

Town of West Tisbury
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, September 8, 2026 | Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Members Present Greg Orcutt, Chair; Clark Rattet; J. Skipper Manter; Kim Angell
Member Absent John Christensen, Vice Chair
Staff Present Shawn Ramoutar, Administrator

Call to Order

Mr. Orcutt call the meeting to order at 5:12 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Manter moved to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2026 meeting. Mr. Rattet seconded the motion.

Discussion: There was no discussion.

Roll-Call Vote: Mr. Orcutt -Aye; Mr. Rattet -Aye; Ms. Angell - Aye; and Mr. Manter, Aye.

The motion passed unanimously. (4-0)

New Business

Mr. Orcutt reported that fraudulent invoices had been sent under the name of the Town of West Tisbury. He said the sender represented the invoice as coming from the Planning Board and requested nearly \$7,000.

Mr. Ramoutar said the amount was approximately \$6,900. He explained that a resident brought the invoice to the Zoning Board on a Friday and that it was brought to his attention the following Monday. He said it was determined that the Town's systems had not been hacked. The sender had created an email that appeared to be associated with the Planning Board, used publicly available information and the Town seal from the website, created a realistic-looking invoice, and signed it with Ms. Rossi's name. The resident questioned the invoice and did not make a payment.

Mr. Ramoutar said the incident was reported to the state, the FBI, and the West Tisbury Police Department. He described it as a phishing attempt and said he created notices and informed Town departments and residents. He emphasized that the Town does not send invoices of this type and asked anyone who receives one to contact him so it can be forwarded to the appropriate agencies. He said no one had been scammed.

Mr. Orcutt discussed a prior check-scrubbing incident involving Habitat for Humanity. He said information on checks sent to a vendor had been digitally altered and the checks resubmitted. Bank of America paid the altered checks, but Martha's Vineyard Savings Bank identified them and refused payment. Ms. Angell asked whether another form of fraud involved overpayment followed by a request for a refund.

Mr. Ramoutar discussed additional fraud risks, including counterfeit currency created by bleaching lower-denomination bills and printing higher denominations on the genuine paper. He said counterfeit-detection pens may not identify that method and that duplicate serial numbers should be checked. He also discussed the increased sophistication of deepfake technology and the ability to create realistic false videos from a person's photograph.

Old Business

Mr. Orcutt reported that he had spoken twice with representatives of the Chilmark and Aquinnah Finance Committees about the Finance Committee's earlier vote concerning a five-percent reduction in spending. He said both committees liked the idea but were not yet prepared to endorse it and expected to respond by September 18. He said he had begun the outreach in late May or early June.

Ms. Angell asked whom Mr. Orcutt had contacted. Mr. Orcutt identified Vicki Duvall and Howie Goldstein. Ms. Angell suggested contacting Rebecca Haag and Matt Poole. Mr. Orcutt said he would contact them the following day.

Mr. Manter said the Committee should send a letter to the Up-Island Regional School Committee without waiting any longer because its budget process would begin soon. He said the letter should notify the School Committee of the Finance Committee's earlier vote and request its support, while allowing the other towns to send similar letters later if they chose to do so.

Ms. Angell referred to Mr. Christensen's ChatGPT analysis and said the Committee needed to understand which expenditures were flexible, which were static, and which were set in stone. Mr. Manter noted that the analysis was not an agenda item and said he would be reluctant to tell school administrators specifically where to reduce expenditures. He said the administration had the expertise to make decisions involving personnel and class size and that the Committee's earlier general approach was a step in the right direction. Mr. Rattet said the first step was to inform the School Committee that the Finance Committee was examining the matter seriously.

The members identified Robert Iannetti as the Chair of the Up-Island Regional School Committee. Mr. Orcutt said he would begin drafting the letter the next morning and expected to send it on Thursday.

Mr. Manter moved to authorize the Chair to send a letter to the Up-Island Regional School District reflecting the Finance Committee's earlier vote. Mr. Rattet seconded the motion

Discussion: There was no discussion.

Roll-Call Vote: Mr. Orcutt -Aye; Mr. Rattet -Aye; Ms. Angell - Aye; and Mr. Manter, Aye.

The motion passed unanimously. (4-0)

Mr. Manter suggested that the letter also be sent to the other two Select Boards and Finance Committees. Ms. Angell agreed. Mr. Orcutt said he would do so.

Ms. Angell agreed that the Committee should not tell the School Committee how to do its job, but said the Finance Committee still needed to educate itself about the budget. Mr. Manter agreed that self-education was useful but repeated that the Finance Committee should not instruct the School Committee where to spend or reduce funds. He said personnel and class size were the principal expenses.

Mr. Orcutt said the school budget was dense and complex and that the Finance Committee had examined it repeatedly during his more than 20 years on the Committee. He said many items, including salaries and health care, could not be changed. Mr. Rattet said some areas could be examined but that the School Committee should choose them.

Mr. Manter said that although the School Committee did not control the amount paid to employees, it had a say in the number of employees and could address staffing through attrition or other methods. Mr. Rattet said the high school faced the same issue. Mr. Manter said the high school budget was somewhat different because it was Island-wide, received more scrutiny, and had not shown the same approximately ten-percent spending increases in recent years.

Mr. Manter also discussed the superintendent's portion of the budget, which is included in both the high school and Up-Island assessments, and said he hoped the School Committee would examine it more aggressively. Mr. Rattet asked whether salaries had increased for administrators and the superintendent. Mr. Manter said he did not believe the new superintendent had received an adjustment, but that some non-union administrators had received increases. He said there had been discussion of tying those increases to a consumer price index rather than to increases received by teachers or other employees. He said cost-of-living adjustments were fair because they preserved the value of compensation, while other expenditures could be examined more closely.

Correspondence and Scheduling

Mr. Ramoutar reported that no correspondence had been received.

Topics Not Anticipated by the Chair

No substantive topics were raised.

Next Meeting

The next Finance Committee meeting was scheduled for October 13, 2026.

Adjournment

Mr. Rattet moved to adjourn. Mr. Orcutt seconded the motion.

Roll-Call Vote: Mr. Orcutt -Aye; Mr. Rattet -Aye; Ms. Angell - Aye; and Mr. Manter, Aye.

The motion passed unanimously. (4-0)