

Tisbury School Committee
4:00PM, Tuesday, August 9, 2022
Emergency Services Facility Training Room
and by Zoom Conference

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TSC Members Present: Chair Amy Houghton, Jen Cutrer, Michael Watts,
Others: Anna Edey, Lyndsay Famariss, Paul Lazes, Tony Peak, Jeff Robinson,
iPhone, Steve's iPhone, Recorder - Marni Lipke,
CHA/Daedalus – Aditya Modi, Christina Opper, Michael Owen,
WT Rich – John DeBettencourt, Harvey Eskanas, Evan Moore, John Rich,
Brian Santos,
Tappé Architects – Chris Blessen, Toby Zaltsman
MVPS Staff: John Custer – Principal, Melissa Ogden – Assoc. Principal;
Supt. Richie Smith, Student Support – Hope MacLeod,
Catherine Coogan, Anne Davey, Sean DeBettencourt, Reuben Fitzgerald,
Kate Harding, Natalie Krauthamer, Sue Leonard, John Mode,
Ashley Tarter, Jane Taylor, Anne Williamson, PTO – Siobahn Mullin,
Town: Select Board – John Cahill, Roy Cutrer, Town Administrator – Jay Grande,
Bldg. Inspector – Ross Seavey, Fire Chief Greg Leland,
Planning Bd. - Ben Robinson,
Finance Committee – Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Jynell Kristal,
Climate Change - Melinda Loberg, Louise Clough, Kate Shands,
TSBC: Chair Michael Watts, Prin. John Custer, Rita Jeffers, Sean DeBettecourt,
Press: Louisa Hufstader -Vineyard Gazette, Rich Saltzberg – MV Times
* Late Arrivals or early departures of TSC members.

The Tisbury School Committee (TSC) hybrid (Zoom/in-person) meeting was called to order at 4:04PM. (Recorder's note: Discussions are summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.)

I. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes

- **ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. JEN CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MR. MICHAEL WATTS THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS WERE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED (3 AYES, 0 NAYS, ABSTENTIONS AS ABSENT):**
- MAY 10, 2022,
- JUNE 14, 2022 AND
- JUNE 29, 2022.

II. Principal's Report

A. Personnel

1. Staffing Update

- The TSC welcomed and congratulated new Superintendent Richie Smith, a former Tisbury School Assistant Principal.
- Administration was interviewing in an attempt to be fully staffed in September. New hires were listed.
- Tisbury School Graduate – Ms. Monica Carroll was hired as an Education Support Professional (ESP) – but would first serve as the long-term Spanish teacher substitute.
- Former ESP, Ms. Kathryn Harcourt, now teacher certified, was hired for 5th/6th grade Special Education.

- 20 year Tisbury School veteran, Ms. Natalie Krauthammer would be a 1st grade teacher.
- Ms. Carrie Caldwell was hired as a one-year-only 5th grade English/Language Arts (E/LA) and Social Studies teacher (see below Ms. Kari Leal).
- Ms. Diane Booth would be the long term kindergarten (K) ESP substitute.
- Ms. Sarah DeBettencourt was hired for the one-year-only ESSER III grant-funded middle school academic support teacher (see 5/10/22 Minutes p.2 #B1) focusing on Covid impact remediation.
- Vacancies included 4 ESP positions and a one-year-only middle school math teacher.

2. Resignation(s)

- **ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MR. WATTS THE FOLLOWING RESIGNATIONS WERE UNANIMOUSLY ACKNOWLEDGED (3 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS):**
- **MS. KATHRYN HARCOURT FROM HER EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL POSITION WITH CONGRATULATIONS (see above), AND**
- **EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL MS. JULIE HATT WITH REGRET.**

3. Leave of Absence (LOA) Request

- **ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MR. WATTS AND SECONDED BY MS. CUTRER THE FOLLOWING LEAVES OF ABSENCE WERE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED/ACKNOWLEDGED (3 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS):**
- **MS. MONICA CARROLL FROM HER EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL POSITION FROM AUGUST 31, 2022 TO DECEMBER 2, 2022, AND**
- **MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH TEACHER MS. KARI LEAL FOR THE 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR (see 5/10/22 Minutes p.2 #B 3).**

II. School Building Project Update

B. Changes in Budget and Town Meeting Requirements

In conjunction with the Town the TSC was working hard to keep the project moving forward in order to minimize rising inflation. Due to circumstances beyond anyone's control (Covid pandemic impact, supply chain problems, inflation, labor shortage, the war in Ukraine) it was proving to be challenging to find qualified bidders. Consequently it was necessary to seek approval of residents and taxpayers for additional funds. Earlier in the summer, options were considered and chosen to proceed with the original price and return to the voters for additional parts such as windows (see 5/10/22 Minutes p.3-4 #VI A), however the current situation was as follows.

