

**Town of Oak Bluffs**  
**Finance and Advisory Committee**  
**Thursday, January 7, 2021, 5:00 pm**  
**Via Zoom Conference**

Present: Chair –Bob Gaffey, Bernie Crossland, Sherry Countryman, Maura McGroarty\*, Mike Taus, Greg Thornton, Walter Vail, Bill Vrooman, Richard Weiss,

Absent: None

Others: Recorder - Marni Lipke

Town: Town Administrator – Bob Whritenour, Highways – Richard Combra, Harbormaster – Todd Alexander,

\* Late arrivals or early departures of OB FinCom members, noted solely to mark vote counts.

• The Oak Bluffs Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) came to order at 5:02pm.

*(Recorder's Note: Discussions have been summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity. There were occasional technical difficulties during the meeting.)*

**Approval of Minutes**

**• WALTER VAIL MOVED TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 17, 2020 MINUTES AS AMENDED; BILL VROOMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 9 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: WALTER VAIL—AYE, GREG THORNTON—AYE, BILL VROOMAN—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, RICHARD WEISS—AYE, BERNIE CROSSLAND—AYE, MIKE TAUS—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—AYE.**

**Highway, Parks and Buildings Budgets** (See documents on file & below: Actions.)

The budget was fairly flat with the following exceptions (\$15,150 increase or 1.64%):

- Longevity;

- Public Building Maintenance (cleaning contracts) raise in line with slight overspending last year, the new Town Hall and continued pandemic cleaning protocols;

- Beautification/Maintenance increase to cover holiday decorations.

• The Commonwealth allowed overspending on Snow Removal, which was traditionally kept low so as not to inflate the budget (see also 1/30/14 Minutes p.2).

• The street-sweeper debt would be rolled over for a lease-to-own large dump-truck and Highways would also purchase a small dump truck.

• The beach rake worked very well on Pay and small sections of Inkwel Beaches, but was limited by Conservation Commission (ConCom) regulation to once a month in June, July and August, with mandates again seaweed removal, low water line distances, etc. Parks and Recreation would request increasing the frequency to twice a month. He was reluctant to loan it out to other towns in terms of rake upkeep and longevity.

• In response to a question on working hours and lunch breaks, Mr. Combra explained the employees sometimes worked through lunch hours or had flexible days, (e.g. 7:00AM to 3:00PM).

• Department employees were American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) members who agreed to a 0% raise in Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21), and were some of the lowest paid in the Town. Town wide collective bargaining negotiations would commence shortly and a pool for Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) were included in the FY22 Budget.

• The only increase in the Parks Dept. was for Ocean Park maintenance which would be rebid for FY22. There was some interest in the last bid but Crossland price was lower than standard. There was also a shortfall from the FY21 (see 10/15/20 Minutes p.2 #4).

• Maura McGroarty, noting the continued economic uncertainties asked each Department for a plan to cut their budget 10%.

• The FinCom thanked Mr. Combra for his time and work.

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• **Marina Budget** (See documents on file & below: Actions.)

Despite a challenging year, the Marina did well. Its FY22 budget was basically level funded except:  
- a 50¢/hr. payroll increase to retain the stable summer staff;  
- a repair/maintenance increase—cut from \$2,000 to \$1,000—hopefully augmented by Waterways revenues.

- The third and final electrical repair upgrade (45 yr. old skipper box near the Harbormasters Office) would be a \$40,000 warrant article—part of the canceled fall 2020 Special Town Meeting (STM) (see Minutes: 3/6/17 p.1, 2/22/18 p.3 and 10/15/20 p.1-2).
- Harbormaster Todd Alexander reviewed mooring fee rates every 4 years, calling similar marinas around the region. Last year rates were raise \$1/ft. which worked out to a \$100,000 revenue increase. Unlike other Island marinas Oak Bluffs rafted its moorings with 3-5 boats collecting mooring fees from each boat. Marina revenues paid over \$1,000,000 into the General Fund.
- The fuel depot masterminded by Mr. Alexander and Town Administrator Bob Whritenour, was the best investment in recent history, reaching payoff in 3 years instead of the conservatively projected 5 years, selling 200,000 gallons of gas/diesel fuel and adding about \$53,500 in fees into a separate account (not shown in local estimated receipts) that paid harbor debts for maintenance and repair projects (harbormaster office, jetty engineering work, etc.).
- The FinCom thanked Todd Alexander for his time and excellent stewardship.

