Approved 8/05/26

TOWN OF WEST TISBURY
SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, July 29, 2026

Select Board: Skipper Manter; Cindy Mitchell (participating remotely); Jessica Miller (absent)
Participants: Jen Rand, Town Administrator; Shawn Ramoutar, Board Administrator; Rob McCarron; Phil Hale; Lauren Lynch; Virginia Barbatti, Agricultural Society representatives; Mike Gala (Comcast); MVTV; Samantha Look, Kim Angell, Prudy Burt, and Garrison Vieira.

Call to Order
Mr. Manter: Called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. and announced that Ms. Miller would not be attending.

Approval of Minutes
Mr. Manter deferred consideration of the prior meeting minutes until Ms. Miller could be present.

New Business
Martha's Vineyard Agricultural Society - Proposed Multi-Use Cold Storage Facility
Rob McCarron introduced himself as Chair of the Agricultural Society's Board of Trustees. He said he was working with Phil Hale, Lauren Lynch, and Virginia Barbatti to develop a multi-use cold storage facility serving island agricultural needs. The proposed facility would include refrigerated and freezer space.

Mr. McCarron explained that the idea also aligned with Tick-Free MV's need for a location to process deer as part of efforts to address the island's tick problem. He described deer processing as one use within a broader cold-storage facility rather than the facility's sole purpose. Mr. McCarron reported that his informal conversations with local farmers consistently identified cold storage as a need. He cited Arnie Fischer's need for space to hang a slaughtered lamb; Jo Douglas's need to store meat from pigs and cattle butchered off island; farmers' interest in freezing and storing vegetables through the winter; and an emerging flower cooperative's potential need for a central gathering and storage location.

Mr. McCarron emphasized that the Agricultural Society wanted the facility to remain useful after the deer population was brought under control. The long-term purpose would be to support agriculture and the island community. He said the Society's existing workshop is on non-APR land. He described it as too small and inconsistent with the other buildings on the property. The concept under consideration would replace the workshop with a larger building divided between workshop space and cold storage. He stressed that the project was moving quickly but remained in the development phase and said the Society had been keeping Joe Tierney informed as plans developed.

Mr. McCarron described a two-phase approach intended in part to accommodate the Share the Harvest program, through which harvested deer may be donated to IGI using a food-safe process.

Phase one could involve moving at least two mobile trailers to the property this fall and later incorporating them into a newly designed building.
Ms. Barbatti said the proposal would replace the Society's existing deer cooler and reimagine that area as a better-functioning, more attractive, multi-purpose facility. The representative said the project had developed rapidly and that the Society was trying to manage it responsibly so the final facility would be appropriate for the property, farmers, and the community over the long term.

Ms. Mitchell said she had no questions and agreed that the proposal sounded like a worthwhile project. Ms. Burt asked whether the project would replace the facility on Lambert's Cove Road that had been discussed in the newspaper. Mr. Manter said the question was not relevant to the proposal before the Board, which concerned a new facility at the Agricultural Society property.

Mr. McCarron said the Agricultural Society could not speak to what the Hunt Club might do. In response to a question about design sketches, said he had only a photograph of a post-and-beam barn as a general concept and that the size had not been determined. He said the building could potentially be designed for future expansion. Mr. McCarron added that the Society's staff currently lacked adequate office space. He said office space might ultimately be included in the project or accommodated by designing the building for a future addition, such as an open second-floor area. He said the Society would continue to update the Board as the plans progressed.

Mr. Manter suggested considering renovation and reuse of the existing garage. The board moved on to other business.

Martha's Vineyard Agricultural Society Fair - Annual Entertainment License
Ms. Rand presented the annual entertainment license for the Agricultural Society Fair, scheduled for August 13 through August 16. She stated that the hours would be Thursday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. and Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Mitchell moved to approve the annual entertainment license. Mr. Manter seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Cindy Mitchell - Aye; Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed. (2-0)

Comcast / Massachusetts Broadband Institute Gap Network Grant Update
Mike Gala, a Comcast Representative, explained that Comcast had committed during cable license negotiations with the island towns to pursue the Massachusetts Broadband Institute Gap Network Grant, a federally funded program intended to provide service to every unserved home on Martha's Vineyard. Comcast was awarded the grant and was working to meet its requirements.

