

West Tisbury Finance Committee Budget Hearing
Howes House
January 25, 2018

Attendance

Committee: Gary Montrowl – Chair, Greg Orcutt – Vice Chair, Chuck Hodgkinson, Doug Ruskin, Katherine Triantafillou

Guests: Dawn Barnes – Assessor, Leslie Clapp – Center for Living Director, Michael Colaneri – Board of Assessors, Julie Fay – Martha’s Vineyard Community Services Executive Director, Don Hatch – MVRDDR Director, Kent Healy – Selectman, Omar Johnson – Health Agent, Sarah Kuh – Vineyard Health Access Director, Paddy Moore – Healthy Aging Martha’s Vineyard Chair, Bruce Stone – Town Accountant, Joe Tierney – Building Inspector, Martina Thorton – Dukes County Manager, Christine Todd – County Commissioner

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00pm. A quorum was present. The hearing was recorded and will be televised on MVTv.

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

Approval of minutes was postponed until next meeting.

Old Business

Letter to the Personnel Board

Katherine moved to send the letter drafted by Doug Ruskin to the Personnel Board. Gary seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

New Business

Reserve Fund Transfer Request – Veterans Benefits

Postponed until next meeting.

New Business

Budget Reviews

#421 Superintendent of Streets

Postponed to next meeting.

#422 General Highway Fund

Postponed to next meeting.

#423 Snow & Ice Removal

Postponed to next meeting.

#424 Street Lights

Postponed to next meeting.

#433 Town Landfill/Local Drop Off

Postponed to next meeting.

#439 MVRDRRD Intergovernmental – Don Hatch, Director

Don Hatch presented to the Fin Com. Katherine asked Don if he had a narrative to submit with the budget. Bruce suggested in the future Don could submit what is included in the Edgartown annual report.

Gary asked if the increase in assessment is principally due to health insurance. Don responded yes and added the refuse district is increasing the bag fee to help offset increased costs.

Don explained the refuse district had been paying \$40/ton to send recycling off Island, but was just informed the cost has risen to \$80/ton retroactive to January 1, 2018. Don described this as a national crisis. Don said the refuse district pays \$63.50/ton to dispose of trash. The Chair asked about how this would impact the budget. Don said all of the recycling costs are assessed to the town. Don explained the refuse district is looking at increasing bag fees, as well as fees on disposal of tires, refrigerators and other items so as to avoid increasing assessments. Don said the refuse district has not increased fees in several years.

Don said that because he just learned of this increase in cost of sending recycling off Island, the MVRDRRD board must vote on the proposed increases. Bruce said the assessment could increase by as much as \$5,400.

Doug suggested charging more for a single bag fee than when bag fee tickets are purchased in bulk.

The Chair asked about the warrant article passed last year for the expansion of the facility. Don said the warrant article passed in all towns, bonding took three months, and the engineer who was on project at the consulting engineering firm became ill and passed away. Don assessed the project as being six months behind schedule.

#491 Cemeteries

Postponed to next meeting.

#510 – Board of Health – Omar Johnson, Health Agent

Omar Johnson presented to the Committee. Gary pointed out the principal change in the budget is a new position. Omar said the addition is an administrative position because he is overwhelmed by his daily duties, explaining the growth in West Tisbury over the past several years has impacted his position.

Omar said that state, title five and food codes have become more complicated and require more time. Omar said there are more public health responsibilities such as a potential needle exchange program, emergency management and working as part of the Cape & Islands coalition of health agents as well as the other health agents on Island. Omar said he is certain the town needs to make sure their health agent has enough time to take of responsibilities including the public water system, West Tisbury transfer station, water testing and beach closings.

The Chair asked about the grade of the proposed position, if it is a benefitted position and if there is a cap on the grade. Bruce replied it is grade 3, step 1, part time, non-benefitted and step increases will be annually based on the personnel bylaw.

Katherine asked if Pam Thors could absorb some of the administrative duties. Omar said he needed a person who could learn and focus on board of health responsibilities. Bruce added the data processing system used is very specific to the position.

Greg asked why revenue is going down if there is demand for more service and more help. Omar said that he has not adjusted the rates because he is relatively new, but noted the rates are low versus other towns. Omar added that he has alerted his board of directors that he plans to make a presentation regarding fees.

Chuck asked if Omar's time pressure is driven by the building boom and if so, how did the previous health agent deal with it? Bruce explained during the last boom, there was a 20 hour per week position that was shared by the building inspector and health agent. Bruce said the building department now has more assistants and the clerical position for the health department is a lower cost per hour position than the field position in the building department.

