

DRAFT Minutes of the West Tisbury Finance Committee

August 12, 2020, 5:00 PM.

A meeting of the West Tisbury finance committee was scheduled for August 12, 2020, 5 PM.

WT invited all other towns to participate as the “All-Island Finance Committee”

Present:

- Doug Ruskin (Chair), John Christenson, Greg Orcutt, Doug Finn

Also Present:

- Allen Rugg, Tom Murphy (Aquinnah Finance Comm)
- Vicki Divoll (Chilmark Finance Committee)
- Steve Auerbach, Maura McGroarty, Sherry Countryman, Bob Gaffey (Oak Bluffs FinComm)
- Mary Ellen Larsen, Niancy Gilfoy (Tisbury Finance Committee)
- T Ewell Hopkins (Oak Bluffs Planning Board)
- Skipper Manter (MVRS School Committee, WT)
- Lucy Morrison (MV Commission)

Others Present:

Susan Desmaris, Rebekah Thomson, Peter Palches, Tracy Stewart, Joe Mikos, Emma Green-Beach, Diana Conway, Aaron Wilson, Mollie Doyle, Dardanella Slavi, Kim Leaird, Don Alexander, Rich Weiss, Stefan Knight, Jynell Kristal

Meeting was called to order by Mr. Ruskin at 5:06 PM. A quorum was declared.

Mr. Ruskin invited members to introduce themselves.

Mr Ruskin read a statement received from Richard Smith (MV School District), requesting a postponement of the meeting, due to the review of the project by the MVC. Mr. Smith stated that it would be ‘inappropriate’ to make a presentation separate from the MV Commission process.

There was brief discussion about details related to the scheduling of the meeting.

It as noted that the project was being conducted in phases; Ms. Morrison noted that the MVC was being asked to review all phases of the project, and that the MVC review would likely not get started until October at the earliest.

Mr Ruskin noted that it would be important to consider the long-term costs.

A timetable for the project was discussed.

It was noted that the Commission would proceed with its process, and must make a decision, before Oak Bluffs can make a final determination, and that the Commission would be reviewing everything – environmental, zoning, etc.

Ms. Rebekah Thomson presented via telephone, summarizing many of the topics included in her letter to the WT Finance Committee (see file).

Ms. Vicki Divoll noted that she had been following the 'saga of the field', and noted her concern with the project, and how it has been proceeding. The stated costs of \$7,500 / year as maintenance costs for the turf field was discussed.

Ms. Mary Ellen Larsen asked about the long-term costs of the project.

Mr. Ruskin: noted that the project is anticipated to cost roughly \$16.8M over 20 years, and that Town Meetings voted on the project in Spring of 2019, and approved the artificial turf plan.

Ms. Nancy Gilfoy: Part of the issue is the maintenance of the synthetic track; the larger issue is the maintenance of the overall facility, including all fields.

Mr. Bob Gaffey (Oak Bluffs): My confusion on this is that interest is in "phase one" of a multi-phase project. What is in front of the MV Commission today? Just the first phase? The entire project? Ms. Morrison noted that the MVC is focusing on Phase 1. The HS has requested that all phases be reviewed. The process has not yet been started.

Maintenance costs were reviewed and discussed. The Finance Committees' authority over the project was discussed.

Mr. Ruskin noted his concerns with the specificity of the maintenance plan, as well as with some of the numbers presented, and advised that Finance Committee members still had the authority over the overall School Budget, and a negative vote on this would be a signal to the schools.

The scope of conversation about the project throughout the region was discussed. The preference of synthetic over grass fields was reviewed.

The private funding for the project was discussed, including the potential impact on SBA funding for school capital project later on.

Ms. Diana Conway expressed concern about the funding for the project, and expressed her general opposition to the project as proposed.

Mr. Allen Rugg asked for clarification on the maintenance costs. There was discussion about the source of the funds thus far, and the source and veracity of estimated costs for maintenance.

Mr. Stefan Knight expressed concerns about the source of cost estimates, reportedly provided by the Huntress.

Ms. Dardanella Slavin noted that the cost estimates appear to favor artificial turf over natural grass.

Ms. Tracy Stewart (Resident of Medway, Massachusetts) expressed concern related to the costs for disposal of turf, and the lack of a realistic recycling option.

Mr. Skipper Manter expressed concern as to whether the schools were notified of the meeting. Mr. Ruskin noted that notice was given to Matt D'Andrea and Ricahrd Smith, who were asked to notify the other parties.

There was further discussion related to costs of maintenance, disposal and rehabilitation, the MVC's timeline, the need to find information from other school districts with similar projects, and independent estimates for realistic maintenance costs.

Mr. Doug Finn noted that financial costs could likely be considered at the Commission level, as they could represent a significant regional impact.

The costs of the current fields was discussed. The committee agreed that knowing what current maintenance costs would be important.

Ms. Devane: legal fees related to this project also need to be taken into consideration, given the potential of a lawsuit related to environmental impacts.

Mr. Ewell Hopkins: The conservation Commission has met, and has rendered an opinion. A member of that commission could further elaborate on that decision.

A subsequent meeting was discussed, with the general consensus that a second meeting would be a benefit to all. Mr. Ruskin stated that the WT Finance Committee will endeavor to schedule, and notify all interested parties.

Mr. Ruskin suggested an adjournment. Without objection.

Meeting adjourned at 6:40 PM.

Respectfully,

Douglas Finn, Clerk Pro Temp.