Approved 11/4/26

Town of West Tisbury
Select Board Meeting Minutes

October 28 2026

Board members present: Skipper Manter, Chair; Jess Miller; Cynthia Mitchell.

Others in attendance – present and others not identified on Zoom: Jen Rand, Town Administrator; Shawn Ramoutar, Board Administrator; Michael Miller, Cody Coutinho, Lily Echeverria; Nicola Blake; Eunki Seonwoo, Jennelle Gadowski, EMD; Martina Thorton, Dukes County Manager; Richard Knabel; Kaitlyn Jones; Catherine Brennan; David Bouck; Ken Vincent; David Wallis; MVTV; and invited presenters and members of the public.

Call to Order
Mr. Manter called the Select Board's weekly meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone. He noted the lengthy agenda, and the Board agreed to address several shorter items first.

Approval of Minutes
Ms. Miller moved to approve the minutes from October 21, 2026. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Discussion: Mr. Manter asked if anyone had questions or concerns; no changes were proposed.
Roll Call Vote: Ms. Miller - Aye, Ms. Mitchell - Aye, and Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed unanimously. (3–0).

MVTV Board Appointment
Ms. Miller moved to appoint Richard Knobel as West Tisbury's representative to the Martha's Vineyard Community Television (MVTV) Board for an annual term. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Discussion: Mr. Knabel explained that he had served as an elected MVTV Board member for approximately 15 years. The Board has seven members elected from MVTV membership and six representatives appointed by the island towns. West Tisbury's appointed position had remained vacant since Alan Look's death. Filling that vacancy would help complete the Board's membership. Mr. Knabel also reported that MVTV completed employee housing for two of its four employees.
Roll Call Vote: Ms. Miller - Aye, Ms. Mitchell - Aye, and Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed unanimously. (3–0).

Conservation Commission Appointment
Ms. Miller moved to appoint Kaitlyn Jones to the Conservation Commission for a term ending in 2029. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Discussion: Mr. Manter acknowledged Ms. Jones's qualifications and strong connections to West Tisbury but expressed reservations about appointing a nonresident, because a nonresident could not vote at Town Meeting on matters relevant to the Commission. Ms. Miller asked whether the vacancy had been posted. After acknowledging it had been advertised and that no West Tisbury resident had applied, she supported the appointment and said Ms. Jones's expertise was welcome. Members agreed that, when available, a town resident would be preferable.
Roll Call Vote: Ms. Miller - Aye, Ms. Mitchell - Aye, and Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed unanimously. (3–0).

Climate Advisory Committee and MVP Project Appointments
Ms. Rand explained that the Select Board proposed Catherine Brennan for two separate annual appointments: membership on the Climate Advisory Committee and service as West Tisbury's liaison to the Martha's Vineyard Commission MVP project. Because the liaison position carries a stipend and the procedure for the prior appointment was unclear, Ms. Rand recommended that the Select Board make both appointments. Ms. Brennan confirmed that Michelle Gitlin had served previously and explained that the grant was in its second year.

Ms. Miller moved to appoint Catherine Brennan to the Climate Advisory Committee. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Ms. Miller - Aye, Ms. Mitchell - Aye, and Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed unanimously. (3–0).

Ms. Miller then moved to appoint Catherine Brennan as West Tisbury's liaison to the Martha's Vineyard Commission MVP project. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Ms. Miller - Aye, Ms. Mitchell - Aye, and Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed unanimously. (3–0).

Seasonal Floating Pier Permit – 65 Carl's Way
Ms. Rand presented an application for renewal of the seasonal floating pier permit at 65 Carl's Way for 2027. She said the permit had previously been renewed annually but lapsed after a change in property ownership. The current application was connected to a proposed sale. Cody Coutinho, representing the applicant, explained that the proposed installation was unchanged from the 2006 plan: a walkway and ramp with two 12-foot-by-4-foot floats secured by anchors to the pond bottom. The walkway remained in place, but the representative could not confirm whether the floats were currently installed.

Ms. Miller asked whether the Conservation Commission needed to review the application and whether the "pier/mooring" language would also authorize a separate mooring. Ms. Rand said the Conservation Commission had no further role in the seasonal floating pier permit, and explained that the Select Board, acting as harbormasters, had historically declined to issue individual mooring permits. She recommended that the Board reconsider that practice and vote on future mooring requests. Ms. Miller favored adopting standards before authorizing separate moorings. Mr. Coutinho clarified that "mooring" referred only to the anchors holding the floating pier and that no additional mooring was proposed.

