

**West Tisbury  
Finance Committee Meeting  
Warrant Article Hearing  
Howes House  
March 8, 2016**

**Attendance**

**Committee:** Katherine Triantafillou – Chair, Gary Montrowl – Vice Chair, Greg Orcutt, Doug Ruskin.

Absent: Sharon Estrella

**Guests:** Bruce Stone – Town Accountant, Jen Rand – Town Administrator, Michael Colaneri – Selectman, Skip Manter – Selectman, Cynthia Mitchell – Selectman, Daniel Rossi – WT Police Department Chief, Jane Rossi – Planning Board Administrator, Dawn Barnes – Principal Assessor, John Powers – Board of Health Agent, Don Hatch – MV Refuse, Richard Olsen – Highway Department, Peggy Stone – Parks & Recreation Board Administrator, Cheryl Lowe – Parks & Recreation Board Co-Chair, Sam Hart – ACE MV Executive Director.

The Chair called the meeting order at 4:00pm. A quorum was present.

**Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings:**

No minutes were reviewed or approved.

**Old Business**

No old business was discussed.

**New Business**

**Warrant Article #24 – Chief Rossi**

Warrant Article #24 is to see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$27,500 from free cash to transfer to the Police Personal Services Line item 210-5120 for FY16 to cover the costs associated with an officer who was injured on duty. Chief Ross requested a reserve fund transfer prior to the town vote. The Chair explained the Committee is restricted by the agenda in the public notice posting, but that Chief Rossi and the transfer request could be added to the agenda of the next Fin Com meeting.

Doug asked if insurance could cover the cost and Jen Rand explained that workers compensation doesn't cover the wages for the staff that fills in when an employee is injured on the job.

**Warrant Article #13 – Chief Rossi**

Warrant Article #13 is to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$15,000 to put towards the purchase of one police cruiser in FY18. In the event of unforeseen major repairs to an existing vehicle in FY17, a portion of the \$15,000 may be used towards major repairs.

The Chair asked if a new police cruiser is purchased each year. Chief Rossi responded that is the current rotation and that two years ago, a new cruiser was not purchased and \$3,500 in repairs was required. Doug pointed out that \$3500 was less expensive than a new car. The Chief explained that when a car is

rotated out, it is given to Tri Town ambulance if it is in good. Jen Rand added that she is investigating the possibility of auctioning the used cars.

**Warrant Article #7 – Chief Rossi**

Warrant Article #7 is to see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$857,500 for the construction and equipping of a new Highway Department Building. Greg asked if \$857,000 would be sufficient funding. Chief Rossi responded that he hoped the project would come in under budget and the excess funds could be returned to the Town. He said there would also be an application for an energy grant.

**Warrant Article #12 – Skip Manter**

Warrant Article #12 is to see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$2,500 from free cash to fund the cost of a hearing officer who is charged with hearing appeals to building and fire violations. Skip further explained that statute CH 148A requires the hearing officer be paid \$2,500.

**Warrant #36 – Jane Rossi**

Warrant Article #36 is see of the Town will to amend the zoning bylaws regarding swimming pools. Jane explained that every five or six years, the state changes the numbers of the codes. Town administrator Jen Rand and Building Inspector Joe Tierney met with Town Counsel and concluded they preferred the language in the bylaws refer to the state code instead of requiring a periodic update to the bylaws.

**Warrant Article #40 – Jane Rossi**

Warrant Article #40 is to see if the Town will vote to amend the zoning bylaw by relocating language from Section 6.2-D to Section 6.3-4 C. Jane explained the language is currently in the special ways section of the zoning bylaws, but it should be in the special places section.

**Warrant #41 – Jane Rossi**

Warrant Article #41 is to see if the Town will vote to amend the Special Ways section of the zoning bylaw. Jane explained the byways committee studied the special ways language and felt it was difficult to understand so the committee put the language in a more sequential format and added a narrative, but made no changes to the regulations.