Mr. Gala explained that long driveways outside Comcast's standard installation parameters require property owner permission, and that many private roads require easements before network construction can occur. Comcast had contracted with a private firm to assist with title research, easement preparation, and related documents. He reported that an initial round of outreach letters had been sent to affected homeowners and that another round was being prepared for the following week. He emphasized that Comcast needed residents' help to complete the outstanding permissions and easements before the grant deadline of December 31, 2026.

Mr. Gala asked residents who lacked Comcast service, or who knew someone still waiting for it, to contact him as soon as possible. He said there would be no construction costs to property owners because the work was fully funded by the grant.

Ms. Rand asked Mr. Gala to send the Town a short, clear notice for the Town website. She said the notice could be posted under News and distributed to people subscribed to Town alerts. Ms. Mitchell supported using the Town website to publicize the program.

Mr. Manter asked whether Comcast had publicized the program through local newspapers. Mr. Gala said Comcast's public relations team was contacting newspapers and that outreach would occur shortly. Ms. Mitchell asked approximately how many properties were affected and whether the properties could be publicized in a manageable way so others might help reach the owners. Mr. Gala estimated that approximately 70 properties across the island currently required easements. He clarified that additional properties required the landlord's or property owner's permission for service drops, and that even more properties had already been reached via existing easements or public rights-of-way. He agreed to confirm whether Comcast could provide information on the affected property.

Mr. Manter thanked Mr. Gala and wished Comcast success with the grant. Mr. Gala said he would send the requested website information to the Town.

Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair
Mr. Manter asked Garrison Vieira whether he was waiting for the Agricultural Society discussion. Mr. Vieira said he was only listening.

Old Business
None

Correspondence
Howes House - Elevator and Building Improvements
Mr. Manter introduced a letter from Bethany Hammond, Director of the Howes House Senior Center, regarding the elevator's future and other building improvements.

Ms. Rand said the first step was to contract with an architect for a building assessment. She separated the work into the interior improvements approved at Town Meeting and the elevator/accessibility issue. The assessment would support planning for the interior work and determine whether an exterior lift to the basement could fit at the building, potentially under an awning. She continued to explain that installing a full elevator would trigger a major renovation of the building. If an exterior lift could be accommodated, the next step would be to apply to the State Architectural Access Board for a variance to use the lift instead of an elevator for basement access. She described the current situation as unacceptable and said the building needed action.

Mr. Manter asked how much the building assessment would cost and where the funding would come from. Ms. Rand said she was waiting for a proposal and did not yet know the cost. She said Facilities funding and the existing warrant articles would be used for the assessment.

Mr. Manter asked whether the other two towns had been approached and noted that the letter had been sent to all three Select Boards. Ms. Rand said she had not yet undertaken that outreach because she needed to move the work forward. She said she was waiting for the assessment quote and, assuming it was reasonable and within available funds, intended to authorize the assessment and continue to the next steps. She noted that there was no clear agreement on capital work.

Ms. Rand went on to say the Town likely would not have funding for an exterior lift until a Town Meeting appropriation. She expected the lift to cost more than she could fund through currently available resources. Ms. Mitchell said the Council on Aging Board had worked on the letter to ensure that everyone was aware of the issue and had nothing further to add.

Public Comment
None

Adjournment
Mr. Manter called for a motion to adjourn.
Ms. Mitchell moved to adjourn. Mr. Manter seconded the motion.
Roll Call Vote: Cindy Mitchell - Aye; Mr. Manter - Aye.
The motion passed. (2-0)

Meeting adjourned at
Respectfully Submitted by Shawn Ramoutar, Board Administrator