

**Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee**  
**6:30PM, Wednesday, January 10, 2024**  
**by Zoom Cloud Conference**

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**Present:** Chair Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Ruth Konigsberg, Alex Meleney, Rachel Orr, Louis Pashman, Allan Rogers,  
**Others:** Recorder – Marni Lipke,  
**Town:** Town Administrator – Jay Grande, Treasurer – Jonathan Snyder,  
**County:** Commissioners Don Leopold, Doug Ruskin, Manager Martina Thornton, CFL – Leslie Clapp, Mary Holmes, VHCAP – Sarah Kuh, HAMV – Cindy Trish, \* 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.*)

**Review of Regional Services Budgets** (See documents on file & below: Actions.)

- Dukes County (DC) Commissioner Doug Ruskin gave an introduction to County governance:
  - departments such as the Treasurer, Manager, Registry of Deeds, Public Benefits, State Beach Management, and Health Care Access;
  - appointing powers such as for the Airport Commission and DC Health Council,
  - State entities like the Sheriff's Office and District Court,
  - other quasi-governmental agencies such as the MV Land Bank, DC Regional Housing Authority (DCRHA), and the DC Contributory Retirement System;
  - fiscal agenting/grant management/pass-through funding for regional programs: Center For Living (CFL), Healthy Aging MV (HAMV), Veteran's Benefits, Harbor Homes, etc.
- In Mr. Ruskin's 30 years of governmental service Dukes County budgeting was the most complex he'd seen. The Dukes County Commission (DCC) set policy and budgets as drafted by the County Advisory Board (CAB). State law prescribed very limited County budgets with specific regulations (see below: p.3), consequently Dukes County actively sought grants to enhance its services and activities.
- The FinCom appreciated the new consistent budget format and had 2 requests:
  - the overall percent increase of each budget, and
  - complete revenues (grants, fundraising, fees, etc.): i.e. total program spending versus the Towns' share.

**Cindy Trish – Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard (HAMV)**

Over the years HAMV built up its grant income shown here for the first time: ~ \$241,000 in local, State and Federal grants for such things as transportation.

**Beth Folcarelli – Martha's Vineyard Community Services (MVCS)**

The CORE and Substance Use Disorder Coalition (SUD) Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budgets had minimal increases for staff pay raises.

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**Leslie Clapp – Martha's Vineyard Center for Living (CFL/C4L)**

The FinCom expressed serious concern about the 15.6% FY25 increase. They acknowledged the increased number of clientele and the importance of the Day Program (projections calculated by past enrollment & wait list). However they stated Towns had limited capacity to fund CFL's increasing general community service; e.g. offering Islandwide shopping shuttle when the CFL bus and driver were idle.

- Although staff numbers were stable, personnel costs increased 16% due to:
  - 4.2% DC Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) plus 3% steps;
  - shifting \$8,000 for substitute staff from operating expenses to personnel;
  - \$27,7000 for accounting/payroll services contract.
  - Level funding would mean staff would forego raises and make for other difficulties.
- CFL 9:00AM-2:00PM Day Program charged \$70/day including State funded transportation. CFL was looking to increase hours to 9:00AM-4:00PM (as requested by client families) without adding staff or Town funding, possibly charging \$85/day.
- Aside from transportation costs, other grants included a Mass. Cultural Council grant, and Respite Innovations for a coordinator and 2 staff members to go into homes to give caregivers some respite.
- CFL Executive Director Leslie Clapp noted increasing funding availability from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs. She and her staff were cognizant of the issue around retaining services and restraining costs after grants sunsetted.

**Sarah Kuh – Dukes County Health Care Access (DCHCA) and Dukes County Public Benefits Access (PB)**

- These budgets included the standard increases for insurance, COLA, etc.
- Director and founder Sarah Kuh was retiring as of FY24 (the FinCom saluted her impressive work) and based on discussions and Ms. Kuh's recommendations the departments were being re-structured and merged with Veterans Affairs (which was fully funded) under a Director of Health and Human Services. The Director would manage grants, supervise staff, seek supplemental funding, etc. The additional increases covered this restructuring.
- The DCHCA office was understaffed such that the number of clients exceeded its ability to serve. The current Director position included 20 hrs. direct service, so an additional staff member was requested to compensate and augment service.
- Office Rental line item was actually building cost and maintenance.
- (The CFL and DCHAC were line items—like departments—in the Tisbury budget.)

**Kristin Leutz – Harbor Homes Martha's Vineyard (HHMV)**

County Manager Martina Thornton stepping in for Ms. Leutz, reported briefly on the 17.8% increase:

- Services now included 0.5% staff increase for on-call service;
- direct programmatic costs: food transportation and hotel expenses;
- increased need (after a brief statistical dip) including landscapers who lost summer corporate housing but who were still working at winter jobs.

