

~DRAFT~
**West Tisbury Finance Committee Meeting
At the Howes House
February 13, 2020**

In Attendance: Greg Orcutt, Doug Ruskin, Gary Montrowl, Clark Rattet and Jane Dreeben

Also present: Janice Haynes, Bruce Stone, Skipper Manter, Kent Healy, Jen Rand, Joe Tierney, Omar Johnson, Jessica Miller, Erik Lowe, Peggy Stone and Suzanne Hammond

Greg Orcutt called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm

Budget Review: Building Department.

Greg asked Joe Tierney, Building Inspector to begin. He presented his budget and said in the 7 years he has been in West Tisbury 2019 had been the busiest year he has seen yet. He pointed out some lines where the number of permits issued had gone up significantly. He also talked about some new expenses coming up. There were new codes put into place a few years ago and it is time to update all of their code books and software. He is also requesting more hours for the Local Inspector position and some more over time hours for the Building Inspector as they simply cannot keep up and anticipate current levels to continue to rise.

Gary raised some questions and concerns about the issue of fees and salary. He proposed that the Building Department come up with a formula to raise fees based on increased costs. He asked about the current process of changing/raising fees? Skipper responded saying that from time to time Joe presents a list of fees to the Selectmen that he feels should go up. Sometimes they vote for them, sometimes they don't. Gary said it should be more systematic.

Doug urged Joe to look at this more closely. He said that it is Joe's responsibility to advocate for raising fees. Doug's argument is that all West Tisbury taxpayers should not be paying for one person's million dollar building project. Joe said that he serves the pleasure of the Board of Selectmen. If the Board chooses to look at the issue, he is happy to do so. He said they (the Fin Com) should be addressing their concerns to the Selectmen.

Doug asked why staff salary costs are going up so drastically. He has heard complaints and thinks Joe could run the department more efficiently. Jen Rand jumped in to say that as someone who sits in Town Hall every day and sees and hears people coming in to speak with Joe, she hears many, many thank-yous to Joe for his help and time. She said Doug was just hearing complaints and, in her experience, people who are dissatisfied speak up more than the ones who are happy. Joe pointed out that in the last couple of years they have taken the time to do plan reviews at the beginning of a project which they have found saves on a bunch of issues coming up later. Doug stated that he would be glad to be proven wrong.

Budget Review: Board of Health

Omar Johnson, Health Inspector spoke about what the Board of Health (BOH) does. He feels that every year gets busier. He has been here 3 ½ years and when he began, his predecessor told him that it was no longer a 1-person job. He was glad to have an Administrative Assistant now and would be addressing the issue of needing more help in the future. He believes there are even more regulations coming from the State which takes up a lot of his time. He gave an example of daily PH testing that is now required.

Gary said that they are happy with what he is doing and with his budget, but like the Building Department, feels that there should be a system or formula for increasing fees. There are only 3 departments in town that generate revenue and that is why they get looked at so closely.

Greg invited the other members of the BOH present to speak. Erik spoke about how the BOH differs from the Building Department and how folks coming to the BOH are not necessarily building more, which generate fees. The BOH is more of a service department. Clark asked when fees were last raised? Omar said that some had been adjusted last year. He said he believes they should be in line with the other island towns and that is one of the things he looks at. Doug asked if Omar could estimate how much of his time was spent on non-fee related work? Omar said it was hard to guess off the top of his head but about 50%.

Bruce asked about the new short-term rental regulations and who would be responsible for inspecting them? Omar said it would fall to him. Doug pointed out that the State law permits the town to charge a fee over and above taxes for short-term rental permits that would cover any enforcement costs. Jen said that when they came into effect, the Selectmen had chosen to put a hold on having rentals registered for now. They knew it would require more 'man hours' and realized the cost would be more than fees could ever cover. Doug said he was not advocating for more fees, just a plan to cover cost increases.

Omar also had a request to increase his budget to put before the Fin Com. He said he had not gotten the info in time to have in the budget he submitted. He is requesting money for new software to help with food inspections. Other towns on island are now using it, and he can get a grant that will cover the cost up until July 1st of this year. After he explained how the software would work, Doug said he thought they should approve a change to the budget and asked Bruce to make the amendment.

Other Business:

While waiting for the Parks and Recreation reps to arrive the Fin Com decided to go on to some other business.

Minutes:

Greg asked to approve the Minutes of February 4th. Approved 4-0, Doug abstained as he had not had a chance to read them.

Greg asked to approve the Minutes of February 6th. Approved 4-0, Doug again abstained.

Budget Amendments:

Library-

Bruce said that he had noticed a discrepancy with the Library personnel budget and got together with Beth Kramer, Library Director. They found some shortfalls that they needed to address, especially as Beth is retiring soon. (*Please see attached budget explanation provided by Bruce Stone*). Ultimately, they need to cover a shortfall for this year and then add money to the FY21 budget. He believes it will be a 3% increase over-all between FY20 and FY21.

MV Commission-

Bruce said they had sent a budget change just that afternoon that they had decreased their budget by approximately \$2000. which would decrease the West Tisbury assessment by approximately \$300.

Budget Review: Parks and Recreation Department

Greg asked Peggy to give an overview of what they've been doing. She spoke about their programs and the maintenance they are responsible for (ball fields, tennis courts, play grounds, etc). She said they are always looking for ways to bring new programs to town and for community activities.

Doug explained that as with the other departments there that evening, they were looking at expenses vs. income and the fact that they were not seeing revenue increasing at the same rate as expenses. He asked if they had discussed raising fees for beach stickers? She said they do look at it and the committee has chosen not to. He asked how long it has been since they last raised the price? Peggy said maybe 15 years. Doug and Clark both stated that was too long ago. Doug said they have no expectation that expenses/ income will ever match exactly, but what can they do to influence the committee to look at making them more equal? Doug asked if there could be a different price for residents vs. visitors. Bruce gave Wellfleet as an example of a town that does that. Peggy said she would bring the request to the committee to discuss.

2020 Warrant Articles:

There was discussion about which articles the Fin Com needed to call people back in for another meeting to answer questions. Since Jen, Bruce Skipper and Kent were present they were able to answer many questions. It was decided to call back folks for the Personnel articles, some of the MVRSD and UIRSD articles, ACE MV, and the Dukes County Commission. Janice will coordinate the schedule with the applicable people.

Other Business:

Jen questioned the Fin Com annual report and a specific 'formula' quoted. After discussion and explanation Doug agreed to remove the sentence.

Greg made the motion to approve the Annual Report as amended. Seconded.

Motion passed 5 – 0

Correspondence: There were none.

Next meeting(s): meetings are scheduled for Warrant Review on Monday February 24th, Tuesday 2/25, Thursday 2/27 and Monday March 2nd. Jen pointed out that the last week of February is school vacation. Janice will coordinate with the appropriate people and will advise by email.

With no further items to discuss, Doug made the motion to adjourn. Jane seconded.

Motion passed 5 – 0

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Janice Haynes
Administrative Assistant
2/17/20

Approved with amendments 2-24-20