

Minutes
West Tisbury Finance Committee Meeting
March 1, 2011
Public Safety Building

Present: Greg Orcutt – vice-chair, Jonathan Revere, Joe Gervais and Katherine Triantafyllou.

Guests: Richard Knabel, Skipper Manter and Cynthia Mitchell, BoS; Jen Rand, Town Administrator; Ray Gale and Ginny Jones, Shellfish Department.

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

Article 29: Raise and appropriate \$15,000 for the purchase of a boat, motor, trailed and associated equipment for the Shellfish Committee.

Ray Gale explained a town-owned boat would be primarily used for shellfish seeding and monitoring, as well as checking on those fishing in the various ponds, and for water-related emergencies such as ice rescues. This work has been done using private boats and has not been suitable for the tasks at hand. The shellfish department receives revenue from licensing fees, both commercial and family. This year that has been a total of \$1,050. Ray noted that shellfishing helps provide income during the winter months. Ginny Jones added that one oyster is capable of filtering twenty-five gallons of water a day, thereby being a great asset in cleaning pond water.

Joe made a motion, seconded by Jonathan, to preliminarily recommend Art. 29. The motion passed 4-0.

Article 4: 1% wage adjustment.

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

Article 17: Raise and appropriate \$2,010 to fund town's share of feasibility study for replacement of superintendent's office.

Decision was made to hold off voting on this article until after more discussion with Dr. Weiss.

Article 21: Reauthorize revolving accounts, previously established, for FY12.

Jonathan made a motion, seconded by Joe, to preliminarily recommend Art. 21. The motion passed 4-0.

Article 31: Vote to amend the Community Preservation Act property tax surcharge from the current 3% to ?%.

Jen is awaiting wording from counsel. The BoS may or may not take a position on this article. FinCom members want to see a specific percentage indicated.

Jonathan made a motion, seconded by Katherine, to take no action on Art. 31. The motion passed 4-0.

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

Discussion of this article will be rescheduled with members of the Mill Brook Committee present.

Article 32: Vote to appropriate from free cash the sum of \$12,500 for installing a sidewalk between the WT Congregational Church and Alley's General Store parking lot.

Richard gave the background of this project and defined the area involved. Greg felt it would change the character of "downtown" WT. Katherine thought that if a sidewalk went in on one side of the road, there should be one on the other side as well. Jonathan felt it is necessary in order to improve walking in that area, while Skipper felt it to be an unnecessary expense.

Jonathan made a motion to preliminarily recommend article 32. He received no second.

Joe made a motion to preliminarily not recommend article 32. He received no second.

Jonathan made a motion, seconded by Joe, to take no action on article 32. The motion passed 4-0.

Article 42: To authorize the BoS to petition the state to allow WT to license the sale of beer and wine in restaurants (including inns and hotels) with seating of over 50 people.

FinCom members wondered what the financial impact to the town might be if this is passed. Cynthia suggested a FinCom member talk to someone from Vineyard Haven since that town has recently implemented the sale of beer and wine licenses to restaurants. Greg will talk to Sherm and Susie Goldstein, owners of Zephyrus restaurant in Vineyard Haven, and to Mary and Jackson Kenworth, owners of State Rd. restaurant in WT.

Minutes:

Minutes of the February 15 meeting were approved. Minutes of the February 22 meeting were approved with corrections.

February 23 meeting discussion

Greg thanked the BoS for hosting this meeting with the UIRSD committee, staff and Dr. Weiss during their regular meeting time.

Joe found it helpful, but wished for more information. Jonathan would like to know the ramifications of school choice and the SPED program. He would also like to see a budget that would show what WT would look like if not in the district. Katharine wished the discussion could have gone on longer and wondered why the budget is not going down to match the decrease in enrollment. She would also like to know where reserve funds are carried and how the E&D relates to the whole budget. Richard had wished for a discussion of the impending repairs. WT will pay 80% of \$1.5 million.

Greg had information regarding the UIRSD standing compared to other schools in the state and on the island. The UIRSD has the fifth highest cost per pupil in the state and is the highest on the island. The state averages 13.1 students to one teacher; UIRSD is 9-8.17 students to one teacher. He suggested that the UIRSD consider cutting the cost per

pupil by \$1,000 each which would result in significant savings to taxpayers while still being the highest cost per pupil on the island.

Richard stated that the UIRSD likes its instructional model and that there is a feeling that altering it in any way would change the academically high results of the district. Skipper noted that the model has evolved over the years. When the district was first started, the WT school had over 400 students. As enrollment has declined, the student to teacher ratio has declined accordingly. He added that students did just as well with the higher ratio as with the lower.

Jonathan and Richard would like to have a breakout of the SPED program. Richard was appreciative of the fact that the number of SPED students has decreased from 25% of enrolled students to 18-19%.

Cynthia stated that when the district was started in 1993 it had a lot to do with fairly apportioning the cost of the addition. She would like the FinCom to suggest that the district bring costs in line with the rest of the island. With the changes in the community and the enrollment, she thought it to be a reasonable request.

Katherine pointed out that it's too late in this year's budget season to make any changes, but would like to have the discussion over a longer period of time. Cynthia agreed with this, but felt it was still important to make a statement in a reasonable, financially responsible way.

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

Future meetings

Tuesday, March 8 and 15, 4:30 at the Public Safety Building. There being no other business, a motion for adjournment was made and seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 6:10pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Rogers, Administrative Clerk