

Minutes
West Tisbury Finance Committee Meeting
March 8, 2011
Public Safety Building

Present: Sharon Estrella – chair, Greg Orcutt, Jonathan Revere, and Joe Gervais.

Guests: Richard Knabel, Skipper Manter and Cynthia Mitchell, BoS; Jen Rand, Town Administrator; Bruce Stone, Town Accountant; Kathy Logue, Town Treasurer; Chief Randi Belain, Chief Dan Rossi, Dianne Powers, Paul “Zeke” Williams, Brian Cioffi and Jeff Haynes, Tri-Town Ambulance; Barbara Silk, Tri-Town Ambulance Administrator; Beth Kramer, Library Director; Dan Waters, Ginny Jones, Linda Hearn and Melissa Hackney, Library Trustees; Kent Healy and Bob Woodruff, Mill Pond Committee; Bill Wilcox, MVC Water Resource Planner.

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m.

Tri-Town Ambulance

Chief Belain presented a revised budget that was amended to show the deletion of two fulltime positions and a change in insurance. The rest of the budget remained the same as the budget presented in February. The chief noted that the stipend for nighttime duty had been increased from \$75 t \$100. Hours have been added to nighttime basic to cover for the hours lost by eliminating two positions. The health insurance is an estimate at this date.

Sharon questioned the \$5,000 for vehicle repair and maintenance. Chief Belain explained it would be needed to cover an additional vehicle and an aging fleet. Greg asked about the 40% increase in insurance. This reflects an increase in premium rates and an additional vehicle. Chief Belain added that each ambulance would need more equipment to satisfy ALS requirements.

Richard asked Chief Belain to clarify ambiguous quotes by the chief in a Gazette article with reference to professional and volunteer services. The Chief Belain explained that taking a shift is on a volunteer basis, but once a shift is signed for, that person must fill it.

Sharon acknowledged the hard work and good service of the department and thanked those present.

Greg made a motion, seconded by Jonathan, to approve the Tri-town Ambulance budget. The motion passed 3-0-1.

Article 32: Transfer from Ambulance Receipts Reserved for Appropriation \$17,500 to purchase portable computer and three stair-chair stretchers.

Jonathan made a motion, seconded by Joe, to recommend Art. 32. The motion passed 4-0.

Article 17: Appropriate from Free Cash \$3,164.93 to fund West Tisbury’s 1/3 share of prior fiscal bills for the Tri-Town Ambulance.

Greg made a motion, seconded by Jonathan, to recommend Art. 32. The motion passed 4-0.

Article 9: Vote to accept the provisions of Chapter 149 of the Acts of 2010, which authorized the creation of the "Dukes County Pooled Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust and vote to join the Trust, or take any action relative thereto.

Kathy explained that legislation has been passed that authorized the creation of the Dukes County OPEB Trust and that WT could now join the pooled funds trust.

Greg made a motion, seconded by Jonathan, to recommend Art. 9. The motion passed 4-0.

Article 10: To appropriate from Free Cash \$150,000 to the Dukes County Pooled Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust.

This is the annual amount to go to the trust.

Article 11: Vote to transfer the full balance of the OPEB Stabilization Fund, including interest earnings thereon, to the Dukes County Pooled Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust.

This would transfer money already set aside in a stabilization fund to the OPEB trust. Whatever money WT puts into the trust can only be used by WT.

Jonathan made a motion, seconded by Greg, to recommend Arts. 9, 10 and 11. The motion passed 4-0.

Each "unit" will appoint a trustee. Joining does not require money to be sent. Administrative fees will be paid by the trust. Retiree's health insurance will be paid from the trust.

Article 13: Enact a temporary tax amnesty program, in accordance with Chapter 188 Section 68 of the Acts of 2010, or take any other action relative thereto.

This would hopefully encourage the payment of certain delinquent tax obligations. Beginning on April 13, 2011 and ending on June 30, 2011, the taxpayer would receive a waiver of 50% of the total accrued interest, collection costs and penalties owed on liabilities for properties in tax title upon full payment of the outstanding liability and all interest, collection costs and penalties to be paid by the taxpayer.

Kathy said this as done in 2004. A municipal relief act provides for the ability to waive a portion of interest/fees. This must be done by the end of the fiscal year, so will only allow ten weeks for people to take advantage of this. There are app. 22 parcels in tax title right now, totaling about \$160,000 due in taxes and \$78,000 in interest. Kathy added that this is a good alternative to big legal fees for foreclosures.

Joe made a motion, seconded by Jonathan, to recommend Art. 13. The motion passed 4-0.

Article 18: Vote to authorize the renovation and expansion of the WT Free Public Library contingent upon the receipt of an MBLC construction grant and donation of private funds, which together will cover 75% of the total project costs.

Article 19: Vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to apply for, accept and expend any state grants which may be available for the renovation and construction of an addition to the WT Free Public Library.

Greg disclosed that he is a Library Trustee.

With the police station and the school repairs looming, Sharon expressed concern for the size of the addition and the 25% left for taxpayers to pay. Dan Waters said the size was determined by community need and has been reduced from what was originally planned. The library is currently 5,600sq.f.; the addition will bring it to 13,000sq.f. The highest amount from the town will be \$1.7 million. 50% will come from the state and 25% from private donations. If the grant is not received, the library will have to go back to the original plan of 50% from the town, but then would not build until 2116. If the grant is received, building will begin in 2113.

Jonathan made the point that there is a larger pool of money right now due to the fact that many libraries can't move forward at this time. Richard added that at the time of groundbreaking the debt service will have been reduced and will remain nearly level.

