

**Town of Oak Bluffs  
Finance and Advisory Committee  
Thursday, May 20, 2021, 5:00 pm  
Via Zoom Conference**

Present: Chair –Bob Gaffey, Sherry Countryman, Maura McGroarty, Deb Potter,  
Walter Vail, Bill Vrooman,  
Absent: Mike Taus, Richard Weiss,  
Others: Dion Alley, Recorder - Marni Lipke  
Town: Town Accountant – Deb Potter,  
\* 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 5:04pm.
- Chair Bob Gaffey welcome new member Deb Potter, and congratulated Walter Vail and Maura McGroarty for their re-election and thanked them for their continued service.  
(Recorder's Note: Discussions have been summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.)

**•Approval of Minutes**

**• BILL VROOMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 18, 2021 MINUTES AS AMENDED FOR TYPOS; SHERRY COUNTRYMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSTENTION: WALTER VAIL—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—AYE, BILL VROOMAN—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, DEB POTTER—ABSTAIN as not a member at the time, BOB GAFFEY—AYE.**

**• Interview Candidates**

A number of write-in candidates were eligible for the single FinCom vacancy. The only candidate that showed interest was Dion Alley. He gave a brief history of his family, including his parents and wife who served Oak Bluffs in a number of capacities—including his Mother as a FinCom member. He had been in the Navy and had extensive experience in the financial management of large budget energy and utility projects some of them with governmental oversight. His family had always planned to return to the Island, and the pandemic accelerated the process. He felt the best way to understand something was to look at its finances. He considered the lack of citizen willingness to serve dismaying and wrote his name on the ballot to serve the Town. He liked that the FinCom did not always agree and had healthy debates about issues, and he looked forward to asking a lot of questions and learning about the Town. He hoped to help the FinCom become more relevant/engaged by contacting other civic organizations and the Board of Selectmen.

- The FinCom:
  - liked his enthusiasm;
  - emphasized the steep learning curve that all members experienced;
  - spoke of having to: do what you think is right for voters and the Town; having convictions; listening and standing your ground;
  - was working on better communication/collaboration with the Selectmen.
- **BILL VROOMAN MOVED TO RECOMMEND THAT THE TOWN MODERATOR APPOINT DION ALLEY AS A MEMBER OF THE FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE; BOB GAFFEY AND WALTER VAIL SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: WALTER VAIL—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—AYE, BILL VROOMAN—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, DEB POTTER—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—AYE.**

**• Year-End Accounting Entries**

**• Accountant's Comments**

Spending for any current fiscal year ended on June 30th, but all bills did not have to be submitted until July 15th; consequently many departments set aside a small lump sum usually slightly over the

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anticipated bills to cover any unknown contingencies (e.g. legal bills, unexpected June 30<sup>th</sup> equipment failures, etc.). Town Accountant Deb Potter proposed a streamlining process to help close out and balance the Town budget as a whole, by getting the conditional approval of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and the Finance Committee (FinCom) to transfer any small residuals to other Town Departments that might be in deficit. (She had asked and received permission from the Oak Bluffs School Committee (OBSC) as it functioned as a slightly separate entity.) The process would in no way curtail spending, and the residuals could not be spent since it was after June 30<sup>th</sup>. It was a simple re-allocation for other Town needs. As it was impossible to conduct FinCom/Selectmen/School Committee meetings at the close of the day on July 15<sup>th</sup> Ms. Potter requested this provisional vote with two caveats:

- all moneys be transferred to cover any deficits, and
- any minor aggregate remaining funds be committed to Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB).
- The FinCom discussed a number of aspect and issues.
- The provisional vote carried some faith that close-of-year (COY) transfers would be appropriate and complete from expense item to expense item—Ms. Potter offered to submit a detailed report after July 15<sup>th</sup>.
- The authorization applied to the OBS and not the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS).
- Most Departments did their best to submit bills in time, but some invoices were not within their control and one particular year the COY had been extremely tight.
- If this were not voted, residuals would revert to the undesignated fund balance and usually from there to Free Cash.
- There was some hesitation over the proposal to commit final residuals to OPEB, as the amount would be unknown until July—although not usually very large. It was noted that OPEB contribution had been cut from \$200,000 to \$50,000. In addition bond rating companies preferred municipalities to hit an actuarial minimum for better market rate returns.
- As further information the OBSC and the Tisbury FinCom motions were read:
  - OBSC - *approval to authorize the re-appropriation to the Town of any funds remaining on July 15, 2021 from the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Oak Bluffs School budget—subject to all Oak Bluffs School bills being paid; unanimously.*
  - Tis. FinCom - *to authorize the Town Accountant and Treasurer to make Fiscal Year 2021 interdepartmental and line item transfers in accordance with Massachusetts General Law (MGL), Chapter 44 Section 33 B; unanimously.*
- Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) local receipts (not including the Harbor which was expected to be very robust) were at 112% over FY20; in addition the Assessor expected substantial excise revenues including meals/lodging/short term rental taxes—amounts would not be known until early July. The general impression was that FY21 would surpass FY20 which was greater than FY19.