**Warrant #35 – Jane Rossi**

Warrant Article #35 is to see if the Town will vote to amend the zoning bylaw with Federal Emergency Management Agency's request to update the flood plain maps and that FEMA typically updates the maps every six or eight years.

The Chair asked if warrant articles #36, #40, #41 and #35 have been vetted by the committee and legal changes were reviewed. Jane Rossi confirmed that was the case.

**Warrant Article #17 – Dawn Barnes**

Warrant Article #17 is to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$24,000 for the valuation update of real and personal property as required by Massachusetts State Law. Dawn explained that consulting fees average \$60,000 - \$75,000 for a three year period. The Department of Revenue audits the assessors' office to confirm property values are created in a fair and equitable way and software and outside consultants are used by the assessor to help defend results.

Gary asked if there was a reason this was not a budget item instead of a warrant article. Dawn answered that if it is a budget item, it must be used in the fiscal year, but a warrant article allows the assessor to level fund over time.

**Warrant Article #22 – John Powers**

Warrant Article #22 is to see if the Town will vote to appropriate from free cash \$10,000 to repair the swale on the capped landfill. John said the capped area is an impervious surface with a manmade geo mat and the swale is a perimeter drain which is sinking and also has growth of small trees and plant material. When the landfill was capped, it was anticipated it would require this maintenance.

**Warrant Article #8 – John Powers, Don Hatch**

Warrant Article #8 is to see if the Town will vote to re-approve up to \$2,500,000 borrowing to finance the cost of capital improvements at the Edgartown Transfer Station.

The Chair asked why reauthorization was necessary. Don explained that once the board of the Martha's Vineyard Refuse District voted, each town was required to hold a meeting and vote within 45 days. However, that did not happen because towns waited for the Annual Town Meetings. Because of this, the bonding company won't lend the funds for the project.

Greg asked if the warrant is unchanged from last year. Don responded yes.

**Warrant Article #14 – Richard Olsen**

Warrant Article #14 is to see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$68,000 to purchase and equip a new 20,000lb dump body truck and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to dispose of the 2006 F-350 truck in the best interest of the Town. Richard Olsen described the current truck as beyond disrepair and small. Richard explained the current truck can't be used to haul sand or gravel because the body is rotted.

Gary asked how many vehicles the highway department owns. Richard answered that a dump truck and pickup truck are owned by the highway department. Gary asked if the new truck would be housed when the new highway department building is built and Richard responded yes.

**Warrant Article #23 – Peggy Stone, Cheryl Lowe**

Warrant Article #23 is to see if the Town will vote to appropriate from free cash \$21,000 for maintenance and renovation of the tennis courts on Old County Road. Cheryl explained the original courts were installed in 2004 and the work includes pulling up the current surface, assessing and repairing the damage underneath and putting the original surface back down.

Gary asked the cost of the original court. Cheryl said the original cost was \$60,000 and it was purchased twelve years ago. Cheryl explained that the project is not eligible for Community Preservation funds because it is considered maintenance. Greg asked if there was a revenue component. Cheryl answered that the courts generate about \$2,000/year.

Doug asked if the department looked for a local contractor to do the work. Cheryl responded that because the surface would be lifted and then put back in place, the decision was made to use the company from which the surface was purchased.

**Warrant Article #9 – Sam Hart**

Warrant Article #9 is to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$15,280 to fund West Tisbury's share of the All Island School Committee's contract for Adult and Community Education in FY17.

Greg asked why the budget changed from \$90,000 in FY15, to \$50,000 in FY16 to \$100,000 in FY17. Sam explained that as a result of a needs assessment conducted with UMass Med School, ACE MV discovered there was a need for programs like graduate credit, higher education and workforce training which require more financial support. Last year the curriculum contained more enrichment classes which require much less funding.

Greg asked how many people are served by ACEMV. Sam said the number of students was 859 last year and would probably be 700 this year.