• **Board of Health (BOH) Budget** (See documents on file & below: Actions.)

The new assistant was a tremendous help, giving BOH Agent Megan Lancaster a well-deserved break after 10 months of exhausting pandemic duty. The FY22 Budget was primarily level funded.

- The Health Agent salary raise was the final part of previous classification/compensation wage adjustment, as was the \$800 administrative increase—shifted from the FY21 wage pool to the BOH budget.
- Clothing allowance was increased \$1,000.
- A potential initiative for public nursing services on Covid contact tracing was not needed. The Town was impressed by the amazing work done for a small budget.
- BOH fees were returned to the General Fund and did not cover Department costs (see below: Ongoing Actions).

• **Finance Committee Members Up for Re-Election** (See below: Actions.)

Bernie Crossland, Maura McGroarty and Walter Vail were all considering whether to run for re-election. Members urged all three to remain on the FinCom.

- The FinCom discussed reducing FinCom membership.

• **Accountant's Comments** (See documents on file & below: Meetings/Events)

Mr. Whritenour praised Town Accountant Deb Potter and the rest of Town Hall staff for their teamwork on the FY22 Budget process. He referred the FinCom to his detailed Budget memo which covered the major issues. He would present it to the Selectmen and FinCom at the January 12<sup>th</sup> Workshop. The Selectmen would then recommend the Budget to the FinCom, who would review it in detail and recommend it to the Special and Annual Town Meeting (STM/ATM).

• **Member Comments**

- Mike Taus requested closer communications with the Board of Selectmen (BOS) on a number of shared/interdependent issue:
  - the next step on the Ambulance Reserve fund and Martha's Vineyard Hospital (MVH) negotiations;
  - regional sewage/septic issues;

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- Selectmen/FinCom collaboration on the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) capital assessment formula. There was a discussion on the Dust Collection System funding process and MVRHS capital improvement process which might require Towns to borrow and initiate debt exclusion votes.

BOS Chair Jason Balboni wanted to meet with the FinCom and quarterly joint meetings were proposed.

- Walter Vail and the FinCom requested the Town loan Maura McGroarty updated technology to facilitate her Zoom participation.
- To facilitate the Budget process, Bob Gaffey requested members to consider which Departments might not need to be interviewed (see below: Actions).

• **Public Comments** - None

• **Adjourn**

• **MIKE TAUS MOVED TO ADJOURN THE FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING AT 6:27PM; WALTER VAIL SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: WALTER VAIL—AYE, GREG THORNTON—AYE, BILL VROOMAN—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, RICHARD WEISS—AYE, BERNIE CROSSLAND—AYE, MIKE TAUS—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—AYE.**

**Meetings/Events:**

**Bd. of Selectmen Budget Workshop – 3:30PM: Tuesday, January 12, 2021**

**OB FinCom - 5:00PM TBD, Thursdays, January 14, 21, 28, 2021 – Zoom**

**OB FinCom - 5:00PM TBD, Thursdays, February 4, 11, 18, 25, 2021 – Zoom**

**Action List**

- All – inform Chair of any Departments not requiring interviews.
- Bernie/Maura/Walter – inform Chair whether running for re-election, (final day to obtain nomination papers 2/23/21, submission deadline 2/25/21)
- Bob G. – coordinate/schedule quarterly meetings with BOS.
- Bob G. - ask Town for tech equipment loan to Maura to facilitate Zoom participation.

**Ongoing Action List from previous meetings**

- FinCom work with Bob W. on updating Town fee structure, licensing, BOH, etc.

• **Future Agenda Items:**

Trash/Waste Analysis	Reserve Fund Increase
Town Cleaning Services Analysis	Embarkation Fund Policy
FinCom Membership (Tis-9, Edg-7, WT-5, Chil-7, Aqu-3)	

**Documents on file:**

- Agenda 1/7/21
- Gaffey/Whritenour cover emails re: Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Recommendations (2 p.) 1/6/21
- Whritenour memo re: Budget Recommendations for Fiscal Year 2022 (25 p.) 1/6/21

• **Minutes approved by the OB FinCom 1/14/21**