Ms. Miller moved to approve the seasonal floating pier permit at 65 Carl's Way for 2027, subject to annual reapplication. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Discussion: The Board confirmed that the anchored floating pier was the sole installation being approved.
Roll Call Vote: Ms. Miller - Aye, Ms. Mitchell - Aye, and Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed unanimously. (3–0).

Ms. Miller suggested that the Board return to the wider question of mooring permits because of increasing pressure on the pond.

David Bouck House Move Tree Limb Trimming Request
Ms. Rand presented the request to remove selected limbs along Old County Road to allow a small existing building to be moved. Since the road is under Town jurisdiction, she requested Select Board

authorization. Ms. Miller supported reusing the structure as a housing opportunity and noted that the Tree Advisory Committee had reviewed the proposal favorably. Members said removal of low or damaged limbs could also improve clearance and tree conditions.

Mr. Bouck said he had contacted Richie Olson, Superintendent of Streets, who connected him with tree contractors. A contractor associated with Tabor Tree had agreed to undertake the work, tentatively on Friday, with the building relocation planned for Sunday morning. The contractor would accompany the move and, if necessary, address smaller branches. Mr. Manter asked that Mr. Olson be notified before trimming so he could monitor the work if he wished.

Ms. Miller moved to approve tree limbing along Old County Road for the purpose of moving the building, on the condition that Richie Olson, Superintendent of Streets, be notified beforehand. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Ms. Miller - Aye, Ms. Mitchell - Aye, and Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed unanimously. (3–0).

Island-Wide Emergency Management and Response Coordination Plan
WT Emergency Management Director, Jennelle Gadowski, and Dukes County Manager, Martina Thorton, presented the Island-Wide Emergency Management and Response Coordination Strategic Integration and Implementation Plan, developed with the Olson Group and island emergency managers.

They described a multi-year plan to strengthen coordination, staffing, infrastructure, funding, and response capabilities across the island. They cited a recent blizzard as demonstrating the need for greater coordination. The proposal would expand an existing part-time coordinating position into a full-time dedicated position, with the goal of starting funding in fiscal year 2028.

The emergency managers were preparing a job description. The host organization had not yet been chosen, with Dukes County and the Martha's Vineyard Commission under consideration; the funding mechanism and any warrant articles also remained unsettled. Ms. Miller noted that the Board had received several letters supporting the plan. The presenters said island-wide emergency managers supported implementation. In response to Mr. Manter, they explained that the Dukes County Emergency Management Association comprises one emergency manager from each town and one from the County.

Ms. Miller moved to adopt the Island-Wide Emergency Management and Response Coordination Strategic Integration and Implementation Plan and designate the Dukes County Emergency Management Association as its governing body. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Ms. Miller - Aye, Ms. Mitchell - Aye, and Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed unanimously. (3–0).

Mill Pines Building Lease
Ms. Rand reported that the Town had received one bid for the Mill Pines building lease, from the existing tenants, Ken Vincent and David Wallis. The bid met the stated requirements, and the Board's evaluation found the proposal advantageous. Mr. Manter questioned the five-year term shown in the evaluation material because the Board had previously discussed a three-year term to preserve an opportunity to assess whether the building might be needed for municipal purposes and what capital work such use would require.

Ms. Rand explained that the five-year reference had carried over from an earlier document and was not a fixed requirement of the request for proposals. She said the tenants could withdraw their bid in light of the inconsistency or accept a three-year lease with renewal options. Following discussion, all parties agreed on a three-year lease with two separate one-year renewal options, each requiring agreement by both the Town and tenants.

Ms. Miller moved to award the lease to Ken Vincent and David Wallis for three years, with two one-year renewal options. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Ms. Miller - Aye, Ms. Mitchell - Aye, and Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed unanimously. (3–0).

Topics not anticipated by the Chair
Halloween Party
Mr. Manter announced that the Town Halloween party would be held Saturday, October 31, 2026, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. at the Agricultural Hall, with games, activities, and rides to the cemetery. The event was open to attendees from any town.

Cemetery Marker Request – Mayhew Family
The Board resumed consideration of the Mayhew family's request for a five-foot marker designed by Ben Cabot in a designated cemetery lot. Members discussed the general 36-inch height limit and whether to consider exceptions individually. Ms. Miller said she had visited the marked lot near the fence and believed the landscaping, nearby markers, and sightlines would accommodate the proposed height. Ms. Mitchell agreed. Mr. Manter supported the proposal at this location but raised concerns about maintaining consistent standards for future applications.

