

Minutes, West Tisbury TFAD Meeting, August 2, 2022

FINAL, approved September 7, 2022

Present: Omar Johnson, Susanna Sturgis, Terry Kriedman, Alexandra Pratt, Loren Ghiglione, Cynthia Mitchell (selectboard member), Ted Jochsberger

The meeting started at 4:30, a half hour earlier than usual, so we could organize our questions for our guest, selectboard member Cindy Mitchell, who arrived at 5. These minutes start there.

In response to the question of **what the Task Force's role should be in personnel-related matters**, Cindy explained that the Personnel Board is governed by personnel bylaws, which are approved at annual town meeting (ATM). These bylaws haven't been reviewed "from a perspective of diversity and inclusion," and she suggested that this is a project that we might take on. She doesn't see a role for us in hiring. *[SJS note: The current personnel bylaws are on the town website [here](#), and the section about the makeup of the board is [here](#).]*

Loren asked whether the Personnel Board took note of the circumstances in the hiring of John Rose earlier this year. Cindy said these were brought to the selectboard's attention, but she's not sure whether this was officially or behind the scenes. He followed up by asking if there's a body reviewing this sort of situation "outside of the person who's making the hiring decision"? Cindy said that "having our antennae up as individuals is what we would want you to do," but she's not sure about we have a role as a group. She said she would try to find out how/whether the personnel board considered the matter.

Susanna noted that when it comes to job openings and openings on town boards and committees, **the town website is often out of date and hard to navigate**. Cindy said she would bring this up with town administrator Jen Rand. We discussed other ways of promoting openings, for instance the public bulletin boards at the post office, Cronig's, and Alley's and social media. The town doesn't currently have an official presence on Facebook, Instagram, or other social media platforms. Cindy will bring this up with Jen and report back to us at our next meeting.

Loren suggested publishing a list of openings in spring and fall. Cindy and Omar both believe that openings are posted when they occur (and come down when they're filled, ideally). The possibility of a newsletter was also raised. It's unclear whether there is money in the budget or staff availability for this.

Attracting younger people is a priority with almost everybody, and social media might help with this. Loren noted that only 6 of the 59 people who responded to his survey were under 50. A total of 114 were sent out. (Cindy said this response rate was impressive.) We suggested connecting with MVRHS and maybe the West Tisbury School, as a way of encouraging young people to learn more about and get involved in town government.

Publishing the results of the survey as a press release or op-ed seems like a good idea. Loren said he would write; Susanna volunteered to help edit.

Loren asked if we should contact the 11 people recommended by survey respondents as possibly interested in serving on a town board or committee. Jen Rand suggested this. Cindy liked the idea. It's important to find out what specific board/committee they might be interested in (if any), and which have openings. Informal word is that some current board/committee members would like to move on but don't want to leave their seats vacant. Loren will send a list of recommended prospective committee members to Omar, and Omar will divvy them up among Task Force members to contact.

We brought up the idea of helping organize another **What Makes West Tisbury Tick? workshop**, like those held in 2017 and 2020. Cindy likes the idea.

About **tax credits for town service**, Cindy said the person to talk to is Kathy Logue, town treasurer. *[SJS note: Info about ["Senior Tax Work-off Program"](#) on town website.]*

Would having a Portuguese-language interpreter at meetings be useful? Cindy said that during COVID-19, interpreting has been helpful in getting out essential information about prevention, testing, and vaccination. She isn't sure that offering an interpreter would increase Brazilian participation, e.g., at town meeting. Leah Palmer was mentioned as a contact for interpreting services. It's difficult to determine how many Brazilian residents West Tisbury has. Island-wide estimates range from 2,500 to 5,000, and the general feeling is that Brazilian residents are concentrated down-island, especially in Edgartown.

It's been suggested that West Tisbury include a **land acknowledgment statement** at official meetings, as is now being done by some organizations, for instance the MV NAACP and the Martha's Vineyard Museum. Susanna explained briefly what this is: an acknowledgment that the land we live on was once held by, in our case, the Wampanoag tribe(s). Get copy to Cindy. Alexandra will send out land acknowledgment statement.

Susanna explained what NAACP's legal redress committee does: people can bring issues around discrimination, etc., to it, and it will help work to resolve them. She's working on getting Alex Palmer and/or Arthur Hardy-Doubleday of the MV NAACP here to speak to us about it.

Loren observed that the affordable housing issue has a big impact on what we're dealing with. Moving frequently doesn't encourage affinity for particular town. Cindy explained that for many committees, you don't have to live in town, though elected officials do have to be residents. She believes West Tisbury is more lenient about this than some other towns.

After Cindy left, the **minutes for our July 20 meeting were approved.**

The meeting was adjourned at about 6 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susanna J. Sturgis
Recorder