

**Town of Oak Bluffs**  
**Finance and Advisory Committee**  
**Thursday, June 20, 2019, 5:00 pm**  
**Oak Bluffs Library Second Floor Conference Room**

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

Absent: None

Others: Town Accountant – Deb Potter,  
Sherry Countryman  
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 5:00PM.  
(Recorder's Note: Discussions have been summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.)

• **Minutes Approval (6/6/19)**

• **WALTER VAIL MOVED TO APPROVE THE JUNE 6, 2019 MINUTES; MIKE TAUS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 2 ABSTENTIONS—MAURA MCGROARTY, WALTER VAIL** due to full or partial absence.

• **Candidate's Interview** (See also below: p.3-4.)

The FinCom members introduced themselves including how long they had served on the FinCom. Chair Bill Vrooman asked two questions: Why was Sherry Countryman interested in joining the FinCom and what talents and skills did she bring to the table.

- Ms. Countryman had not considered the FinCom until Richard Weiss recruited her. She moved to the Island about 2 ½ years ago after being a long time visitor. She had joined the Lagoon Pond Association and the Friends of Sengekontacket as a fisherman, shellfisher and gardener. She was interested in the FinCom as a hub of Town business.

- She was a 29-year corporate lawyer in mergers and acquisitions (still practicing) with degrees from University of Massachusetts-Amherst and Georgetown University. She expected to retire in the foreseeable future, had no plans to leave the Island for winters, and attended Annual Town Meetings. The FinCom described the yearly meeting schedule and budget cycle and the appointment/election protocol.

• **Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) and Pension Liabilities Policy – Vote**

The FinCom did not have the authority to approve the policy but could endorse or recommend it. The discussion centered on the use of such terms as: “should,” “aim for”, “seek to” as more suited to guideline or wish-list language. The debate covered:

- having the flexibility to adapt actual implementation;
- setting firm standards and giving the Selectmen authority to modify from year to year;
- stricter standards as a set up for failure,
- the policy as modified boiler plate,
- policy as a big step forward and details as modifiable;
- opposing opinions could be voiced at the Selectmen's meeting.

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**• WALTER VAIL MOVED TO ENDORSE THE OAK BLUFFS TOWN CONTINGENT UNFUNDED LIABILITY POLICY; MIKE TAUS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 6 AYES, 2 NAYS—BOB GAFFEY, MAURA MCGROARTY, 0 ABSTENTIONS.**

**• Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) Proposal Letter –Approval**  
(See documents on file & below: Actions & 6/6/19 Minutes p.1.)

- The proposal consisted of two parts:
  - requesting the five other Island towns annually reimburse Oak Bluffs for the lost tax revenue from 90+ acres of MVRHS property; and
  - a formula for instructional expenses by enrollment, and non-instructional and capital expenses based on housing units per town.
- The Selectmen appointed Greg Coogan to be the Oak Bluffs representative to the MVRHS Regional Agreement Subcommittee, so there was some question of Selectman Brian Packish' request that Bill Vrooman represent the Town.
  - If the FinCom approved the proposal it would first be submitted to Greg Coogan, then to the Board of Selectmen for endorsement/comments and finally to the Regional Agreement Subcommittee.
  - Any MVRHSD Regional Agreement amendment required the approval of all six towns.
- The FinCom offered comments and suggestions.
  - The formula was housing unit not census based.
  - Taxable parcels (commercial, vacant or other) were different from housing units.
  - Non-instructional expenses should be clarified and the statement bulleted and simplified.
  - The MVRHS did not charge rental rates to non-profits on its land (Martha's Vineyard Community Services (MVCS), Ice Rink, YMCA, etc.) to offset its costs.
  - Loss of tax revenues was only part of Oak Bluffs expenses, which also included extra services: police, traffic, fire and ambulance, etc.
  - Aquinnah as the smallest Town had the largest MVRHS allocation fluctuations, for example an enrollment rise from 2 to 9 students would force a large override.
  - The idea of a five-year average on enrollment was raised again (see 2/13/14 Minutes p.1).
  - There was a suggestion to base enrollment on the prior year enrollment allowing Towns time to prepare for any spikes or dips.
  - It was important to have the Selectmen commit to advocating for the issue.
  - The proposal should be presented at the upcoming All Island FinCom meeting.
  - The proposal could be presented by emphasizing Oak Bluffs burdens, or such arguments could be used as backup as debate progressed.
- **WALTER VAIL MOVED TO ENDORSE THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL REGIONAL AGREEMENT AMENDMENT AS PROPOSED AND SEND IT TO GREG COOGAN AND THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN; MAURA MCGROARTY AND GREG THORNTON SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 8 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.**

**• Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Letter Subcommittee**

**• MIKE TAUS MOVED TO FORM A PILOT SUBCOMMITTEE; RICHARD WEISS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 7 AYES, 1 NAY—WALTER VAIL, 0 ABSTENTIONS.** The charge was to research and recommend how to accomplish PILOTS and present a list of viable organizational candidates. Subcommittee members were: Maura McGroarty, Greg Thornton – Acting chair to convene the first meeting, Richard Weiss.

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**• Year End Transfers  
Accountant's Comments**

(See documents on file & 5/2/19 Minutes p.1.)

- The Shellfish Dept. had a number of staffing changes: the Assistant Shellfish Constable resignation and hire, and the retirement of Constable Dave Grunden and promotion of the new Assistant Constable Chuck Fischer—serving simultaneously for orientation/training.
- Veterans Benefits and Board of Registrars had residuals due to natural fluctuations. The Highway Dept. also had residuals and transfers for several possible causes, minimal snow and ice spending, staff hires that didn't materialize, contracting municipal cleaning service.
- The Information Technology (IT) assistant only worked part-time and the funds could be spent on Telephone expenses.
- The Town Clerk ordered some books bound.
- Building Dept. transfers were structural regarding the unpredictability of Inspector hours, and higher salaries than expected.
- Town Accountant Deb Potter would try covering the Selectmen Professional/Technical deficit with General Fund residuals before referring it to the Reserve Fund.
- The Police had expected a substantial salary residual, which they requested be transferred to the Police Chief's medical reimbursement costs, however the matter should be referred to the Personnel Board and Selectmen. The FinCom briefly discussed accrued time (see Minutes: 5/19/12 p.2 & 1/18/18 p.1).
- Budgets were projections on anticipated spending a year in the future and should not be taken as fixed realities.
- To reduce transfers, Ms. Potter proposed a different budget protocol: giving Departments bottom lines for salaries and for other expenses and letting Department Heads spend it as they saw fit. There was a brief discussion on how well Departments were adhering to end-of-year deadlines.
- Transfers constituted a good reference for next year's budget discussions.
- A quorum was needed at a joint Selectmen/FinCom meeting for final transfers (see below: Actions & Meetings/Events).
- **MIKE TAUS MOVED TO APPROVE FISCAL YEAR 2019 BUDGET TRANSFER # 1 THROUGH #5 AS DOCUMENTED; BOB GAFFEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 7 AYES, 1 NAY—MAURA MCGROARTY, 0 ABSTENTIONS.**

**• Candidate's Interview**

Sherry Countryman expressed her continued willingness to serve and was asked to leave the meeting for voting. The candidates were discussed in terms of perspective, diversity, skills and advantages.

