

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
6:30PM, Tuesday, December 7, 2021
By Zoom Cloud Conference**

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Present: Chair – Alex Salop, Roxanne Ackerman, Kate DeVane*, Robert Lionette, Skipper Manter,

Others: Supt's Shared Services Office: Matt D'Andrea, Mark Friedman, Ruda Stone, Richie Smith, Hope MacLeod,
Principals: Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Susan Stevens,
Towns – West Tisbury – Greg Orcutt, Doug Ruskin, Kate Warner
Press – Eunki Seonwoo – MV Times
Recorder: Teresa Kruszewski (Marni Lipke)

Call to Order (Agenda Item #I)

The Up-Island Regional School Committee (UIRSC) meeting was called to order.

Public Comment – None (Agenda Item #II)

Finance (Agenda Item #III)

A. Use of UIRSD Contingency Fund for West Tisbury School (WTS) Energy Analysis

(See documents on file & 10/18/21 Minutes p.3-4 #A.)

* During this conversation Kate DeVane entered the meeting.

- West Tisbury Energy Committee Chair Kate Warner reported that the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was almost complete and the funding must be in place before it was advertised, hopefully in early January 2022. She reviewed the finances of this energy analysis stage of the project:
 - possible Green Communities Special grant \$25,000;
 - Cape Light Compact grant pending Green Communities award \$5,000;
 - UIRSD payment of residual (\$10-20,000) of a \$40-50,000 total cost—likely to be closer to \$50,000.
 - If UIRSD Contingency was not available the Town agreed to pay 80% of the total cost.
 - The grants were still unknown and would be used to reimburse the UIRSD if/when awarded.
- The procurement timeline was likely to be 6-8 weeks: 4 weeks of advertisement, 1-2 weeks to review and award bids, up to 4 weeks to sign the contract.
- The Contingency line balance was \$82,779 after a commitment to cover the additional Chilmark School class (see 6/22/21 Minutes p.5 #D).
- The UIRSC asked about and discussed the grant reimbursement process and timing, which turned out to be bureaucratically complex.
 - Funding sources could be changed easily up until the contract was signed and with a little more difficulty until the first invoices were paid. After that funding sources were set and any later grant award would have to be refused. However it was emphasized that the grant award notifications were expected soon and the signing of the contract and possible billing were many months in the future.
 - The WTS study was a portion of the application put forward by the Town of West Tisbury.
- The UIRSC considered a number of options and issues.
 - There was an objection that the Contingency line was in the regional section showing a slightly different formula from the Capital section.

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- There was also an objection that the Contingency line could only be used for emergencies such as unforeseen residential placements. Others maintained that given the current status of the planet, environmental remediation was an emergency.
- Excess and Deficiency (E & D) was a cumbersome process requiring certification, followed by 60 day notice/waiting period in which all three Towns could hold Special Town Meetings (STM) to vote approval—thus giving Towns and/or their Select Boards the opportunity to voice their opinions. There was some disagreement as to whether the Towns could be notified of a possible draw, thus starting the notification timeline before the actual decision.
- The grant funds might be used to reimburse West Tisbury for its 80% portion. It was much too complex to divide the grant among the Towns.
- There was a discussion on whether the action should include a fiscal year end deadline.
- The Task Force would do its best to set a price that would include a construction start date.
- The energy analysis or feasibility stage was the first of 3 stages. The second (probable cost 6 figures) would include detailed work plans, drawings, and specifications and the last phase would be execution/construction for which the UIRSC would likely have to borrow. Kate Warner and WT Finance Committee (FinCom) representative Doug Ruskin requested the following items for the next agenda:
 - a 2022 Annual Town Meeting (ATM) article for Phase II, and
 - a discussion on the WTS flat roof (see 11/15/21 Minutes p.2 #V A).
- The UIRSC had already discussed the project and committed to funding it.
- *KATE DEVANE MOVED THAT BASED ON CURRENTLY APPLIED FOR GRANTS THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMIT UP TO \$50,000 FOR AN ENERGY ANALYSIS OF THE WEST TISBURY SCHOOL; ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 4 AYES, 1 NAY, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, KATE DEVANE—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—NAY, ALEX SALOP—AYE.*

Up Island Regional School District (UIRSD) (Agenda Item #III)

A. Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Budget Workshop

(See documents on file & Minutes: 10/25/21 p.2-3 #IV, 11/2/21, & 11/15/21 p.2-3 #V B.)

In keeping with instructions to reduce the budget, Administration presented the following changes.

