

**Minutes**  
**West Tisbury Finance Committee Meeting**  
**February 17, 2009**  
**Public Safety Building**

Present: Al DeVito - chair, Sharon Estrella, Ann Nelson, Brian Athearn and Greg Orcutt.

Guests: Bruce Stone, Town Accountant; Dr. James Weiss, MV schools Superintendent; Diane Dandy, Principal Chilmark school; Michael Hat, Principal West Tisbury school; Bob Lane, Asst. Principal WT school; Steve Nixon, Principal MVRHS; Laurie Halt, Asst. Superintendent; Amy Tierney, MV Schools Treasurer; Susan Parker and Marshall Segel, UIRSD School Committee; Susan Mercier, Edgartown/MVRHS School Committees; Dan Seklecki, SPED Coordinator; Skipper Manter and Richard Knabel, BoS.

The meeting was called to order at 4:35 p.m.

**UIRSD #311:**

Dr. Weiss reported that the UIRSD budget was up .48% including salary increases and fixed expenses. This was accomplished by reductions in other areas. He also explained that the school choice budget, by state mandate, has had to be placed in a separate fund and school choice expenses need to be deducted from that fund. Previously, this was done through the general fund, so the general fund expenses will now appear lower.

Dr. Weiss, Ms. Dandy and Mr. Halt explained the high cost per student in the UIRSD vs. other island schools and the rest of the state with the following points:

- Depth & breadth of programming
- More field trips to expand education
- Lower turnover rate of staff translates to higher salaries
- Maintenance costs, particularly at Chilmark school
- Only island school system with two buildings
- Have to offer all middle school subjects, but to fewer students

In answer to a question regarding enrollment projections, Dr. Weiss explained that there is a formula based on births and housing starts, used throughout New England, for a five-year period. This model expects an island-wide enrollment of 2,000 to 2,100, which is consistent with the actual figures at present.

Sharon voiced her concerns regarding the tardiness of the buses, leaving students, sometimes quite young, waiting for a long time. Dr. Weiss responded by asking that transportation problems be reported first to the transportation manager, then to him or Amy, if not satisfied.

Al asked Dr. Weiss if anything could be done about COLA? Dr. Weiss said this would require re-opening contract negotiations and would be discussed the following night (Wednesday, Feb. 18) at the All-Island School Committee meeting.

Brian, seconded by Ann, made a motion to preliminarily approve the UIRSD budget. The motion passed 4-0-1.

**MV Regional High School Budget #313:**

Dr. Weiss began this discussion by commending Steve Nixon, MVRHS Principal, on the excellent work he did on the budget. Steve then explained his process, citing the clear message from all the towns to keep the budget down. To do this, for the first time in the school's 50-year history, jobs have had to be eliminated. Mr. Nixon stated that his goal was to maintain educational excellence while acknowledging the present economic situation.

Susan Mercier, chair of the All-Island School Committee, commended the high school staff and Mr. Nixon.

Ann, seconded by Brian, made a motion to preliminarily approve the MV Regional High School budget. The motion passed 5-0.

**Snow & Ice Removal:**

Bruce announced that there will be a need to transfer funds for snow removal, stating that up to \$25,000 over budget can be spent in one year and paid back the next. To date, \$27,000 has been spent with \$19,000 still needed.

Sharon made a motion, seconded by Ann, to allow Bruce to spend up to \$25,000 for snow & ice removal. The motion passed 5-0.

**Reserve Fund:**

Reserve fund for FY09 is \$46,000. Sharon would like to see it lowered to discourage overspending. Bruce noted that the reserve fund is specifically in place to handle extraordinary or unforeseen expenses. He stated that the departments have been very responsible with their budgets knowing they could request a transfer if needed. BoS member Richard Knabel mentioned the expense of a special town meeting to vote for funds if the reserve fund were to be completely exhausted.

Greg made a motion, seconded by Ann, to keep the reserve fund at \$46,000 for FY10. The motion passed 4-1.

**Written Ballot:**

Since there will be no support from the BoS for the written ballot, Sharon recommended it be placed on the agenda for the forum; Greg will try to get a news story on NPR and in the papers; Jonathan Revere will publicize it on MVTV. Details for the forum will be worked out at the next meeting.

**Minutes:**

Minutes of the February 9 meeting were approved.

The next meeting is Tuesday, February 24, 2009, 4:30pm at the Public Safety Building.

There being no other business, a motion for adjournment was made and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 5:55pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Rogers, Administrative Clerk