

**Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee
in Joint Meeting with the
Oak Bluffs Finance and Advisory Committee
5:00PM, Thursday, July 20, 2023
Oak Bluffs Town Hall Conference Room
and by Zoom Cloud Conference**

1

Present: Chair Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Ruth Konigsberg, John Oliver, Rachel Orr, Louis Pashman, Allan Rogers*, Dan Seidman,

OB FinCom: Chair Sherry Countryman, Sean DeBettencourt, Mimi Davisson, Reuben Fitzgerald, Bob Malecki, Maura McGroarty, Ryan Ruley, Mike Taus*,

Others: Recorder – Marni Lipke

* TFC or OB FinCom members late arrivals or early departures.

Call Meeting to Order – Purpose of the Meeting – Open Lines of Communication, Explore Ways We Can Help Each Other Introductions

The Tisbury and Oak Bluffs Finance and Advisory Committees (FinComs) were called to order at 5:07PM and everyone introduced themselves.

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

Overview of Towns of Oak Bluffs and Tisbury (See below: Actions.)

Financial differences and similarities of these two port Towns were noted:

- operating budgets: Tisbury at \$39,000,000 and Oak Bluffs at \$40,000,000;
- Martha's Vineyard Regional High School District (MVRHSD) enrollment (determining assessment proportions): Tisbury 200 and Oak Bluffs 218;
- average house value: Tisbury \$1,400,000, Oak Bluffs \$1,200,000;
- average tax bill – Tisbury \$10,511 (post School project debt), Oak Bluffs \$6,457—the difference driven by Tisbury's 2,138 single family residences, versus Oak Bluffs 3,418 (Tisbury was at build-out and Oak Bluffs was close).
- Both were drafting Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plans and shared the Lagoon and Tashmoo Pond watersheds (Oak Bluffs shared Sengekontacket Pond with Edgartown.)
- Most of Tisbury qualified for Massachusetts Environmental Justice designation due to neighborhoods below state median income and a 60% English Language Learners/English as a Second Language (ELL/ESL) minority—Oak Bluffs had a 30% ESL population. The designation affected Dept. of Public Utilities grants and permitting.

Tisbury and Oak Bluffs Finance & Advisory Committees
July 20, 2023

2

Discussion (See below: Actions.)

- The Towns were successfully collaborating on the Embarkation fee legislation (see 10/13/22 Minutes) and felt they could benefit from working together on other issues.

Paid Parking

- * During this discussion Allan Rogers entered the meeting.
- Oak Bluffs was interested in parking as a revenue stream and asked about Tisbury's experience with paid parking.
 - Tisbury Park & Ride was at capacity, but the payment kiosks were unreliable. Both Towns were looking for a more reliable vendor.
 - Tisbury required resident stickers (at a minimal charge) for the old fire station lot or overnight parking. Oak Bluffs had no such program.
- Although there were some spaces near the Oak Bluffs Steamship Authority (SSA) terminal, commercial parking was a major problem in both towns, resulting in heavy trucks and equipment parked at their homes. An attempt to regulate commercial parking in residential neighborhoods failed two Tisbury Annual Town Meetings (ATM). Eversource subcontractors parked around all the power lines. Discussion points included:
 - definition of commercial (commercial plates or any vehicle used in trades);
 - need for efficient bus service from ports to job sites or commercial lots for workers commuting from Falmouth;
 - parking space value and town Planning Boards, Parking Committees, and Zoning Board of Appeals discussions;
 - unpopularity of parking fees on Circuit Avenue;
 - Edgartown's expensive parking tickets that discouraged violations—and wealthy residents or visitors that simply ignored regulation and paid all tickets;
 - seasonal nature of the problem, solved in Newport by spaces designated for residents only.
- The two Towns considered a shared commercial parking lot.

Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOTS)

- Oak Bluffs received \$14,000 per year from Elder Housing developments. Island Housing Trust and Dukes County Regional Housing Authority paid by an assessed value formula for tax-exempt properties in Tisbury.
- The Tisbury Assessor would attend a training on PILOTS later this summer.
- The Boston model reduced a percentage of tax payments by the benefits the institution/non-profit gave to the community.
- Oak Bluffs used their tax loss to negotiate a reduced MVRHS allocation.
- Some towns assessed non-profits for police, fire and other services.
- Enforcement or imposition of the PILOT was often a function of permitting, i.e. a Town would withhold a permit for expansion, etc. until a PILOT agreement was signed.

Tisbury and Oak Bluffs Finance & Advisory Committees
July 20, 2023

3

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) Policies

- Tisbury struggled with: three 3 different unions (general staff, teachers, police) as well as Management and Professional (M&P) and Personnel Board coordination of COLAs. In addition there was a 6.9% spike in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) which, added to steps, came to 10% increases for some staff.
- Oak Bluffs FY24 COLA was 3.4% and the Town had just approved a policy of 3-5 year averages for COLAs in order to smooth out spikes and dips.
- It was noted that 2024 Social Security increases were 8.7%, however there was a difference in Federal and Town financial capacity.
- Compensation/Classification studies differed in recommending average or higher salaries for comparable jobs, and there were challenges around comparing jobs with different duties and descriptions. Oak Bluffs and Tisbury suggested using the same vendor to conduct the studies.
- This lead to differing Island Town pay-scales for public safety employees, police, emergency medical staff, etc. which caused personnel to desert one town for another. A possible goal was to have all the towns agree to a common pay-scale and negotiate collectively with the unions.
- Every year the Massachusetts Municipal Association compiled budgets for all towns over 25,000 population—Martha's Vineyard showed 50% higher budgets. Savings could be had by regionalizing the schools, police, fire and ambulances. A study by the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) proposed a shared assessor that rotated or staggered Towns, Oak Bluffs one year, Tisbury the next, etc. (A previous attempt at a shared Building Commissioner was rejected by Tisbury ATM.) Other areas of possible sharing/collaboration included: Animal Control Officers and Climate Change issues (e.g. electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, solar installations, etc.).