Joe questioned the addition in light of the impact technological trends are having on reading and if libraries would be viable in 40 years. Dan said the role of libraries has changed to being more of a social gathering place. The addition is to facilitate the numbers of people using the library (1500 in one day in August), not to add to the collection.

Jonathan made a motion, seconded by Greg, to recommend Arts. 18 and 19. The motion passed 3-1-1.

Article 40: Raise and appropriate \$4,000 to continue testing Mill Brook water quality. This work will be done by staff of the MVC.

Kent Healy explained that testing has been going on at various stations before and after the Mill Pond. It is important to measure quality of water going in. Bill Wilcox of the MVC has been doing the testing for free (only lab fees), but he will be retiring June 30 and a new person might wish to be paid. Each test costs \$150 to be analyzed. Samples need to be done frequently to be properly assessed. Bob Woodruff added that the committee supported the testing. Jonathan thanked them.

Jonathan made a motion, seconded by Joe, to recommend Art. 40 The motion passed 4-0.

Since votes at the last meeting were done to preliminarily recommend certain articles, the following articles were voted on to be recommended:

- **Art. 28 (29)** moved by Greg, seconded by Jonathan. Passed 4-0.
- **Art. 4** moved by Jonathan, seconded by Greg. Passed 4-0.
- **Art. 16 (17)** - will wait for discussion with school personnel at March15 meeting.
- **Art. 20 (21)** moved by Jonathan, seconded by Joe. Passed 4-0.

Art. 31 (32) Motion by Jonathan to revisit, seconded by Greg. Passed 4-0.

Sharon wanted to reopen discussion about this article concerning the proposed sidewalk from Alley's to the WT Congregational Church. At the last meeting a vote was taken to take no action. Since it is a money article (\$12,500), she felt it important the FinCom either recommend or not recommend. She then expressed her opinion that the sidewalk would not be in keeping with the area. Joe acknowledged the work done by the BoS on this project, but he, too, felt it would change the character of the area. He recommended perhaps cleaning and seeding the area in question.

Richard felt it was a safety issue and that adding a sidewalk would define where people should walk. This would be an improvement and a convenience.

Cynthia added that brick is being considered to be in keeping with the sidewalk in front of the church. The BoS is attempting to have a meeting with the Historic Committee.

Jonathan made a motion to recommend Art. 32, which was not seconded.

Joe made a motion, seconded by, Greg to not recommend Art. 32. The motion passed 3-1.

Art. 14: Raise and appropriate \$63,320, appropriate \$14,180 from unexpended balance of funds voted at ATM in April 2010 for the Police Department Feasibility Study and \$75,000 from unexpended balance of funds originally borrowed for the Town Hall Renovation Project, no longer needed, for a total of \$150,000 to pay costs of the Schematic Design and Panning Phase and the development of construction and bid documents for a new Police Station.

This will pay to get the committee all the way to bid documents. Jen used state guidelines to determine the percentage of the total cost to get this figure.

Joe made a motion, seconded by Greg, to recommend Arts. 14. The motion passed 4-0.

Art. 31 (30): Motion by Joe to reconsider, seconded by Greg. Passed 3-0-1.

This is the article concerning lowering the CPA percentage. Sharon would like to have a number. Jen said the BoS cannot recommend a particular percentage, but can recommend reducing. Bruce added that a committee had looked at various percentages and determined that lowering by 2% would eliminate the town from the second and third rounds of state matching funds. 1% would give the town more money from the state.

Joe made a motion, seconded by, Jonathan to not recommend Art. 31. The motion passed 4-0.

Art. 42: Beer and wine in restaurants.

Greg spoke to Tisbury selectman Jeff Kristal who said there has been no real impact on Tisbury in either revenues or expenses. Jeff said a vote to recommend would be a show of support for business in the town.

Cynthia informed the FinCom of a recently realized situation with regard to fundraising events that serve alcohol. If money has been paid for admission to an event where alcohol is being served a license must be obtained. Allowing beer and wine licensing would provide the opportunity of non-profit organizations to purchase a one-day license for their event.

Sharon was strongly opposed to the concept of licensing restaurants to sell beer and wine.

Jonathan made a motion, seconded by Joe, to take no action. The motion passed 3-1.

Art. 16 (17): New Superintendent's office feasibility study.

Jonathan opposes the study because he feels the need and site for a new office has already been determined. Jen will look into the need for a feasibility study as part of the process. If needed, Jonathan thinks it should come from the superintendent's budget.

Greg, seconded by Joe, made a motion to recommend Art. 17. The motion passed 3-1.

Joe left the meeting at 6:12.

Art. 35: Town's purchase of the Maley property.

A price of this property has not yet been determined. Sharon doesn't think the town should be in the real estate business and should not remove another property from the tax base. If there is no figure set by next week the article will not appear in the warrant.

Other Business:

Discussion next week will include the Park & Rec. Department, Art. 35, Kristina West's article, a vote on the overall budget and the UIRSD.

School discussion:

The members would like to address the following issues:

- Figures for WT out of the district
- Function of SPED and school choice as far as these impact the budget
- Description of the UIRSD model of education
- Regional savings
- Recommend reduction of \$750-\$1,000 in cost per student.

Greg made a correction to his report last week regarding the placement of the UIRSD in the state. He stated the URISD had the fifth most expensive cost per student, but that was including tech school and other schools with large expenses for special equipment. Amongst elementary schools the UIRSD is most expensive by far.

Greg will ask Dr. Weiss to attend the March 15 meeting to continue this discussion.

Future meetings

None set at this time.

There being no other business, a motion for adjournment was made and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 6:24pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Rogers, Administrative Clerk