

**Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee  
6:30PM, Wednesday, September 3, 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:** ICON – Ned Collier, Paul DiGiandomenico, Mark McKevitz, Recorder Marni Lipke,

**Town:** Town Administrator Joe LaCivita, Finance Director Jonathan Snyder, Rick Homans, Police Chief Christopher Habekost,

\* TFC members late arrivals, early departures or partial attendance.

**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.)*

**Reserve Fund Transfer Request – Kirk Metell, Department of Public Works (DPW) Director** (See documents on file.)

Building Inspector Greg Monka and DPW Director Kirk Metell contacted the owner about a damaged stone retaining wall along a sidewalk. The residents' attorney contended that it was on Town property so this DPW request would fund a formal survey.

- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED THAT THE TISBURY FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPROVE THE WITHDRAWAL OF \$2,800 FROM THE RESERVE FUND FOR THE DEPT. OF PUBLIC WORKS FOR A SURVEY OF THE STONE RETAINING WALL AT 133 SKIFF AVENUE; ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

**Review and Vote on Unattached Trailer and Structure Bylaw – Christopher Habekost, Police Chief** (See 8/20/25 Minutes p.5.)

\* During the discussion Rachel Orr entered the meeting about 6:40PM.

Chief Christopher Habekost spoke to the bylaw, noting;

- its instigation by a “parked” large boat trailer causing traffic issues;
- modeling after similar bylaws in waterfront communities;
- first checking for abandonment issues (registration, unmoved for 72 hrs., etc.)

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- “unattached” and timing (4, 8 or 24 hrs.) exempted trade equipment use/parking which eliminated the need for permits.
- The FinCom discussed;
- whether equipment parking was a part of the cost of owning/running a business or the responsibility of the Town;
- Tisbury downtown area as already parking regulated;
- Tisbury’s narrow streets;
- a new Parking Committee and book references.
- ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO *RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 2025 SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE #5 ON UNATTACHED TRAILER OR STRUCTURE BYLAW*: LOUISE CLOUGH AND ELAINE MILLER SECONDED; **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS**: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RUSS HARTENSTINE—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

**Town Hall Location – ICON Introduction** (See documents on file & Minutes: 3/7/18 p.9 #11, & 10/20/20 p.5, & 8/10/23, & 10/25/23, & 4/10/24 p.5, & 11/6/24 p.2-4.)

\* During this discussion Russ Hartenstine left the meeting about 7:40PM.  
In the continuing 25-30 year new Town Hall process, and as requested at the 2025 Annual Town Meeting (ATM), the Town hired ICON Architects to do a professional site preselection study.

• The FinCom was well aware of the increasingly dire need for a new Town Hall, (fractured locations, difficult public access, lack of team communication, poor quality, insufficient, outdated work space; insecure storage, etc.). The Committee (Rick Homans, Master Plan Chair Lindsey Famaris, Town Administrator Joe LaCivita, FinCom member Russ Hartenstine, Planning Bd. member Daniel Phelan) put out a Request For Proposal (RFP) for such a study with 2 Tisbury Select Board (TSB) conditions:

- a Town owned site (eliminating any land purchase), and
- if possible the inclusion of a new Police Station.
- ICON was awarded the contract July 10<sup>th</sup> with the goal of presenting a final recommendation at the October 2<sup>nd</sup> TSB meeting. They reviewed previous studies, and ran a space needs study, a site evaluation and conceptual design process with the following goals:
  - consolidate Town services,
  - improve accessibility and comply with code,
  - update workspaces,

