

**Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee  
in Joint Meeting with the  
Master Plan Steering Committee  
and Planning Board  
6:30PM, Wednesday, November 8, 2023  
by Zoom Cloud Conference**

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**Present:** Chair Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Ruth Konigsberg, Alex Meleney, Rachel Orr, Louis Pashman,  
**Master Plan:** Co-Chair Lindsey Famariss, Susannah Bristol, Cheryl Doble, Rick Homans, Mary Ellen Larsen, Melinda Loberg, Admin – Dan Doyle,  
**Planning Bd:** Chair Ben Robinson, Connie Alexander, Cheryl Doble, Casey Hayward, Elaine Miller, Admin – Amy Upton,  
**Others:** Recorder – Marni Lipke, Teresa Kruszewski,  
**Town:** Town Administrator – Jay Grande, Treasurer – Jonathan Snyder,  
**Press:** Gazette – Louisa Hufstader,  
\* TFC, Master Plan Com. or Planning Bd. members late arrivals or early departures.

**Call Meeting to Order**

• The Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) was called to order at 6:33PM. Zoom protocol was reviewed. Best wishes went to Allan Rogers.  
*(Recorder's note: Discussions are summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.)*

**Budget Recommendation Letter** (See documents on file.)

As usual Departments were asked to level fund and/or justify any increases.

- Last year's Climate Committee paragraph would be replaced with a request for departments to identify projects for grant funding (Community Preservation Act (CPA/CPC), Embarkation, Green Community, etc.) for consideration by the Climate Committee or the Tisbury Select Board (TSB)—e.g. the Town was lagging in Green Community grants. The new Facilities Manager was starting to track issues and projects (efficiencies, replacement vehicles, etc.).

• The FinCom would note consistent department turn-backs or residuals (see 10/4/23 Minutes p.2).

• The Town Meeting calendar draft was briefly noted.

• *ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE LETTER AS AMENDED TO REPLACE THE CLIMATE PARAGRAPH WITH ONE ON GRANT PROJECTS; LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.*

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**Special Town Meeting (STM)**

(See documents on file & below: Meetings/Events & Actions.)

The FinCom would meet November 29th and/or December 6<sup>th</sup> to review articles due November 27<sup>th</sup>; the warrant would be signed December 20<sup>th</sup>. Besides the purchase the Tisbury School modulars for a temporary Town Hall (see 10/25/23 Minutes p.2), other possible articles included: the Police Dept. generator (see Minutes/Notes: 10/4/23 p.5) and a possible land purchase. It was noted that once the tax rate was set (in November) funds were restricted.

- Chair Nancy Gilfoy requested a capital planning spreadsheet.
- *The FinCom recessed at 6:56PM and reconvened in the joint Planning Board and Master Plan Steering Committee meeting at 7:02PM—when the Steering Committee meeting was called to order.*

**Discussion of Financial Components and Implications in the Master Plan**

The Master Plan Steering Committee was working through an enormous amount of data turning out: outlines, goals, policies and actions. This meeting was to gather FinCom financial feedback and any further issues needed in the current rough draft Master Plan. The FinCom was looking to see if/how the Plan considered Town finances, increasing revenue and taxpayer burden. Tisbury might have to make some uncomfortable, tough financial choices in the next 10-20 years.

- There was probably more in the Plan that the Town would ever be accomplished and consequently setting priorities was vital. The Plan consider 5 issues: governance structure and capacity, regulatory bylaws, zoning, fees, and capital improvement—including of course as it related to climate change. In addition conversations often turned to Islandwide cooperation and relations to avoid important responsibilities being sidelined by lack of leadership and special interests.
- Judy Barrett/Barrett Planning Group were very qualified and experienced. As an independent party, they gained no advantage from their advice.
- The current draft was wordy and difficult to navigate, however the final Plan would be much more understandable and visually accessible. It would also provide more context for its recommendations as well as outlining the financial implications of some of the priority changes.
- The bulk of the meeting centered on the governance recommendations. Over and over Town residents and staff voiced frustration with the current lack of leadership, follow-through, and a government fragmented by no clearly defined chain of command, vague job responsibilities and failed initiatives falling through the gaps of authority.

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- Currently the 3 person TSB lacked capacity to run day-to-day operations, compounded by its recent actions in disbanding the Dept. of Public Works (DPW) Board and the Sewer/Wastewater Commission and taking on their responsibilities. The Town Administrator was answerable to the TSB and its changing membership. In addition responsibility for a project or issue could be shifted around until it faded. Normally a master plan did not focus so much on governance however the consultants recognized where government failed or succeeded and they recommended a switch (requiring special State legislation) to a Town Manager structure, similar to a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and differing from a Town Administrator in a number of ways:

- responsible for day-to-day Town operations;
- somewhat insulated from the TSB;
- authority to hire and fire;
- reviews budgets with all department heads;
- should be highly qualified/experienced, the result of a rigorous search.

The TSB would set policy and retain authority to hire or fire the Manager.

- The Consultants also recommended a Director of Planning and Sustainability to deal with such things as transportation, parking plans, climate resiliency, capital planning, maintenance, etc.

The discussion covered a number of issues.

- The recent Association of Town Finance Committees conference focused on capital planning, and it was suggested a committee with authority to examine and prioritize projects within a set debt limit percentage could do the same job as a Director, starting immediately.

