

West Tisbury Finance Committee Meeting
Howes House
October 10, 2017

Attendance

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

Guests:

Skip Manter - Selectman, Bruce Stone – Town Accountant

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:30pm. A quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meetings

Chuck moved to approve minutes as amended for the meeting on September 12, 2017. Greg seconded the motion which passed 4-0-1 with Katherine abstaining.

Old Business

Chair Term and Selection Process

The Chair pointed out there is not currently a formal process for choosing the Finance Committee Chair. There was a discussion regarding a chair term of two versus three years, noting that committee member terms are for three years. Doug suggested seniority as the method for choosing the chair. Greg suggested polling other Island finance committees to learn of their processes.

New Business

Letter to Department Heads

Committee members reviewed the letter the Chair drafted to department heads and committee chairs regarding the FY19 budget review process. There was a discussion regarding the definition of tax levy and how tax dollars are impacted. Suggestions were made to add dollar amounts, include an OPEB discussion and request that those considering warrant articles bring them to the Fin Com's attention.

Upcoming Budget Cycle Planning

The Chair asked if the Committee would like to alter the process from FY17. Greg suggested a presentation or open meeting to the public either held at the library or on aired on MVT. Bruce said that the first time the Town did an open meeting about the budget, there was strong interest, but that waned over time. Doug reminded the Committee he is looking at a ways to disseminate information to voters via email.

Chuck explained that an analysis of the FY18 budget of \$19 million shows \$10 million is attributed to schools, \$3.5 million is budgeted to town salaries, \$1.0 million is attributed to regional budgets, and health insurance plus debt service together equal \$2.0 million, leaving only \$2.5 million in the budget that the Fin Com can impact in addition to the warrant articles. Gary explained that the Fin Com has become more influential early in the budget process, citing school meeting participation as an example.

There was a discussion about the new warrant article process in Edgartown in which the Selectmen would like all warrant article proposals to be reviewed by the appropriate department heads and the Edgartown finance committee before being placed on the warrant.

It was discussed that both Edgartown and Chilmark require proposed budgets and warrant articles to be submitted in December. Katherine explained that although the Fin Com would like earlier budget and warrant article deadlines to give the Fin Com more time to review, it is evident the Town Administrator and Selectmen do not agree. Doug suggested keeping submission deadlines as is, but moving the town meeting date to later in April or May. A conversation about how to mobilize the electorate to support a later town meeting date ensued.

Review of Meeting with the School Superintendent on August 3, 2017

The Chair presented a review of the meeting he and Katherine attended with Superintendent D'Andrea on August 3, 2017. The Chair said there is a report with thirteen special education recommendations and the Superintendent's office is putting together a team to implement the recommendations over the next two to three years. Gary explained one goal is to consolidate services including the bridge (autistic), social skills (elementary school) and headway (preschool) programs in one location. Gary added that the Fin Com still had not received a copy of the report and volunteered to follow up with the Superintendent's office.

The Chair said that on average, Martha's Vineyard spends less per pupil on special needs, but we have more specific learning disability (SLD) students which has driven up costs. The Superintendent supported the Island finance committees working with Selectmen to lobby state reps to move forward on the foundation budget issue.

The Chair reported that the Superintendent has a three year plan for the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) to increase the OPEB budget \$280,000 per year to get up to normal cost and will consider applying remaining year end E&D funds to address the OPEB liability. Chuck added that the cost of the renovation of the high school will also be a significant cost for the town.

Katherine said that the topic of a business plan was once again addressed in the meeting with the Superintendent. The Committee discussed the fact that the schools have a \$50mm budget, but no CFO to control and analyze costs and to concentrate on the creation of operating efficiencies.

The Chair said the Massachusetts school building authority will make a determination on the MVRHS petition in December. The two likely outcomes are either 1) accelerated repair for things such as windows, roof and boiler or 2) core which is the whole building. The Superintendent conveyed the MVRHS is pretty high on the application list and will keep applying for funds until they are granted, but he believes there is a good chance for funding this year.

Review of All Island Finance Committee (AIFC) Meeting on September 28, 2017

The Chair highlighted two issues from the AIFC meeting. The first was a letter from the Dukes County Sheriff's Office asking for financial support from towns for 911 emergency management. According to the letter, the Dukes County Sheriff's Office operates the Dukes County Regional Emergency Communication Center (RECC) that serves all of Martha's Vineyard. The letter explains the RECC was originally supported fiscally through county assessments before transfer to the Commonwealth in 2010.

The letter maintains the RECC has not been adequately funded by the state and the Sheriff's Office intends to request funding through warrant articles from all Island towns based on the volume of dispatches.

The Chair said there was no action taken at the AIFC. After discussion, Doug volunteered to draft a letter to state reps stating the Fin Com views the RECC as a state expense. The letter will be distributed to the AIFC with a goal to get all of the Island finance committees to lobby state reps as a united front.

The Chair said the second issue from the AIFC meeting is to appeal to state reps for Martha's Vineyard be viewed as a regional entity when calculating affordable housing quotas. Gary said the goal is for Island towns to work together and the Island Community Preservation Committees would become more comfortable with regional projects. Gary explained there will be an effort to resurrect the All Island Community Preservation Committee and develop a standard CPC formula for regional projects.

Committee Reports

Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

Chuck distributed FY19 applications.

Up Island Regional School District (UIRSD)

No report.

Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS)

The next MVRHS meeting is tomorrow, October 11 at 10am.

There was a general discussion about school debt service and how once debt is retired, the bottom line of subsequent budgets should be reduced by the amount of the prior debt service.

Correspondence/Scheduling

The Committee instructed Bruce to pay the \$160 dues bill from the Association of Town Finance.

Adjournment

Doug moved to adjourn. Katherine seconded the motion which passed 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 5:49pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Margo Urbany-Joyce
West Tisbury Finance Committee Admin Assistant

Approved 11/14/17, 5-0 vote.