

**Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee**  
**6:30PM, Wednesday, February 28, 2024**  
**by Zoom Cloud Conference**

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**Present:** Chair Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Rachel Orr, Alex Meleney,  
Louis Pashman\*, Allan Rogers,

**Others:** Abbe Burt, Mary Ellen Larsen, Recorder – Marni Lipke,

**Town:** Treasurer Jon Snyder, DPW Director Kirk Metell,  
Police – Chief Dan Habekost, Lt. William Brigham,

\* TFC members late arrivals or early departures.

**Call Meeting to Order**

- The Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) was called to order at 6:35PM.

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

**Consider Voting to Appoint Candidate Jointly with the Select Board to Open Position on the Finance and Advisory Committee Until June 11, 2024**

The FinCom had experienced quorum problems since John Oliver resigned in October 2023, so Chair Nancy Gilfoy proposed appointing former Select Board member Abbe Burt as an interim member. Ms. Burt agreed to serve and was familiar with the Tisbury process having attended many meetings. There was a protocol question as to whether the position had to be re-advertised (after the original October/November advertisement).

• LOUISE CLOUGH MOVED TO APPOINT ABBE BURT TO THE VACANT POSITION ON THE FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE PENDING APPROVAL/APPOINTMENT OF THE TISBURY SELECT BOARD: RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5, AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, NANCY GILFOR—AYE.

**Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Overview**

**Jon Snyder, Finance Director**

(See documents on file.)

\* During this discussion Louis Pashman entered the meeting.

In this unusual year (see 1/10/24 Minutes p.3-4) Treasurer Jonathan Snyder was still working with the auditors to close-out FY23 and certify Free Cash, consequently he presented very preliminary FY25 numbers. The FY24 levy limit was \$35,773,000, hugely driven by debt exclusion. FY25 limit (FY24 plus 2.5%, plus growth plus the \$4,600,000 debt exclusion) would be about \$35,889,000.

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- A net FY25 operating budget over \$41,000,000 had several components.
    - Department budget increases over FY24 totaled \$3,300,000 (8.3%), driven by a 4.5% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and some large spikes in department budgets e.g.: Ambulance 12%, Human Resources 26.2%, Police 18.6%.
    - Regional social services came to \$87,000 (see 1/10/24 Minutes p.1-3) plus other articles like the \$185,000 standard contributions to Stabilization Funds (the Town was looking to increase the annual amount)—very few articles were raise and appropriate.
  - Some adjustments from other funding sources (waterways, betterments/debt reserve), plus revenues such as:
    - a slight increase to the Chapter 70 State Cherry Sheet;
    - local fees, excise, meals/rooms (including short-term rental), etc.
    - an amount of Free Cash used to reduce the tax rate;
- resulted in the Town having to raise and appropriate \$37,752,508 showing a negative or override of \$1,863,747. Historically in many years preliminary override projections were reduced or eliminated; the last overrides being in 2019 and 2022.
- Mr. Snyder repeated the FinCom motto of what can we afford to do and what can we afford not to do.
    - Noting previous under-estimates and high Free Cash (see Minutes: 12/7/22 p.3, & 6/21/23 p.1-2), the FinCom requested more accurate short-term rental revenue projections.

**Review of Department of Public Works (DPW) Budget and Warrant Articles**  
**Kirk Metell, DPW Director** (See documents on file.)

- The DPW (Dept. #422) presented a \$56,000 (3%) Budget increase despite the 4.5% COLA. The Department operated in 3 groups: highways (4 employees), buildings (3 employees), and Parks and Recreation (Parks & Rec) (3 employees).
- A new Parks & Rec dedicated laborer (rather than a foreman) would be hired to maintain heavily used spaces (pickleball, tennis courts, Veterans Field, etc.).
  - The DPW, Tisbury Select Board (TSB), and Open Space Committee were determining appropriate Park & Rec facility fee levels to raise revenues while allowing as many people to use them as possible.
- The budget included 2 vacant positions (an administrative assistant and a laborer) that Director Kirk Metell expected to fill.
    - Additionally it retained the full Facilities Manager salary, in case the current part-time Manager Erik Blake did not continue—if he remained the ½ salary would likely be returned.
      - Mr. Blake hired an inspector who had assessed maintenance on 4 Town buildings; staff was parsing what could be handled in-house versus outside contractors.

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- Professional Services was raised in FY24 to substitute for the then-vacant Facilities Manager position (see 1/18/23 Minutes p.2) and was now reduced. Similarly Grounds-keeping was reduced from an outside contract to the in-house mowing crew.
- Generator Maintenance was cut to match the contract and in consideration of a brand new Police generator (see 1/24/24 Minutes p.3).
- The FinCom commended the tight budget but wanted assurance the DPW would have enough funds to maintain Town properties. As taxpayers the DPW took Town finances and possible overrides to heart; of course Kirk Metell would take what the FinCom decreed but he considered the budget to be sufficient.
- The DPW should play an active role with the new Capital Planning Committee (see below: p.6) which would include capital maintenance projects.

