

*Approved 9/16/26*  
**TOWN OF WEST TISBURY**  
**SELECT BOARD MEETING**  
**WEDNESDAY, September 9th, 2026**  
**Town Hall Hybrid Meeting**

**Present:** Select Persons - Skipper Manter (Chair), Jessica Miller, Jennifer Rand (Town Administrator)

**Absent:** Cynthia Mitchell

**Also present in person:** Chelsea Joiner; Emily Avarkian; Billy Manson, representative of the Wild Food Challenge; and MVTV.

**Also present on Zoom:** Noreen Flanders, John Christensen; Hammond; Michael Miller; Jenna Sylvia; Hayley Duffy; Julie; Liz Gebo; and G. Vieira.

### **Call to Order**

Mr. Manter called the meeting to order. He stated that Ms. Mitchell would not be joining the meeting and that he and Ms. Miller would conduct the meeting.

### **Approval of Minutes - September 2, 2026**

Ms. Miller asked to postpone approval of the September 2, 2026 minutes because she had not received them until that afternoon. Mr. Manter agreed and said the postponement would also give Ms. Mitchell an opportunity to review them.

### **One-Day Beer and Wine License - Wild Food Challenge**

The Board reviewed a request for a one-day beer and wine license for the Wild Food Challenge at the Grange on October 12, 2026, from 2:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Billy Manson appeared on behalf of the event.

Ms. Miller said she had attended the event several times and described it as impressive. She noted that the Town was trying to keep events at 400 people or fewer, including contestants, workers, and volunteers. Mr. Manson said the application requested attendance of approximately 250 people, that the event normally had no more than approximately 30 contestants, and that total attendance should remain well within the Town's limit.

Mr. Manter asked whether there would be amplified music. Mr. Manson said the organizers were seeking a band. Mr. Manter said he had no objection because the event was earlier in the day, but asked the organizers to be respectful of the neighbors because music carried in the area. Mr. Manson said the band could finish by approximately 6:00 p.m.; Ms. Miller said music until 7:00 p.m. was acceptable.

***Ms. Miller moved to approve the one-day beer and wine license, and Mr. Manter seconded the motion.***

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

***The Motion was approved unanimously. (2-0)***

### **Event Permit – Fielder-Montieth Wedding, 91 Old Courthouse Road**

The Board reviewed an event permit application for an event at 91 Old Courthouse Road on September 30, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. Mr. Manter stated that the application appeared to be in proper order.

***Ms. Miller moved to approve the event permit, and Mr. Manter seconded the motion.***

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

***The Motion was approved unanimously. (2-0)***

### **Event Permit - Celebration of Life for Diane Powers**

The Board reviewed an event permit application for a celebration of life for Diane Powers at the Martha's Vineyard Agricultural Hall on September 19, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. Noreen Flanders appeared remotely and said

she hoped that one of the Select Board members would speak at the event because Ms. Powers had served as a Select Person. Mr. Manter said the Board members would discuss it, and Ms. Rand said she would follow up with Ms. Flanders.

*Ms. Miller moved to approve the event permit, and Mr. Manter seconded the motion.*

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

*The Motion was approved unanimously. (2-0)*

### **Appointment - Jennifer DeVivo, Up-Island Council on Aging Kitchen Manager**

The Board considered the appointment of Jennifer DeVivo as Kitchen Manager for the Up-Island Council on Aging, effective September 10, 2026, at Grade 1, Step 1.

*Ms. Miller moved to approve the appointment, and Mr. Manter seconded the motion.*

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

*The Motion was approved unanimously. (2-0)*

The Board congratulated Ms. DeVivo.

### **PFML Policy**

Ms. Rand said the Board would skip the personnel policy because it was not ready for consideration.

### **Vacation Carryover - Kevin Hatt**

The Board considered Kevin Hatt's request to carry over 117 hours of vacation time.

*Ms. Miller moved to approve the vacation carryover, and Mr. Manter seconded the motion.*

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

*The Motion was approved unanimously. (2-0)*

### **Town Administrator Succession Planning**

Mr. Manter opened a preliminary discussion regarding the process for replacing Town Administrator Jennifer Rand upon her retirement. He emphasized that the Board was not making decisions that evening and that Ms. Mitchell would participate in future discussions. He said Ms. Rand had provided ample notice and that the Town had time to work toward a positive transition. Ms. Rand's final workday was identified as July 16.

