Approved 8/12/26

TOWN OF WEST TISBURY
SELECT BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, August 5th, 2026
Town Hall Hybrid Meeting

Present: Select Persons – Skipper Manter (Chair), Jessica Miller (Vice Chair), Cynthia Mitchell, Jennifer Rand (Town Administrator)

Also present in person or on Zoom: Shawn Ramoutar (Board Administrator), Tara Whiting, Town Clerk (remote); Chief Bradley Cortez; Chief Greg Pachico; Chief Ben Retmier; and Chelsea Joiner, John Christensen and Sunday Smith, Improving Governance Task Force; Ellen McAdams, Leila Glotzer Martin, and Darci Schofield, The Trustees of Reservations; members of The Trustees staff; Haley Sandlow; Kim Angell, Shannon, Langone; Liz Gebo; Jack Collins; and MVTV.

Call to Order

Mr. Manter called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Approval of Minutes - July 29, 2026

Ms. Miller moved to approve the minutes of July 29, 2026, and Ms. Mitchell seconded,
Roll Call Vote: Jessica Miller - Abstained; Cindy Mitchell – Aye; Skipper Manter -Aye.
Motion approved. (2-0-1)

Recognition of the Long Point Emergency Response

Mr. Manter moved this item forward on the agenda because representatives of The Trustees of Reservations and the Town's public-safety departments were present following the July 31 emergency at Long Point.

Chief Cortez thanked The Trustees personnel for their professionalism and selflessness. He acknowledged the tragic outcome and said that their willingness to put others' lives first demonstrated bravery. He also thanked the other individuals who assisted.

Ellen McAdams introduced herself as The Trustees' Operational Beach Manager, Leila Glotzer Martin introduced herself as Chief Ranger at Long Point Wildlife Refuge, and Darci Schofield introduced herself as The Trustees' Islands Director. Ms. Schofield thanked the community, emergency responders, and beach visitors who assisted, as well as The Trustees staff, for their leadership, courage, and care for the people and the place. She emphasized that emergency response at Long Point is difficult due to its remote location and thanked everyone for the rapid response and for their efforts to keep the community safe.

Mr. Manter recognized Chiefs Cortez, Pachico, and Retmier, as well as the members of their departments. He also recognized the four Edgartown lifeguards who traveled by ATV to assist. He said the response demonstrated the value of a coordinated team effort and noted that, despite the tragic circumstances, others had been saved.
Ms. Miller said she lives in the area and sees The Trustees staff during her morning walks. She described the ocean at Long Point as powerful and dangerous and expressed deep appreciation for those who entered the water to help people in distress.

The Board reviewed a letter to the Edgartown Select Board thanking the four lifeguards named for their professionalism, courage, quick thinking, and commitment to protecting the Island community. The letter was to be signed by the three Select Board members and the three public-safety chiefs, with copies sent to each lifeguard.

Ms. Miller moved to sign and endorse the letter of appreciation to the Edgartown Select Board regarding the lifeguards who responded at Long Point, and Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Jessica Miller – Aye; Cindy Mitchell – Aye; Skipper Manter – Aye.
The Motion was approved unanimously. (3-0)

The Board then reviewed a letter to Darci Schofield thanking the Long Point rangers and other Trustees personnel named in the letter. The letter commended their professionalism, courage, quick thinking, dedication, and commitment to public safety and was also to be signed by the Select Board and the three public-safety chiefs, with copies provided to the named individuals.

Ms. Miller moved to sign and endorse the letter of appreciation to The Trustees of Reservations regarding the staff who responded at Long Point, and Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Jessica Miller – Aye; Cindy Mitchell – Aye; Skipper Manter – Aye.
The Motion was approved unanimously. (3-0)
Mr. Manter again thanked the responders and commended their work.

Fall State Primary Warrant and Early Voting

Mr. Manter read the Town Clerk's memorandum concerning the fall state primary on Tuesday, September 1, 2026, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Public Safety Building, 454 State Road. The memorandum also described early-voting arrangements for the September primary and the November 3 general election.
For the September primary, the memorandum listed early voting on Saturday, August 22, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Monday, August 24, through Friday, August 28, from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. For the November election, the memorandum listed Saturday, October 17, from 8:00 a.m. to noon; Monday, October 19, through Friday, October 23, from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.; Saturday, October 24, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; and Monday, October 26, through Friday, October 30, from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Town Clerk Tara Whiting explained that the Board needed separate votes designating the early-voting location for the September and November elections because early voting could not be conducted at Town Hall. She said she would return later to approve the November hours.

Ms. Miller moved to designate the Public Safety Building, 454 State Road, as the early-voting location for the September state primary, and Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Jessica Miller – Aye; Cindy Mitchell – Aye; Skipper Manter – Aye.
The Motion was approved unanimously. (3-0)

Ms. Miller moved to designate the Public Safety Building, 454 State Road, as the early-voting location for the November general election, and Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Jessica Miller – Aye; Cindy Mitchell – Aye; Skipper Manter – Aye.
The Motion was approved unanimously. (3-0)
The Board reviewed the fall state primary warrant, which included the offices of Senator in Congress, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of the Commonwealth, Treasurer, Auditor, Representative in Congress, Councilor, Senator in the General Court, Representative in the General Court, District Attorney, Register of Probate, and County Commissioners.