Chuck asked if the position could be seasonal. Omar replied although it is slower in the off season, he is busy year round and the new position allows him to be more effective.

Katherine asked about the increase in building and equipment supplies. Bruce explained that is a one time cost to reconfigure the work area for a new person. Katherine asked if board members would consider foregoing their stipend to help pay for the position.

Both Chuck and Doug pointed out the opportunity to increase fees. Doug asked Omar to take the Fin Com comments regarding fees to his board, saying that if the board of health is going to increase expenses, revenue has to go up sooner rather than later.

Chuck noted that actual expenses were approximately \$10,000 in each of the last two years and are \$4,700 year to date. Chuck asked if \$14,000 of expenses in the proposed budget could be reduced..

#522 Health Services

Postponed to next meeting.

#525 Vineyard Health Access

Sarah Kuh and Martina Thorton presented to the committee.

The Chair thanked Martina and Sarah for presenting to the All Island Finance Committee, apologized for asking them to appear at this meeting and recommended next year the presentation to the AIFC be later in the year so final numbers could be presented.

The Chair explained the budget format was not the standard format the Fin Com reviews for other departments, but he found the information to be complete.

Martina said there are five warrant articles and two proposed budgets for programs so there are seven funding requests. Regarding budget #525 Vineyard Health Access, the Chair noted the budget is up \$42,900 or 13.38% over last year. The Chair noted that \$22,000 is budgeted for retirement and health insurance and asked why there is a nearly 50% increase over last year. Martina responded that a 15% rate increase over last year was budgeted, but she just learned the increase will actually be 6% so that amount will be reduced.

The Chair asked Martina if the budget would be revised. Martina responded no because the budget has already been presented to some other Island finance committees so changing the budget would be confusing. Martina explained that at the end of each fiscal year, the County reconciles how much each town funded and if a refund is appropriate, the County sends a check to the town. Martina added this is a cleaner process than issuing credits for the next year.

Martina explained that an amount exceeding a budget line cannot be spent without approval of the Dukes County Advisory Board and the selectmen. Sarah Kuh added that one more employee is getting health insurance in FY19.

The Chair asked about the rent increase and equipment increase. Martina responded that \$1,000 was budgeted for a new computer. Sarah added that is being funded by a grant.

The Chair summarized that West Tisbury's portion of the budget for #525 Vineyard Health Access is 14.39% of \$360,000 or \$51,687.

Katherine asked about miscellaneous contractual services. Sarah answered that is a grant funded position for outreach. Katherine asked about spending \$8,000 for advertising. Sarah said this also is grant funded so people know about VHA and come in for services. Gary noted the increase in units illustrates the advertising has been effective.

Katherine asked about OPEB and Martina answered it is funded out of the general county OPEB fund.

Doug said with the dramatic drop in cost of health insurance, he would expect an amendment on town meeting floor to reduce the budget. Martina said although she heard about 6% for the rate increase, she has not seen yet seen the rates. Martina expressed concern that calculations and amendments could make it to all town meetings accurately. Doug said he did not find it necessary to rework the budget and get it back to the Fin Com, but it should be changed on the town meeting floor. Martina explained that she also would have to amend the budgets for other programs.

Katherine asked about the formatting of the budgets. Martina explained each program is different, some are run through the county as departments (Vineyard Health Access, Center for Living), but the other programs are run the Martha's Vineyard Community Services (CORE, First Stop, Healthy Aging MV).

#540 Martha's Vineyard Center for Living

Leslie Clapp presented to the Committee.

Greg asked about renting out the second floor of the new building. Martina said they are actively seeking a tenant/tenants either at fair market value or at less than fair market value if the tenant brings community benefit.

Chuck noted that the budget for FY17 was \$476,000 and two years later the proposed budget is \$742,000. Leslie explained that the budget for each of the last two years assumed a supportive day program four days a week for six months and five days a week for the remaining six months. Leslie said that since they have moved into the new building, the CFL is budgeting the program for five days a week for the entire year and all other operations will be for the entire year.

Leslie said the CFL needs to work out how they will feed clients because they no longer have access to the elder services nutrition program and is working on some innovative ideas working with restaurants and caterers.

Chuck noted that FY19 is 27% higher than FY18 which is anticipating increasing days 25%. Leslie concurred.

Katherine asked if the increase in janitorial services is because the CFL is in the new building. Leslie responded yes.

Katherine asked about salaries. Leslie explained salaries were not broken out by employee in the budget submitted. Katherine asked about step increases and COLA. Martina responded there is a 3% step increase and 1.5% COLA based on the median for all town COLAs set in the previous year. Katherine asked if OPEB for the department is paid through the county and Martina responded yes.