- The negotiations placeholder was modestly adjusted in all sections, and the health insurance increase projection was shifted down from 10% to 7.5%.
- E & D was used to offset some one-time or temporary expenses:
 - WTS network security – one time purchase;
 - two WTS FY22 one-on-one Education Support Professionals (ESPs)—in keeping with WTS policy to minimize one-on-one ESPs and pending student improvement/Individual Education Plan (IEP) modification.
 - continuation of the teacher, special teacher and ESP for the additional Chilmark School classroom.
- The \$700 Chilmark School furniture expense was eliminated by sharing items internally among the UIRSD schools.
- The Districtwide section was only up 1.15%.
- The Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) \$50,000 was eliminated, since the UIRSD had reached Actuarially Determined Employer Contribution (ADEC) which included payoff of principal.
- The non-union technician positions had evolved from exploring methods to integrate computers into education, to a crucial service involving important infrastructure requirements. A Statewide study

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showed the Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) salaries to be \$10,000 below average and consequently Superintendent Matt D'Andrea proposed \$10,000 increase for the WTS full time technician and \$5,000 for the Chilmark School half-time technician.

- The Superintendent's Shared Services 3.96% increase (effected by student population shifts across the Island) was included but not yet distributed into appropriate line items.
- Draft #4 total operating increase was ~ \$766,000 or 5.86% and the assessment increase 4.96%.

A large portion of the discussion centered on use of E & D offset.

- A \$287,000 E & D residual was rolled over from previous years. Due to Covid based government grants and reduced pandemic year spending, FY21 E & D was likely to be ~ \$600,000, thus putting E & D over the ~ \$700,000 or 5% UIRSD limit for a \$13,674,000 budget. Although sometimes due to over-budgeting, E & D was often the result of careful savings and/or unforeseen expense reductions or revenue increases.

- Use of E & D funds in the operating budget, satisfied the legal procedures of the 60 day notification and possible Town vote.

- E & D budget offsets had ramifications for following years when the withdrawal of such offsets 'artificially' raised assessments.

- The proposal was to utilize E & D offsets over a period of two years thus easing the assessment transition and addressing the impact of the pandemic, including population changes and much needed extraordinary responses/services for students.

- The Chilmark School enrollment was projected to grow for the next two years—and the UIRSC noted this was a UIRSC goal of many years standing.

- Skipper Manter repeated his belief that all E & D be returned to Town taxpayers and he and Robert Lionette considered that it disingenuously concealed the actual rise in operational costs.

- Others strongly noted that the practice was being/would be discussed in public meetings and public hearings with both FinCom and press representatives present, as well as at all three Town ATMs.

- It was also noted that:

- the money was previously voted for education;

- UIRSC members were elected to manage educational spending;

- E & D returned to the Towns was returned to the Select Boards, not directly to taxpayers;

- the electorate was likely to accept spending funds on pandemic-generated severe needs, rather than the complicated process of giving funds back to Towns and then asking they be re-voted.

- Although some agreed to use E & D for one time expenses, there were objections to using it for personnel that could easily be on-going or permanent positions.

- The UIRSC also discussed the annual \$50,000 OPEB increase.

- The OPEB budget line was currently \$608,000. Roxanne Ackerman strongly considered this to be more than sufficient. The current liability (as discounted for the 37.13% funded principal) was ~\$11,400,000. The UIRSC thanked taxpayers for their generosity.

- Including the \$50,000 increase in the FY23 budget would result in a 6.25% operating increase and 5.26% assessment increase.

- The policy was generated in response to Town initiative (see 4/4/16 Minutes) and after some discussion the UIRSC agreed to retain it until the Towns agreed to eliminate it, including it in the FY23 Budget funded by E & D offset following previous practice of dedicating E & D to OPEB.

* During this conversation Kate DeVane left and re-entered the meeting.

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- As previously noted, Town assessment proportion changes were due to student population shifts:
 - Aquinnah population (stable at 38) – assessment percentage slightly down,
 - Chilmark population 63 - assessment up 2.93%, and
 - West Tisbury with 22 additional students up 6.67%.
- The shifts were due to more students moving into Towns either purchasing houses or living in parents' homes. Consequently the tax base might increase but not necessarily significantly.
- Following State information, Chapter 70 projections were raised \$11,000. Chapter 71 levels were not yet available.
- Charter School tuition and reimbursement both increased for a relatively even 'wash'.
- There were no changes to Medicaid projections.
- School Choice balance included a \$216,000 residual which would be divided between offsetting FY23 and FY24 budgets.

Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair - None (Agenda Item #VI)

Meetings/Events

- **UIRSC/Public Hearing – 6:30PM, Monday, December 13, 2021 – by Zoom**
- **UIRSC – 6:30PM, Friday, December 17, 2021 – by Zoom**

Adjournment

• *KATE DEVANE MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:19PM; ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, KATE DEVANE—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE.*

Documents on File:

- Agenda 12/7/21
- Request for Qualifications, Up-Island Regional School District, Energy Analysis Study, West Tisbury School (9 p.)
- UIRSD FY2022 Assessment – Recertified V#7 2/16/21
- UIRSD FY2023 Assessment – V#4 12/7/21
- Up-Island Regional School District FY23 General Fund Budget – Version #4, 12-07-2021 (12 p.)
- UIRSD FY23 Budget Version #4 11/15/21 (2 p.)
- Chilmark School Weekly Peek (4 p.) 12/3/21

Minutes approved 1/20/22