

**Town of Oak Bluffs**  
**Finance and Advisory Committee**  
**Thursday, March 12, 2020 5:00 pm**  
**Oak Bluffs Library Conference Room**

Present: Acting Chair – Greg Thornton, Sherry Countryman, Bernie Crossland,  
Bob Gaffey\* by phone, Maura McGroarty, Walter Vail, Richard Weiss,  
Absent: Mike Taus, Bill Vrooman,  
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 5:02pm. Acting Chair Greg Thornton stated that Bob Gaffey would join the meeting by phone, at which point all votes would be roll call.

*(Recorder's Note: Discussions have been summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.)*

• **Approval of Minutes**

• **WALTER VAIL MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 5, 2020 MINUTES; BERNIE CROSSLAND SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSTENTIONS—SHERRY COUNTRYMAN** due to absence.

• **Vote on Remaining Warrant Articles** (See documents on file & 3/5/20 Minutes.)

• The Board of Selectmen had voted the warrant and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) had met and reviewed/recommended projects.

**Annual Town Meeting (ATM) Warrant Articles**

• **Article 1 – FY21 Town Budget (Raise & Appropriate)**

This was a well-balanced budget as previously reviewed, reduced according to level health insurance rates and the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) assessment (see Minutes: 1/23/20 p.2 & 2/6/20 p.2).

- The Reserve Fund balance was \$79,072.35.

- Maura McGroarty protested that although the FinCom had heard from the Departments, the actual budget discussions had not been held. In particular she had expected a line-by-line review, possibly moving money around.

• **WALTER VAIL MOVED THAT THE OAK BLUFFS FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON THE FISCAL YEAR 2021 TOWN BUDGET AS PRESENTED IN THE REVISED WARRANT; RICHARD WEISS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 6 AYES, 1 NAY, 0 ABSTENTIONS: WALTER VAIL—AYE, RICHARD WEISS—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—NAY, BERNIE CROSSLAND—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, GREG THORNTON—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—AYE.**

• **Article 16 – Town Hall Renovation (Borrow)**

The CIP voted this project as a priority. In order to avoid previous unpredictable bidding problems the Town elected an alternate procurement process called construction manager at risk, which would allow a vote at a solid maximum project cost.

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- Walter Vail spoke passionately about his disappointment with previous failed projects and votes, as well as his hesitation over the current lack of a Building Committee.
- Town Administrator Bob Whritenour stated the project would not go away as the current building was inadequate and out of code. High construction inflation rates meant delays only increased projects costs.

• **SHERRY COUNTRYMAN MOVED THAT THE OAK BLUFFS FINANCE COMMITTEE SUPPORTED THE TOWN HALL PROJECT AND WOULD MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON THE TOWN HALL PROJECT PENDING FINAL FIGURES; WALTER VAIL AND RICHARD WEISS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 6 AYES, 0 NAY, 1 ABSTENTION: WALTER VAIL—AYE, RICHARD WEISS—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—ABSTAIN, BERNIE CROSSLAND—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, GREG THORNTON—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—AYE.**

• Article 17 – \$2,774,000 Streetscape Sidewalk and Infrastructure Repairs (Borrow)

- The CIP was very much in favor the project—2 of its 5 attending members were on the Streetscape planning committee.
- Town Administration submitted applications for state grants two years running but currently such funds were concentrated on affordable housing infrastructure.
- The FinCom discussed sidewalk improvement locations and status. Bob Gaffey decried lack of FinCom inclusion and information on the project.
- There was a discussion on the continuing Island Theater eyesore and blocked opportunity (see Minutes: 12/15/16 p.2-3, 3/6/17 p.4 #25 & 3/16/17 p.6 #26 & 5/4/17 p.2.). Other Town missed/wasted sites included the Police Station. Improving Oak Bluffs infrastructure could be an incentive for Circuit Avenue businesses to invest in their buildings.

• **WALTER VAIL MOVED THAT THE OAK BLUFFS FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON \$2,774,000 FOR STREETScape SIDEWALK AND INFRASTRUCTURE; RICHARD WEISS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 5 AYES, 1 NAY, 1 ABSTENTION: WALTER VAIL—NAY, RICHARD WEISS—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—ABSTAIN, BERNIE CROSSLAND—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—AYE, GREG THORNTON—AYE.**

• Article 18 – \$510,000 Park & Ride (Borrow)

The CIP voted the Park & Ride as a priority, however the FinCom raised issues of premature timing and recent bus issues.

