

Town Administrator Report  
February 23, 2021

The following is a summary of the major activities of the Office of the Town Administrator for the previous week.

1. **Financial Update-** Attached please find copies of the summary revenue and expenditure reports through the warrant dated February 18, 2021, along with an analysis of Local Estimated Receipts (LER) by month for both the current and previous fiscal years. This warrant period represents the completion of 61.5% of the fiscal year. Through this period, total expenditures stand at 63.8% of budget, still slightly ahead of schedule for the year by 2.3%. This gap has been closing as the fiscal year has progressed, which is anticipated given some of the large expenditures made for overhead items early in the year. As an example, last month the gap was 3.6%, and it has decreased to 2.3% this month. It is anticipated that this gap will continue to slightly decline until the end of the fiscal year, which is an important trend to monitor. For the same period, total revenue collections came in at 71% of budget, which is a strong increase from the previous month as a result of strong real estate and personal property tax collections from the December billing, creating a strong cash flow for the period. Turning to LER, we see 78% of our budgeted revenues collected through 58.3% of the fiscal year as of the end of January. Despite the strong collection vs, budget, collections for both December and January are down slightly from the previous fiscal year. More than likely this is the result of timing of short-term rental payments, as we did much better this year in the first quarter, but not as good as last year in the second quarter. Overall, collections are within approximately ½ of a percent from the previous year, in which we greatly exceeded budgeted collections. This should signify another positive year of LER collections at year-end.

2. **Potential Ballot Questions-**As you may know, in addition to their normal budget this year, the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School has submitted four additional proposed town meeting articles totaling an additional \$349,668.89 in funding for the next fiscal year. Three of the articles are for capital expenditures, with the fourth for a supplemental assessment over the normal budgeted amount for OPEB. There are not additional funds under the Town's proposition 2 ½ levy limit to fund these additional requests. For this reason, the Town will need to seek exclusion of these requests from prop 2 ½ in order to fund them. I have prepared the following proposed ballot questions to exclude these amounts. The fourth question is to re-shingle the Superintendent's office for an Oak Bluffs share of \$8,388, so I left that one off, but the other articles are substantive, and require revenues to support them. The deadline for the Selectmen to vote these questions and forward them to the Town Clerk is March 11, so your vote will be required at your March 9 meeting. The proposed questions would be as follows:

**Question 1 Capital Exclusion.**

Shall the Town of Oak Bluffs be allowed to assess an additional \$183,572.57 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding the Town's share of technology

infrastructure upgrades at the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School for the fiscal year beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021?

Yes  No

**Question 2 Capital Exclusion.**

Shall the Town of Oak Bluffs be allowed to assess an additional \$73,128.65 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding the Town's share of purchasing electric school busses for the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School for the fiscal year beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021?

Yes  No

**Question 3 Levy Limit Override.**

Shall the Town of Oak Bluffs be allowed to assess an additional \$84,579 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding an additional contribution to meeting the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OBEP) liability for the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School for the fiscal year beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021?

Yes  No

- 3. Potential Meeting with Selectmen, Finance Committee and School Committee –** In discussing the High School's proposed articles at the Finance Committee meeting last week, there was a great deal of discussion regarding the equity of the existing educational formula. Some members felt that all requests should be denied until the formula is changed, but other members pointed to the potential negative impacts on the school system and our students. It was agreed by all that the discussion of the formula should be revived at the local level. It was proposed that each of these elected Boards bring up this matter with other like Boards on the Island in order to bring the issue to the forefront. Before that happens, it will be necessary to have a meeting of these three boards in Oak Bluffs alone in order to generate a consensus on a shared and common position of the Town which may be shared Island-wide. Before this happens, the Finance Committee and the School Committee will not be able to speak for the Town beyond their general feelings, so this is a valuable step in coordinating the Town's efforts.
- 4. Discussion of Donut Hole Transaction –** I have discussed with the Chairman and Vice Chairman the status of the property transaction with the Land Bank authorized in 2004 to exchange the so-called "donut hole" parcel with the Land Bank for property accessible from existing Town-owned property. In its correspondence of December 5, 2018, the Land Bank reports that the final step to the transfer is for the Oak Bluffs Board of Assessors to correct the Town tax records to reflect Land Bank ownership of parcels no. 42-1 and 43-53 off of County Road on the attached map. As you may recall, the Selectmen have a standing vote to request this of the Assessors, but the action has been delayed based on my January 8, 2019

meeting with the Selectmen regarding concerns with discussions between the Land Bank and the Water District. Based on my discussion with the Chairman and Vice Chairman I am prepared to take that final action if the Board no longer feel it should be delayed. This would remove the last obstacle to completing the property swap and send it off to the legislature for approval.

- 5. Town Meeting and Election Timing-**As we prepare to necessary documents regarding the Town Meeting and the Annual election, I have received a number of questions regarding the timing of each given our lingering Covid-19 pandemic, so I take this opportunity to review where we currently stand on the scheduling. Town Bylaw fixes the dates for the Annual Town Meeting and Election. The new State law allows the Moderator to postpone a duly called Town Meeting for increments up to thirty days. Given the fact that our community still has a relatively high transmission rate for Covid 19, it does not seem wise to conduct the Annual Town Meeting in early April at an indoor location. Rather, we are planning the warrant for a normal posting, but we will be working with the Moderator and the Town Meeting logistics team to move the Town meeting to a date in May when the weather will be mild enough to conduct the meeting at the Tabernacle. A final date for Town Meeting has not yet been selected. The Town election will occur as planned, on April 15, 2021 in the Library using our Covid-19 protocols which were successfully employed last spring for the annual election.