

Recommendations of the Finance Committee

The Finance Committee is charged with making recommendations as to passage of warrant articles that come before the Town citizens assembled in a Regular or Special Town Meeting.

Here are our recommendations for the Annual Town Meeting to be held on April 10, 2007.

Article 2 – Town Reports

The Finance Committee voted 4 - 0 to take no action.

Article 3 – The Budget

On a 5 - 0 vote, the Finance Committee recommends approval of the proposed budget except for two items: Up-Island Regional School District (311-5600) and Island Council on Aging (540-5700).

Up-Island Regional School District

Every year for at least the past five years the school district has cost the taxpayers of West Tisbury more money to educate fewer children. The budget that has been proposed for FY2008 continues this trend. Our proposed assessment has increased by \$419,177 (8.2%) although the number of students has decreased by 27 (7.7%). We believe that the time has come to call a halt to this trend. Therefore, we are recommending a budget of \$5,249,280 which, including the change in the population of West Tisbury students, represents an increase of 0%, although another drop in the school population is expected for FY2008.

Consider the following also. UIRSD is the most expensive school on the Island and among the top twenty most expensive schools in the state. It costs more to attend the UIRSD schools than it does to attend many private schools. The district operates two school buildings where one is sufficient to house all students; the Harkins Kelly report estimated that this costs the West Tisbury taxpayer almost \$700,000 a year. Finally, year after year over 40% of our budget goes to UIRSD, that is a higher percentage spent on elementary education than any other town on the Island.

Island Council on Aging

In order to keep the budget increases to a minimum, we asked that any department or agency requesting an increase in hours, personnel or stipend implement this increase in two steps, one in FY2008 and one in FY2009. All except the Island Council on Aging agreed. Therefore, we are recommending a budget of \$21,491 rather than the originally requested budget of \$22,071.

Article 4 – Spraying Town Trees

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. This article will allow the Tree Warden to spray some of the Town-owned trees to protect against damage from moths. Should the trees not be protected, the costs of removing the trees far exceeds the cost of spraying.

Article 5 – Compensating Balance Agreements

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. This article will give the Treasurer the authority to conduct the Town's banking business.

Article 6 – Estuary Project

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. This multi-year project, which was approved at the 2004 Annual Town Meeting, seeks to protect the health of

Tisbury Great Pond. The state assumes one-half of the cost, with the balance being split equally between West Tisbury and Chilmark. This is the Town's third of three payments for this project.

Article 7 – Triennial Revaluation

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 1 to recommend this article for passage. The Town is mandated by the State to conduct a reevaluation of all personal and real property every three years. These funds enable the Town to comply with this mandate.

Article 8 – Copy Machine for Tri-Town Ambulance

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. The current copier was donated to the Tri-Town Ambulance after it had been used for years by the Town of Chilmark. It urgently needs to be replaced.

Article 9 – Representatives to Energy Board

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. Meeting the energy needs of the Town are critical to our future. This is a step towards that end.

Article 10 – Amend Personnel Bylaw

The Finance Committee voted 2 -1 with one abstention to **not** recommend this article for passage. The increase in the 2006 consumer price index for our area as calculated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics for our area (Northeast Urban) was 3% as of December 31, 2006. The committee feels that an increase of 3.8% is excessive and recommends an increase of 3.0%.

Article 11 – Dukes County Regional Housing Authority

The Finance Committee voted 4 - 0 to recommend this article for passage. This appropriation supports the efforts to provide affordable housing on the Island.

Article 12 – Local Control of Herring Runs

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. This will allow our local constables to control our ponds.

Article 13 – Amend UIRSD Regional Agreement

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. This amendment is a more equitable distribution of the debt service costs of the Up-Island Regional School District.

Article 14 – Correct an Oversight

The Finance Committee voted 3 – 0 with 2 abstentions to recommend this article for passage. This is a 'housekeeping' article to correct an oversight by the Town.

Articles 15 and 16 – Rescind Outdated Bylaws

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend these articles for passage. The Competitive Building Bylaw has been superseded by the Procurement Act. The Town Motor Vehicle Bylaw has been superseded by events.

Article 17 – Business Personal Property Revaluation

The Finance Committee voted 5 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. The funds are needed to comply with state laws.

Articles 18 and 19 – Zoning Bylaw Changes

The Finance Committee voted 4 - 0 to take no action on these articles.

Article 20 – Withdraw from the Up-Island Regional School District

The Finance Committee voted 5 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. The costs of the Up-Island Regional School District remain on an upward trend; West Tisbury’s share of these costs has increased by over \$800,000 in the past two years. State support given to regional school districts - the primary reason for entering the district - seems to have leveled off at about 10% of the budget. Withdrawal would mean foregoing \$182,000 of Chapter 71 state money and a reduction in Chapter 70 money, perhaps another \$240,000. Withdrawal would also mean that West Tisbury would not bear the cost of supporting a second school building that is not needed. The Harkins-Kelly report estimated an annual savings of \$700,000 to West Tisbury if only one site housed all the children in the district.

