeting to Order

- The Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom or TFC) was called to order at 6:32PM.
(*Recorder's note: Discussions are summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.*)

Levy Limit Calculation Update (See documents on file.)
Jonathan Snyder Finance Director

- Budget and article sources had been shifted.
- Fire/Ambulance/Department of Public Works (DPW) stabilization deposits were moved to Free Cash as a better funding source.
- Other budgeted items were also shifted to Free Cash for this year—police cruiser, Wastewater deficit, etc.
- State assessments were net against State receipts.
- Local receipts were increased to \$3,990,000,
This brought the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) Budget and Raise & Appropriate articles ~ \$12,000 below the levy limit—a narrow margin for error.
- FY24 local receipts came to \$7,000,000 but this was inflated by last year's investment income from the School bond (see 3/19/25 Minutes p.2). FY26 investment projections had returned to the more normal \$140,000.
- Further factors that increased the levy “cushioning margin” were noted:
 - \$23,000 Shellfish Dept. residual if Deputy Shellfish Constable passed;
 - Tisbury School budget reduction (see below);
 - Departments mostly over-budgeted by about 8% (overages not salary related) as shown by 5 years of budgeted vs. actual spending.
- FinCom thanked Mr. Snyder for all his hard work and useful information.

Tisbury School Budget Discussion

Richie Smith, Superintendent Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS)
John Custer, Principal,

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Amy Houghton Chair, Tisbury School Committee (TSC)

Mark Friedman, School Business Manager

The FinCom welcomed the School representatives. Superintendent Richie Smith and TSC Chair Amy Houghton thanked the FinCom for their invitation. The Schools were able to reduce their budgets by \$151,634.75 to be re-certified at a March 31st TSC meeting scheduled to be within Town Warrant deadline. Although able to find funds in some deeper cuts, this had already been a lean budget under pressure from a number of issues.

- The newly renovated facility would go out of warranty in 2025-26 and the TSC and Administrators were determined to be good stewards of this most advanced school facility on the Island.

- Due to the imminent construction, the Preventive Maintenance line had been artificially lowered to bare bones for about 10 years.

- An issue at Eversource delayed billing, which turned out substantially higher than expected—FY25 Power/Light would show a ~ \$20-40,000 deficit.

- If roof & parking lot canopy solar installation went as planned this summer, the FY26 Power budget would be sufficient, but delays would result in a deficit.

- Projections showed that School solar would save 500,000 tons of oil-based carbon from being released into the atmosphere.

- The FinCom warned that power usage jumped when staff thought of it as “free” and suggested a brief education or training session.

- In comparison with other Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) custodial staffing, (Edgartown 5, Oak Bluffs School (OBS) 4, Tisbury 4, West Tisbury School (WTS) 4.4, Chilmark 1, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) 7) Tisbury School had more square footage than WTS. Plus custodians and staff faced a steep learning curve on technical advances.

- The Budget also reflected a 50 student enrollment jump which produced significant assessment increases.

- Tisbury School was in the mid-range of other MVPS student/staff ratios:

Tisbury 7.51/1, Edgartown 7.3/1, OBS 7.7/1, WTS 6.29/1, Chilmark 5.75/1, and MVRHS 8.78/1. The TSC appreciated their fortune in being in such a position.

- As a “High Needs” designated school, Tisbury received \$1,600,000 in Chapter 70 State reimbursements for Special Education, low income, high needs student expenditures—which also spoke to its student/staff ratio.

- Due to a FY25 reporting error, the MVRHS over-assessed Tisbury by \$200,000, so no invoices would be submitted for the final months.

- The All Island School Committee (AISC) was seriously involved in regionalization. A Committee was formed which welcomed Town representation (Select Boards, FinComs, Town Administrators) and was working with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the

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Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS). Regionalization would be a complex process aiming to preserve each elementary school's uniqueness, while increasing MVPS student equity, and instituting economies of scale in curriculums, bulk orders, etc., but results were hoped for in 1-2 years. This would require an Islandwide vote, a traditional stumbling block due to inequities of the six Towns' taxpayer bases.