Harbor Homes was searching hard for another location for a grant funded shelter after being disappointed by neighborhood opposition to the previous location.

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**Martina Thornton – County Manager**

- As in FY24 (see 1/11/23 Minutes p.4-5), County projected expenses (COLA, insurance, etc.) exceeded its revenue projections. State law required a balanced budget and only allowed the County to keep 10% of its annual budget, while returning any residual funds to the Towns. From a business manager's standpoint this was frustrating, generating paperwork and repetitious Town asks.
  - For example, a booming FY22 real estate market generated unexpected Registry of Deeds excise revenue so the County retained \$50,000 but returned \$200,000 to the Towns, which it had to ask for again the following year.(Despite continued high prices, FY23 real estate sales were the lowest in 40 years.) This article balanced the FY25 budget for County services—any unused funds over 10% would be returned.
- An overall discussion explored rising need and sharp increase in Island senior population, e.g. DCHAC 55% increase in Medicare applications—handled without increased staffing. Cuts in funding would create hardships for people and programs.
- Later in the meeting FinCom members raised some long standing issues.
  - How to monitor multiple agencies' services for duplication and inefficiency.
  - FinCom influence and impact: e.g. to not recommend funding or request agencies restrict raises. It was noted that MV Career Education and Training (MVCET) level-funded its Tisbury ask at \$10,000 at the FinCom's request.
- Repeat interviews were requested for:
  - CFL to discuss its annual high increases;
  - DCHAC/PB to better explain the restructuring;
  - Harbor Homes Director for more information.

**Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Budget Process** (See documents on file & below: Actions.)

At the end of 2023 Town Accountant Suzanne Kennedy retired abruptly after 37 years of good service. Her assistant John Minnehan was appointed Acting Accountant. The Department was now struggling with:

- the annual audit in process;
- annual report to Mass. Department of Revenue (DOR) to certify FY23 Free Cash;
- generating 1099 and W2 tax forms for yearly taxes,
- FY25 departmental budgets and articles.

Town Administrator Jay Grande's Office would be vetting department budgets and salaries were being spot checked by Finance and Human Resources staff.

- The FinCom appreciated Ms. Kennedy's substantial responsibilities, and offered its support, for example as a further backup check on any department.
- Finance Department and FinCom future goal was earlier Free Cash certification—allowing a wider window to access funds.

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- Information on Departments that turned back funds (see 10/4/23 Minutes p.2) could be gleaned from the document Ms. Kennedy sent previously.

**Finance and Advisory Committee Proposed FY25 Budget** (See documents on file.)

This year Chair Nancy Gilfoy proposed some changes:

- \$1,750 market rate correction for Marni Lipke's recorder services (23 meetings averaging 6.5 hrs or \$360 per meeting);
- \$65 conference fee for Association of Town Finance Committees;
- Printing (Voter Guide) FY23 actual;
- \$40 reduction in Dues and Subscription for actual Association dues.
- The FinCom debated conference travel expenses in terms of ferry fees, town vehicle use or \$0.60/m mileage and then set travel costs at \$200.

**All Island Finance Committee and the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) Budget Review**

Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) Business Manager Mark Friedman passed on a Chilmark FinCom suggestion to streamline the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) FY25 budget presentation into a single meeting of all the Island FinComs. Member reactions varied.

- The FinCom acknowledged the burden to all regional staff for 6 presentations and 6 Annual Town Meetings (ATMs).
- Unless carefully chaired, 30-40 FinCom members' questions and discussion could result in a very long meeting. Logistics would require a large venue or Zoom.
- Past attempts at an All Island FinCom (AIFC) failed because no FinCom achieved a quorum, so regionals had to present again at all the locals.
- Due to assessment formula issues Towns could have differing concerns.
- There was some concern that the Chilmark FinCom request might be a politically motivated push about the artificial turf controversy.
- THERE WAS GENERAL CONSENSUS TO AGREE TO THE MEETING IF IT WAS RESTRICTED TO AN INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION ONLY.

**Capital Planning Update** (See 12/13/23 Minutes p.1-2 and below: Actions.)

Mr. Grande welcomed the FinCom initiative and Selectman John Cahill would present it to the Tisbury Select Board (TSB) at a January meeting. There was a previous Tisbury Capital Planning Committee charge that could be amended.

- Fortuitously, in 2017 Finance Director Jon Snyder requested and was waitlisted for DOR Division of Local Services (DLS) review. The DLS agreed to submit a proposal on the Capital Planning initiative instead, hopefully by spring 2024.
- The FinCom emphasized their dedication to continuing the momentum, and its importance for ATM recommendations—for example the FinCom might consider restricting all capital requests to those covered by stabilization funds.