Doug asked about the amount budgeted for health insurance. Martina replied that she would look into the numbers.

#541 Up-Island Council on Aging

Postponed to next meeting.

#543 Veteran's Benefits

Postponed to next meeting.

#241 Inspector of Buildings & Zoning – Joe Tierney

Joe Tierney presented to the Committee. In referencing the health inspector's presentation, Joe said that his group receives clerical support for Pam Thors, but she is often occupied.

The Chair asked about the increase in line item #5430 Building & Equipment Supplies. Joe responded it is a one time charge to purchase shelving for storing large roll plans in the basement which is required by law. Katherine asked Joe about his salary increase.

Greg asked why building permit fees have not been raised. Joe responded the selectmen set the fees. Joe said the selectmen recently increased the fee paid to inspectors by five dollars, but the selectmen did not want to raise fees charged. Joe added West Tisbury's building fees are normally lower than other towns. Bruce said \$83,000 in fees has been collected in the first six months of the year.

Kent Healy explained the genesis of building permit fees and said there should be a lot of thought going into how the fees are structured.

Doug said that he attended the hearing where the selectmen discussed raising building permit fees and asked Joe to report the fin com's interest in increasing fees to the selectmen. Doug added he would like to see this rectified sooner rather than later because the town has the opportunity to have revenue match cost.

#141 Board of Assessors – Dawn Barnes, Michael Colaneri

Dawn Barnes presented to the Committee.

Chuck asked about the overlay surplus and how it is budgeted. Dawn said the overlay is created on the recap sheet each year to cover adjustments in value, abatements, exemptions and revenues that may be written off as uncollectable. Dawn said the amount must be agreed upon by the commissioner of revenue. Dawn added the overlay used to be an account that was assigned by fiscal year, but due to a change in legislation, that is no longer the case.

Dawn explained the account balance above and beyond the overlay is overlay surplus which after a vote by the board of assessors is released to the accountant and can be spent on anything lawful.

Chuck asked about last year's overlay surplus of \$200,000. Bruce responded it was unlikely that would happen again because the overlay and surplus are no longer held by fiscal year.

Katherine asked about a proposed warrant article for \$24,000. Dawn explained that although they did not request funding through a warrant article last year, traditionally the board of assessors has made an annual request to cover the engineer and revaluation consultant services that are performed every third year which is the audit year.

Katherine asked about the \$11,000 increase in the assessor's salary from FY17. Dawn responded that is a step increase which she called a performance review and a COLA. Bruce added that next year both employees will be step eight.

Katherine asked about the \$1,000 stipend for board members. Dawn said assessors board members attend meeting 24 times a year, are knowledgeable and she considers it to be an important position adding that it is difficult to get people to run for election.

Doug said it is strange is the apparently random way stipends are calculated. Doug said he believes the Finance Committee is prevented from receiving stipends by law, but separate from that, the stipend amount is different for the planning board, selectmen and board of assessors. Doug added that as a committee, the fin com doesn't understand that process. Katherine agreed saying that highlighting the issue is a way to start a conversation about an inconsistent process. Dawn noted the board of assessors did not set their stipend and it was one of the lowest of the seven communities for which she has worked. The Chair added this is a question of standardization.

Focusing on expenses, Chuck noted the board of assessors has a tight expense budget, spending 53% fiscal year to date and maintaining level funding in the proposed budget for FY19. Regarding legal expenses, Chuck pointed out the amount spent was \$0 in FY16, \$10,000 in FY17 and \$0 fiscal year to date, but the proposed FY19 budget is \$30,000. Chuck asked if the amount could be lowered from \$30,000 to \$15,000. Chuck highlighted the fact that last year the legal budget was lowered from \$30,000 to \$27,000 but is back up to \$30,000.

Dawn said that of the two current cases, if one is lost, the town will have to pay back \$26,000 and revenue will be reduced by \$26,000 annually going forward. Dawn said the town has some high end properties with complicated valuations and if they go to court to regarding valuation, it is outside of the commissioner of revenue's standard valuation process and it comes down to a legal defense. Dawn praised the services of the attorney hired. Chuck noted that if the \$30,000 is not spent, it will go to free cash and toward the levy.

Any Topic Not Anticipated by the Chair

Substance Use Disorder Warrant Article

Christine Todd presented to the Committee.

The Chair introduced the program citing the total cost to be \$50,000 with West Tisbury's share to be approximately \$7,000.

