

Approved 3/9/11
TOWN OF WEST TISBURY
SELECTMENS MEETING
Wednesday, February 23, 2011, 4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Present: Selectmen Richard Knabel, Skipper Manter, Cindy Mitchell, Jennifer Rand.

Guests: Dr. Weiss, Amy Tierney, Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Laurie Halt, Dan Cabot, Perry Amboulos, Gary Montrowl, Ron Rappaport, Sharon Estrella, Katherine Triantafillou, Greg Orcott, Joe Gervais, Susan Stevens, Kathy Logue, Ernie Mendenhall, Janet Bank, B&B Day, J. Hickey, B. Potts

The Finance Committee called their meeting to order.

Up Island Regional School District Budget: Sharon began by saying the Finance Committee had concerns about the budget in light of enrollment that keeps dropping with no associated drop in expenses. Dan Cabot spoke about the budget process and noted that the school is not a factory that produces widgets so the budget cannot be approached as a simple business model.

Greg said he thought both West Tisbury and Chilmark were good schools, his issue was an inability to understand the budgets. He also was concerned about the cost of small class size, and where did we fit compared to other schools on the Island. He also asked if the elementary school budget could be separated out because the junior high was the truly regional part of the district.

Dan said a few years ago he sat with Al DeVito to develop a budget format that would meet the Finance Committee requirements. He said the Committee still didn't like it.

Speaking of the current budget, Dr. Weiss said the budget was only up .9% until it was realized that Chilmark would need another class section, which then raised the budget to 2.3%. He said that roughly Oak Bluffs had a cost of \$14,000 per student and the district was at about \$20,000. Some of this is due to economies of scale and some to the small class size expected Up Island.

Cindy noted that while the bottom line was only up about 1% the expenses were up more than that but it was offset by debt reduction. She asked what was driving the expenses increase. Amy said health insurance, employee contracts and shared services.

Katherine asked how solid the reimbursement numbers were. Amy said not solid. She said there was a reserve fund available to cover shortfalls, but over the last few years it had shrunk.

Dan said he has questioned the need for an assistant in every classroom and while he leaves the final decision up to the school, he does ask that it is looked at annually to see if they are needed. He noted that often the assistants are part of the Special Education staff, not regular assistants. In response to a question about the high number of special

education students Dr. Weiss said he thinks it is in part because of State mandates and in part because parents in the district have a high level of understanding of the Special education system and advocate for their children to be able to access the services.

Katherine asked what the benefit to the region was. Dr. Weiss said the ability to control things like health care costs, the ability to move resources around where they are needed, and the ability to control and standardize curriculum. She then asked if he thought the formula was fair. Amy said it had been studied and seemed even. Skipper disagreed and felt it was based on a presumption of West Tisbury's enrollment that was no longer true.

Greg closed the discussion saying he hoped there would be further attempts to lower the budget.

Executive Session: *S. Manter motioned to go into Executive Session to discuss land acquisition negotiation and not to return to regular session. C. Mitchell seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted with RK & CM in favor, SM opposed.*