Doug asked why tuition and grants cannot cover the budget. Sam explained to create higher education programs on the island, it takes money to bring professors here. Although tuition and grants are enough to sustain the classes, they don't cover the overhead. Sam further explained ACE MV's mission is provide affordable and accessible education to Islanders. There is an affordability gap on the Island and Ace MV wants to ensure Islanders can afford to take the classes. Doug pointed out that based on the figures Sam presented, ACE is offering courses necessary for continuing education credits at approximately 50% of off-island rates. In combination with saved travel costs, this is a very large difference and ACE could charge a 25% discount, still be far less costly than the off-island competition and therefore need less money from the towns.

The Chair asked how many participants were from West Tisbury and if ACE MV overlaps with other organizations offering classes on Island. Sam responded they collaborate as much as they can including with the West Tisbury Library and Featherstone with a goal to cooperate, not duplicate.

#### **Warrant Article #15 – Bruce Stone**

Warrant Article #15 is to see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$82,237 for reconstruction work on Town roads which will be reimbursed by the state. Bruce explained that \$82,237 is the annual allotment from the state and the Town must appropriate the funds in order to accept the reimbursement. There is no specific project in mind yet, but a major section of road costs approximately \$500,000. The Chair asked Bruce to confirm this would not cost the Town any money and he replied yes.

#### **Warrant Article #6 – Cynthia Mitchell**

Warrant Article #6 is to see if the Town will vote to appropriate from free cash \$20,000 for the purpose of contracting a facilities management consultant for Town-owned buildings. Cynthia explained the Selectmen made the decision to combine maintenance lines in the various departments so that it is more integrated. The committee assigned suggested hiring a facilities manager. Joe Tierney further explained the consultant will evaluate all of the buildings and come up with a maintenance list. After a year, the maintenance will be passed back to Joe in addition to his responsibilities as Building Inspector.

Doug said he had a hard time hiring somebody to make a list. Cynthia responded that the consultant would be the first facilities manager and then hand it off. Cynthia added that Beth Kramer, Librarian, sent a list to the Selectmen and she has no experience in facilities management and neither does Town Administrator, Jen Rand.

Bruce stated that a plan would be beneficial to long term budgeting. Skip added that the Town has spent so much money on new buildings, this is a small percentage to protect that investment.

**Warrant Article #31 – Skip Manter**

Warrant Article #31 is to see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into an agreement to convey and negotiate an easement over the cemetery to the Whiting Farm Trust to gain access for farming purposes. Skip explained the Whiting family donated land to the Town to expand the cemetery and they would like an easement so they drive to their property.

**Warrant Article #18 – Bruce Stone**

Warrant Article #18 is to see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$60,000 to be borrowed for repairs to the Howes House roof. Bruce explained the Town would take advantage of current low interest rates and of the fact that it is borrowing for the highway department building. Gary asked if the roof would be repaired or replaced. Bruce answered it would be replaced.

**Warrant Article #16 – Cynthia Mitchell**

Warrant Article #16 is to see if the Town will vote to appropriate from free cash \$45,000 for repairs and maintenance to Town buildings. Cynthia broke down the costs to \$4,400 for a Howes House humidifier, \$32,300 for air exchange for the fire department, \$6,000 for the cemetery fence and \$2,300 for unforeseen circumstances. Greg noted this is the third or fourth time cemetery fence repair has come before the Committee. Cynthia responded the fence is being repaired piece meal.

Doug asked why these repairs were not being combined with the Howes House roof repair. Skip answered there is a timing issue.

**Warrant Article #39 – Bruce Stone**

Warrant Article #39 is to see if the Town will vote to amend the bylaw to include language that individuals who subdivide land into four dwelling units or more indicate water sources for firefighting and, if not sufficient for firefighting establish a water source which is to be approved by the fire chief after the plans are submitted to the Planning Board.

**Warrant Article #21 – Bruce Stone**

Warrant Article #21 is to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate \$54,212.46 and transfer the remaining balance of \$5,787.54 from the 2012 Annual Town Meeting, Article #36 for the purchase of a brushbreaker truck for a total of \$60,000 to be placed in a stabilization fund towards the purchase of a new pumper truck. Bruce explained the cost of the truck is upwards of \$400,000 and the funds would be used to replace a truck that was purchased in 1989. Bruce added this is part of the capital improvements plan.