- The FinCom noted that regional formulas should include many factors, and not be solely population or enrollment based, for example large affordable housing projects desperately needed by the entire Island, were being concentrated in the down-Island towns.

- The FinCom thanked the School representatives for their response and difficult work that allowed Tisbury to avoid a Proposition 2 ½ override.

Discussion and Vote on Article to Fund Renovation of the Spring Street Building House **John Cahill, Chair, Tisbury Select Board (TSB)**

(See documents on file, & Minutes: 1/8/25 p.5, & 2/19/25 p.5.)

- TSB Chair John Cahill thanked Rachel Orr and Ruth Konigsberg for their feedback.

- To be safely within budget the Article was raised \$200,000 to \$450,000. The Department of Public Works, (DPW) and Facilities Director would act as Owners Project Manager (OPM), however all other work would go out to bid.

Previous objections and responses were reiterated in terms of providing housing as a perquisite for high level employees, e.g. \$36,000/yr. rent vs. renovation investment would take 12 years to break even.

- In contrast, a 30 year \$450,000 mortgage would cost \$2,900/mo.

- Mean salary for Town Administrators in comparable U.S. towns was \$218,000. The position paralleled a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a \$45,000,000 corporation. Other municipalities (in Florida, Baltimore...) were struggling with employee housing.

- The renovation was not for one person but would remain a future Town asset and resource.

- The Tisbury practice of poor municipal building maintenance had left the building in poor shape so renovation would be required in any case.

- It was a small 2 bedroom house currently configured as an office that had not been painted or carpeted in 10-15 years. The basement and attic were fire hazards; the rooms were small.

- The footprint would not be changed. Renovation would put a bathroom on the second floor and update the 1940s kitchen and downstairs bathroom.

- Town Administrator Joe LaCivita had been very accommodating and proposed a simple standard space, for example, polishing floors to forego carpeting.

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- Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning (HVAC) would change from oil to heat pumps. (Mr. LaCivita would pay utilities.)
- Septic had to be upgraded to an Innovative/Alternate (IA) system—a benefit to the Park and Tashmoo Springs.
- As experienced in such work, Russ Hartenstine noted that renovations were tricky, uncovering unknown problems making cost unpredictable.
- The FinCom suggested a compromise to \$400,000. Mr. Cahill expected the cost to be \$350,000 but requested a cushion to assure project completion.
- LOUISE CLOUGH MOVED *TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING SELECT BOARD WARRANT ARTICLE ON **RENOVATION OF THE SPRING STREET HOUSE FOR \$450,000 AS PRESENTED***; ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; MOTION **PASSED: 6 AYES, 1 NAY, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—NAY, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

Discussion and Potential Votes on Late-Filed Articles

(See documents on file & below: Actions.)

As the Frink donated land was un-developable, underneath a power line with Eversource right of way, and difficult walking terrain. The FinCom asked:

- what benefit the plot would entail,
- did it obligate the Town to pay Bailey's Way Association dues, and
- what was the loss to tax rolls?

Planning Board representative Ben Robinson reported:

- the plot had very low assessed value and there was minimal tax roll loss;
- the Town could use the land for wastewater leaching;
- there were no road association dues.
- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON FRINK LAND DONATION AS PRESENTED; RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION WITHDRAWN.
- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED *TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON **THE FRINK LAND DONATION AS PRESENTED***; RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE (reluctantly), NANCY GILFOY—AYE.
- RACHEL ORR MOVED *TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLES AS PRESENTED*:
 - **TO FUND THE WASTEWATER BUDGET DEFICIT AT \$320,833,**
 - **TO PURCHASE ONE POLICE CRUISER AT \$80,000,**
 - **TO FUND OTHER POST-EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS (OPEB) TRUST AT \$150,000;**

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

- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED **TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE WARRANT ARTICLE ON THE RESERVE FUND INCREASE FOR \$100,000 AS PRESENTED**; ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

Discussion and Potential Votes on Budgets and Articles Previously Reviewed (See documents on file & below: Actions.)

