

Approved 9/23/26
TOWN OF WEST TISBURY
SELECT BOARD MEETING
WEDNESDAY, September 2nd, 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); Police Chief Bradley Cortez; Officer Steve Mathias; Fire Chief Greg Pachico; Spike Smith; Richard Olsen; Kendell Miller and accompanying family members; Kim Angell; Bob Wasserman; Michael Miller; Haley Sandlow; members of the public; and MVTV.

Call to Order

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

Approval of Minutes - August 19, 2026

Ms. Miller moved to approve the minutes of August 19, 2026, and Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Manter asked whether there were any questions, concerns, amendments, or omissions. None were offered.

Roll Call Vote: Jessica Miller - Aye; Cindy Mitchell - Aye; Skipper Manter - Aye.

The Motion was approved unanimously. (3-0)

Event Permit - Smith Wedding, 44 Flint Hill Road

The Board reviewed an event permit application submitted by Spike Smith for a wedding on September 5, 2026, at 44 Flint Hill Road. The required sign-offs had been obtained. Ms. Rand said a one-day license was not required because alcohol would not be sold.

Ms. Miller moved to approve the event permit, and Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Manter said his concern, both for this event and generally, was the volume of amplified music and the need to keep it at a sensible level. Ms. Miller said people should be able to celebrate while remaining considerate of those around them. Mr. Smith said most of his neighbors would be attending the wedding and acknowledged the Board's concern.

Roll Call Vote: Jessica Miller - Aye; Cindy Mitchell - Aye; Skipper Manter - Aye.

The Motion was approved unanimously. (3-0)

Donation - Friends of the Up-Island Council on Aging

The Board reviewed a request to accept an \$8,000 donation from the Friends of the Up-Island Council on Aging. The donation would be placed in the Up-Island Council on Aging special fund for residents in need of assistance with food or utilities. The request was submitted to the three Up-Island towns and was signed by Friends President Beth Kramer.

Ms. Miller moved to accept the \$8,000 donation. 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 thanked Ms. Kramer and the Friends of the Up-Island Council on Aging.

Police Sergeant Appointment - Steve Mathias

Chief Cortez recommended Officer Steve Mathias for promotion from patrol officer to sergeant. He said Officer Mathias had consistently demonstrated professionalism, sound judgment, dependability, and a strong commitment to the Police Department and the Town. He described Officer Mathias as someone who led by example, supported fellow officers, understood that leadership involved responsibility and accountability,

and had earned the trust and respect of those around him. Chief Cortez said the promotional process showed that Officer Mathias was prepared to assume supervisory responsibilities and that he was proud to recommend the promotion.

Chief Cortez said the promotion would take effect at noon on September 3, 2026. The Board discussed whether the appointment should follow the Police Department's regular April reappointment cycle or begin a new three-year term. After discussing the possible April 2028 and April 2029 reappointment dates, the Board agreed to set the term at three years beginning September 3, 2026, and to correct the term later if necessary.

Ms. Mitchell moved to promote Officer Steve Mathias to the rank of sergeant for a three-year appointment effective at noon on September 3, 2026. Ms. Miller seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote: Jessica Miller - Aye; Cindy Mitchell - Aye; Skipper Manter - Aye.

The Motion was approved unanimously. (3-0)

The Board congratulated Sergeant Mathias and wished him well in the position.

Traffic and Road-Vibration Concerns - State Road and Old County Road

Kendell Miller addressed the Board about serious traffic, speeding, safety, drainage, and vibration concerns affecting his family's historic former general-store property near the intersection of State Road and Old County Road. He said his family had owned the property for six generations and that, because the house sits extremely close to State Road, passing traffic was causing substantial vibration. He reported buses and trucks braking abruptly, vehicles accelerating through the intersection at approximately 35 to 45 miles per hour, vehicles leaving the roadway and crossing his lawn, and repeated accidents and near misses. He also found bricks dislodged from a cellar wall once or twice a year and planned to determine whether the damage was connected to moving vehicles, idling or stopped trucks, drainage conditions, or the roots of nearby trees.

Mr. Miller said traffic safety, roadside drainage, trees, the intersection design, and any future Mill Pond restoration work should be considered together. Another attendee described seeing a Department of Transportation employee nearly struck near the property and a Postal Service truck nearly rear-end a vehicle entering from Old County Road. Limited sight distance and vehicles approaching too quickly were described as constant dangers.

Mr. Miller had contacted or attempted to contact state highway and trucking officials, the road superintendent, the Tree Warden, and relevant Town committees. He suggested establishing and enforcing a 20-mile-per-hour limit for commercial traffic. He also planned to hire a structural engineer and install radar equipment and accelerometers to collect coordinated speed and vibration data, which he intended to publish through an online dashboard. He had already spent approximately \$3,000 investigating the problem. Regarding the large roadside trees near his property and his neighbor Lucy's property, Mr. Miller said they might transmit or reduce vibration, but he could not work on them because they appeared to be on state property. Ms. Rand explained that the Tree Warden could assess their health, but the state would decide whether work on state-owned trees was appropriate. Mr. Miller emphasized that he did not want the trees removed and was seeking coordinated input from the officials responsible for each part of the problem. The posted speed limit changes from 25 to 35 miles per hour near the property. Mr. Miller believed the location of the 35-mile-per-hour sign encouraged drivers to accelerate through the Old County Road intersection. Ms. Miller said speeding and heavy summer traffic were Island-wide problems that had been especially severe that summer. She supported investigating a formal speed study and asking the state to consider reducing speeds on roads beyond the Town's direct control.