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- create an environmentally friendly building.
- Preliminary findings were that this would require a minimum of 1 acre for 36,600 sq. ft. 2 story Town Hall needing 24 parking spaces.
- Storage was estimated at 13,000 sq. ft. (a little less than needed) but archiving versus active storage was always a balance. Existing off-site storage, including the Senior Center basement, was beginning to max out.
- Face-to-face Town Hall services had not changed much, but plans were contingent on such things as hybrid meetings and digitalizing some storage.
- Town Hall would include general government and regulatory departments. Shellfish, harbor, library, DPW, etc. would remain in their current locations.
- The Police Station was projected at ~ 8,300 sq. ft. plus 33 parking spaces—existing Station 65-6700 sq. ft. and 30 spaces plus sally port and swop vehicle.
- Site factors included: legal dimensions, setbacks, zoning restrictions (residential or commercial), topography, flood zones, wetlands, sub-surface issues, site impacts (further researched by Tye & Bond Engineering), street frontage, centralized locations, traffic issues, utility access.
- After inventorying all Town-owned properties and running them through the above factors, the previously discussed 2 sites remained: 55 West Williams St. and High Point Lane.
- Given many considerations and possibilities early cost estimates were \$19,500,000 for the Town Hall and \$12,500,000 for the Police Station for a total of \$31,500,000 based on Island new construction square footage costs.
- FinCom discussion explored financial issues.
- A 2 story building was very marginally more economical.
- The possibility of a connector road, (a proposed on and off State-funded project from some years ago) was noted but remained too unknown/unsettled to be a factor in the study.
- Russ Hartenstine advocated for the West Williams St. location as a second Town center with the School, Emergency Services Facility (ESF), Senior Center, walking distance to ferry, and utilities already on site.
- Removal of a new Police Station would reduce the lot size to 0.75 acres, which would not open any additional site options. (If the main Station was located outside the downtown area a Police sub-station might be needed.)
- The sale of the existing Police Station (assessed at \$3,500,000) would be considered in project funding. The building would likely have to be demolished. Project financing would be further considered after the “Ability to Pay Analysis” (see 8/20/25 Minutes p.6).
- The Educomp Building proposal that informally assessed Town Hall space at 12,200 sq. ft. was not scientifically or comprehensively determined.

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**Capital Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC)**

CPAC had made no progress since the previous report (see 6/4/25 Minutes p.3), membership was incomplete due to resignations, delays and disagreements (see below: Actions), and many Town Departments continued uncooperative. Mr. LaCivita had not provided the necessary and promised Town Asset inventory that was requested two months ago.

- The FinCom reviewed Mr. LaCivita's opinion that Capital Planning was part of his job description and a CPAC was redundant.
- It was suggested a consultant be hired to assist with the inventory.
- A Town asset inventory would probably be a basic requirement for the imminent Ability to Pay Analysis.
- Long term capital planning was a constant request on Town Meeting floors.
- *ELAINE MILLER MOVED TO REQUEST A TOWN ASSET INVENTORY IN TIME FOR THE COLLINS CENTER "ABILITY TO PAY ANALYSIS" ASSESSMENT; RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ELAINE MILLER—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.*

**Discuss Impact of Proposed Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) Building Project** (See documents on file & Minutes: 1/22/25 p.4-7, 5/14/25 p.2-3, & 6/4/25 p.2-3, & 7/9/25 p.4-5.)

\* At the end of this discussion Rachel Orr left the meeting.

The information in this presentation was developed in July since which time the MVRHS Building Committee was able to cut the square footage to just under 200,000 (the goal was 195,000 sq. ft.) bringing the Island cost share down \$50,000,000 to \$234,000,000 and Tisbury's share to \$53,586,000, or \$3,100,000 in annual debt payments.

- The formula (for this project only) was 70% enrollment/30% equalize (real estate) value resulting in the following percentages:

Aquinnah 2.40%,	Oak Bluffs 22.89%
Chilmark 8.26%	Tisbury 22.90%
Edgartown 30.13%	West Tisbury 3.40%.

- There were two possible project approval methods:
  - a simultaneous Island wide vote with majority approval;
  - a Town by Town Meeting vote, allowing a single town to veto the project.
- Other statistics showed Tisbury status compared with other Island towns:
  - the lowest per capita income;
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> highest population;
  - half the properties of the other down-Island towns;