The costs of the Up-Island District are the highest on the island and among the highest in the state. Given the past history of the district we see little hope that these costs will be lowered. Yet, unless these costs are lowered, 40 cents and more of every tax dollar spent by the West Tisbury taxpayer will continue to go to the school district.

Withdrawal is not automatic. A second vote - taken no sooner than six months after the initial vote - is required unless Chilmark and Aquinnah agree that we can opt out of the regional agreement.

Article 21 – Appropriate CPA Reserves

The Finance Committee voted 5 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. These funds will be available for suitable projects to be approved by the Town in the future.

Article 22 – Update Historic Inventory Using CPA Funds

The Finance Committee voted 5 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. The historic inventory has not been updated for thirty years.

Article 23 – Use CPA Funds for New Affordable Rental Housing

The Finance Committee voted 5 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. These funds will pay for some of the permitting and other predevelopment costs in connection with erecting another building at the Sepiessa Apartments site.

Article 24 – Use CPA Funds for Existing Affordable Rental Housing

The Finance Committee voted 5 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. These funds will be used to fund part of the successful Rental Conversion Program and will enable West Tisbury residents to obtain affordable rental housing.

Article 25 – Use CPA Funds for A New Path

The Finance Committee voted 3 – 2 to recommend this article for passage. Those in favor recognize that the current paths have been warmly received by young and old alike. This proposed path will make it easier and safer for children to walk to school. Those opposed felt that abutters should have been consulted before this path was proposed and the Paths by the Roads Committee should complete the path voted at the November Town Meeting before starting on a new path.

Articles 26 and 27 – Support the Library

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend these articles for passage. These funds are necessary to ensure that the Town is eligible for library grants from the Commonwealth.

Article 28 – Establish a Revolving Fund for Local Drop-Off Fees and Expenditures

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. This enables a more economical, orderly and current management of funds.

Article 29 – Police Cruiser

The Finance Committee voted 3 – 1 with one abstention to recommend this article for passage. The current vehicle is at the end of its useful life as a primary patrol vehicle and should be replaced. Those opposed to this article felt that plans to dispose of this vehicle should be firmed up.

Article 30 – Train Emergency Responders

The Finance Committee voted 3 – 0 with two abstentions to recommend this article for passage. These funds will be used to develop an Island-wide police capability to handle emergency situations. Currently, there is a considerable waiting period until off-Island emergency police forces arrive here, thus increasing the risk of loss of life.

Article 31 – Computer Hardware for Police

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 with one abstention to recommend this article for passage. The server is at the end of its useful life. These funds will be used in conjunction with a grant.

Article 32 – Drug Task Force Grant

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 with one abstention to recommend this article for passage. This appropriation represents the Town's share of an Island-wide program to combat the use of illegal drugs on the Island. The Commonwealth provides matching funds.

Article 33 – Paint the Fire Stations

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. This is a transfer of funds already appropriated. They will be used to properly maintain the buildings.

Article 34 – Establish SCBA Air Pack Stabilization Fund

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. The devices are needed for the safety of our firefighters. The total funds required will be raised over two years.

Article 35 - Appropriate Funds for SCBA Air Pack Stabilization Fund

The Finance Committee voted 3 - 1 to recommend this article for passage. The opponent of this recommendation believed the funds should come from Free Cash.

Article 36 – Ambulance Replacement Stabilization Fund

The Finance Committee voted 4 - 0 - 1 to recommend this article for passage. This article is designed to minimize spikes in appropriations.

Article 37 – Seasonal Highway Laborer

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 1 to recommend this article for passage. This position will enable the Town to better maintain the roads and surrounding areas. The opponent felt that this position calls for a 40-hour per week employee.

Article 38 – Form a Building Committee

The Finance Committee voted 4 - 1 to recommend this article for passage. The Town Hall has been an issue for several years. It is time to resolve the issue. This article is the first step in coming to a resolution. The opponent felt that the Space Needs Committee was limiting the options of the Building Committee.

Article 39 – Redirect Funds to Upgrade Software

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. This is a transfer of funds already appropriated.

Article 40 – Replenish Reserve Fund

The Finance Committee voted 5 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. Exceptional circumstances have reduced the Reserve Fund to a level that may make it difficult to make additional transfers from the fund prior to July 1, 2007. These funds provide a level of safety.

Article 41 – Authority to Apply for a Grant

The Finance Committee voted 5 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. The Commonwealth has an established program to assist small towns in maintaining their roads. This article enables the Town to apply for a grant from this program.

Article 42 – Designate Tax Title Land

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. This would allow the Affordable Housing Committee to begin the process of determining the feasibility of these lots for affordable housing.

Article 43 – Reduce the Tax Levy

The Finance Committee voted 5 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. This will reduce our taxes.

Article 44 – Martha’s Vineyard Cultural Council

The Finance Committee voted 4 – 0 to recommend this article for passage. This is a small amount to contribute to the Vineyard’s cultural activities.

Article 45 – Holding Multiple Offices

The Finance Committee voted 3 - 2 to take no action.

Respectfully submitted,

West Tisbury Finance Committee

Al DeVito, Chair Jeffrey “Skipper” Manter, Vice Chair

Brian Athearn Sharon Estrella Richard Knabel