

**Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee**  
**6:30PM, Wednesday, March 13, 2024**  
**by Zoom Cloud Conference**

**1**

**Present:** Chair Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Alex Meleney, Rachel Orr,  
Louis Pashman, Allan Rogers,  
**TSB:** Chair Roy Cutrer, John Cahill, Christina Colarusso,  
**Others:** Abbe Burt, Lynne Fraker, Recorder – Marni Lipke,  
**Town:** Town Administrator Jay Grande, Treasurer Jonathan Snyder,  
Elena DeFoe, Town Clerk – Hillary Conklin,  
Shellfish – Danielle Ewart, Conservation – John Best,  
Wastewater – Michael Alberice, Kirk Metell,  
Planning Bd. – Ben Robinson, Amy Upton,  
**Press:** Louise Hufstader – Vineyard Gazette  
\* TFC members late arrivals or early departures.

**Call Meeting to Order**

- The Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) was called to order at 6:32PM.

*(Recorder's note: Discussions are summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.)*

**Vote on Late-Filed Article** (See documents on file & below: Actions.)

Tisbury's Conservation Agent Jane Varkonda (an Edgartown employee—Tisbury paying 1/5 of her salary) would retire June 30, 2025. The Conservation Commission (ConCom) was grateful for the early notice not only to allow overlap training but also because position needs had grown significantly and a larger part-time or possibly full time position was required for environmental inspections, enforcement, permitting, and expertise. The ConCom would consider hours, job description, etc.

• *ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO ACCEPT THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION LATE FILED ARTICLE FOR \$22,308 TO ESTABLISH AND FUND A CONSERVATION AGENT; LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.*

**Joint Meeting with Tisbury Select Board (TSB)**

**Finance and Advisory Committee Appointment – Abbe Burt**

- *Chair Roy Cutrer called the joint session of the Tisbury Select Board (TSB) and Tisbury FinCom (TFC) to order at 6:40PM.*

Both the FinCom and the TSB thanked Abbe Burt for stepping forward and welcomed her back.

**Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee**  
**March 13, 2024**

**2**

• ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO JOINTLY APPOINT ABBE BURT TO THE FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE UNTIL THE TOWN ELECTION ON JUNE 11, 2024; LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

• Ms. Christina Colarusso moved and Mr. John Cahill seconded a motion to jointly appoint Ms. Abbe Burt to the Finance and Advisory Committee until the Town election on June 11, 2024, which motion passed unanimously: Ms. Colarusso—aye, Mr. Cahill—aye, Mr. Roy Cutrer—aye

Adjournment (TSB)

• Ms. Christina Colarusso moved and Mr. John Cahill seconded a motion to adjourn at 6:44PM, motion passing unanimously: Ms. Colarusso—aye, Mr. Cahill—aye, Mr. Roy Cutrer—aye.

**Update on Levy Limit** (See documents on file & 2/28/24 Minutes p.1-2.)

Based on budget submissions, warrant articles and a review of excluded debt service (part of tax bills but excluded from Proposition 2 ½ levy limit) the levy limit now showed a cushion of ~ \$750,000. Consequently, although budgets should be lean, they need not be drastically cut.

- Many articles would be Free Cash funded totaling about \$3,400,000.
- Public Safety Department budgets were reviewed and might be reduced.
- In general Town Departments actually spent 91% of their budgets—except the large Departments that usually spent all their funds.
  - In municipal finance it was far worse to under-budget than to over-budget, since if a department ran short it's operations, programs, etc. would have to cease. However it was clear that some department budgets could tighter.
  - It was suggested that departments budget less and draw on the Reserve Fund for any shortfalls.
- The Interim Town Accountant, Treasurer/Finance Director Jon Snyder and the auditors continued to work on Free Cash—the initial step of closing Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) was expected shortly.
- Local receipts were conservatively estimated: updated short-term rental revenues, meals, rooms, marijuana, \$200,000 in fees, \$250,000 in building and other licenses/permits, vessel and vehicle excise, etc. In addition there was substantial investment income.

**Shellfish Budget Review**

**Danielle Ewart, Shellfish Constable** (See documents on file.)

- A \$6,000 budget increase in Part-Time/Seasonal was designed to promote an Assistant Shellfish Constable. The Shellfish budget was cut several years ago, and a shared position with the Harbormaster was not sufficient.

**Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee**  
**March 13, 2024**

**3**

- The Martha's Vineyard Shellfish Group (MVSG) provided eelgrass expertise and shellfish seed, (quahogs, oysters, bay scallops, etc.) to all Island towns (see Tisbury Town Reports). Their main office and a nursery were on Weaver Lane, Vineyard Haven. All Towns paid the same dues, with additional costs for special projects.

**Review of Town Clerk's Budget**

**Hillary Conklin, Town Clerk**

(See documents on file.)

- The Town Clerk Budget increase would fund an Assistant Town Clerk, established at the 2023 Annual Town Meeting (ATM) (see 3/1/23 Minutes p.1-2). Position funding was in the Part-Time/Seasonal line—previous part-time seasonal costs were eliminated.
- Although she initially expected the position to be some years away, and despite her concerns about taxpayer burden, Town Clerk Hillary Conklin concluded the current staffing level could not support the required services.
  - Massachusetts now allowed people without Social Security numbers to obtain drivers licenses, adding to other Town Clerk records: births, deaths, marriages, pet licenses, census, registration, etc.
  - The Department had insufficient language resources to serve the substantial Tisbury Brazilian population.
  - The Steamship Authority referred customers to the Clerk's Office for excursion rate forms and explanations.
  - Election services had expanded to early voting and mail-in ballots; and on election days the Town Clerk supervised polling set up, voting, vote counting, etc. from 5:30AM to 1:00AM. If Ms. Conklin was ill or unavoidably unavailable there was no one to substitute for her. 2024 was a Presidential election year.
  - Other Tisbury Departments had grown or expanded. Oak Bluffs had a part-time Assistant Town Clerk with expanded hours during elections.
- The Clerk was a skilled municipal position requiring extensive training. A bilingual person was a responsible move for the Portuguese-speaking population, although Hillary Conklin emphasized the larger Town Hall issue would result in any bilingual employee being constantly called on by other Departments.
- The Registrars/Elections budget primarily funded Registrar staff/volunteers. Actual election expenses were in the Town Clerk's budget, e.g. mail-in ballots at 88¢ each.
  - A Democratic Party registrar representative was needed.
- The FinCom and Ms. Conklin exchanged thanks.

**Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee**  
**March 13, 2024**

4

**Review of Wastewater Enterprise Fund Budget and Warrant Articles**

**Mike Alberice, Wastewater Superintendent**

**Kirk Metell, Department of Public Works (DPW) Director's**

(See documents on file & Minutes: 2/22/23 p.2-3, & 3/6/24 p.6.)

- The Wastewater Enterprise Budget shortfall was due to:
  - the new tiered fee system failure to generate sufficient funds,
  - \$0 revenue from the projected B2 district expansion, which did not happen;
  - and the debt load.
- The Enterprise Fund had only balanced in 2 years since 2004, the other years required Raise and Appropriate (R&A) adjustment (see below: Actions).
- There were several suggestions on how to amend tiered fees, but after a 1 ½ year trial the Department concluded it needed professional experts to revise/design the fee system. Advice was part of the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) (already paid for and with projected completion FY25) and was also through conversations with Environmental Partners.
- The FinCom asked about 2 people running a 24/7 plant. Staffing configuration was as follows.
  - With only 1-2 weekend calls a month, the 2 current employees were not over-worked, and were confident Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) obligations would be met.
  - Two grade 6 operators were required and a third staff member (grade 2) was requested for FY25—advertising in July 2024. More staff had been expected but the Operations line was reduced due to lack of interested candidates.
  - The DPW requested 2 secretaries (see 2/28/24 Minutes p.2-3) one of whom would do Wastewater billing—relieving pressure on the Enterprise Fund.
- Building Repairs was reduced in view of bond financed ongoing upgrades.
- The B2 expansion \$6,000,000 was not yet borrowed due to several issues:
  - awaiting CWMP completion;
  - \$3,000,000 for the plant upgrade—currently in progress;
  - remaining funds would only cover a partial expansion, sparking discussions on priorities: the most efficient runs, the Tashmoo watershed, etc.