Community Impact Fees

- * During this discussion Mike Taus entered the meeting. This was another possible revenue stream programs, requiring Town vote to charge a tax of up to 3% of rent income for:
 - professionally managed, non-owner occupied units, or
 - owner occupied dwellings with 2-3 units.
- With 30% of the revenue designated for affordable housing. However the program was designed for multiple unit urban density and was less likely to be very remunerative for the Island towns where most rentals were owner occupied single units.
- Every 3 years the Tisbury Building Inspector, Fire Chief, and Board of Health (BOH) inspected and charged fees for all short-term rental units so it had a database that could be checked against advertised units. Oak Bluffs had 844 registered rentals.

Tisbury and Oak Bluffs Finance & Advisory Committees
July 20, 2023

4

- The Internal Revenue Service allowed 2 weeks of rentals per year of private properties before a property was classified as a rental property.
- The FinComs asked about:
 - individually owned properties that were investment income,
 - exemptions for those renting year-round,
 - community impact fees at other resort communities,
 - whether a home-rule petition was needed and 2 Town collaboration.

Outreach to Taxpayers

The OB FinCom was influential on some Town committees such as debt approval, but was frustrated by ATM voters who often ignored their recommendations, particularly with warrant article votes. The OB Select Board (OBSB) position was that issues should be put in front of voters.

- The Oak Bluffs Capital Planning Committee rated projects as 1) necessary and immediate, 2) middle priority, and 3) and 4) low priority or not recommended at this time.
- The TFC noted that recently the Tisbury Select Board (TSB) and/or staff considered FinCom discussions and objections raised during budget meetings and pulled articles from the warrant and Tisbury voters tended to be more fiscally conservative.
 - However, the TFC struggled with a lack of foundational information to give them an overall picture of the year's finances.
- Both Towns received articles during the budget rush as they were submitted and or changed. Edgartown received all articles when the budget was released. Both Towns received Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) Free Cash certification late in the budget/ATM process.

Other

- Tisbury had an Embarkation Committee that allotted such funds, some of which went to pay for its information booth.
- Oak Bluffs and Tisbury hired different engineers for their CWMP and a shared waterway and would have to cooperate on Lagoon Pond issues.
- FinCom roles depended on membership preferences. Oak Bluffs was debating whether to focus more on their advisory capacity. The TFC voted on non-monetary articles. Tisbury members usually sat in on other boards and committees and met jointly with them when shared issues arose—e.g.:
 - the new Town Hall / EduComp building proposal,
 - a joint Personnel Bd./Human Resources Dept./TFC meeting on COLA and department reorganization issues.
- This had been a very helpful meeting and hopefully could be continued quarterly. Member intercommunication was welcomed. The FinComs agreed to collaborate more closely and share information (see below: Actions).

Items Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair – None

**Tisbury and Oak Bluffs Finance & Advisory Committees
July 20, 2023**

5

Adjournment

- *MIMI DAVISSON MOVED TO ADJOURN THE OAK BLUFFS FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE AT 6:45PM; MIKE TAUS SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 7 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: BOB MALECKI—AYE, RYAN RULEY—AYE, MIMI DAVISSON—AYE, MAURA MCGROARTY—AYE, SHERRY COUNTRYMAN—AYE, MIKE TAUS—AYE, SEAN DEBETTENCOURT—AYE.*
- *LOUISE CLOUGH MOVED TO ADJOURN THE TISBURY FINANCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE AT 6:45PM; RACHEL ORR SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: DAN SEIDMAN—AYE, ALLAN ROGERS—AYE, RACHEL ORR—AYE, NANCY GILFOY—AYE, LOUISE CLOUGH—AYE.*

Appendix A: Meetings/Events

- **TFC/Town Hall Task Group – 6:30PM Wednesday, August 10, 2023 – ESF**

Appendix B: Actions

Mike Taus/Bob Malecki – share parking vendor info w/Nancy Gilfoy,
Nancy – contact assessor re: OB FinCom or assessor participation in training
FinCom Sharing:

- parking vendor information (Mike Taus, Bob Malecki),
- vendor presentations,
- commercial parking lot?,
- assessor PILOT training,
- Classification/Compensation study vendors,
- CWMP engineers/shared waterways,
- Munis trainings (whole Island),
- quarterly joint meetings,
- cross representatives on sub-committees,
- agendas
- contact lists,

Nancy – research number of rentals in Tisbury.

Nancy/Sherry – contact Sen. Cyr’s Office re: Embarkation legislation.

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

Future Agendas

- Minutes: 3/22/23, 4/5/23, 5/17/23, 6/21/23, 7/20/23

Budget Season Notes

- No new positions in FY25
- FY25 salaries/budgets will be higher due to classification raises.
- include budget deadline ultimatum in FinCom letter,

continued >

**Tisbury and Oak Bluffs Finance & Advisory Committees
July 20, 2023**

Appendix B: Actions (cont.)

Budget Season Notes (cont.)

- 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.
- contact Planning Bd. re: zoning bylaw revision.
- 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: \$100,000

Appendix C: Documents on File

- Agenda/Revised (2 p.) 7/20/23

Nancy Gilfoy – Chair

Date

Minutes approved as amended 9/6/23