**Members Comments**

- As usual after the elections, the FinCom considered reorganization. Chair Bob Gaffey expressed some reservations about continuing as Chair in favor of grooming the next candidate for Chair and also as it was possible he might be traveling during December – February, the busiest time of the FinCom calendar.
- The FinCom discussed continuing on Zoom both for better public participation as well as for remote member convenience. Another option might be hybrid of in-person/Zoom meetings if the technology was available. Previous MGL remote participation law did not allow remote members to be counted as quorum or to chair a meeting—however this might be modified post pandemic.
- Vice Chair Sherry Countryman felt she needed more time on the learning curve before taking on the role of Chair—but might have more time towards January 2022.

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• **BILL VROOMAN NOMINATED BOB GAFFEY AS CHAIR; WALTER VAIL SECONDED; BOB GAFFEY ACCEPTED THE NOMINATION; NOMINATIONS WERE CLOSED; NOMINATION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: BILL VROOMAN—AYE, WALTER VAIL—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, DEB POTTER—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—AYE.**

• **BILL VROOMAN NOMINATED SHERRY COUNTRYMAN AS VICE CHAIR; WALTER VAIL SECONDED; SHERRY COUNTRYMAN ACCEPTED THE NOMINATION; NOMINATIONS WERE CLOSED; NOMINATION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: BILL VROOMAN—AYE, WALTER VAIL—AYE, DEB POTTER—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE.**

• A schedule was set after a discussion on COY process timing (see below: Meetings/Events).

The FinCom reported and reviewed some of its goals for the year (see 8/6/20 Minutes p.1-2)

• Ambulance Reserve: (see Minutes: 1/25/18 p.1-3, & 10/18/18 p.1-3, & 12/17/20 p.2.) In negotiation with the Martha's Vineyard Hospital (MVH) on reconfiguring its billing, MVH representatives were unhappy with the Town Transport budget structured on 2 ambulances 5 days a week with a backup on weekends. The FinCom representatives expressed their frustration with not being included in the internal OB pre-negotiations meetings. Other issues reviewed included:

- not billing for capital costs (e.g. the chassis rebuild); and  
- MVH exploration of alternatives which proved fairly costly.

• MVRHS Regional Formula: (See documents on file, & Minutes: 2/28/19 p.7, 5/2/19 p.2-3, 6/6/19 p.2, 6/20/19 p.2, 7/10/19, 7/18/19, 9/3/19, 9/4/19, 10/2/19 p.1, & 1/30/20 p.2-3.) The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) rejected the MVRHS capital funding application for the 6<sup>th</sup> time. The MSBA monitored local press and would not invest funds in a project knowing the Island could not agree to a capital funding formula. The FinCom reviewed the long struggle:

- Edgartown politics and parent advocacy;  
- no Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidance on allocation of funds;  
- original Regional Agreement formulas mostly based on enrollment;  
- some Island-wide support for Oak Bluffs loss of real estate revenue and additional service costs (police, fire, etc.) since the MVRHS was located in OB;  
- MVRHS requests for piecemeal capital projects (see 3/11/21 Minutes p.3-4 #32, 33, 34);  
- previous FinCom investment of energy and time on alternate proposals, formulas, meetings, etc.  
- averaging enrollment over 5 years to allow more predictable budgeting and less spikes and dips.

• Highlighting another FinCom goal of improved FinCom/Selectmen collaboration, members again emphasized that internal FinCom and Board of Selectmen agreement was needed to move forward effectively—with discussion about including the Oak Bluffs School Committee.

• **Public Comments**

Mr. Alley found the meeting highly informative and looked forward to working on many of the issues (MVH, Schools, independence, jobs for Island youth, etc.)

• **Adjourn**

• **WALTER VAIL MOVED TO ADJOURN THE FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING AT 6:38PM; SHERRY COUNTRYMAN AND BILL VROOMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: BILL VROOMAN—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—AYE, DEB POTTER—AYE, WALTER VAIL—AYE, BOB GAFFEY—AYE.**

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**Meetings/Events:**

**OB FinCom - TBD 5:00PM, Thursday, June 17, 2021**

**OB FinCom - TBD 5:00PM, Thursday, July 8, 2021**

**Action List**

- Bob/Bill/Sherry - contact Fire/EMS re: participating in internal meetings on MVH negotiations.
- Bob – contact BOS re: joint OBS/BOS/OBSC meeting on MVRHS capital formula.

**Ongoing Action List from previous meetings:**

- Bob G. – coordinate/schedule quarterly meetings with BOS.
- FinCom work with Town Admin. 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	

**Documents on file:**

- Agenda 5/20/21
- Gaffee/Brough emails re: Spending Freeze for remainder of FY21 and COY (3 p.) 4/18/21
- Gaffey/Whritenour email re: Use of Funds and Debt (8 p.) 3/27/21
- Town of Oak Bluffs, YTD Report (18 p.) 4/9/21
- Town of Oak Bluffs, YTD Report (4 p.) 4/7/21
- Town of Oak Bluffs, YTD Report (3 p.) 4/7/21
- Town of Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, Reports on Federal Awards Programs, Year Ended June 30, 2020 (10 p.) 4/8/21
- Town of Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, Management Letter, Year Ended June 30, 2020 (5 p.) 4/8/21
- Town of Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, Report on Examination of Basic Financial Statement, Year Ended June 30, 2020 (71 p.) 4/8/21

- **Minutes approved by the OB FinCom 6/17/21**