Christine said that last year the county appropriated \$10,000 toward SUD prevention initiatives, not knowing where the need would be and where the funding would go. Christine said the county was able to help community services with funding in their recovery coach program, worked with the health agents to develop a public service campaign regarding services available in English and Portuguese, and helped with the public school system to hire a consultant to evaluate services in the school system.

Christine explained that over the past year a SUD coalition formed with members including law enforcement, the hospital, schools, MV Community Services, island counselors and others. Christine requested additional funding from the county to best support the efforts on the island to deal with this life threatening situation.

Greg asked about using electronic media. Christine said they are working with a consultant to develop campaigns, but are in the early stages. Christine spoke about an app for kids in middle school.

Christine explained Dukes County is supporting a collaborative community approach to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Prevention initiatives, working with other island organizations to identify gaps in services and ways to address it.

Katherine noted that drug abuse is a huge problem everywhere and asked if Christine sees duplication of services, asking if it is appropriate for the county to provide this service in addition to services provided by the town. Christine said the county is working with individual agencies that are already prolific in the areas which the county will support. Christine listed as an example working with MV Community Services to support a program which otherwise would not be fully funded/could not fully deliver.

Christine explained that when programs are funded collaboratively by private institutions, public institutions and also through local municipalities, they are in a better position to receive grant funding from the state. Christine said the Governor's office set a tremendous example of educating our communities of the responsibility municipalities have to find a solution to this problem. Martina described the county as the fiscal agent for the collaboration which contracts out to others to perform the services.

Katherine asked Christine if she is able to quantify this problem explaining that it is difficult to solve a problem without understand the magnitude. Christine said the Dukes County Health Council is working on compiling data, but it is not as easy to collect data in this area due to privacy issues as well as the accuracy of medical examiners reporting on the cause of death. Katherine suggested the importance of data regarding obtaining funding in future years.

Chuck quoted Margaret Mead telling Christine a few dedicated people can change the world and she is one of them. Chuck asked if each town would receive a warrant article. Christine confirmed the entire program is \$50,000 and West Tisbury's portion is \$7,195.

Chuck asked about the search for space for the drop in program and suggested the second floor of the Center for Living.

First Stop, Healthy Aging and CORE

Julie Fay and Paddy Moore presented to the Committee.

The Chair introduced the budgets and listed the CORE total budget as \$80,000 for FY19 (West Tisbury share is \$11,512) up from \$53,000 in FY18, First Stop total budget of \$47,500 in FY19 (West Tisbury share is \$6,835), down from \$86,900 in FY18 and Healthy Aging MV total budget of \$71,110 in FY19 (West Tisbury share is \$10,232) with no budget in FY18.

Julie explained the Healthy Aging program moved to MVCS from the county in the last year due to a personnel change that happened which would have significantly escalated the cost of the program.

Julie said that First Stop, which was a website devoted to all of the services to seniors on the Island also moved to MV Community Services in the past year and subsequently the search engine was expanded to include all social services on the island. Julie said the skill sets required to run First Stop are IT expertise, web content and phone coverage. Julie said the large decrease in the total budget request for First Stop from \$86,990 in FY18 to \$47,500 in FY19 was due to utilizing expertise that was already at MVCS.

Julie defined the CORE program as counseling, outreach and referral for elders. Julie said CORE was originally funded by a grant from the hospital and has been a program for eight years. Julie said CORE receives referrals from others such as EMTs, COAs, and primary care providers. Julie explained CORE sends a clinician to a home to assess the situation. Julie said towns began to fund CORE last year and the FY19 budget is up because the referrals are off the charts.

Greg asked how CORE interacts with VNA. Julie said there is no interaction because they are very different services.

Julie said Healthy Aging MV was started five years ago due to a concern of demographics. Julie said this is an international program sponsored by the World Health organization and implemented by AARP in the US. Julie said that no funding is provided by AARP and it is a totally volunteer effort. Julie said there is an oversight committee which provides policy direction for the executive committee and has written grants for over \$600,000. Julie said Healthy Aging MV does not provide the services, but spins them off to others best suited to do so. Julie explained the organization is not sustainable as a fully volunteer effort and most of the agencies nationally are supported by municipalities. Julie said the oversight committee has approved an alternative support structure for the future that includes staff support for this work and MVCS has agreed to be the fiscal conduit and home for HAMV and to provide support and assistance with fiscal administration. Julie added the MV Commission has joined the executive committee and will provide financial support of \$10,000 per year.

Correspondence/Scheduling

The next meeting is Tuesday, February 6 at 4:00pm.

Adjournment

Katherine moved to adjourn. Chuck seconded the motion which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:06pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Margo Urbany-Joyce
West Tisbury Finance Committee Admin Assistant

Approved 5-0

February 8, 2018