#### **Overlap and consulting period**

Ms. Rand said she was uncertain about the ideal amount of overlap but believed fewer than four weeks would be insufficient. She noted that four weeks had not been enough for some recent retirements and that the Town Administrator's work changed throughout the year in ways that could not be covered completely in four, six, or eight weeks. She recommended budgeting for her to remain available as a consultant for no longer than one year.

Ms. Miller asked about the transition between Chelsea Joiner and former Town Accountant Bruce Stone. Ms. Joiner said their overlap lasted eight weeks: during the first four weeks, Mr. Stone performed the work while she observed; during the second four weeks, she performed the work while he observed; and he later returned as a consultant. Ms. Joiner said that approach worked well for a clearly defined accounting position, while the Town Administrator position was less predictable.

Ms. Rand explained that many responsibilities in her office arose from unplanned calls and events rather than a fixed monthly cycle, so matters not addressed during the overlap would inevitably arise afterward. Mr. Manter suggested planning for a six-week overlap, depending on the selected candidate's experience and ability. Ms. Rand said a useful model could have the incoming administrator observe during the first three weeks and perform the job during the next three weeks while she answered questions.

Mr. Manter said future discussion should consider six weeks of overlap and up to one year of on-call consulting by Ms. Rand, by telephone or in person. Ms. Miller supported a firm endpoint so the new administrator would ultimately work independently. Ms. Rand said one year was her hard stop, but she could stop earlier if everyone was comfortable. She said she was not counting on a year of income and would simply make herself available for up to a year. Ms. Joiner said the Town had previously budgeted a set number of consulting hours for retirees, citing 100 hours as an example rather than a recommendation.

Ms. Rand clarified that the proposed overlap would occur before her departure, during which both administrators would be paid under their respective contracts. Because no funding then existed for the incoming administrator's contract before the new fiscal year, the Town would need a warrant article to fund the position from the start date through June 30. The following fiscal year's budget would then carry the position. Mr. Manter asked Ms. Rand to consider an appropriate hourly consulting rate for later discussion.

### **Recruitment schedule and advertising**

The Board discussed beginning advertising after the first meeting in January to avoid the holiday period. Ms. Rand said the initial advertisement needed a definite closing date and would likely run for approximately one month, after which the position could be advertised as open until filled. She asked how to balance advertising early enough to allow a renewed search, if necessary, with asking a successful candidate to wait until after Town Meeting and the necessary appropriation to begin work.

Ms. Miller said the advertisement could clearly state the anticipated start date and that a longer interval would allow an off-Island candidate to plan and a candidate already in a senior position to provide sufficient notice and complete existing work. Emily Avarkian agreed that candidates for a higher-level position could need more than two weeks to leave their current employment. The discussion generally contemplated advertising in January, reviewing applications and interviewing in the following months, and selecting a candidate before Town Meeting, without voting on the schedule.

The Board discussed advertising through the Cape Cod Times/Gannett, the Vineyard Gazette, The Martha's Vineyard Times, the Massachusetts Municipal Association's Beacon, LinkedIn, the Martha's Vineyard Chamber of Commerce, and the Town website. Ms. Rand said LinkedIn had produced unrelated applicants for other positions but might reach a qualified candidate on the Cape or in southeastern Massachusetts. Mr. Manter initially suggested using LinkedIn only if the first round did not produce enough qualified applicants. Ms. Miller and Ms. Avarkian favored casting a broad net from the beginning. Ms. Rand said prior municipal experience could shorten the learning curve but was not the only relevant qualification, and that municipal requirements were generally set out in law. No final advertising list was approved.

### **Job description and salary**

Mr. Manter said the job descriptions should be reviewed soon. Ms. Rand said she would gather comparable descriptions and had already provided the Island town administrator contracts to Ms. Joiner for review.

Ms. Joiner recommended budgeting \$210,000 for the position. She said she had reviewed the contracts for the other Island towns, except Aquinnah because it was an outlier, and that the current contracts for the other towns exceeded that figure, with the closest comparison reaching approximately \$209,000 during the fiscal year in which West Tisbury expected to hire. She said \$210,000 would make the Town competitive, attract strong candidates, and allow some room for negotiation. The discussion identified the current West Tisbury Town Administrator's compensation as approximately \$186,000, about ten percent below the comparison communities.