Warrant Articles

- The Main St. decorative pots were funded in the budget and an Embarkation article (see 2/21/24 Minutes p.1).
- \$60,000 – to replace/upgrade Emergency Services Facility (ESF) locks. The locks were required for medication and equipment storage and had been problematic for years. Repair would include electrical work, wifi, individual access and remote operation, at \$5-6,000 each. The DPW preferred all Town building locks, (ESF, Police Station, School...) be serviced by on-Island vendors since off-Island companies were reluctant to respond to service requests.
- \$50,000 – to deep clean/repair/paint Town Hall interior and the same for the Annex at \$25,000. The Town Administrator's office roof was repaired and dehumidifiers installed so mold numbers were down. This was the next step.
- \$56,000 for a new/used Chevy truck with snow plowing and towing capacity would replace the current 2012 truck, which was no longer repairable and would be surplus/sold for scrap. There were now 6 DPW trucks that carried staff and equipment, all with snow plowing capacity; and one car.
- \$135,000 for landfill operations was within the usual \$110-150,000 range. Only ~\$50,000 of the \$200,000 operating costs was collected in sticker revenue since 2/3 of residents used curbside pickup contracted to Brunos.
- Tisbury's \$15,000 share of a Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) Transportation project to engineer/design electric vehicle (EV) charging station locations.
- A number of previous DPW articles remained unspent. Kirk Metell explained that larger projects could take 1-2 years to plan, vet with the Open Space Committee and execute.
- On Island company bids for Town Hall and Police Station exterior work and painting were expected for 2024 spring, summer and fall work.

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- The Owen Park Bandstand only garnered 1 bid at 4 times the budgeted price so Town staff was considering how to proceed.
- Union Street underground utilities was not prioritized as it received pushback from Main St. business owners (it was never a good time); and it was extremely difficult to coordinate with Verizon sometimes taking 1-2 years.
- The connector road article cycled on and off (see below: Actions).
- Old Library articles would be rolled into the larger project (see 2/22/23 Minutes p.1-2.)
- The FinCom thanked Mr. Metell for his work and attendance.

**Review of Police Department Budgets and Warrant Articles**

**Christopher Habekost – Chief, William Brigham – Lieutenant**

(See documents on file.)

The FY25 General Police Dept. Budget (#210) was up 18.6%.

- ~ 90% of this budget was salary/benefits, in this case planning/anticipating police union negotiations outcome, e.g. linked to Management and Professional (M&P) 4.5% COLA, plus steps and education incentives.
- A Statewide drop in police applicants forced municipalities to compete for staff and even with this increase, Tisbury was at a disadvantage since both Oak Bluffs and Edgartown signed union agreements with 10-15% wage inflation, and Tisbury paid only about ½ the standard education incentive stipends. Each town was a different situation: Edgartown had 5 times the acreage and revenue; Oak Bluffs an active night life; Tisbury a dense population and most service calls of any town—partially due to its busy port.
- The Station recently switched to heat-pumps so the fuel line might be reduced (see below: Actions) although it might include repairs/maintenance.
- The full time Executive Assistant also filled the Emergency Management (EM) position—a minimal time position (mostly in meetings) that increased Tisbury's emergency networking.

The FinCom interview focused on the \$200,000 Overtime (OT) increase.

- OT fluctuated from year to year depending on staffing levels. For a long time Specials or part-time officers with a lower training level expanded staffing options and filled in shifts at a greatly reduced cost, but the Police Reform Act eliminated specials, requiring all officers be fully trained. This increased police budgets—without any compensating State funding.
- Overtime became more expensive as salaries went up. Chief Dan Habekost reviewed how he calculated OT costs. Coverage included: holidays (including 3 double-time holidays), minimum 15 days vacation, personal days, sick time, training time, major events, etc.

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- Additionally the School Resource Officer (SRO) (a national practice) was unavailable for other service calls during school hours. The School paid \$400/wk of the \$2,000/wk salary.
- The Department was finally fully staffed at 17 officers, working three 8-hr. Shifts: 3 officers on day shift, 3 on evening and 2 at night. Consequently overtime should be reduced.
- This OT increase anticipated that the new union contract might include a change from five days of 8 hr. shifts to four days of 10 hr. shifts.
- This allowed officers a more balanced life and recuperation from the high-stress job. It worked well in Oak Bluffs and Edgartown allowing overlap at high volume times such as evening shifts but it would be problematic in Tisbury, disrupting the shift coverage with over-staffed and under-staffed periods.
- The FinCom expressed concern about whether the Town negotiating team understood the OT cost of the 10 hr. shift (see below; Actions).
- The Department (#212) had 1 unmarked, 1 detective, 6 marked vehicles and the Chief's car which was not in the shift rotation. This allowed coverage when vehicles were out on routine maintenance or repairs. Cars took a real beating and were often idling when not being driven.
- The Hiring/Training budget (#211) covered new hires. There was a training line item in the Department's general budget for existing officers. It was hard to predict how many new officers might be hired, in terms of who might leave or retire. Often a significant portion of this budget was returned to the Town.
- The FinCom doubted whether the Town could afford an 18% increase. It was suggested that if the Embarkation special legislation passed (see 10/25/23 Minutes) a substantial percentage be dedicated to the Police budget.