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- geographically the second smallest (6.5 sq. miles) and the most dense—twice as dense as Oak Bluffs and Edgartown;
- highest average property tax \$13,552 or 43.7% of the per capita income;
- the second highest tax rate in Massachusetts;
- currently carrying ~ \$85,288,000 in long-term debt at 14.2% of its operating budget (policy was under 10%), next was Oak Bluffs with ~ \$30,000,000.
- As one of the few comprehensive high schools left in the State, the MVRHS provided: Academic, Art, Vocational, and Special Needs education which drove the size of the project.
- Tisbury currently had 464 total students (both Tisbury and MVRH Schools)—comprising 53% of its operating budget. With the added Project debt this would come to ~ \$54,426 per student, the equivalent of sending all Tisbury students to a private school.
- The MVRHS was being regionally designed such that each student would have equal opportunities regardless of Town of residence, however it was not being funded in a regional manner.
- The Island currently showed a gross disparity in educational tax rates. Precedents for other Vineyard formulas included:
  - Dukes County and the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) paid by universal tax rate;
  - the State Statutory formula, and
  - regional non-profits at 50% population/50 equalized value.
- The FinCom discussed this reality and how to maneuver within it.
- The solution could not be unilaterally resolved and certainly was a matter of educating fellow Island citizens (see below: Actions). Island history consistently showed reluctance to voluntarily negotiate or re-negotiate formulas.
- It was clear that other Towns were struggling with the Project cost.
- There were mixed reactions to appealing to the MVC.
- Project costs did not reflect the impact of tariffs nor increased deportation labor costs.
- The Town might have to move forward and deal with the harsh reality.
- Tisbury had to acknowledge that its current status was due to its decision to build a completely Town-funded Tisbury School, refusing \$15,000,000 from the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA), and choosing to pay for a \$50,000,000 project spiked by Covid inflation to \$80,000,000.
- If the MVRHS Project passed, a ballot vote would be needed to exclude the debt. If this vote failed, the debt would have to be absorbed into the operating budget, forcing service and program cuts.
- High taxes and high debt were likely to affect the Town bond rating, ability

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to complete other urgent capital projects (Town Hall, sea level rise, etc.), real estate sales, and Town services and programs.

- The FinCom discussed sending a letter to the MVRHSC requesting approval by separate Town Meeting vote.

- The Superintendent and Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) Business Administrator would attend the next FinCom meeting to discuss the Project.
- IT WAS THE CONSENSUS OF THE TISBURY FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO REQUEST THE ISSUE BE PLACED ON THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE AGENDA. There was a discussion on whether representatives or the entire FinCom would attend the Tisbury School Committee (TSC) meeting. (See below: Actions.)

**Approve 8/20/25 Minutes**

- ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 20, 2025 MINUTES: ELAINE MILLER AND ALLAN ROGERS SECONDED: MOTION PASSED 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, ABSTENTIONS AS ABSENT: LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

**Committee Reports**

Chair Nancy Gilfoy would be meeting with Oak Bluffs FinCom Chair Bob Malecki, to discuss the Embarkation Legislation and also to continue discussions that Oak Bluffs Select Board member Dion Alley, Oak Bluffs Town Administrator Deborah Potter, Mr. LaCivita and TSB member John Cahill were having about possible shared services between Tisbury and Oak Bluffs.

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

School representatives would discuss the MVRHS Building Project.

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

**Adjournment**

- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:13PM; ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ELAINE MILLER—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

**Appendix A: Meetings/Events**

- STM Article Recommendation deadline – Thursday, September 4, 2025

**continued**

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**Appendix A: Meetings/Events (cont.)**

- TSC – 4:00PM, Tuesday, September 9, 2025 – Tisbury School
- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, September 17, 2024 – Tis. Sr. Center**
- Special Town Meeting – 7:00PM, Tuesday, September 30, 2025 – Tis. School

**Appendix B: Actions**

Nancy – contact Prin. John Custer re: FinCom Presentation on TSC agenda.

Nancy – post 9/9/25 joint TFC/TSC meeting.

Rachel – send density statistics to Nancy.

All – recruit/recommend candidate for CPAC membership

All – contact Nancy with any agenda items for Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Future Agendas**

- Minutes: 9/3/25
- MVRHS Building Project

**Previous/Long Term**

- End-of-Year FY26 Transfers Report – Finance Director Jonathan Snyder

\$200,000 FY26 Reserve Fund spending tally – Balance: \$197,200

- 9/3/25 – DPW - \$2,800 – Survey stone wall Skiff Ave.

**Appendix C: Documents on File**

- Agenda 9/3/25
- Gilfoy/Massachusetts Municipal Association emails re; Register Today: ATFC Annual Meeting Oct. 18 (2 p.) 8/30/25
- Request for Transfer from the Reserve Fund 8/26/25
- ICON Architecture (16 p.)
- MVRHS Building Project and Implications for Tisbury (12 p.) 7/24/25

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Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

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Date

Minutes approved as amended 10/8/25