

**Town of Oak Bluffs Finance and Advisory Committee**  
**Thursday, January 6, 2022 5:00 pm**  
**Via Zoom Conference**

Present: Chair –**Bob Gaffey, Dion Alley, Sherry Countryman, Maura McGroarty, Mike Taus, Walter Vail, Bill Vrooman, Richard Weiss**

Absent: **Bernie Crossland**

Others: Recorder - Debra Alley. Town Administrator - Deborah Potter. Highway Superintendent - Richard Combra. MVC – Adam Turner.

**5:03 pm** The Oak Bluffs Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) came to order.

Review minutes December 2, 2021 meeting.

Walter Vail moved the minutes be accepted with the suggested edits by Sherry Countryman, seconded by Bob Gaffey.

Bill Vrooman – Aye, Mike Taus – Aye, Walter Vail – Aye, Richard Weiss – Aye, Maura McGroarty – Aye, Dion Alley – Aye, Sherry Countryman – Aye, Bob Gaffey – Aye. (8 –Aye)

**Review FY23 Budget Submissions**

○ **Highway Department**

Mr. Combra noted no huge increases or changes. There has been a little increase in expense items due to the New Town Hall coming on line, Fuel costs have increased a bit, small increase in maintenance of Town trees.

Mr. Vail asked what the other charges and expenses \$80,000. Mr. Combra noted it was for contracts and other items not specifically budgeted for such as uniforms, drug testing. Mr. Combra said he could provide a further breakdown.

Ms. Deborah Potter – said in finance committee packet there was a tab with expense details which included the highway 5700 account. Such as Aramark, Charles Daniels – carpentry work, DaRosa’s, Cottles – supplies, Hinkley Homes – supplies, Island color – paint, Island Source – coffee, cream, MV Auto Supply, Mill Hinch, DeBettencourt – propane, Perma-line, Shirley Hardware, Phillips Hardware, Vineyard Cash & Carry. Actual expenses for last year were just over \$61,000.

Ms. McGroarty asked about the company who supplies the paper goods. Mr. Combra noted the Highway Dept. buy for most of the Town Building; they are working with the Fire Department to bring them under the umbrella of Highway Dept.

Public Building maintenance: Does the Police Dept. have its own cleaning crew? Why don’t we have one cleaning crew for all the Town Buildings? Mr. Combra stated there will be an RFP will be issued in the near future for cleaning all Town Buildings.

Repair of Trucks and Equipment: if we are replacing older vehicles can’t we either reduce or keep this line item the same value. Mr. Combra noted the Town is getting some new vehicle. Mr. Combra noted that all Town vehicles come from this budget.

Wastewater Fees - can we reduce the wastewater line item, historically it has been reduced by \$10, 000 can we look to reduce this by \$5000.

Equipment –what is this line item? Mr. Combra stated this is lawnmowers, chain saws, a plow and other equipment.

Mike Taus: Recycling is up to \$15,000 with a 25% increase; is this cardboard? Mr. Combra stated it is the LDO fees we pay to remove all the cardboard and co mingles at LDO.

Mr. Weiss: How many staff on full time during the year? Mr. Combra replied 10. In the summer this has not increased due to lack of summer hires; last summer the Town had 2 in other years 6 years. The Town can’t pay as much as the private sector. Mr. Weiss asked if the employees are paid by hour or salaried.

Mr. Gaffey noted the dredging of Farm Pond is moving to a special article. Mr. Combra is fine with this line item move. The last dredge was finished in the past two weeks. Dredging has to be done between Oct 15<sup>th</sup> – Jan 1<sup>st</sup> due to permit. The Shellfish warden tells Highway Dept. when the permit is available. The culvert is dug out once a year.

Ms. Countryman asked what the increase in the resurfacing is. Is this circuit Ave? Mr. Combra replied no- just filling pot holes, patch work, some line striping. The price increase is due to the increase in cost of asphalt.