**Warrant Articles**

- Re-appropriate sewer collection funds for odor control at the Treatment facility was separate from the Harbor odor control Embarkation Article (see 2/21/24 Minutes p.1).
- The Sewer Advisory Board asked the Library to investigate the cause of its problems since odor was inside the building but not at the septic tank/field. Hence, the Library sewer extension Article would likely be withdrawn.
- Some of the additional parcels in the next Article were still in flux.
- The Sewer Advisory Bd. voted down 89 Main St.—although 28 State Rd. would get an emergency tie-in after its septic failed.

**Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee**  
**March 13, 2024**

5

- Martha's Vineyard Hospital (MVH) Breakdown Lane property was still in process with the Town, MVH and the Martha's Vineyard Landbank.
- \$150,000 for the CWMP completion and Lake Tashmoo Targeted Watershed Plan's other funding source was the American Recovery Program Act (ARPA).
- The FinCom and Wastewater representatives exchanged thanks.
- At the end of the meeting it was suggested:
  - Water and Wastewater staff shared skills and sometimes certification, and so might share project work;
  - as Wastewater was having difficulty operating as an enterprise fund other configurations might be considered.

**Review of Treasurer Budgets (Treasurer Collector, Treasurer Collector Other, Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB), County Assessments, Debt and Interest) and Warrant Articles, Accountant Budget**

**Jonathan Snyder, Finance Director/Treasurer** (See documents on file.)

- Treasurer Collector Budget
  - Most of the 8% increase was in salaries which were up 7.3% for Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and steps. A position was incorrectly reported at 30 hrs/wk in FY24. Overtime (OT) increased \$350.
  - Data Processing was reduced to account for funds apportioned to the Water and Wastewater Enterprise funds.
  - A lateral hire from the DPW was positioned to become Assistant Treasurer so Instruction/Training was increased. Other costs were for the Munis software upgrade remote training (see 5/17/23 Minutes p.2-3).
- Treasurer Collector Other Budget
  - Health insurance premiums were up 8% across the Island, with Medicare & FICA increases proportional to salaries.
- OPEB Budget (See 10/4/23 Minutes p.3.)
  - This was a low but steady contribution that satisfied bond rating companies. When the Town finished paying its pension liability (~10 years) the annual \$1,400,000 would shift to paying off OPEB.
  - This budget might be proposed as a Free Cash warrant article instead.
- Debt and Interest Budget
  - The Emergency Services Facility (ESF) and Tisbury School roof bonds were paid off in FY24. However the large Tisbury School Project bond was borrowed.
  - The School Project bond certification cost (FY24 borrowing) could be reduced.
- Accountant Budget
  - The Town Accountant salary was budgeted at the outgoing Accountant level and might become a contracted position—there were few candidates with municipal accountant skills. West Tisbury recently advertised and interviewed for a new Town Accountant (see below: Actions).

**Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee**  
**March 13, 2024**

**6**

- The Interim Accountant's contract could be extended and he could apply for the permanent position.
- The Department would become more automated and transparent.

Warrant Articles

- Most of the Treasurer Collector articles were boiler plate.
- As previously noted (see 3/6/24 Minutes p.3-4) one Article's intent was to double the amount the TSB could vote into the Fire, Ambulance and DPW Stabilization Funds, in order to keep pace with accelerated costs.
- General Stabilization balance was \$2,600,000 and should grow. FY25 contribution was set at \$500,000. Capital Building/Infrastructure Stabilization balance was \$1,992,000; plus the FY25 \$250,000 contribution. This was not enough for a New Town Hall which was currently estimated at ~ \$20,000,000. Both contributions could be increased pending further conversation and Capital Planning Committee input.
- The FinCom thanked Jon Snyder for his presentation and all his hard work. Jon Snyder and Town Administrator Jay Grande thanked the FinCom for an informative session and particularly thanked Chair Nancy Gilfoy for her assistance and financial proofing.

**Discussion and Votes on Previously Reviewed Budgets and Warrant Articles**

**Schools – Tisbury School, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS), Superintendent's Shared Services** – Tabled

**Department of Public Works (DPW) Articles**

(See 2/28/24 Minutes p.3-4.)

- ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING FISCAL YEAR 2025 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS ARTICLES** AS PRESENTED:

- **EMERGENCY SERVICES FACILITY LOCKS (\$60,000),**
- **DEEP CLEAN/REPAIR/PAINT TOWN HALL (\$50,000),**
- **DEEP CLEAN/REPAIR/PAINT TOWN HALL ANNEX (\$25,000),**
- **CHEVY TRUCK (\$56,000),**
- **LOCAL LANDFILL DROP OFF (\$135,000),**
- **MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION TRANSPORTATION (\$15,000);**

LOUISE CLOUGH AND LOUIS PASHMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:** ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

**Police Budgets** (See 2/28/24 Minutes p.4-5.) Tabled

- The differential between 8 and 10 hr. Police shifts came to nearly \$300,000.

**Ambulance Budget and Article** (See 3/6/24 Minutes p.3-4.) – Tabled

**Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee**  
**March 13, 2024**

**7**

**Fire Budget and Articles** (See 3/6/24 Minutes p.2-4) - Tabled

**Emergency Management (EM) Budget** (See 3/6/24 Minutes p.1)-Tabled

**Harbormaster Budget and Articles** (See 3/6/24 Minutes p.4-5.)

- ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING FISCAL YEAR 2025 HARBORMASTER DEPARTMENT ARTICLES** AS PRESENTED:

- **TOWN OWNED MOORINGS (\$10,000),**
- **HARBORMASTER SKIFF OUTBOARD CONTROLS (\$15,500),**
- **CLEAN VESSEL GRANT MATCH PUE STEERING (\$6,000),**
- **CLEAN VESSEL GRANT MATCH OWEN AND LAKE ST. PUMPS/SEWERS (\$45,000),**
- **DISPOSE OF ABANDONED VESSELS (\$2,000),**
- **FUTURE DREDGE (TASHMOO) (\$100,000),**
- **TASHMOO LANDING DINGHY FLOAT (\$3,000);**

LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:** ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

- ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF THE **HARBORMASTER DEPARTMENT FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET** AS PRESENTED: LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION PASSED **UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:** ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

- The FinCom hoped the new Harbormaster would be advertised and hired shortly so as not to start work too close to the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend.

**Capital Planning Committee** (See documents on file & below: Actions.)

The target date for appointment of a quorum was March 27<sup>th</sup>.

- ALLAN ROGERS NOMINATED ABBE BURT AS A FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CAPITAL PLANNING COMMITTEE: ALEX MELENEY SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

**Committee Reports**

- The Climate Committee presented its solar proposal to the Tisbury School Committee (TSC). The TSB awaited a joint Climate/TFC/TSC/TSB meeting.

**Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee**  
**March 13, 2024**

**8**

- The Planning Board expected to submit 1 or 2 bylaw changes at an April 2<sup>nd</sup> public hearing in time for the April 12<sup>th</sup> Special Town Meeting (STM) deadline.
- Chair Nancy Gilfoy was working to update the ATM/STM FinCom recommendation schedule.

**Future Meetings** (See below: Meetings/Events.)

- Next week the Library and TSB would present their budgets. The FinCom requested an accounting of previous articles (see below: Actions).
- Unless there were further requests, this would complete department budget interviews.
- An in-person meeting was suggested to review all department budgets holistically; and also possible semi-weekly but shorter meetings.
- Two Reserve Fund requests were expected:
  - about \$8,000 for dock repairs from storm damage;
  - augmentation of the FinCom Professional Services line.
- FinCom members stated their availability and travel plans.

**Items Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair** – None

**Adjournment**

• *ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:04PM; ALLAN ROGERS AND LOUIS PASHMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.*

**Appendix A: Meetings/Events**

- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, March 20, 2024 – Zoom** Library, Select Board
- **TSB – 4:30PM, Wednesday, March 27, 2024, KCT/Zoom**
- **TFC TBD – 6:30PM, Wednesdays, March 27, & April 3 & 10, 2024 – Zoom**
- **Special/Annual Town Meeting – 7:00PM, Tuesday, May 28, 2024 – PAC**

**Appendix B: Actions**

Nancy – request Library renovation & New Town Hall previous funding.  
Nancy – consider in-person meeting on all budgets.  
Nancy – request any budgets materially changed since distribution.  
Nancy – send Police property check questions (what are they & finable?).  
Abbe – get sworn in.  
John B. – present Conservation Agent position proposal to Personnel Board.  
Kirk/Mike – show correct Wastewater enterprise tax subsidy history.

