

Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee
6:30PM, Wednesday, October 8, 2025
Tisbury Senior Center

1

Present: Chair – Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Russ Hartenstine,
Elaine Miller, Rachel Orr, Allan Rogers,

Others: Pamela Brock, Recorder Marni Lipke,

* 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 6:36PM.

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

Appointment to the Capital Planning (Advisory) Committee (CPAC)

(See Minutes: 6/4/25 p.3, & 9/3/25 p.4.)

- Pamela Brock spoke of tracking Island news and events. She had been a FinCom member until 2019 and been on various non-profit boards. Alex Meleney would continue as CPAC Chair so this would fill the 2nd FinCom appointment. Initial work was progressing.

• *ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO APPOINT PAMELA BROCK AS THE TISBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CAPITAL PLANNING AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE; RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) Budget Process

(See documents on file.)

- Town Administrator Joe LaCivita continued to assess Town capacity, status, available or missing resources and challenges such as:
 - MVRHS project (see below), new Town Hall, etc.
 - veteran staff retirements: Finance Dir. Jonathan Snyder, Asst. Treasurer/Collector Kim Serpa, Town Clerk Admin. Asst. Joanna Jernegan...).
- He met with Department Heads and requested they present:
 - budget wish lists;
 - maintenance schedules and costs;
 - vehicles and equipment inventory including mileage, age, etc.;
 - overtime estimates to cover vacant positions. The Department of Public Works (DPW) was understaffed as were the Police—2 candidates were recruited to start Police Academy training and a 3rd veteran was being interviewed (see 2/12/25 Minutes p.1-2).
- He also met with departments involved in enforcement (Police, Building, Shellfish, etc.) as an area needing attention.

Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee
October 8, 2025

2

- After many years of more laissez-faire Town leadership, Mr. LaCivita was likely to challenge Dept. Head independence and autonomy.
- Mr. LaCivita submitted a budget calendar. As FinCom and CPAC roles were being re-examined, he wished to avoid redundant budget interviews. One solution was for him to attend each department's presentation to the FinCom.
- In some municipalities the Town Administrator set the budget while the FinCom and Select Board set policy.
- The FinCom mentioned delegating some of his work or focusing on larger departments so as not to burn-out this first year.
- In reviewing Town debt the FinCom noted:
 - a \$10,000,000 Water Dept. request for a new well/tank—an enterprise fund bond to be reflected in water rates not tax bills;
 - the final years of the DPW \$8,000,000 roadwork bond;
 - imminent wastewater borrowing.
- The FinCom was reminded of the original bylaw (temporarily amended during the Covid Pandemic and Tisbury School construction) setting Annual Town Meeting (ATM) as the 1st Tuesday in April (see below: Actions).

Draft Seasonal Community Guidelines (See documents on file & below: Meetings/Events, & Minutes: 10/24/24 p.4, & 3/26/25 p.6, & 4/16/25, & 6/4/25 p.5)

- Municipal and affordable housing projects could only invoke the Seasonal Communities regulations if the Town had a financial interest (town land, town funding, tax breaks, etc.)
- Fair housing regulations (such as only the first draw could specify preferences) were unclear.
- The State would not specify who or how regulations would be enforced. The Building Dept. and/or Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) might need to augment staff with a compliance officer. (Currently Tisbury shared a short-term rental inspector with Oak Bluffs.)
- Anything built as year round or Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) would count as housing stock and would not affect the tax base or the 10% affordable housing threshold (Tisbury was currently at 5%).
- An ADU could not be included in a residential exemption.
- In discussing affordable housing the FinCom noted:
 - loss of real estate taxes and Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) policy for non-profit rental projects;
 - Affordable Housing Committee lease-to-locals initiative;
 - State legislation on 4% transfer fees for non-Massachusetts residents (to fund education).

Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee
October 8, 2025

3

Updates

- Nancy Gilfoy and Rachel Orr were going to the Association of Town Finance Committees Annual Meeting (see below: Meetings/Events).

Meeting with the All Island School Committee (AISC)

Chair Nancy Gilfoy and Rachel Orr presented the Tisbury PowerPoint to the AISC (see 9/17/25 Minutes p.5), strongly emphasizing the placeholder (e.g. example rather than accurate) status of the figures. Rachel Orr commended Nancy Gilfoy's clear, measured and thorough explanations. They both felt the message had been heard. Fairly accurate press coverage was noted.

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, & 9/3/25 p.4-6, & 9/17/25 p.1-5.)