Ms. Rand said the Town could not recruit a successor at her current salary and compared the issue to adjustments previously made to the Highway Superintendent's compensation. Ms. Joiner said that at Grade 11, Step 8, the current pay scale produced approximately \$174,000 for a 35-hour week and \$198,000 for a 40-hour week, before any new cost-of-living adjustment. Ms. Rand said the position was no longer within the personnel bylaw and required a compensation level capable of attracting a particular type of candidate whose peers earned considerably more.

Mr. Manter said he was uncomfortable paying an incoming administrator more than an employee who had served for 20 years and said Ms. Mitchell's participation would be needed before the Board resolved the issue. Ms. Miller said the discussion should return when Ms. Mitchell was present because her long experience on the Board would be valuable. Ms. Joiner agreed to provide additional comparisons, including the pay-scale figures. Ms. Miller said the position carried very high responsibility and needs, and that the Town should offer compensation that would attract a high-quality candidate who felt respected rather than undervalued. No salary decision was made.

### **Work schedule, residency, and in-person expectations**

Mr. Manter proposed that the new Town Administrator work five days per week; Ms. Miller agreed that this should be the expectation at the start. The Board then discussed whether the administrator should be required to live on Martha's Vineyard.

Ms. Rand said Island residency would be ideal, but a highly qualified candidate commuting daily from Falmouth could work if the person understood that evening meetings were required and that the Town would not provide overnight accommodations. Ms. Miller said she was comfortable allowing a commuting arrangement because the candidate's commute was the candidate's responsibility, provided the position was clearly described as an in-office job with very limited exceptions, such as weather-related circumstances.

Ms. Avarkian cautioned against stating that the employee must live on Martha's Vineyard. She recommended focusing on the requirement to work in the office five days per week and making clear that the position was not remote. She noted that applicants increasingly omitted home addresses from resumes and should be considered based on their qualifications. Ms. Rand and Ms. Miller agreed that the posting should state that the position is fully in person, five days per week, while allowing limited flexibility when circumstances require it.

The group discussed ensuring that off-Island applicants understood the realities of working on Martha's Vineyard, including the ferry, difficult housing market, evening meetings, and the absence of Town-paid relocation, commuting, lodging, or housing stipends. The salary would be all-inclusive. No residency requirement was adopted.

### **Hiring and screening process**

Ms. Rand said the Select Board would interview and appoint the Town Administrator, but the Board needed to decide whether the interviews would include a staff member and a community representative or whether a preliminary screening committee would first review applicants and forward finalists. She said a screening committee would be most useful if the Town received substantially more than three applicants and could protect the identities of applicants who were not advanced, thereby reducing the risk to their current employment.

Mr. Manter said a screening committee could help determine whether a large group of applicants met the position's requirements. Ms. Rand said applications were not public merely upon receipt and generally became public when candidates were selected to move forward. After discussing whether a committee should be used even with a smaller pool, she agreed to review the applicable law so the Board would know precisely how long it could maintain applicant confidentiality. She said protecting unsuccessful applicants was especially important in a small Island community and did not represent an effort to withhold information from the public.

Ms. Miller asked whether one Select Board member could serve on a screening committee while preserving applicant privacy. Ms. Rand believed that was possible but said she would confirm the law. The Board left the screening and interview structure open for further discussion.

### **Budget considerations and next steps**

Ms. Rand summarized that the Town would need a free-cash warrant article to fund the incoming administrator before June 30, an amount in the following budget for consulting services, and sufficient funding for her accrued paid-time-off payout. She said she would revise the discussion document for the

Board's next review. Mr. Manter said the discussion had made good progress. No votes were taken during the succession-planning discussion.

### **Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated**

No topics were raised.

### **Old Business**

None.

### **Correspondence - Cape Light Compact Quarterly Report**

The Cape Light Compact quarterly report was listed under correspondence. No discussion was held.

### **Public Comment**

Mr. Manter invited public comment. None was offered.

### **Adjournment**

*Ms. Miller moved to adjourn, and Mr. Manter seconded the motion.*

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

*The Motion was approved unanimously. (2-0)*

The meeting was adjourned at 5:16 pm

Respectfully Submitted by Shawn Ramoutar, Board Administrator