- A Special Town Meeting (STM) was scheduled for September 20, 2022, to vote on the additional borrowing—2/3 majority vote required for approval.
- The Tisbury Select Board (TSB) sent a letter to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) requesting permission to allow the additional funds be voted at the STM with discretionary permission on whether to also require a ballot. This was sometimes allowed for overages within an original project's scope that fit certain parameters. The DOR decision was expected within the next week or 10 days. The TSB and Town Administrator had conversations with the Town Accountant, Town Attorney as well as the DOR.
- Pending the DOR decision, a ballot could be on October 4, 2022.
- Construction Manager at Risk (CMR) WT Rich was required to submit a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) (expected around August 19th) for the defined scope of work—which with the exception of change orders would be a solid number for voters. The Project was put out to bid in different categories of subcontractors some requiring low bids some involving negotiations. The Team worked hard for "best and final" bids/estimates. Traditionally bids

were set for 6 months however current hold times were shorter—e.g. structural steel would only hold 1 week.

- The GMP included best estimates for each area of work as well as ~ 2% overall contingency.

Public questions and attendant discussion included a number of issues.

- If the DOR ruled the ballot vote was unnecessary, the final decision rested with the TSB.

- It was emphasized that the DOR decision was not a denial of voting rights since all residents could vote and were strongly encouraged to attend the STM. The Town had already strongly supported this project in the June 2021 vote and ballot.

- This was the third time the Town had hired and paid architects to design a school, so to fail the project and start again would be an additional redundant expense with the next project very likely to exceed the current Project cost.

- Every delay whether a week or a month cost the Town both through inflation and modular school rent, so it was preferable to proceed on the STM two thirds vote.

- Municipal as well as private projects across the State (and the Island) were 10-25% over budget, for example Lowell's new school (at ~ \$40,000,000 overbudget). The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) was reporting most school projects were currently \$790-\$820 per square foot. However the Tisbury Project was 50% over budget.

- The original estimate by the Team of: architects, Owners Project Manager (OPM) and Construction Manager at Risk (CMR) on schematic/60% construction drawings (CDs) based about a year and a half ago on the professionals' experience with historical numbers and inflation. However the current construction market was so volatile it was difficult to predict. Normally an estimate would be repeated at 90% CDs but to streamline the process and forestall inflation the Town went straight to 100% estimate/biddable CDs.

- Bidding results were tricky and dependent on how many bidders competed for a job. Mr. John Rich of CMR WT Rich Co. emphasized the importance of the "Island factor" in the pricing. Construction companies and subcontractors already experiencing a heavy market, with labor and supply shortages, were strongly influenced/discouraged by the added problems of working on the Island: housing, transportation of materials and labor, cost of living, etc. Town Administrator Jay Grande, underscored this point, citing the Martha's Vineyard Museum which could not attract any bidders, the doubled prices at all the local lumberyards, and residents' difficulty in getting any trades people to work on their houses. It was inappropriate to compare costs with the rest of the State which had housing, public transportation and other conveniences.

- Ms. Anna Edey stated the actual cost to the Town was \$170,000,000 and that she was petitioning voters to reject additional costs for her alternate design of a much better school at half the cost and only a 6-9 month timeline.

- The TSC acknowledged this was a terrible position to be in, eliciting much finger-pointing and blame, lack of leadership, etc. All actions were according to law, and the TSC and Town were doing the best they could. In order to minimize delays and reduce costs:

- the Project was reduced both in size and Value Engineering (VE);

- the Town tried to support bidders with housing;

- alternatives were explored such as sending students/staff to other elementary schools (Towns were not encouraging and no space was available).

- As to questions on stopping the project altogether, at least \$10-12,000,000 of the \$55,000,000 had already been committed to companies and sub-contractors that had refused other work to their detriment when committing to this Project. Cancellation costs would be exceedingly high and would damage further work on the School. The remaining funds would not be sufficient for any other project.