Ms. Miller moved to sign the fall state primary election warrant, and Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Jessica Miller – Aye; Cindy Mitchell – Aye; Skipper Manter – Aye.
The Motion was approved unanimously. (3-0)

Improving Governance Task Force - Request to Refine Charge

John Christensen, chair of the Improving Governance Task Force, said the Task Force had assembled existing authorities, bylaws, and general laws into a compendium. The next phase, titled Management of Change, would focus on governance continuity and preservation of institutional knowledge. Because the current charge did not clearly authorize the Task Force to ask staff and other Town bodies to participate, the Task Force requested a Board policy and a refinement of its charge.

Mr. Christensen described a guidebook that would record how employees actually perform their work, rather than repeat formal job descriptions. It would capture practical methods, the annual and multi-year rhythm of each position, reasons behind decisions, important working relationships, and advice for successors. He said recent departures had shown that knowledge could leave faster than it could be replaced and that rebuilding it could impose substantial costs on the Town.

The proposed guidebook would be a living document. Employees could begin with the most important information and add to it as unusual situations arose. The Task Force anticipated a conversational process, short interviews where helpful, and periodic updates rather than a single lengthy assignment. Once developed, the material would be available so employees and residents could better understand how Town functions work together.

Ms. Miller said the final product appeared valuable but asked who would create it and whether it would add a significant burden to existing employees. Mr. Christensen estimated that the initial introduction might take approximately twenty minutes, followed by a few minutes at a time as employees thought of additional information. He said Task Force members could sit with or interview employees who were not comfortable writing the material themselves.

Sunday Smith said people who have performed a job for many years may not immediately recognize which details are important to a successor. She envisioned a series of shorter conversations in which Task Force members could act in an editorial role. She said the Task Force was still developing the process and was seeking the Board's authority to approach employees and begin learning what method would be most useful.

Ms. Mitchell supported the direction and said the Task Force had demonstrated sensitivity to avoiding unnecessary burdens on staff. Ms. Rand said a Board vote would help her explain to staff that the work was a Town priority and would allow her to help facilitate participation. Mr. Christensen reiterated that there were also financial and operational costs to failing to preserve knowledge during transitions.
Chelsea Joiner said tools such as ChatGPT or Claude could help employees document procedures while they performed them by transcribing dictation, organizing the information into step-by-step procedures, and incorporating screenshots. She said she was using that approach to develop Finance Department procedures so other staff could follow them during an extended absence. Mr. Christensen added that recorded interviews or Zoom conversations could also be transcribed and organized, while Ms. Smith noted that employees would have different comfort levels and some would prefer an in-person conversation.

Mr. Manter said the work could be completed in small parts instead of asking anyone to describe an entire job at once. After further discussion of the Board's authority and the independence of elected boards, Mr. Christensen read the requested policy language.

Ms. Mitchell moved that the Select Board adopt a Town-wide policy recognizing governance continuity and knowledge preservation as ongoing responsibilities of every Town department, board, committee, and office, and amend the original charge of the Improving Governance Task Force to include facilitation of that goal, and Ms. Miller seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Jessica Miller – Aye; Cindy Mitchell – Aye; Skipper Manter – Aye.
The Motion was approved unanimously. (3-0)

After the vote, Ms. Wasserman asked whether the Task Force could use small staff lunches to encourage participation. Ms. Rand said that if Town funds were used, she would need the Select Board's authority to spend from the Board's discretionary fund. The Board asked the Task Force to develop a plan and return with a specific request. Mr. Manter praised the Task Force's collaborative, energetic process and Mr. Christensen's leadership.

Letter of Support - MassDOT Local Bottleneck Reduction Program

Ms. Rand reported that the Town of Tisbury was applying for a grant through MassDOT's Local Bottleneck Reduction Program and had requested a letter of support from West Tisbury.

Ms. Miller moved to provide a letter in support of Tisbury's application to MassDOT's Local Bottleneck Reduction Program, and Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Jessica Miller – Aye; Cindy Mitchell – Aye; Skipper Manter – Aye.
The Motion was approved unanimously. (3-0)

Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated

None

Old Business

None

Correspondence - Housing Production Plan

The Board acknowledged correspondence stating that the Town's Housing Production Plan had been approved by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. Ms. Miller noted that the approval would remain in effect for several years, and Mr. Manter congratulated those involved in the work.

Public Comment

None

Executive Session

The Board considered entering executive session to discuss strategy regarding collective bargaining and litigation because open discussion could have a detrimental effect on the public body's bargaining and litigation positions. The Board stated that it would not return to open session.

Ms. Miller moved to enter executive session for the stated purposes, not to return to open session, and to invite Shawn Ramoutar, Chief Bradley Cortez, and Attorney Jack Collins, and Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Jessica Miller – Aye; Cindy Mitchell – Aye; Skipper Manter – Nay.
The Motion was approved. (2-1)

Mr. Manter stated that he believed the discussion should occur in open session. Mr. Manter called a five-minute recess before the Board entered executive session to pack up the recording equipment.