- The MVRHSC would decide on the voting method for the Project at its meeting on the 1st Monday in November.
 - The Chilmark Select Board voted unanimously against an Islandwide vote.
 - The FinCom also noted Aquinnah's difficult position.
- The FinCom reluctantly stated Tisbury's choice of voting for the current high price or rejecting the Project and having to pay a higher price later.
 - There was advocacy for revisiting the Project plan to a base renovation: (i.e. windows, doors, heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HAVC)) with the possibility of the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) subsidizing an addition. Issues included MVRHS Building Committee attitudes and efforts as well as the fact that this approach had not been tried or was considered too late in the timeline. It was argued that a base renovation would not meet the standards on which the MVRHS application to the MSBA was based.
- In response to Town advocacy the Building Committee was working hard with the architects to:
 - significantly reduce square footage,
 - maximize reimbursement,
 - apply for substantial grants,
 - cut all playing fields on one side of Sanderson Rd.,
 - reduce the size of the gym,
 - add flexibility to classrooms.
- The FinCom challenge was to see the Project as taxpayer advocates and to present it at ATM as a split recommendation.
 - Some members proposed Town staff (from Mr. LaCivita to Dept. Heads) be asked to consider reductions and cuts to accommodate any resulting shortfall necessary. However, Project funding would be borrowed gradually, rather than all at once, causing a gradual tax increase.

Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee
October 8, 2025

4

- Residential Exemption actually raised the tax rate and had a tendency to increase rents by passing the difference on to tenants. The FinCom was interested in ways to incentivize affordable housing (see below: Actions).

Regional School District Tax Reform (See documents on file.)

- There were 2 conversations: the current Project and MSBA funding formulas and the Statutory formula for annual MVRHS operating budgets.
- The FinCom acknowledged high construction costs were pushing the MSBA conversation Statewide, initiating such alternatives as pre-fabricated schools.
- However, challenging MSBA funding now could jeopardize Project funding.
- Since the general feeling was that the Project must be voted, the FinCom was dedicated to the long haul of reforming the Statutory formula for annual MVRHS operating and capital budgets.
- It was agreed that the conversation, which would be a long process, was important on all levels, whatever the result.
- Tisbury could condition their approval pending further discussion on redistribution of the Regional/Statutory formula.
- There was discussion on Islandwide advocacy, the increasing cooperation of Oak Bluffs. Aquinnah Town Administrator Chip Elitzer Letter to the Editor and Education Committee testimony.
- The State Legislature had established a Committee to work on regional school district tax reform. In conjunction with the Tisbury Select Board (TSB):
 - *ALLEN ROGERS MOVED TO SEND A LETTER TO STATE SENATOR JULIAN CYR SUPPORTING REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT TAX REFORM; SECONDED BY RUSS HARTENSTINE; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Approve Minutes: 9/3/25 as Amended, 9/17/25 as Amended

- *ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO APPROVE THE:*
 - *SEPTEMBER 3, 2025 MINUTES AS AMENDED, AND*
 - *SEPTEMBER 17, 2025 MINUTES AS AMENDED,*
- ELAINE MILLER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, ABSTENTIONS AS ABSENT.*

Committee Reports (See below: Actions.)

- The Collins Center (see 9/3/25 Minutes p.4) sent a list of needed documents and a file sharing link for the Ability To Pay Analysis. Mr. Snyder, Mr. LaCivita, and Chair Nancy Gilfoy had already uploaded a lot of information.
- The Town Finance Director position advertisement had just been posted.

Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee
October 8, 2025

5

- Having lost Federal funding for vaccines the Board of Health (BOH) was working with Martha's Vineyard Hospital (MVH) to pool money Islandwide.
- Superintendent Richie Smith announced his retirement as of June 30, 2026. Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) Business Administrator [Mark Friedman](#) was exploring ways to fund the search for a new superintendent.

Future Meetings – See below: Actions & Meetings/Events.

Members reviewed travel and health issues around scheduling the next meeting.

Items Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair – None

Adjournment

• LOUISE CLOUGH MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:09PM; ELAINE MILLER AND ALLAN ROGERS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.

Appendix A: Meetings/Events

- Assoc. of Town FinComs – October 18, 2025 – Sharon, MA
- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, October 22, 2025 – Zoom**
- Seasonal Communities comment deadline – October 30, 2025

Appendix B: Actions

Nancy – note or change original Tisbury ATM bylaw re: 1st Tuesday in April...

Nancy – send FinCom complete Seasonal Community Guidelines.

Nancy – contact TSB/Mr. LaCivita re: Regional School Tax reform letter &
- draft letter

All – [please](#) remember to not hit 'Reply All'

Future Agendas

- Minutes: 10/8/25
- Victor Capoccia – Affordable Housing Lease To Locals
- Reserve Fund Request (?)

Previous/Long Term

- End-of-Year FY26 Transfers Report – Finance Director Jonathan Snyder
- MV Public Safety Communications as Town Budget line item
- FinCom Support for Fire Inspection Fee/Fine Update
- Wastewater/Water Works possible crew sharing
- Personnel/TSB/Human Resources/TFC Meeting on Strategic Planning
- Letter re: specifying parameters of personal vehicles in staff contract clauses

continued >

Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee
October 8, 2025

6

Appendix B: Actions (cont.)

\$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 10/8/25
- Gilfoy/Elitzer emails re: Regional School District Tax Reform (7 p.) 10/4/25
- Seasonal Communities Advisory Council, September 11, 2025, Draft Regulation Update (16 p.)
- FY2027 Budget /2026 ATM/STM/Election Calendar Draft #5 9/19/25

Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

Date

Minutes approved 10/22/25