Mr. Vail asked are you getting Chapter 90 funds. Mr. Combra said yes about \$175,000, it has not changed too much. This past year the money was used on Dukes County Resurfacing and sidewalk project. The Highway Dept. has a five year paving plan – this is the

last year of the plan, they are working on a new 3 – 5 year plan. This money does not go too far to repave the roads. Previously a bond has been obtained – may need to look at doing this in the very near future, some of the main roads– County Road, Dukes Country Rd, can be repaired in places not in the entirety. Mr. Combra said they will be doing a survey in the near future. Mr. Vail asked to see a copy of this survey.

Mr. Taus asked the status of the parking lot proposed near the town dump? Mr. Combra said this plan is still alive, but not in this financial year.

Ms. McGroarty - going back to the dredging, is the \$40,000 going to become a warrant article? Deborah Potter noted it is moving to a special article, this allows us to use the \$40,000 much more effectively.

Mr. Vail spoke to Mr. Combra about changing the way we approach picking up trash and recyclables; outsource pick up. Can we do a study about what other Towns on the island are doing about trash/recycle pick up in order to save money? Mr. Combra said they did a study 5 years ago; we can do a study again. Oak Bluffs generates a large amount of unbillable trash; harbor, the down town barrels about \$30,000 of tipping fees. Our sticker price is very reasonable, has not been raised in quite a while. Mr. Combra said he could do a report – include the expenditures, the percentage of man hours that go into picking up trash and compare it. All the unbillable tonnage from the harbor is subsidized by the sticker price. It would not be cost effective to have Bruno's pick up the harbor trash. It would be a wash as far as the Town Budget goes but residents will pay more money. Mr. Combra said the other positive would be that if they outsourced the trash it would relieve a staff member to do other duties and chores around town. Mr. Combra said he has looked at adding recycle to the Town, but this will require a lot of expenditure, such as another truck. Mr. Vail and Mr. Combra will work together on a study/plan.

#### o **Parks:**

Mr. Gaffey noted an increase in the Parks. Mr. Combra stated the increase is due to changing a part-time to a full-time position. The position is for the foreman who will also act as the recreation director in the summer months. Mr. Taus asked the annual salary \$53,000. Mr. Combra confirmed it was doubling the seasonal salary.

The landscape RFP for Ocean Park going out soon they are expecting an increase in expenses. Band Concerts – increasing by \$5000 - offer more concerts. The geese are making walking through Ocean Park hazardous. Mr. Combra commented there is a border collie who works a couple of days a week in the summer. There are chemicals the Town can use, but this is may cause other problems. Ms. McGroarty asked if the collie is successful, Mr. Combra said yes and in summer months there are more activities in the park so less geese. We do pay for the collies services.

Mr. Weiss in relation to concerts in the park; do we get any money back from concerts in the park from the permits. The Town pays for bands and acts- we hire the Vineyard Haven band we pay \$5000 for 12 concerts on Mondays in the summer. There are a couple of other bands/groups which would like to join. In relation to the trash pickup, the Highway Dept. is in Ocean Park daily so it does not increase cost/man hours.

Deborah Potter commented if we are interested in doing more bands in the bandstand maybe we could attract local bands and give them exposure as volunteer performers.

Mr. Taus asked how the beach rake is going. Mr. Combra advised the Conservation Dept. has limited the amount of use to once a month. Mr. Combra said it has helped remove the small trash and other small shells and rocks; it could be done more.

5:50pm Mr. Combra left the meeting.

#### o **MVC – Adam Turner**

MVC is involved in two major pieces of litigations this year; Meeting House Way and Harbor View Hotel. MVC took out an insurance policy a couple of years ago so they can recoup \$100,000. However, there is still a shortage of roughly \$100,000.

There are some salary increases; the Commissions rental property needs a new septic tank.

Mr. Gaffey asked where the estimates for the litigation came from. Mr. Turner advised the estimate was from their lawyers. MVC has already spent \$150,000 and that is pre litigation; MVC is not in litigation yet; do not go to trial until April. Most of the work is being done in house for the preparation. The insurance policy maxes out at \$100,000.

Mr. Gaffey noted Meeting House expenses already \$170,000 + already billed and forecasting another \$150,000 still to be spent on Meeting House.