• **WALTER VAIL MOVED THAT THE OAK BLUFFS FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON \$510,000 FOR A PARK AND RIDE; RICHARD WEISS SECONDED; MOTION FAILED: 2 AYES, 5 NAY, 0 ABSTENTIONS: WALTER VAIL—AYE, RICHARD WEISS—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—NAY, BERNIE CROSSLAND—NAY, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—NAY, BOB GAFFEY—NAY, GREG THORNTON—NAY.**

• Article 13 – \$75,000 Unforeseen Wastewater Equipment Repairs/Other Breakdowns (Wastewater Retained Earnings)

The amount was increased in keeping with projected repair costs.

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• **WALTER VAIL MOVED THAT THE OAK BLUFFS FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE AS AMENDED TO \$75,000 FOR WASTEWATER EQUIPMENT REPAIRS AND OTHER BREAKDOWNS; MIKE TAUS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: WALTER VAIL—AYE, RICHARD WEISS—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—AYE, BERNIE CROSSLAND—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—AYE, GREG THORNTON—AYE.**

• Article 20 – \$815,000 Eminent Domain Purchase of Uncas Avenue Lot (Stabilization or Borrow)

The FinCom agreed this was a valuable opportunity that should not be missed. The article had been amended according to FinCom request.

• **WALTER VAIL MOVED THAT THE OAK BLUFFS FINANCE COMMITTEE RECOMMEND THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLE ON \$815,000 FOR EMINENT DOMAIN PURCHASE OF THE UNCAS AVENUE LOT; MIKE TAUS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: WALTER VAIL—AYE, RICHARD WEISS—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—AYE, BERNIE CROSSLAND—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—AYE, GREG THORNTON—AYE.**

• Article 24 – \$87,499 Social Services (Raise & Appropriate)

- It was reported that many agencies came in under-budget in FY19 (see below: Actions). Walter Vail advocated for the vital services, most of which were level funded—except Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard's (HAMV's) expansion of the Director position.

• **SHERRY COUNTRYMAN MOVED TO REVISIT THE VOTE ON THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING SOCIAL SERVICES ARTICLE: WALTER VAIL SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 6 AYES, 1 NAY, 0 ABSTENTIONS: WALTER VAIL—AYE, RICHARD WEISS—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—AYE, BERNIE CROSSLAND—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, GREG THORNTON—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—NAY.**

• Mr. Gaffey considered the FinCom was wasting time.

• **SHERRY COUNTRYMAN MOVED TO RESCIND THE VOTE ON THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING SOCIAL SERVICES ARTICLE: WALTER VAIL SECONDED; MOTION FAILED: 3 AYES, 4 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: WALTER VAIL—AYE, RICHARD WEISS—NAY, MAURA MCGROARTY—NAY, BERNIE CROSSLAND—NAY, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, GREG THORNTON—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—NAY.**

• **Accountant's Comments**

• It was re-affirmed that if all votes passed, Free Cash would be \$217,000 a reasonable balance as recommended by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR).

• The FinCom stressed the need for a healthy stabilization fund in view of the Corona Virus lock-down and marketplace fluctuations likely to impact the high tourist season.

• Mr. Whritenour distributed a Steamship Authority embarkation revenue history (see documents on file).

• **Public Comments** – None

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**• Member Comments**

- Sherry Countryman protested FinCom members bullying those who were speaking, rolling their eyes or accusations of wasting time, maintaining that everyone had questions that needed explaining.
- It was agreed that the Warrant recommendations were complete and there was no need to meet the following Thursday.
- Town Hall would communicate any postponement of Town Meeting due to the Corona Virus lockdown, in which case emergency authorizations would be instituted.

**• Adjourn**

**• WALTER VAIL MOVED TO ADJOURN THE FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING AT 6:37PM; SHERRY COUNTRYMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: WALTER VAIL—AYE, RICHARD WEISS—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—AYE, BERNIE CROSSLAND—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—AYE, GREG THORNTON—AYE.**

**Meetings/Events:**

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**

- Deb P. - request County accounting for under-budget Social Services returns.

**Ongoing Action List from previous meetings**

**• Future Agenda Items:**

Trash/Waste Analysis

Reserve Fund Increase

Town Cleaning Services Analysis

Embarkation Fund Policy

**Documents on file:**

- Agenda 3/12/20
- Sign In Sheet 3/12/20
- Warrant for Annual Town Meeting, Commonwealth of Massachusetts (31 p.)
- Town of Oak Bluffs Capital Improvement FY2021-2026 Recommendations (5 p.) 3/12/20
- FY21 Draft Budget (8 p.) 3/12/20
- OB FinCom 2020 Warrant Article Recommendations (2 p.)
- 2019 Embarkation Fees
- Town of Oak Bluffs 2013-2037 Total Tax Levy Debt Service Existing and Proposed (2 p.)
- FY21 Capital Requests, Selectmen, Downtown Streetscape Improvements

**• Minutes approved by the OB FinCom 5/7/20**