

Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee
6:30PM, Wednesday, August 20, 2025
by Zoom Cloud Conference

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Present: Chair – Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Russ Hartenstine,
Alex Meleney, Elaine Miller, Rachel Orr, Louis Pashman,
Allan Rogers,
Others: Recorder Marni Lipke,
Town: Town Administrator – Joe LaCivita, Admin. Asst. – Elena Defoe,
Finance Director – Jonathan Snyder, Town Clerk – Hillary Conklin,
Fire Dept. – Chief Patrick Rolston, Marques Rivers,
Police Dept – Chief Christopher Habekost, Bill Brigham,
Rick Homans,

* 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.)

Review and Vote on Articles for September Special Town Meeting (STM)

(See documents on file.)

Tisbury Finance Director Jon Snyder reported that when Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) finances were settled there was a \$750,000 levy limit reserve. FinCom reservations about STM additional tax increases after Annual Town Meeting (ATM) prompted a request that any appropriate items be shifted from Raise and Appropriate (R & A) to General Stabilization (balance ~ \$3,800,000). Mr. Snyder noted that stabilization withdrawals required a 2/3 majority vote.

Fire Truck – Patrick Rolston, Fire Chief

• According to Massachusetts Firefighting Academy (MFA) guidelines the class A pumper truck should have been replaced this year after a 30 year lifespan (20 yrs. plus 2 five-year upgrades). The trucks were on rotation so the next would be the ladder truck in 2037—current price ~ \$2,100,000.

- Given steeply rising equipment and labor costs (see 1/29/25 Minutes p.2-3), Chief Patrick Rolston advised the Town to discuss a decision about the Department's future.

• The vote to contract and lock in the pumper price was delayed to increase the Fire Stabilization balance (see Minutes: 3/4/25 p.3, & 3/26/25 p.5). The lead time was 3-4 years—2 years to build plus a backlog (ladder trucks 4-5 yrs.) The FinCom considered several issues:

- The price was comparable to other town purchases.

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- Although Island departments shared lesser costs: a tech team, phone trailer, etc., fire truck purchases could not be regionalized because State regulation required an 8 minutes event response time.
- The Department had a capital plan, courtesy of former Chief John Schilling.
- The Emergency Services Facility (ESF) had room to house the new truck.
- Depending on its value at contract completion, the current truck would either be traded in or reserved for training and maintenance backup.
- The trucks were manufactured at standard 9 ft. wide due to equipment weight requirements (ambulances were the same); however as an old town many Tisbury streets were narrow. The Department ordered the shortest truck available but further customization would be expensive. It was reported the Vineyard Transit Authority had similar issues with bus width.
- As noted above, the FinCom amended the article to fund the remaining balance from General Stabilization.

• *RUSS HARTENSTINE MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 2025 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE #12 TO PURCHASE AND EQUIP A NEW CLASS A FIRE PUMPER TRUCK AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:*

- \$1,026,467.12 FROM FIRE STABILIZATION, AND

- \$23,431.38 FROM GENERAL STABILIZATION;

*ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; **MOTION PASSED 7 AYES, 1 NAY, 0 ABSTENTIONS:** RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—NAY.*

Amend Bylaws—Kennel and Dog License—Hillary Conklin, Town Clerk

- This would bring Tisbury Bylaw language in line with new State kennel regulations (Ollie's Law) requiring a special permit for anyone housing more than 5 dogs—in Tisbury 4 dogs. The kennel license (\$75) included licenses for all kenneled dogs. Kennel license fees were not Town Clerk purview. The Office was working with Animal Control Officer (ACO) Heather Maciel on enforcement, and application and inspection fees.
- 2 Tisbury situations might require licensing. There had been no complaints.
- Dog license fees were revised to coordinate with the expiration/renewal deadline of December 31st. (Other Town Clerk fee increases would be presented at the 2026 ATM.)
- *ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 2025 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLES #8 AND #9 TO AMEND GENERAL BYLAWS:*
 - ON DOG LICENSING FEES,***
 - AND TO INCLUDE A NEW KENNEL BYLAW;***

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ELAINE MILLER SECONDED; **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:** RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE. Hillary Conklin and the FinCom exchanged thanks.

Solar Radar Signs – Christopher Habekost, Police Chief

The article was corrected to reflect the quoted price (see below: Actions). Three signs were proposed, bringing the Department total to six.

- This was in response to several speeding complaints. The signs were effective in reminding drivers to check their speed and in reducing Police calls—a critical issue for the understaffed Department (see 2/12/25 Minutes p.1-2).
- Solar power included batteries for shade or night and could be attached to any post. (The original battery-powered signs required monitoring/recharging).
- Although this could wait for FY27 budgeting, the signs would be useful now—the Department hoped to purchase more in the future.
- The price was too small to be counted as capital and therefore not suitable for stabilization funding.

• ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO **RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 2025 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE #1 TO PURCHASE THREE SOLAR POWERED RADAR SIGNS FOR \$11,221**; RACHEL ORR SECONDED; **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:** LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

Union Wage Increase – Jonathan Snyder, Finance Director

The FY26 budget included funds for 3.1% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) but negotiations resulted in ~11% increase across the board partly as a result of the Compensation/Classification Study (see below: Actions)—average \$4,500 per employee per year for 49 union employees). These funds would cover the FY26 gap but the FY27 budget would reflect the increases.