**continued**



**Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee**  
**March 13, 2024**

9

**Appendix B: Actions (cont.)**

Kirk/Mike – keep FinCom advised of Sewer Advisory decisions on Articles.

Jon S. – confirm/correct Health Care Access FY25 amount.

- send bond list including which are excluded to Nancy for distribution.
- review/clarify wording of Fire, Ambulance Stabilization increase article.

Jon S./Jay G. – contact West Tisbury re: Town Accountant search.

**Future Agendas**

- Minutes: 1/24/24, 2/7/24, 2/21/24, 2/28/24, 3/6/24, 3/13/24
- Previously Reviewed Department/Article Votes –
  - Accountant
  - Ambulance Budget & Article
  - Emergency Management Budget
  - Fire Budget & Articles
  - MVRHS Budget
  - Police Budget, Training/Instruction, Vehicles
  - Shellfish Budget
  - Tisbury School Budget
  - Treasurer Collector Budgets & Articles: Other, OPEB, Debt & Interest,
  - Wastewater Budget & Articles
- FinCom Budget
- MV Public Safety Communications as Town Budget line item
- FinCom Support for Fire Inspection Fee/Fine Update
- Wastewater/Water Works re-configuration and possible crew sharing
- Late Filed Article(s)
- Reserve Fund Requests
- End-of-year transfer vote

**Budget Season Notes**

- No new positions in FY25
- FY25 salaries/budgets will be higher due to classification raises.
- Request data on how much each Department turned back in FY23.
- Request projects for grant funding.
- Request capital projects

**Budget Season Notes**

- attach budget/narrative modules to agendas.
- request/demand foundational information, levy, free cash estimates, etc.
- include Dept. fee revenues (offsetting expenses) in budget interview;
- ask departments to project all needs 5 years out i.e. like a capital plan but on other factors—staffing, program changes, etc.

\$100,000 FY24 Reserve Fund spending tally – Balance: \$29,650.25

- 10/4/23 – Ambulance - \$43,000 – monitor/defibrillators

- 11/29/23 – Select Board - \$6,518 – salary step 2 & on-call stipend

- 11/29/23 – DPW - \$20,831.75 (\$10,000) – Police Dept. generator rent

**continued >**

**Tisbury Finance & Advisory Committee**  
**March 13, 2024**

10

**Appendix C: Documents on File**

- Agenda 3/13/24
- Gilfoy letter to Select Board re: Abbe Burt Appointment (2 p.) 3/15/24
- Tisbury Conservation Commission letter to Select Board re: Warrant Article (2 p.) 3/8/24
- Snyder email re: Departments Spending Vs. Budget last four years (2 p.) 3/12/24
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 172 Shellfish (5 p.) 2/27/24
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 172 Shellfish (6 p.) 2/27/24
- Articles for the FY 2025 Town Warrant, Submitted by the Tisbury Shellfish Department 1/9/25
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 161 Town Clerk (6 p.) 1/18/24
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 163 Registrar of Voters (3 p.) 1/18/24
- Department of Public Works memo re: Article to Adopt FY 2025 Sewer Enterprise Fund Budget (4 p.) 2/16/24
- Wastewater Department, 2024 Annual Town Meeting Articles 1/12/24
- Alberice cover email & attachment re: Sewer Budget Articles (16 p.) 3/17/24
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 145 Treasurer/Collector (5 p.) 2/15/24
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 146 Treasurer/Collector Other
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 700 Debt & Interest (2 p.) 2/16/24
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 919 OPEB Benefits (2 p.) 2/16/24
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 830 County Assessments (2 p.) 2/16/24
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 135 Accountant (3 p.) 2/2/24
- Article Submission Form ATM, Article – To Increase Funds Added to the Stabilization Funds for Fire, Ambulance, and Public Works Departments 10/13/23
- Article Submission Form ATM, Article – Hear or Receive Reports...1/12/24
- Annual Town Meeting Articles, To Fund General Stabilization, 1/12/24

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Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

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Date

Minutes approved 3/20/24