Ms. Miller moved to approve the Mayhew family's application for the particular five-foot marker designed by Ben Cabot at the lot identified by the cemetery representative, Alan. The motion was seconded.
Discussion: The approval was specific to this application and was not presented as a general revision of the marker-height standard.
Roll Call Vote: Ms. Miller - Aye, Ms. Mitchell - Aye, and Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed unanimously. (3–0).

Cemetery Expansion – Mowing, Layout and Survey
Members discussed the recently mowed cemetery expansion area and its improved appearance. They considered continuing to mow the area, possible lime treatment in a future season, and maintaining the property's natural character. Ms. Rand said the next stage of laying out burial lots should be placed on a future agenda. She favored a professional survey to establish precise boundaries and lot lines, and Mr. Manter agreed that accuracy would be essential before the Town sold lots. Members noted that the survey might require a funding request or Town Meeting warrant article.

The Board also considered whether to include maintenance of the expanded area in a future cemetery mowing contract or continue with Highway Department assistance. Ms. Rand cautioned that increasing the mowing scope could affect bids and costs. Members discussed managing cedars, invasive growth, and poison ivy to protect the area for future cemetery use. No formal vote was taken.

Correspondence – Martha's Vineyard Commission
Mr. Manter referred to correspondence from Doug Ruskin regarding Ernie Thomas's abstention on a Martha's Vineyard Commission vote. Ms. Miller said the Board should communicate regularly with its appointees to outside boards and committees, without instructing them how to vote. She suggested discussing reporting expectations and periodic updates. Mr. Manter recalled that appointees had previously appeared before the Board when seeking reappointment and suggested reviving that practice. A related appointment was expected in December. No action was taken.

Public Comment
None

Town Administrator Job Description
Ms. Rand presented further revisions to the Town Administrator job description, including language drawn from Oak Bluffs, to distinguish daily operational coordination from appointing authority or direct supervision of departments governed by separate boards. Ms. Mitchell and Mr. Manter expressed concern that references to supervising all town staff would imply authority beyond that of the West Tisbury Town Administrator. Ms. Miller and Ms. Rand emphasized the position's extensive daily coordination and operational responsibilities, including matters involving departments not directly under the Town Administrator's appointing authority.

Members agreed on the phrase "provides operational direction and oversight of town hall staff." They distinguished operational oversight from personnel authority and revised another provision to read "coordination and oversight of town hall operations," without the word "daily." They agreed to remove "formal" from the limitation on disciplinary action, clarifying that the Town Administrator does not independently hire, terminate, or impose discipline. A separate staff-support provision would refer to "town hall staff." Ms. Rand said she had added responsibility for maintaining and improving governance documentation.

Members discussed a proposed purpose statement that described the Town Administrator as chief administrative officer responsible for the "daily management of the town." Mr. Manter objected that separate departments had their own management responsibilities. The Board agreed to use the more limited statement, "The Town Administrator will serve as the chief administrative officer of the town," with later provisions further describing the responsibilities and limitations.

Ms. Rand emphasized how the position had grown over time, including facilities, grants, programs, and cross-departmental issues. The Board discussed how to reflect those responsibilities in recruitment and compensation. Ms. Rand agreed to incorporate the changes, submit the draft to Town Counsel, and bring the reviewed language and proposed salary back to the Board. She also said Town Counsel was reviewing a paid family and medical leave policy for anticipated discussion at a following meeting.

Ms. Miller moved to adopt the amended draft Town Administrator job description, subject to Town Counsel's review. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion.
Discussion: The Board reserved final approval of the counsel-reviewed language and salary consideration for a later meeting.
Roll Call Vote: Ms. Miller - Aye, Ms. Mitchell - Aye, and Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed unanimously. (3–0).

Upcoming Meeting and Adjournment
Members discussed a hearing scheduled for the following Wednesday. Ms. Rand said she might arrive late or be unable to attend due to a prior commitment and would forward the meeting link when she receives it. The Board also discussed its upcoming meeting schedule.

Ms. Miller moved to adjourn, and Ms. Mitchell seconded.
Roll Call Vote: Ms. Miller - Aye, Ms. Mitchell - Aye, and Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed unanimously. (3–0).

Meeting adjourned at 5:32 pm
Respectfully Submitted by Shawn Ramoutar, Board Administrator.