

Finance Committee Meeting
Minutes of Meeting 3-8-19

Aquinnah Town Hall Selectmen's Meeting Room

Members present: Chairman Allen Rugg, Tom Murphy, Mark Foster

Also present: Town Administrator Jeffrey Madison, Selectman Gary Haley, Selectmen Julie Vanderhoop, Selectmen Jim Newman, Superintendent of Schools Matt D'Andrea, School Business Administrator Amelia Tierney, Assistant School Superintendent Richie Smith, MVRHS Finance Manager Mark Friedman, West Tisbury School Principal Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Chilmark Head of School Susan Stevens, Elise LeBovit, Assistant Assessor Angela Cywinski

- The meeting began at 9:37am

- First on the agenda was the review of minutes. The Committee deferred review of the minutes to the end of the meeting.

- Prior to meeting with the Schools, Emily informed the Committee that the Town is currently facing close to a \$500,000 override. Emily reminded the Committee that their next meeting will be on March 22. Emily left the meeting.

- Next, The Committee reviewed the proposed FY20 budget for the Up Island Regional School District. Matt D'Andrea, Superintendent of Schools, reviewed the major increases and reductions to the budget: \$235,000 contractual increases for staff (2% increase - not final and is a place holder until contracts are complete), health insurance increase of \$160,000 (increase due to coverage change of individuals and not a premium increase), shared services increase of \$90,000, Other Employment Benefit Program \$50,000 increase, transportation increase of \$25,000 (High School runs transportation for all schools and this is the UIRSD contribution to the High School Budget increase). West Tisbury School Principal Donna Lowell-Bettencourt gave a rundown on the major increases and reductions for the West Tisbury School: special education teacher increase of 1.6% and ESP reduction of 4.5% (changing the model to be more inclusive for special education students— adding a teacher and reducing an ESP assistant), English Language Learn increase, engineering teacher increase (increasing the teachers role due to the amount of students in the class), tech equipment increase (5 year refresh so that the school doesn't fall behind), and a residential placement reduction (student in the up island district will be entering the high school). Chilmark Head of School Susan Stevens presented budget increases and reductions for the Chilmark school: tech equipment increases (1-time increase – server update) and special education teacher increase (adding 1 day). Matt noted that the Chilmark School is paid off and therefore the FY20 budget does not reflect a \$146,000 payment (budget is reduced). All other changes across the UIRSD budget resulted in a \$30,000 increase and an overall increase of 3.97% (\$467,717 increase) to a budget that is a little over \$12 million. There was discussion on the calculation of the allocation for Aquinnah: budget is based on the regional agreement formula (3 components: district enrollment, school site enrollment and 80% paid by owning town and 20% by non-owning towns based on enrollment). There are 48 Aquinnah students enrolled in the UIRSD (based on the October 1, 2018 census). There was lengthy discussion concerning the cost per student in the UIRSD (approx. \$27,000/student) and whether there is substantial cost/student difference between the two schools. Allen noted that there is talk around town regarding a difference in education expense/student (\$10,000 more for Chilmark) and whether there would be an

impact on the Aquinnah allocation if all Aquinnah students attended West Tisbury School. The School representatives informed the Committee that they only look at the budget as a region (operation of both schools) and felt that there would be a shift in the cost of West Tisbury (additional teachers to supplement the increase in kids). However, while the pupil cost at Chilmark would increase with the removal of Aquinnah children, the UIRSD allocation would not change much for Aquinnah because the overall budget would not change. Furthermore, they noted that are making all efforts to reduce the budget. The Finance Committee expressed appreciation for both schools but requested that Amelia Tierney calculate the difference of cost/student in both schools.

The statutory formula was discussed: State formula based on wealth and income of a community to determine allocation (High School uses this formula). Should the budget not pass in Aquinnah (budget requires all three towns approval), UIRSD would review why it didn't pass and then try to come up with a budget that would pass. Matt D'Andrea noted that it is unique to have two different schools for children to attend. Donna Lowell-Bettencourt informed the Committee that the School Committee is aware of the issue that Aquinnah faces, and they continuously look at ways to address it. The Committee agreed that each school is unique, but they noted that their objective is not to evaluate the operation of the school but to look at the budget and try to save money for the tax payers.

The Committee reviewed the proposed warrant articles for UIRSD. The total request for Aquinnah is \$43,390: Chilmark School window and flooring replacement; West Tisbury School parking lot repair, roofing and outdoor deck repair. Jeff noted that these requests are the same needs of the Aquinnah Town Offices. The Committee thanked the School reps for their time.

- Next, the Committee discussed the Regional High School budget. MVRHS Finance Manager Mark Friedman presented the FY20 budget. Overall increase for the FY20 budget is 4.93%. Mark gave a brief rundown on the budget increases: \$292,000 residential care tuition increase (specialized services - West Tisbury student moving to High School and additional student from another town), Other Post-Employment Benefits \$252,000 increase (addressing a 32 million liability and will get the High School on a 7-year trajectory to get to a point where this line item will not increase). Aquinnah's FY20 assessment has increased 14% due to a one student increase (11 students last year to 12 students in October 2018). Mark briefly discussed reductions which were mostly due to internal shifting. There was discussion concerning the English learning language line item increase of \$119,000: hiring of additional teacher and assistant (total of 80 students this year). There was discussion on the grass vs. turf issue the high school is considering. The issue is not reflected in any warrant or budget requests and will only be brought to the town for approval of using High School Excess and Deficiency reserve funds. Mark Foster noted that the school's budget is a public relation problem and from the Fin Comm point of view they can act as agents for the Schools in moving forward in dispelling rumors of mismanagement. The Committee reviewed the High School warrant request for schematic design funds. Total request from Aquinnah is \$25,480 but may be reduced dependent on the School Committee contribution. The High School is looking to redesign the school to meet the needs of the Island.

- With no other business to discuss, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn.
The Committee voted 3-0 in favor. The motion passed.

- The meeting ended at 10:55am

Respectfully submitted,
Sophia Welch
Board Administrative Assistant