- Tisbury was losing staff to other Towns and needed to be more competitive to attract good personnel.
- Proposition 2 ½ put all municipalities in a difficult situation threatening overrides for any year a COLA exceeded 2.5% so the levy limit reserve was a constant problem. The FinCom understood but stated its concern.
- As a salary expense it was not eligible for Stabilization funding.

• RUSS HARTENSTINE MOVED TO **RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 2025 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE #2 TO RAISE**

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AND APPROPRIATE \$226,000 TO FUND WAGE INCREASES FOR THE TOWN GENERAL UNION EMPLOYEES; ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:** ELAINE MILLER—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

Dredging and Abandoned Boat – Michael Gately, Harbormaster

- The FinCom discussed the demolition/removal of the abandoned catboat *Seeker* which was now a Tashmoo obstruction. The article was withdrawn.
- The Woods Hole Group advised that Tashmoo sand drift was becoming critical. Permitting would include studies on sand deposits, timing, wildlife, etc.
- As agreed above, the article was amended to reduce R & A. As of July 1, 2025 the Dredge Stabilization fund had a \$126,000 balance.
- **RACHEL ORR MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 2025 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLES TO FUND LAKE TASHMOO AND HARBOR DREDGING PROJECTS AS AMENDED:**

- #6 TO WITHDRAW \$50,000 FROM THE WATERWAYS FUND, AND
- #7 PENDING TOWN ACCOUNTANT CONFIRMATION TO WITHDRAW
\$50,000 FROM THE DREDGE STABILIZATION FUND;

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

Software Upgrades – Joe LaCivita, Town Administrator

- The amount had been amended up from the original place-holder figure.
- The prices included training and professional services for October 1 through December 31, 2025. The second year would include a full year of professional services after which the price would drop to the straight licensing fee (\$47,000 for Licensing/Permits and \$32,000 for Asset Management)—to be included in future Information Technology (IT) budgets.
- The systems would not replace human staff.
- Systems were cloud-based and information was automatically stored.
- Permit and Licensing would allow a more user-friendly public access to Building, Fire and Board of Health (BOH) permit processes.
- Asset Management would facilitate strategic decisions by allowing departments to enter and update assets (including fleet overhauls, stormwater systems, etc.) onto a single platform for a more holistic view of Town asset status. It would be a valuable tool for planning and re-codification.

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- The FinCom emphasized the importance of Town staff training, accurate initial data input, and continuing data entry. Executive Assistant Elena DeFoe liked it as staff and as a user.
 - It was also suggested that staff plan for time to train and/or facilitate members of the public who were less comfortable with on-line procedures.
 - LOUIS PASHMAN MOVED TO **RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 2025 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLES TO RAISE AND APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO PURCHASE SOFTWARE AS FOLLOWS:**
 - **#3 \$63,079.99 FOR OPENGOV LICENSING AND PERMITS, AND**
 - **#4 \$82,600.50 FOR OPENGOV ASSET MANAGMENT;**
- ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:** RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

Trailer By-law – Christopher Habekost, Police Chief

After a couple blocked street complaints the Tisbury Select Board (TSB) drafted this Bylaw that enabled police to ticket trailers, campers, and heavy equipment parked on public streets, Other towns' bylaws and Town Counsel David Doneski were consulted.

- The FinCom noted the Bylaw would restrict business as trades people such as in construction and landscaping had no designated parking for large equipment. An unintended consequence might be heavy equipment driven on regular errands. Town Administrator Joe LaCivita would work on commercial parking solutions.
- The FinCom suggested the article be amended to include a form of commercial parking permitting (see below: Actions).

Renovations to Water Works Building, Software Upgrades, “Ability to Pay” Analysis – Joe LaCivita, Town Administrator

(See Minutes: 1/8/25 p.5, & 2/13/25 p.6, & 3/26/25 p.3-4.)

- The Waterworks (Spring St.) renovation article failed at ATM.
- The project returned the building from an office to its original use as a residence now for use as current and future municipal employee housing. It would reduce the number of occupants and include the originally planned denitrification septic tank.
- Besides septic improvement, the itemized estimate included: demolition/ replacement of interior walls, rotted decks, railings and a few windows, supplementing heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC), kitchen cabinets, lead removal, a 1st floor bathroom, painting, trim, floor sanding/ polyurethaning, upgrades to an existing backup generator.

