

**Town of Oak Bluffs**  
**Finance and Advisory Committee**  
**Thursday, January 9, 2020 5:00 pm**  
**Oak Bluffs Library Conference Room**

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

Absent: Richard Weiss,

Town: Town Administrator – Bob Whritenour, Town Accountant – Deb Potter,

Others: Recorder - Marni Lipke \* Late arrivals or early departures,  
noted solely to mark vote counts.

- The Oak Bluffs Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) came to order at 5:05pm.  
(Recorder's Note: Discussions have been summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.)

• **Approve Minutes (12/29)**

• **MIKE TAUS MOVED TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER 19, 2019 MINUTES; BOB GAFFEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSTENTION—BERNIE CROSSLAND** due to absence.

• **Town Administrator's Budget Requests** (See documents on file.)

Town Administrator Bob Whritenour would submit his recommendations on the Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) budget to the Selectmen (BOS) at a workshop on Tuesday (see below: Meetings/Event) and he strongly recommended that the FinCom attend. The FinCom would then receive the Selectmen recommended budget on January 16, 2020. He expressed his satisfaction with the Budget process especially noting the work of the Department Heads and Town Accountant Deborah Potter. For the second year Oak Bluffs (OB) received the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Distinguished Budget Presentation Award and thanked the FinCom for their approval of the Financial Policies. Mr. Whritenour highlighted the components impacting the FY21 Town Budget. The overall philosophy was to build on initiatives with time and patience, preserving services and educational spending.

- Revenues were shown with a five-year look-back. Standard revenues included: Proposition 2.5% real estate tax increase, 3% new growth, and 2% excluded debt. Mr. Whritenour again emphasized the importance of conservative projections for local receipts so as to end each year with Free Cash rather than a deficit shortfall.

- Drastic cuts and/or an override were avoided by raising the local receipts by a conservative estimation of the short-term rental revenue based on FY20 collected receipts. The OB FinCom explored tracking and enforcing short-term rentals through internet monitoring, state registry and possible local registration. Local bylaws could encompass fees for registration and inspections.

The overall Town FY21 Budget increase was ~ 6%.

- Health insurance costs were projected to rise about 5% or \$145,000;
- Dukes County Retirement assessment was up \$74,000; and
- \$200,000 in projected labor cost increases (including a union/contract negotiations pool).
- Mr. Whritenour was disappointed to have to reduce the annual budgeting goal of a \$200,000 Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) increase to \$100,000 to avoid an override. He hoped to cover the remaining \$100,000 with Free Cash. (Free Cash was estimated at about last year's levels.)

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- Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) Oak Bluffs enrollment would increase by 12 students however the Tisbury and Edgartown decreases would further sift the proportional share onto OB raising it to 28.3% and increasing the assessment 10.76%—although the total assessed MVRHS FY21 budget was up only 3%. Enrollment projections were often skewed by population moves caused by the affordable housing crisis.
  - Mr. Whritenour advocated for a way to smooth out the enrollment spikes and dips and said he would promote a joint Selectmen/FinCom meeting to map out a strategy.
  - A MVRHS single warrant article for a Building Trades Dust Collection system would be submitted—other capital projects were put in the budget.
  - The Oak Bluffs School (OBS) was up only 3% (\$250,000), having emerged from a four-year initiative to address increased enrollment and facilities needs.
  - Yesterday, Principal Megan Farrell requested \$75,000 in residential tuition—which could be funded through Free Cash or placed in the OBS Budget.
  - The Finance Department needed an assistant to keep pace with the workload.
  - The Assessor Dept. reduced management positions to fill the need for residential exemption research and now should re-staff administrative support.
  - The Registrar's budget would increase to cover the Presidential election and early voting.
  - As an addition to previous small initiatives that produced noticeable results, the Highway Dept. requested a \$15,000 raise in building maintenance/cleaning (now mostly contracted out) and \$20,000 in tree trimming for public and roadway safety. A position was changed from custodian to Building Supervisor (see below: Actions) but no new staff were hired.
  - The Fire Dept. requested:
    - a stipend increase
    - increasing the rotating night duty officer from 5 to 7 day a week (see 1/25/18 Minutes p.2),
    - part-time fire prevention officer (\$11,400) to conduct more inspections on regional and commercial facilities
    - high intensity trained specialized emergency rescue team (\$12,000) for specialty incidents such as hazardous materials (hazmat) fires (e.g. battery storage), vehicle extraction, confined space emergencies, etc. Eversource was required to pay for continuous trainings.
    - An additional request for a boat incident support team was not recommended.
- (Chief John Rose was still working on cost estimates for the meeting with the Martha's Vineyard Hospital (MVH) (see Minutes: 6/6/19 p.3, & 10/3/19 p.4, & 11/21/19 p.3).
- In order to keep the FinCom informed Mr. Whritenour reported on the complex situation on the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) inquiry into Oak Bluffs Ambulance billing, including Town cooperation, transparency issues, and Selectmen personnel actions.
  - **BILL VROOMAN MOVED TO STRIKE THE DISCUSSION FROM THE MINUTES; MIKE TAUS, GREG THORNTON AND WALTER VAIL SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSTENTIONS—SHERRY COUNTRYMAN, MAURA MCGROARTY.**
  - The OB FinCom thanked Mr. Whritenour for the excellent work and praised the accompanying information packed documents.