- Other improvements that would take little or no money would be:

- to clearly define current staff positions;
- improve communications and networking among boards and committees;
- officially declare the Town website as the public platform;
- reinstate a Sewer/Wastewater Commission (see below).

- The Steering and other committees pushed back on the Manager and Director recommendations at length, but the consultants strongly advised these 2 key positions were vital to any progress. Whether to re-organize and/or clarify positions before or after a Manager was hired was a chicken-and-egg question.

- Attracting good staff to the Island was problematic, given, among other things, the high cost of living and the housing crisis.

- Citing personnel costs as the majority of Town spending, the FinCom and Planning Bd considered finances.

- Was it just 2 positions or would there be several others? Was it 1% or 3% of the budget? Would it require a one-year override or yearly step-ups?

- What if property values ceased to rise, or even fell instead?

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- The current Town Administrator salary was substantial so the Manager salary differential could be reasonable. The Director position would be new, but could also bring in more revenue in grant funding or fee structure improvements.
- The Steering Com. did not focus on financial details but was cognizant of the Town debt burden and lack of capital capacity. Increased revenue was raised as an action item in terms of: more robust fee structure, better grant administration, short-term rental funds, permits and licensing increases, etc. Further financial information would be included in the final Master Plan.
- The Sewer Operator was leaving for a better paid position in Mashpee. The Sewer Advisory Board strongly recommended the reinstatement of the Sewer/Wastewater Commission as part of the Master Plan. The TSB was too busy to give wastewater the necessary attention that expert commissioners could in better planning, revenues and operations.
- A Charter Commission was a statutory elected body that looked at everything and took all recommendations to the voters: e.g. whether to appoint or elect a Town Clerk, combining Water and Wastewater boards, etc.
- There was recognition that the lack of staff capacity as well as a lack of a Master Plan blueprint contributed to the Town's static nature, and that progress required spending some money. Change was risky but problems would only get worse without it.
- The Steering Committee and Planning Board referenced conversations with the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) as an available resource.
- The meeting also highlighted Islandwide collaboration, what services could be regionalized and where there might be efficiencies (such as combined trainings). Oak Bluffs and Edgartown were also working on Master Plans (see below: Actions). Whereas regionalization has historically been unpopular, in recent years, steeper challenges with larger stakes could be changing people's views. The Tisbury and Oak Bluffs FinCom were collaborating on parking meter vendors and Steamship Authority embarkation fee legislation. The meeting suggested an Islandwide questionnaire to build consensus and poll the waters.
- The FinCom commended the strong Steering Committee, Planning Board and excellent consultants, thanking them for all their impressive work, multiple hours and personal sacrifices to complete this overwhelming project. Looking forward, all agreed on the heavy work of implementation ahead.

**Adjournment**

• *CHERYL DOBLE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE PLANNING BOARD MEETING AT 8:17PM; CASEY HAYWARD SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 3 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: CHERY DOBLE—AYE, CASEY HAYWARD—AYE BEN ROBINSON—AYE.*

**continued**

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• ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:17PM; LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, MARY ELLEN LARSEN—AYE *from habit*), NANCY GILFOY—AYE.

**Appendix A: Meetings/Events**

- TFC/Capital Plan—6:30PM, Wednesday, November 15, 2023
- TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, November 29, 2023
- TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, December 6, 2023
- Special Town Meeting – 7:00PM, Tuesday, January 11, 2024 – PAC
- Special/Annual Town Meeting – 7:00PM, Tuesday, May 28, 2024 – PAC

**Appendix B: Actions**

Nancy – amend letter to ask Depts. to identify projects for grant opportunities.

Jon Snyder – provide capital planning spreadsheet.

Steering Com

- consider including reinstatement of the Sewer Commission in Master Plan;
- contact Oak Bluffs and Edgartown re: Islandwide collaboration in their Master Plans;
- consider Islandwide questionnaire on regionalization/collaboration.

All – Please remember not to hit “Reply All”.

Future Agendas

Minutes: 9/6/23, 9/20/23 Notes, 9/27/23 amended for spelling,  
10/4/23, 10/25/23 Notes, 11/8/23

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.
- include budget deadline ultimatum in FinCom letter,
- department budget drafts posted on Town Website (password protected)? or
- attach budget/narrative modules to agendas.
- request/demand foundational information, levy, free cash estimates, etc.
- include Building 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: \$57,000

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

**continued>**

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**Appendix C: Documents on File**

- Agenda & cover email (2 p.) 11/8/23
- Gilfoy email re: Upcoming FinCom meetings 10/31/23
- Gilfoy/Kennedy email re: Free Cash Analysis & 5-Year Revenue Reports (3 p.)  
11/8/23
- Chat
  - Dan Doyle, Master Plan project support (Nov 8, 2023, 7:38 PM)  
great point, Ruth. We've requested that (and expect it) to be elaborated upon  
in our Key Issues section of the final report
  - Dan Doyle, Master Plan project support (Nov 8, 2023, 7:54 PM)  
initially the recommendation was a DEPT of Planning and Sustainability – and  
the C'tee and PB didn't think a full department was realistic

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Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

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Date

Minutes approved 12/6/23