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**Committee Reports**

- The Tisbury School Committee (TSC) debated a large FY25 budget at its Public Hearing finally approving 11.71% increase comprising:
  - Shared Services mandated increase to cover a sharp rise in high needs enrollment;
  - a Facilities Manager and additional custodian for the new building; and
  - a Special Education (SpEd)/English Language Learners (ELL) support teacher.Chapter 70 funding levels were not yet available from the State (see Minutes: 1/25/23 p.2, & 11/29/23 p.4, & 12/13/23 p.3)
- The Climate Committee submitted 2 articles:
  - The Senior Center 5 yr. old boiler was constantly breaking and the old air conditioning was finished. A \$200,000 article covered the full cost of a complete overhaul and solar panels, hopefully reimbursed by the Green Community grant.
  - 30% federal rebates made this an optimum time for \$1,200,000 (\$800,000 plus soft costs and an Owners Project Manager (OPM)) for Tisbury School solar panels—resulting in only a 5 year payback (11 years without the rebate).
  - Various factors determined the Senior Center solar could be installed/held by Vineyard Power/Cape Light Compact, but bond/borrowing regulations required the Town own the School solar installation.

**Future Meetings** (See below: Meetings/Events, & Actions.)

Nancy Gilfoy reviewed budget process for new members, including department budget information and FinCom interviewing large departments or large increases.

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

**Adjournment**

- *ALEX MELENEY AND ALLAN ROGERS MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:51PM; LOUISE CLOUGH SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, RUTH KONIGSBERG—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.*

**Appendix A: Meetings/Events**

- ATM Warrant Articles due January 12, 2024
- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, January 17, 2024 – Zoom**
- **TFC – TBD - 6:30PM, Wednesday, January 24, 31, 2024**
- Special/Annual Town Meeting – 7:00PM, Tuesday, May 28, 2024 – PAC

**Appendix B: Actions**

Nancy – email County budget format comments to Martina Thornton.

Nancy – schedule DCHAC, CFL & Harbor Homes repeat interviews.

Nancy – contact Mark Friedman re: Chilmark All Island FinCom request feedback.

Nancy – obtain and distribute previous Capital Planning Committee charge.

Nancy – email Tisbury School FY25 Budget to FinCom.

**continued>**

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

Nancy – email department and regional budgets as they are released.

All – contact Nancy with any request to review a department budget.

Nancy – ask Jon Snyder to send current year spending with department budgets.

Jon Snyder – please PDF future reports.

- keep FinCom informed of any FY25 budget schedule changes;
- inform FinCom of any department budget needing extra scrutiny.

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

Future Agendas – Minutes: 12/13/23, 1/10/24

**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
- 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: \$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 – Police Dept. generator rent

**Appendix C: Documents on File**

- Agenda 1/10/24
- Gilfoy cover email re: FinCom Agenda for Wednesday 1/10/24, 1/6/24
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 131 Finance Committee
- Gilfoy/Grande email re: Retirement Town Accountant 12/29/23
- County of Dukes County plays a critical role on Martha's Vineyard and Gosnold supporting its citizens by: (4 p.)
- Explanation of warrant article to fund County Revenue Replacement (a/k/a budget shortfall) (2 p.)
- FY2025 County Request for funding 1/13/25 Draft
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Coalition (5 p.) 1/2/24
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Martha's Vineyard Center for Living (4 p.) 1/2/24
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Dukes County Public Benefits Access (4 p.) 1/2/24

**continued**

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**Appendix C: Documents on File (cont.):**

- Dukes County Regional Programs, Martha's Vineyard Community Services, Inc./Counseling, Outreach Referral and Education (CORE) (4 p.) 1/2/24
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Dukes County Health Care Access Program (8 p.) 1/2/24
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Harbor Homes of Martha's Vineyard (4 p.) 1/2/24
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard (HAMV) (12 p.) 1/2/24
- Gilfoy cover email re: Updated County programs information 1/11/24
- FY2025 Dukes County proposed budget – Memo (2 p.)
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Coalition 1/11/24
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Martha's Vineyard Center for Living 1/11/24
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Healthy Aging Martha's Vineyard (HAMV) 1/11/24
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Dukes County Public Benefits Access 1/11/24
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Martha's Vineyard Community Services, Inc./Counseling, Outreach Referral and Education (CORE) 1/11/24
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Dukes County Health Care Access Program 1/11/24
- Dukes County Regional Programs, Harbor Homes of Martha's Vineyard 1/11/24
- Chat: Cindy Trish:

Just a reminder that 1 in 3 of Tisbury residents are over 62 (according to census data), in addition our Older Adult population is getting older, requiring more services and support. We anticipate over 20% of those over 60 will be 85+ by 2030. I do recognize that there are limits to what town budgets can afford but it is important to keep this in mind for all of these agencies who are serving this growing population. Thanks

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Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

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Date

Minutes approved 2/7/24