

**Minutes, West Tisbury Task Force Against Discrimination Meeting,  
December 6, 2022, 5 p.m.  
FINAL -- approved Jan. 10, 2023**

**Present:** Alexandra Pratt, Arielle Faria, Bradley Cortez, Cindy Mitchell, Elaine Cawley Weintraub, Jeffrey DuBard, Susanna J. Sturgis, Ted Jochsberger

The meeting was held via Zoom. Alexandra chaired.

The **November 1 minutes** were **approved**.

**Discussion with selectboard member Cindy Mitchell**

At Cindy's suggestion, we followed the points listed by Loren in his email of Nov. 29:

*Did the personnel board formally review, prior to the hiring of John Rose, his resignation from the Oak Bluffs Fire Department in January 2018 amidst sexual harassment claims?*

Cindy inferred that we were asking whether the earlier incidents had been considered in Mr. Rose's hiring, and whether we should have a role in comparable cases. Susanna said that we'd also like to know more about the usual procedure.

Cindy explained that hiring is done by department, not by the personnel board. But the proposed hiring choice *was* reviewed, though not in public because of the sensitivity of personnel matters. The fire chief had multiple conversations with the Oak Bluffs town administrator. Mr. Rose had been cleared of all charges in Oak Bluffs.

Jen told her about an incident involving a town hire where background check hadn't picked up some out-of-state info. Employee was let go as a result. "if your committee is looking for assurances that these things are properly screened and addressed when they come up, the answer is yes -- but not by the personnel board."

Asked to clarify the personnel board's role, Cindy said that its primary responsibilities were to update and administer the personnel bylaws, make sure that job descriptions are kept current, and keep track of personnel records.

*You were going to bring up with Jen Rand ways of promoting openings on town bodies through public bulletin boards at the post office, Cronig's, etc., and through a presence on Facebook, Instagram, or other social media platforms.*

"We are exploring that," Cindy replied. She said that Jen is skeptical about posting on public bulletin boards because that's not where people look for jobs. The town is considering a town Facebook page and a presence on whatever other social media platforms seem appropriate. She is in favor of a social media presence.

*Might West Tisbury adopt a land acknowledgment statement at official meetings—an acknowledgment that the land we live on was once the land of the Wampanoag?*

Cindy wants to have a conversation with Cheryl Andrews-Maltais, the tribal chair, to get the tribe's sense of this. Asked what the procedure would be to bring this up, she said that would

have to be decided but she thinks it would be “good to have some sort of resolution on the town meeting floor.”

*A question raised by an Erik Albert letter in the MV Times of Nov. 23, 2022, is directed at the Task Force. Albert says “The town maintains exclusive beach policies at Lambert’s Cove Beach, a town park. Where is the dignity and respect in telling someone they aren’t welcome at a town beach?” Has this issue been raised before and what has the town decided is the appropriate response?*

Cindy said the issue of Lambert’s Cove Beach access came up a few years ago in connection with a possible joint land purchase with the Land Bank for a 2nd access path. This would have required public access to the beach. At an open forum about this, the sentiment was “overwhelming against” public access.

Susanna noted that the issue had come up at a Task Force meeting this past summer in response to another Erik Albert letter to the editor. *[SJS note: See minutes for TFAD Sept. 7, 2022, meeting.]* Omar invited Erik to a meeting and he didn’t show up. At the time Omar said that as health agent he was responsible for the beach but since he doesn’t live in town he’s not eligible for a pass. He didn’t believe that “town of residence” was one of the issues we were supposed to focus on. Ted noted that Chilmark has a private beach. Cindy pointed out that Massachusetts and Maine are unusual in having private beaches at all.

### **New TFAD chair**

Susanna said she was willing to take on the job, in part because she’s been doing some chair jobs, such as preparing agendas and representing the Task Force at selectboard meetings. No one else expressed interest, so Brad moved that Susanna become chair, Ted seconded, and everyone agreed. We also agreed that the chair should serve a one-year term, as is the practice on other town boards and committees.

Susanna would now like to pass the recorder’s job to someone else. Ted noted that other boards and committees have an administrative assistant to do the clerical/admin work. Could we request such an assistant. Arielle believes this would require funding. Alexandra pointed out that we’re a task force, not a board or committee. Susanna will ask Jen about this. *[SJS note: Jen’s response was “We do not provide clerical support.” Presumably if we had a budget, we could hire such support, but this would involve requesting funds.]* Susanna is willing to do minutes this month and maybe next but would like to pass the task on. She has a Zoom account, and Alexandra has access to the library’s. Arielle suggested asking if we could continue to use a town Zoom account. *[SJS note: I forgot to ask Jen about this but will do.]*

### **Prospective member: Elaine Cawley Weintraub**

Most of us already knew Elaine and were familiar with her work as an educator, writer, and activist. She said that issues around diversity and inclusion were “a passion with me” and have been a large part of her life as an educator. She says that there’s so much that needs to be done around inclusion but believes that the persistence of *non*-inclusion has more to do with lack of awareness than with intent to exclude. She’s currently working with the Charter School on a project about the African American Heritage Trail’s single site in West Tisbury. (With Carrie Tankard Elaine was a co-founder of the Trail. Arielle moved that we invite Elaine to join the Task Force, Brad seconded, and we voted unanimously to approve. Susanna will ask Jen to put

Elaine's appointment on the selectboard's agenda. *[SJS note: Elaine's appointment is on the agenda for the Dec. 14 selectboard meeting. I plan to go to the meeting and Elaine does too, even though she'll be in Ireland at the time.]*

### **Update on February event planning**

Alexandra reported that Cindy and a couple of fincom members have agreed to participate, and that Dan Waters will moderate. The plan is to ask town clerk Tara Whiting to talk about what's involved in running for office and maybe a little about the Open Meeting Law, and town administrator Jen Rand on submitting warrant articles for town meeting.

We need a better title than "What Makes West Tisbury Tick." We're looking for something that will bring in people who aren't already involved and also something that conveys that the town IS its residents, that we the residents run the town.

The event will include a presentation of how town government works and what town meeting is about. Members can speak about the various boards and committees, how to get involved with them, and how to run for office. We're updating the handout used at previous events so participants can take something home with them.

Arielle spoke about an advocacy workshop she'd recently attended, which dealt with showing people how to speak up effectively at public forums such as town meetings. *[SJS note: Does this sound like something we might want to sponsor or co-sponsor in the future? It sounds really useful!]*

Childcare and Portuguese translation weren't used at the 2020 event, but these will be offered; they can come out of library budget.

To do: Work out who's presenting about what. Develop a plan for marketing and PR. The event is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 11. We should have everything in place right after New Year's.

### **Change in January meeting date**

Because of holiday travel and other complications, our January meeting will take place on the *second* Tuesday instead of the first: Jan. 10.

The meeting adjourned at about 5:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanna J. Sturgis  
Recorder