Ms. Rand explained that state traffic speed studies follow a specific protocol, can be costly, and would likely need to be funded by the Town. The Town would also be required to accept the study's result even if it supported a higher speed limit, which was why the issue had not previously been pursued. She agreed to investigate the Town's authority, the state's requirements, and the study's cost so the Board could consider placing a funding article on a Town Meeting warrant. Ms. Miller supported allowing voters to decide

whether to fund the study and asking the state directly for lower speeds. Mr. Manter recalled that the Town had previously tried unsuccessfully to move the 35-mile-per-hour sign beyond New Lane because it lacked evidence that the existing limit was too high. He supported determining whether a formal study was required and whether the state could conduct it.

The Board also discussed converting the Old County Road intersection into a conventional T intersection. Ms. Rand recalled that, approximately ten years earlier, Eversource had rejected relocating the utility pole at the corner because doing so might require undergrounding utilities for a considerable distance. Ms. Miller said traffic had intensified and the Town should ask again. Ms. Rand agreed to contact the Town's current Eversource representative to determine the process for removing or relocating the pole.

An attendee noted that Martha's Vineyard Commission traffic counters in the road also recorded vehicle speeds. Ms. Rand discussed using roadside delineators to prevent vehicles from cutting the corner, although Mr. Miller noted that the existing trees already served as a physical barrier. He reiterated that the intersection, roadside drain, utility pole, and surrounding conditions should be addressed through a lasting, coordinated safety plan.

Chief Cortez said the Police Department would continue helping with speed enforcement and could move a portable speed-display sign to the area. Mr. Manter discussed the intersection's historic features, including the former stocks, the limited available land, and the difficulty of obtaining state action. He explained that the state generally prioritizes locations with serious or fatal crash histories and noted how long it had taken to advance other projects at the opposite end of Old County Road and the North Tisbury culvert.

The Board agreed that Ms. Rand would determine what the state requires to consider changing the speed limit and would consult both the state and Eversource about the requirements for redesigning the intersection and relocating the utility pole. Mr. Manter cautioned that the process would likely take considerable time but said the Town now had a starting point.

Affordable Housing Committee - Municipal Employee Preference at 401 State Road

Affordable Housing Committee Chair Kim Angell asked the Board to authorize Ms. Rand to sign a letter supporting a municipal-employee preference for one one-bedroom unit and one two-bedroom unit at the 401 State Road housing development. Ms. Angell briefly noted that the committee hoped to call the development "Callie's Corner." She said the letter, which Island Housing Trust needed for submission to MassHousing, reflected the Town's difficulty in recruiting and retaining employees due to housing. She said the preference would continue when a designated unit became vacant; if no qualified employee applied, the unit would then be offered to the next qualified applicant.

The Board discussed precisely which workers would qualify as municipal employees. Ms. Rand noted that Tri-Town Ambulance employees were employed by Chilmark and that school employees worked for the regional district rather than directly for West Tisbury. Ms. Angell said the Affordable Housing Committee wanted the preference to include employees of the Up-Island Regional School District and Tri-Town Ambulance but needed clarity about what MassHousing would permit. Ms. Miller supported including both groups and asked that the letter contain a clear definition to prevent uncertainty during tenant selection. The Board also noted that the development already had a 70 percent local preference.

Ms. Angell said Island Housing Trust and Laura had drafted the letter. The Board agreed that the letter should define municipal employees for this purpose to include West Tisbury employees, Up-Island Regional School District employees, and Tri-Town Ambulance employees. Ms. Rand said she would add the necessary language and coordinate the wording with Ms. Angell, Island Housing Trust, and Laura.

Ms. Miller moved to approve the letter, including the Up-Island Regional School District and Tri-Town Ambulance employee groups, with the final wording left up to Ms. Rand. 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 - Building Department Coverage

Ms. Miller asked about coverage following Building Inspector Joe Tierney's medical absence. Ms. Rand said Joe was recovering but would be out for some time. Jeff Fisher, Joe's assistant, was handling inspections, although he could not issue certificates of occupancy; none were outstanding at the time. Ms. Rand said Building Department inspection work was being covered, but zoning enforcement remained the area of uncertainty. She planned to speak with Joe on Monday, after he had a better understanding of what work he could perform, and determine whether further coverage was necessary. Mr. Manter suggested seeking assistance from other building inspectors if needed.

Old Business

None

Correspondence - Vineyard Transit Authority Update

Bob Wasserman, the Town's representative to the Vineyard Transit Authority, reported that the contract between the drivers and Transit Connection, the company that supplied the VTA's drivers and buses, had expired at the end of August. The parties had begun discussions, but the chief negotiator was unavailable to resume substantial negotiations until September. Mr. Watson said wages did not appear to be the principal point of contention. The drivers were seeking summer vacation time, while the VTA needed the greatest number of buses and qualified drivers during its busiest season.

Mr. Wasserman said the VTA might be able to accommodate some vacation time near the beginning or end of the summer season, but too few qualified drivers would require service reductions, which the Authority wanted to avoid. He expected negotiations to continue in September and believed the parties would reach a workable agreement. He explained that the VTA Board did not negotiate the drivers' contract directly, although it would have to approve budgetary or salary-related expenditures.

Mr. Wasserman also addressed a suggestion that federal funding could be used more broadly, explaining that state and federal transit funds were limited to specific eligible purposes. He said the VTA had received significant assistance supporting fare-free service, which was expected to continue through the end of September before fares resumed. He planned to return for a more formal presentation and anticipated that VTA Board Chair Elaine Miller would join him. The Board thanked Mr. Wasserman for the update.

Public Comment

Haley Sandlow of the press announced that this was her final week on the Island and that she would be joining another newspaper in Charlottesville, Virginia. The Board thanked her for her work and wished her well. Mr. Manter invited Michael Miller and then the remaining attendees to comment. No additional public comment was offered.

Adjournment

Ms. Miller moved to adjourn. 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 meeting was adjourned.