- ALEX MELENEY MOVED **TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING FINANCE DEPARTMENT REVISED WARRANT ARTICLE ON PRIOR YEAR BILLS AT \$46,441.89 AS PRESENTED**; RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

- Building Inspector Greg Monka could not attend tonight's meeting (see below: p. 7). The Article was designed to allow some leeway to fund: an employee, a shared position with Oak Bluffs, or contracted work.

- A 1-yr. (non-precedent setting) increase to the Fire/Ambulance/DPW Stabilization was a good use of excess Free Cash (see 3/12/25 Minutes p.1).

- ALEX MELENEY MOVED **TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING FINANCE DEPARTMENT REVISED WARRANT ARTICLE ON FIRE AT \$700,000/AMBULANCE AT \$70,000/DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AT \$100,000 STABILIZATION AS PRESENTED**; RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

- Chair Nancy Gilfoy's received no further information on the Beach Rd. project.

- RACHEL ORR MOVED **TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WATER WORKS DEPARTMENT REVISED WARRANT ARTICLE ON WATER WORKS CAPITAL PROJECTS: WATER METER REPLACEMENT AT \$20,000, SANBORN GENERATOR AT \$250,000, STORAGE TANK**

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ENGINEERING AT \$290,000, SCADA UPGRADES AT \$75,000 AS PRESENTED; RUSS HARTENSTINE AND ALLAN ROGERS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

- The Seasonal Community legislation designed for Cape Cod and the Islands, still had discrepancies to resolve (see 3/19/25 Minutes p.5) so there was general sense that the request for an Annual Town Meeting (ATM) vote was premature. Possible consequences included; development of undevelopable lots, acceptance of tiny houses, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) non-conformance, municipal employee housing restrictions, etc. There was no disadvantage to waiting until a Special Town Meeting (STM) or the 2026 ATM meanwhile focusing on State Legislature advocacy regarding the details.

- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED **TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON DESIGNATION AS A SEASONAL COMMUNITY AS PRESENTED**; LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION **FAILED UNANIMOUSLY: 0 AYES, 7 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: RUSS HARTENSTINE—NAY, RACHEL ORR—NAY, RUTH KONIGSBERG—NAY, ALEX MELENEY—NAY, ALLAN ROGERS—NAY, LOUISE CLOUGH—NAY, NANCY GILFOY—NAY.

- RUTH KONIGSBERG AND ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE **REVISED SELECT BOARD #122 FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET AS PRESENTED**; ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

- The FinCom discussed their request for School cuts as encouraging conversations and other Island Towns responses to School budgets.

- It was suggested the FinCom draft a letter to the AISC and the TSB strongly advocating regionalization for sustainability, not only for the schools but also for public safety departments: police, fire, emergency medical services, etc. (A single all island tax rate seemed politically unattainable.)

- ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE **RECERTIFIED TISBURY SCHOOL #300 FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET WITH A REDUCTION OF \$151,635 AS PRESENTED**; ALLAN ROGERS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

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- ALEX MELENEY MOVED *TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING REVISED* WARRANT ARTICLE TO **REDUCE THE TAX RATE AT \$700,000 AS PRESENTED**; RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.
- The Operating Budget was so close to the tax levy limit that overspending could be a problem.
- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED *TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE 2025 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING REVISED* WARRANT ARTICLE ON **THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 TOWN OPERATING BUDGET WITH THE \$151,634.75 TISBURY SCHOOL DEPARTMENT BUDGET REDUCTION**; RUSS HARTENSTINE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

Approve Minutes 3/12/25

- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 12, 2025 MINUTES AS AMENDED; RUTH KONIGSBERG SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSTENTIONS due to absence; ALEX MELENEY—ABSTAIN, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—ABSTAIN, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

Committee Reports

- At the TSB meeting Roy Cutrer took issue with the Leaf Blower articles clauses on limiting electric blower hours (see 3/25/25 Minutes p.1).

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

Chair Nancy Gilfoy thanked all who came to the TSB/TFC March 25th meeting, as well as thanking everyone for their valiant time, attention and effort this year, meeting once and sometimes twice a week.