Warrant Article

- The Embarkation article for 17 tasers (see 2/21/24 Minutes p.1) was in keeping with other individual equipment. Each officer was responsible for the care and use of their own gear: radios, bulletproof vests, firearm, etc. including the gear's internal computer data on use and incidents. This meant most tools lasted longer. The tasers were expected to last 10-12 years. Total Town taser deployment was maybe 10 times per year.
- Chief Habekost and Lt. Brigham described the difficulties of a Police day dealing with crises, crimes, suicide, domestic violence, etc. This budget covered the tools needed to run the Department and allow staff to function comfortably.
- The FinCom expressed their appreciation of Police professionalism, work, and articulate presentation.

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**Capital Planning Committee Discussion**

(See documents on file, & above p.3, & 2/21/24 Minutes p.3-4.)

The TSB had only 1 appointment for a 5 member Committee. Alex Meleney confirmed his interest in serving as the FinCom representative on the Capital Planning Committee. Abbe Burt was interested in being a member at large.

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

- It was agreed that budgets be distributed as soon as they were released so members could see the larger picture. There were still requests and frustration over the lack of sufficient foundation information on Town finances as a whole, a necessary perspective if the FinCom was expected to cut budgets.
- There was a new Wastewater Operator. The FY24 budget was significantly off, and had to be revised to adhere to enterprise fund requirements.
- The Library was still working on project costs.

**Committee Reports** – None

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

**Adjournment**

The FinCom commended Chair Nancy Gilfoy for a well-run meeting.

- *ALEX MELENEY MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:47PM; ALLAN ROGERS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 6 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, ALEX MELENEY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, LOUIS PASHMAN—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE.*

**Appendix A: Meetings/Events**

- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, March 6, 2024 – Zoom** EMS, Fire, Ambulance
- **TFC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, March 13, 2024 – Zoom** WW,
- **Special/Annual Town Meeting – 7:00PM, Tuesday, May 28, 2024 – PAC**

**Appendix B: Actions**

Jon S. - report accurate but conservative FY25 short-term rental revenue.

Kirk M. - correct Annex repair/paint/deep clean amount to \$25,000.

Kirk M./Jon S. - check connector road article status.

Lt. Brigham. - check heat-pump/oil line item for possible savings.

Lt. Brigham. - report Tisbury call volume, and

- cost differential between 8 and 10 hr. shifts

Nancy – contact negotiating team re: cost of 10 hr. Police shift change.

Nancy – send budgets (clearly labeled) when you get them.

Nancy – contact Library Director re: budget and project cost.

**continued**

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

Future Agendas

- Minutes: 1/24/24, 2/7/24, 2/21/24, 2/28/24
- MV Public Safety Communications as Town Budget line item
- Votes: DPW Budget & Articles:
  - ° ESF Locks,
  - ° Town Hall interior paint/sanitize
  - ° Annex interior paint/sanitize
  - ° Local drop-off
  - ° Truck/snow-plow
  - ° MVC EV charger study
- 3 Police Budgets
  - ° Police tasers (Embarkation #B)
- MVRHS
- Tisbury School

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
- 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

**Appendix C: Documents on File**

- Agenda/Revised Agenda (4 p.) 2/28/24
- Town of Tisbury, FY2025 Budget & Levy limit, Preliminary (2 p.) 2/28/24
- Gilfoy cover email re: Agenda and budgets for meeting 2/28/24, 2/24/24
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 422 Public Works & Narrative (13 p.) 2/16/24
- Department of Public Works Warrant Articles 1/12/24
- Department of Public Works Regular Articles 11/21/23
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 210 Police & Narrative (18 p.) 2/16/24
- Article Submission Form 17 new Tasers 1/18/24
- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 211 Police Hiring & Training

**continued >**

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

- FY 2025 Budget Plan Town of Tisbury Department 212 Police Vehicle
- Gilfoy/Grande emails re: Capital Planning Advisory Committee (3 p.) 2/24/24
- Town Clerk memo re: Draft #3, ATM (5/28/24) Appropriating, ATM (5/28/24) Non-Appropriating, STM (5/28/24) (3 p.) 1/30/24
- Town Clerk memo re: Draft #3, ATM (5/28/24) Appropriating, ATM (5/28/24) Non-Appropriating, STM (5/28/24) (3 p.) 2/28/24

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Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

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Date

Minutes approved 3/20/24