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- Staff was working with Waterworks Spring building Manager Lorraine Wells.
- The septic system was limited to 120 occupants for both buildings which had been exceeded 3 times in 3 years. The addition of this house would reduce Waterworks Spring building events capacity to no more than 108 people. The system would now be monitored, possibly with an automatic alarm system.
- The house was part of Mr. LaCivita's contract. Future staff rental issues could be determined as it came up.
- Maintenance of all municipal buildings was being reviewed.
- *ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 2025 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE #11 TO WITHDRAW \$297,000 FROM THE BUILDING AND INFRASTRUCTURE STABILIZATION FUND FOR OLD WATERWORKS BUILDING RENOVATION; ELAINE MILLER AND RUSS HARTENSTINE SECONDED; **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.*

“Ability to Pay” Analysis – Joe LaCivita, Town Administrator

- This article had been rewritten at the previous TSB meeting to remove all mention of the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) Building Project and any political implications.
- Due to the \$81,000,000 Tisbury School, at 14% the Town already exceeded the financial policy recommended 10% debt. The estimated Tisbury assessment of the MVRHS Project was likely to raise it to 22-23% and other Town projects were urgently needed (Town Hall—see 1/26/24 Minutes p.2-4, Police Station, climate change adaption, etc.).
- Although technically an assessment on MVRHSD debt, it was counted as Tisbury debt on the Mass. Department of Revenue (DOR) levy limit calculation.
- The analysis would present a five-year view of the Town's financial status, revenue, expenditure, tax base, capital planning, etc. and suggest a number of models for future actions, not only as a useful tool for municipal staff but also to educate the public on the Town's financial problems and options.
- Chair Nancy Gilfoy proposed the FinCom co-sponsor the article.
- The FinCom suggested appealing to other Island Towns for assistance/relief for heavy of Tisbury roads traffic and resources due to ferry terminal, shopping and other shared uses.
- *ELAINE MILLER MOVED TO COSPONSOR SEPTEMBER SPECIAL TOWN MEETING ARTICLE #10 TO CONTRACT FOR A TOWN FINANCIAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT; RUSS HARTENSTINE AND ALLAN ROGERS SECONDED; MOTION*

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PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

• RACHEL ORR MOVED TO **RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 2025 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE #10 TO RAISE AND APPROPRIATE \$45,000 TO CONTRACT FOR A TOWN FINANCIAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT AS READ AND AMENDED BY THE TISBURY SELECT BOARD;** RACHEL ORR SECONDED; **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:** RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

Discuss Impact of Proposed Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) Building Project – Tabled

Approve Minutes 6/4/25, 7/9/25

• ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:
- JUNE 4, 2025, AND
- JULY 9, 2025;

RACHEL ORR SECONDED: MOTION PASSED 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, ABSTENTIONS AS ABSENT: RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

Committee Reports – Tabled

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

Items Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair – None

Adjournment

• ALL MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:16PM; ALL SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

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Appendix A: Meetings/Events

- Close/Sign STM Warrant – Tuesday, September 2, 2025
- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, September 3, 2025 – TBD**
- Recommendation deadline – Thursday, September 4, 2025
- Special Town Meeting – 7:00PM, Tuesday, September 30, 2025 – Tis. School

Appendix B: Actions

Nancy – send FinCom amended Article #10 Ability to Pay.

Chief Habekost – send revised solar radar article to Nancy.

Joe LaCivita – Trailer Bylaw:

- check for consistent “trailer or structure” language.
- review and redraft with a commercial permits paragraph.

Jon Snyder – send Union Compensation/Classification study to Nancy.

Future Agendas

- Minutes: 8/20/25
- Review and Vote on Articles for September STM Article – Trailer Bylaw,
- MVRHS Building Project Powerpoint and Discussion
- Capital Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC) Status
- End-of-Year transfers report

Budget Season Notes

- Remember FY26 11% union wage increases.
- 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.

Previous/Long Term

- Jon Snyder – send report on end-of-year transfers

\$200,000 FY26 Reserve Fund spending tally – Balance: \$200,000

Appendix C: Documents on File

- Agenda/Revised Agenda (2 p.) 8/20/25
- Gilfoy emails re; Articles for meeting Wednesday 8/20/25 8/17/25
- & Revised 8/30/35 agenda and proposal 8/18/25
- Cherry Sheet History, Tisbury, 7/11/25

continued

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Appendix C: Documents on File (cont.)

- Article Submission Form, Special Town Meeting Article__To fund Union Contract 8/1/25
- Item #1 Article __ To Fund Renovation of the old Water Works Building (3 p.) 8/12/25
- To Amend General By-Laws to Include Kennels 8/14/25
- To Amend General By-Laws to Accept the Following under Town Clerk Fees 8/14/25
- Revised, To Fund Renovation of the Old Water Works Building 8/15/25
- Revised, To Upgrade Open Gov Licensing and Permit Software 8/15/25
- Town Clerk memo re: STM September 30, 2025 (2 p.) 8/15/25
- Town of Tisbury, Harbor Department, FY2026 STM Warrant Articles 8/14/25
- Warrant Article Submission for Special Town Meeting 9/30/25, Revised, solar powered radar signs... 8/8/25
- Concannon/UMass Boston letter re: Ability to Pay Analysis 8/14/25
- Proposal for Ability to Pay” Analysis: Phase I/II/III, To Town of Tisbury (7 p.)
- Raise and Appropriate \$45,000 for professional services...
- Article 10 Town Financial Capacity Assessment
- Town of Tisbury, Special Town Meeting Warrant, Tuesday, September 30, 2025, at 7:00PM (4 p.) 8/18/25

Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

Date

Minutes approved 9/3/25