Mr. Taus asked the cost of the insurance policy for \$100,000. Mr. Turner stated the policy is with AIG, maybe \$5000- \$6000/year.

Mr. Vrooman asked how the budget was allocated between the Towns. Mr. Turner said an equalized valuation – all the total valuation of the island and divided by the Towns. Based on assessed value; property value.

Mr. Weiss asked about the frequency of litigation; is it increasing. Does the MVC work with an arbitrator in an attempt to avoid litigation. Mr. Turner said yes the MVC does work with arbitrator.

Ms. McGroarty noted the Tia Anna property increase in \$25,000 due to septic replacement. MVC owns the property, but MVC does not pay taxes. Ms. McGroarty asked about salary increase, details on the salary, health insurance. Mr. Turner will provide further details on this. Mortgage principle and interest, this was miscalculated in the 20-21 budgets. Mr. Turner commented the MVC is financed by the all the Towns; the entire MVC is financed -buildings, mortgage, staff etc.

Mr. Taus asked if MVC win in court do we get reimbursed for fees. Mr. Turner said no, MA is the only state where you do not. Mr. Taus asked if it is worth increasing insurance coverage.

Ms. McGroarty said we have talked about PILOT programs before. Mr. Turner advised he had spoken to previous Town Administrator about these he would be willing to work with Deborah Potter on this in the future.

6:10pm Mr. Turner Adam left the meeting.

### **Other Business**

Deborah Potter noted the Marina/Harbor will be added to the calendar on January 13th before Police/Fire/ EMS. ACE MV will be added on January 27th with High School and Elementary School. There are no other departments the Finance Committee would like to speak to.

Ms. Countryman noted on the top of the budget it shows FY21 not FY23.

Deborah Potter noted she had received the meals excise and short term rental excise from September to November. The hotel/short term rental was \$1.152 million. Meals Tax was an additional \$175,000. Right now the LER is 39% over the same period for last year. Approximately have collected 91% of our local estimated receipts.

Relative to purchasing off island companies purchased from are on Comm. Buys MA list. It does not matter if you buy 1 or 1000 of the item; we are getting the best saving. We may save money on the shipping, but then we need a place to store purchased items.

In relation to salaries, The Town is limited by union contracts; limited by things that are outside the Towns control. Deborah is working with the department heads to get employees at a reasonable level relative to the other towns. Tired of being a training ground for everybody else.

Mr. Weiss asked whether the Town Administrator and Select Board are working regularly to create streams of revenue. Is there a game plan to look at embarkation fees, tax structure, and regional agreements? To look at revenue streams on a regular basis.

Deborah Potter said the parking issue should not be looked at on a lot by lot basis – but an overall entire Town parking plan. The residential exemption has just been approved and implemented. Things are constantly under review – but take time to work their way out. The Embarkation fee is a state level and will need to come from State level.

Ms. McGroarty commented departments which are carrying leases in the budget make them look financially/ fiscally larger than they are. The Highway Dept. has a number of leases due, as does the Police Department. Deborah Potter said Capital items are outright purchases. Leases have to be accounted for and paid from somewhere. Have to go through the general fund as operating expenses. Paid for in full by free cash, paid for by borrowing, or because a recurring lease is incorporated into the general operating budget. Most of the leases are lease to purchase. Except for police- looking to change the way the police do their capital purchases.

### **Adjourn:**

Mr. Taus motioned to adjourn the Finance and Advisory Committee Meeting at **6:32PM**. Ms. McGroarty seconded; motion passed unanimously. 6 Ayes, 0 Nays, 0 Abstentions:

Mike Taus – Aye, Bill Vrooman – Aye. Rich Weiss – Aye, Maura McGroarty – Aye, Sherry Countryman – Aye, Bob Gaffey – Aye

Dion Alley & Walter Vail had previously left the meeting.

### **Meetings/Events:**

Oak Bluffs Finance Committee – 5:00 PM Thursday, January 13, 2022

### **Documents on file**

Budget Calendar Fiscal Year 2023

FY23 Budget

Respectfully submitted by Debra Alley, Office Administrator