- The FinCom thanked and gave a round of applause to the Chair for her tremendous job, organization and leadership.

- An in-person April 16th meeting would include an interview with Greg Monka as well as review of the 2025 Town Meeting Voter Guide.

Items Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair – None

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Adjournment

• *RACHEL ORR MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:46PM; ALLAN ROGERS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.*

Appendix A: Meetings/Events

- TFC Recommendation Deadline – Friday, March 28, 2025
- TSB signs Warrant 4/1/25
- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, April 16, 2025 – In-person TBD**
- STM/ATM – 7:00PM, Tuesday, April 29, 2025 Tis. Sch. Gym

Appendix B: Actions

Nancy – request Short-Term position job description from Greg Monka;
Nancy/Rachel – consider letter re: regionalizing school and public safety depts.
All – Please remember not to hit “Reply All”.

Future Agendas – Minutes: 3/19/25, 3/25/25, 3/26/25

- Building Inspector,
- Municipal Housing Trust Representatives

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: \$143,833.16

- 12/11/24 – Accounting - \$40,000 – Ongoing Consultants

- 3/12/25 – FinCom - \$5,000 – Purchase Services Overage

- 3/19/25 – Harbor - \$11,166.74 – Town-owned Mooring Maintenance

Appendix C: Documents on File

- Agenda 3/26/25
- Town of Tisbury, Office of the Select Board, Article – Renovation of the Spring Building, Revised 3/25/25
- Revised, To see of the Town will vote to appropriate and transfer from designated sources the sum of Forty Six Thousand... 3/25/25
- Town of Tisbury, 2025 Annual Town Meeting, Article: To Adopt the Position of Short-Term Rental Officer for the Building Department 1/30/25

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Appendix C: Documents on File (cont.)

- Town of Tisbury, 2025 Annual Town Meeting, Article: To Amend the Position of Building Commissioner & Zoning Enforcement Officer for the Building Department 1/30/25
- Town of Tisbury, 2025 Annual Town Meeting, Article: To Adopt the Position of Administrative Assistant to the Building Department 1/30/25
- Town of Tisbury, 2025 Annual Town Meeting, Article: To Amend the Position of Local Building Inspector for the Building Department 1/30/25
- Proposed Article Regulating Leaf Blowers (Tisbury) Date: 3/5/25 (2 p.)
Revised 3/12/26
- Article Submission Form, Revised, ATM, Article __ To Add Funds to the Stabilization Funds for Fire, Ambulance, and Public Works Departments 3/25/25
- Revised Amounts: Reduce Tax Rate, To Fund General Stabilization Fund, To Fund Capital Building and Infrastructure Stabilization Fund 3/25/25
- Meleney/Gilfoy emails re: Path to NO-override! 3/22/25
- Gilfoy/De Foe emails re: Select Board budget questions 3/21/25
- Town Meeting Articles as of 3/21/2025...(2 p.)
- Fiscal Year 2026, Recap – Local Receipts, 3/24/2025
- Town of Tisbury – FY2026 Budget & Levy Limit (3 p.) 3/24/25
- Department Expenditures vs Budget (2 p.)
- Department Expenditures vs. Budget (2 p.)
- Gilfoy cover email re: Seasonal Communities Information 3/24/25
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, Seasonal Communities Advisory Council, Funding, Data & Designations, March 12th, 2025 (27 p.)
- Gilfoy email re: MVRHS School Building Committee Meeting Tuesday, April 1, 2025 5:30PM, (2 p.) 3/27/25
- Chat:
 - Richie Smith: 7:07 – Here is the DESE link that Amy referenced regarding regionalization resources:
<https://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=13545>
 - Russ Hartenstine: 7:09 – the DESE was last updated in 2014, i wonder what the state has learned since then...
 - Jonathon Snyder; 7:34PM – Thank you all – good night.
 - John Cahill: 8:07PM – Thanks everyone for allowing me to speak. And I have learned a lot over the past few months attending. Leaving shortly

Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

Date

Minutes approved as amended 4/16/25