

Minutes
West Tisbury Finance Committee Meeting
March 29, 2011
Public Safety Building

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

Guests: Richard Knabel, Skipper Manter and Cynthia Mitchell, BoS; Jen Rand, Town Administrator; Bruce Stone, Town Accountant.

The meeting was called to order at 4:32 p.m.

UIRSD

The focus of this meeting was to find a reasonable reduction to the school budget that can be presented to the voters at the ATM in a format that will be easily understood, as the assessment formula is very complicated.

Bruce worked up numbers, comparing 2011 and 2012, to show how the budget affects the assessment. WT's assessment is up by \$250K based on the 2009 census numbers. WT's share of the Chilmark site is 18-20%; for the WT site, 80-83%. This translates to a big shift regardless of the budget. The town that owns the building pays 80% of the costs to run that building, the other two towns pay a portion of the remaining 20% based on their enrollment percentage. If Aquinnah and Chilmark vote to accept the UIRSD budget, they will have appropriated enough to cover the assessment.

Greg wants to keep the focus on the cost per student. Even with a \$750 per pupil reduction, the URISD will remain the highest cost per pupil not only on the island, but also in the entire commonwealth.

Cynthia pointed out that looking line by line at the budget doesn't deal with the overriding issue of the cost per pupil. Trying to come up with a number by which to reduce the assessment would have to be arbitrary. Being assessed by the enrollment formula makes it a moving target. It would be too difficult to figure, and then to present at the ATM. Addressing the cost per pupil remains the real issue.

Skipper said starting with the cost per pupil would be a good place to begin a discussion. Jonathan added that it would have relevance for all three towns, not just WT, and that it is a reasonable request to make of the school committee.

Katherine wondered if it were possible to explain the savings to the town. What is the tangible amount? Will it make a difference to the town or the taxpayer? Will taxes be lowered? If so, by how much? What affect will a reduction of \$150k have to the taxpayer?

Cynthia proposed that, after this first step to send a message and to raise awareness concerning the high cost per pupil, a small task force be appointed to do an analysis of the budget in an out of the district. It should consist of people with no political agenda, but rather with a concern for accuracy. Have "number crunchers" who can run different scenarios and take a hard look at how the district is working as a district. Who to appoint and other details will have to be worked out by the BoS.

Bruce thought it would be good to get to know where the costs are. Go back to a very detailed level of the budget, and then compile the information to see how expenses are allocated. Sharon agreed, noting that, for instance, the transportation reimbursement is never shown in the budget.

Jonathan made a motion, seconded by Joe, to make an amendment on the town meeting floor to reduce the cost per pupil by \$750. The motion passed 5-0.

At 5:30 Richard called to order a meeting of the BoS so that they could take a vote on Jonathan's motion. Skipper moved to support the FinCom motion. Cynthia seconded Skipper's motion, which passed 3-0.

Jen suggested a letter to Chilmark and Aquinnah informing them of this action and to suggest they might want to consider the same. Also, send a letter to inform the school committee.

Handout

Cynthia felt the handout format was very confusing and did not include enough information for people to know what it was about. She thought it would be better to have FinCom members get up at the ATM do give their input on the minority votes. Others agreed that it would be better to have nothing then to have something that was not clear.

Jonathan made a motion, seconded by Greg, to have no handout this year. The motion passed 5-0.

At 5:52 the BoS adjourned their meeting.

Other Business:

Nancy submitted a bill for her hours from December 14, 2010 to March 27, 2011. Katherine made a motion, seconded by Jonathan, to pay the bill. The motion passed 5-0.

Minutes

Minutes of the March 22 meeting were approved with correction to the spelling of Katherine's name.

Future meetings

April 5 at 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 5:57pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nancy Rogers, Administrative Clerk