- Maura McGroarty recused herself as not present at Mr. Jennings' interview.
- **RICHARD WEISS MOVED TO RECOMMEND SHERRY COUNTRYMAN BE APPOINTED TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE VACANCY; WALTER VAIL SECONDED;**
- **MIKE TAUS MOVED TO RECOMMEND JAMES JENNINGS BE APPOINTED TO THE FINCOM VACANCY; THERE WAS A DISCUSSION ON PROTOCOL; MOTION PASSED 7 AYES, 0 NAYS 1 ABSTENTION.**
- **MIKE TAUS MOVED TO RECOMMEND JAMES JENNINGS BE APPOINTED TO THE FINCOM VACANCY; BOB GAFFEY SECONDED; MOTION FAILED: 3 AYES, 3 NAYS, 1 ABSTENTION.**

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After a debate on how votes should be taken:

- **RICHARD WEISS MOVED TO REVISIT AND RESCIND THE MOTION TO RECOMMEND SHERRY COUNTRYMAN; WALTER VAIL SECONDED; MOTION PASSED 7 AYES, 0 NAYS 1 ABSTENTION.**
- **MIKE TAUS MOVED TO REVISIT AND RESCIND THE MOTION TO RECOMMEND JAMES JENNINGS; BOB GAFFEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED 7 AYES, 0 NAYS 1 ABSTENTION.**
- **RICHARD WEISS MOVED TO RECOMMEND SHERRY COUNTRYMAN OR JAMES JENNINGS BE APPOINTED TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE VACANCY; MIKE TAUS SECONDED; 1 ABSTENTION, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN: 4 AYES, JAMES JENNINGS: 3 AYES,.**
- The FinCom urged Mr. Jennings to persist, attend meetings and run for election.

• **Member Comments** – None

• **Public Comments** – None

• **Adjourn**

• **MIKE TAUS MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 7:00PM; RICHARD WEISS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**Meetings/Events:**

**OB FinCom/BOS - 4:00PM, Tuesday, July 9, 20, 2019 - OB Library**  
**AIFC - 7:00PM, Wednesday, July 10, 2019 Tisbury Emergency Bldg.**  
**OB FinCom - 5:00PM, Thursday, July 18, 20, 2019 - OB Library**

**Action List**

- Bill V. – contact Selectmen re: Regional Agreement Subcommittee appointment.
- contact Greg Coogan re: Regional Agreement Amendment proposal.
- All – Send Bill additions and comments for the MVRHS amendment proposal.
- Marni – send FinCom OBS & MVRHS NESDEC projections.
- Deb P. – send FinCom Building Maintenance details & Tax Exempt Properties list.
- Greg – convene PILOT Subcommittee – Maura & Richard
- Bernie, Bill, Bob, Maura, Mike(?), Rich – attend joint BOS/FinCom meeting 7/9/19.
- Marni/Deb – send new member packets to Sherry Countryman.
- July/August Agenda Items:
  - Review and Recommend Town Financial Policies

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

• Future Agenda Items:

|                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Trash/Waste Analysis             | Reserve Fund Increase        |
| Town Cleaning Services Analysis  | Assessor's Office re: PILOTs |
| Auditor Management Letter Update | Embarkation Fund Policy      |

**Documents on file:**

- Agenda 6/20/19
- Sign In Sheet 6/20/19
- Town of Oak Bluffs Requested FY19 Budget Transfers under MGL 44:33B (2 p.) 6/20/19
- Vrooman cover email re: MVRHS Regional Agreement Recommendation 6/10/19
- Agreement to Regional Agreement (4 p.)

**continued >**

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**Documents on file (cont.):**

- Vrooman cover email re: MVRHS Regional Agreement 6/11/19
- Agreement to Regional Agreement (4 p.)
- If the amendment were to be approved,...
- Town of Oak Bluffs YTD Report (18 p.) 6/20/19
- Town of Oak Bluffs YTD Report, Public Building Maintenance (8 p.) 6/21/19
- Public Tax Exempt Properties Fiscal Year 2019 (5 p.)
- Private Tax Exempt Properties Fiscal Year 2019 (3 p.)
- Enrollment Projections Martha's Vineyard Public Schools Oak Bluffs School December 5, 2018 (8 p.)
- Enrollment Projections Martha's Vineyard Public Schools Martha's Vineyard Regional High School December 5, 2018 (8 p.)