• **Accountant's Comments**

The FY20 Budget was on track at 51% spending. A tax form was rectified and re-submitted with the help of the Consulting Accountant

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**• Member Comments**

- Chair Bill Vrooman asked for comments on the Town Report essay (see below: Actions).
- County Manager sent budget changes on the County Budget.
- The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) was waiting for Free Cash to be certified.
- Adult Community Education Martha's Vineyard (ACE MV) doubled their previous requests (see documents on file) and would join the OBS and MVRHS presentations.
- The architect was working positively on possible renovations to the current building (including the foundation), how to meet future Town needs, and separating the bottom floor for large meeting rooms and mechanical storage. By adding square footage to the upper floors they could be reconfigured so offices were directly visible to entering citizens.
- An alternative procurement procedure Construction Manager at Risk (CM@R) was being explored. This allowed a General Contractor to be interviewed and hired in a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process that promoted better quality bidders. The chosen firm then participated in the final 60% of the design phase and oversaw the subcontractor prequalification process theoretically reducing change orders and unforeseen problems. A maximum construction price was then negotiated for a hard figure to be presented at Annual Town Meeting (ATM). Mr. Whritenour, however, emphasized that the "at risk" was to the Town.

**• Public Comments** – None

**• Adjourn**

- **MIKE TAUS MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 6:45PM; BOB GAFFEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**Meetings/Events:**

- Selectmen/OB FinCom – 5:45PM?, Tuesday, January 14, 2020 - OB Library**
- OB FinCom - 5:00PM, Thursday, January 16, 2020 - OB Library**
- OB FinCom - 5:00PM, Thursday, January 23, 2020 - OB Library**
- OB FinCom - 5:00PM, Thursday, January 30, 2020 - OB Library**
- OB FinCom - 5:00PM, Thursday, February 6, 2020 - OB Library**
- OB FinCom - 5:00PM, Thursday, February 13, 2020 - OB Library**
- OB FinCom - 5:00PM, Thursday, February 20, 2020 - OB Library**
- Nomination Form Deadline - Thursday, February 27, 2020**
- OB FinCom Budget Hearing - 5:00PM, Thursday, February 27, 2020, TBD**
- OB FinCom - 5:00PM, Thursday, March 5, 2020 - OB Library**
- OB FinCom - 5:00PM, Thursday, March 12, 2020 - OB Library**
- OB FinCom - 5:00PM, Thursday, March 19, 2020 - OB Library**
- OB FinCom Budget recommendation deadline March 20, 2020**
- OB FinCom - 5:00PM, Thursday, April 2, 2020 - OB Library**
- Special & Annual Town Meeting – 7:00PM, Tuesday, April 14, 2020**
- Town Election – Thursday, April 16, 2020**
- OB FinCom - 5:00PM, Thursday, April 23, 2020 - OB Library**

**Action List**

- **Bob W./Wendy B.** – send organizations charts.
- **All** – send comments on Town Report draft to Bill by 1/16/20.

**continued**

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**Ongoing Action List from previous meetings (cont.)**

- Bob G. – keep Greg informed of all meeting issues.
- Sherry/Bob/Maura/Richard – pick up nomination forms for 2/27/20 submission deadline.
- Future Agenda Items:
  - Trash/Waste Analysis
  - Town Cleaning Services Analysis
  - Reserve Fund Increase
  - Embarkation Fund Policy

**Documents on file:**

- Agenda 1/9/20
- Sign In Sheet 1/9/20
- Whritenour/Town of Oak Bluffs memo re: Budget Recommendations for Fiscal Year 2021 (30 p.) 1/6/20
- Town of Oak Bluffs, Budget Calendar Fiscal Year 2021
- Warrant Article for Adult Education Spring 2020
- Martha's Vineyard Elder-Service Mapping November 2019 (33 p.)
- Vrooman/Thornton cover email re: County Warrant Articles 1/3/19
- FY2021 - County Request for Funding 1/3/2020
- Vineyard Health Care Access Program, FY2021 Budget Proposal, Draft 1-3-2020 (2 p.)

**• Minutes approved by the OB FinCom 1/16/20.**