**Warrant Article #38 – Katherine Triantafillou**

Warrant Article #38 is to see if the Town will vote to amend the existing deadline for warrant articles such that all articles or subjects to be acted upon at the Annual Town Meeting to be held on the second Tuesday of April shall be filed with the Selectmen on or before the first Tuesday of the January preceding said second Tuesday of April when the warrant shall be closed. The Chair explained that warrant articles usually come in after the budget and often skew the budget.

Cynthia explained that although the Selectmen are not going to mount a full scale opposition to Warrant Article #38, they have concerns because it would be almost impossible to expect Town departments to come forward in a timely fashion. In order to do that, they would have to start much earlier without the benefit of all of the information they would have if the date remained the same. Cynthia added the

Selectmen believe they responded well to the issues that arose last year, are on track now and it would not be wise to put that pressure on the Town because it is unpredictable to capture all business that might be done at the Annual Town Meeting.

The Chair responded it was terrific to get the warrant articles when the Committee received them and she was pleased the language has not changed after submission. The Chair thanked Town Administrator, Jen Rand, for sending out the warrant article submittal sheets which the Chair believes made the process go much more smoothly.

The Chair stated that Edgartown has a deadline in January. Jen responded that Edgartown almost always has a special meeting before the Town Meeting. Skip added that regional warrant articles are not always submitted by Edgartown's deadline, thereby creating the need of a special meeting. Skip asked that in the spirit of working together, the process be the same for another year.

The Chair summarized the proceedings by stating that with all of the expenditures, the Town is still facing an override. Bruce said that if voted as written, the Town would be \$150,000 over the proposition 2.5 limit. However, we made some cuts and moved some warrant articles so they are not raise and appropriate warrant articles. Bruce explained there will be an amendment by the Community Preservation Committee for the West Tisbury school playground and the CPC will recommend Community Preservation funds be used and then warrant article #42 will be amended. If that amendment is accepted, the Town will not have a proposition 2.5 override.

Bruce said that he uses very conservative estimates for revenues and levy limit changes so additionally, the levy limit may be higher than what is currently incorporated into the equation.

The Chair asked if the West Tisbury playground improvements are covered by Community Preservation funds and the Town would not face a proposition 2.5 override, how much would taxes increase. Bruce responded the levy will go up \$642,000 which is about a 4.4% increase if property values stay the same. To not raise taxes at all, you would have to cut \$642,000.

The Chair asked if Bruce could identify any cuts. Bruce responded nothing that is in the Town's control. Regional assessments including the schools are up \$450,000 and revenue is down \$236,000. Warrant articles are \$300,000 less in raise and appropriate which is offsetting some of the increase, but budgets are up over 5.5%. Bruce explained the financial management team (Bruce Stone, Kathy Logue, Jen Rand, Brent Taylor, Dawn Barnes) thought things such as public safety and maintenance issues were very important. In other years when things are not this tight, we would add more to stabilization funds and the OPEB liability.

The Chair asked if anyone could point out where the Excess & Deficiency money at the schools is listed. Skip said that E&D does not appear on the budget and the schools are not using E&D for budget items. Bruce said an auditor had just visited and there is approximately \$300,000 E&D in the Up Island Regional School District. Bruce added the MVRHS has about \$694,000 in E&D, but their audit is not yet complete.

Skip explained the schools have spent E&D with only two positive votes. Since the district inception, they have spent \$5,000,000. There is no review with the finance committee and the voters do not have to approve E&D expenditures.

**Scheduling and Correspondence**

The Chair informed the Committee Lynn Christoffers had submitted a bill for \$375 for videotaping three Finance Committee meeting. *Greg moved to pay the bill. Gary seconded the motion which passed 4-0.*

**Adjournment**

*Greg moved to adjourn. Doug seconded the motion which passed 4-0. The meeting was adjourned at 6:39pm.*

Respectfully Submitted,  
Margo Urbany-Joyce, Administrative Assistant

Approved: 4-0

Date: 3/22/16