- Further reductions or redesign would be tantamount to stopping the project, repeat preparations and re-bid; resulting in further delay, attendant inflation costs, ongoing \$85,000/ mo. modular school rent, etc.
- Talks between the 6 Towns showed any agreement to be an ongoing challenge. Although most school leaders favored regionalization, it was not a viable present option for Tisbury students.
- Therefore, increased cost seemed to be the least problematic of the options. The Town continued to research alternative funding including grants, private donations (a Friends of the Tisbury School was established); political advocacy including State and Federal Representatives, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), MSBA and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).
- Although an individual could speak to not being able to afford the increased costs, it was deceptive to speak of Tisbury as a whole not being able to afford the Project. The TSC had done the math and encouraged each voter to vote their opinion.
 - Mr. Rich Saltzberg of the Martha's Vineyard Times asked if there was a “plan B” and if/when further escalation of costs might trigger such a plan.
- The TSC responded that whatever the outcome, the students and staff would move into and remain in the temporary school modulars which were air purified, reviewed by hygienists, and monitored during construction with safety as the first priority. They would not return to the current “sick” building due to black mold, asbestos, lead in the water and the paint, etc. This was the only “plan B” being considered. As a long-run solution modulars were likely to discourage staff and families. Students would return to the renovated building at the completion of the project.

A. Approval of Invoices – Invoices had been reviewed and signed.
(See documents on file.)

C. Timeline for Construction

The timeline was posted on the website.

- Gym demolition was currently scheduled for October. Preceding elements such as hazardous material (hazmat) removal and elevator decommissioning were in process.
- Three trees were scheduled to be cut down to accommodate grading changes and security fencing needed for the temporary school.
 - There was a series of public comments.
- No irrevocable work should be done before the Town vote.
- Planning Board Chair Ben Robinson maintained that retaining the gym was the cheapest option and the rebuild was only to accommodate 7th/8th grade basketball, and suggested many other alternatives be explored. He stated:
 - the new School would be outdated within the near future;
 - the TSC had not included taxpayers in the list of those hurt by the Project overage,
 - and requested an itemized list of all spending so far.
- Mr. Tony Peak supported retaining the gym, reducing the project to a simple clean-up and renovation of the existing building predicting the Island would agree to a regional junior high attached to the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) project within 5-10 years.
- Both Mr. Peak and Mr. Robinson spoke strongly about the current state of the School and leadership elected to make hard choices.
- Ms. Edey passionately protested the removal of trees, which could not be replaced and invited anyone to join her in on-site protests.
 - The Town found 2 trees had significant rot. WT Rich noted it took 3 weeks to find a contractor and schedule the work. The TSC and Town agreed to consider the matter.

- Ms. Melinda Loberg representing the Town Climate Committee received confirmation that the School would be all electric and solar ready and asked about solar battery storage. They supported and were cooperating on the continuing Project net-zero goal and alternate funding. The Committee had been doing its homework on the Project and was prepared to strongly recommend that any Town project make climate change a primary consideration.

- Solar was separated from the Project early on, in consideration of alternate funding and State and Federal grants.

- The existing gym roof could not support solar panels.

- Superintendent Richie Smith had technical difficulties with his Zoom connection. He spoke in support of the Project asking the community to come together to build the School, noting the 2018 vote to fail the previous \$35,000,000 new school project was only 567 to 546 and the hard work to present a renovation/addition for the current project that was overwhelmingly supported at Town Meeting and the ballot, putting children first. He emphasized that everyone in the educational community was thinking about the taxpayers and that no one was to blame for the current challenging conditions.

- The TSC pointed out its history maintaining low operational costs within Town requests.

D. Timeline for Move to Temporary School

1. Occupancy Permit

Progress on the Temporary school was awaiting Eversource's struggle to get the necessary power up the street to the site, and struggling with increasing procurement difficulty with fire safety and alarm protection—present lead time at least a year. Building Inspector Ross Seavey would issue an occupancy permit for the temporary school—estimated move-in no later than November 1, 2022. Principal John Custer assured the public that there was a lot of continuing work preparing safety and family confidence in the temporary school

2. Kitchen and Cafeteria Plan

The Team, Administration and TSC were considering upgrading and using the American Legion kitchen and dining space as more convenient than the Emergency Services Facility (ESF) space used in the previous dislocation (see Minutes: 9/18/19 and 10/2/19).

E. Communication with Staff and Family

- The TSC was working on how to best communicate with families and the community, keeping the website updated, considering a weekly report for press and distribution. They welcomed all meetings with other Town boards, committees, departments, etc. and pleaded for public, teachers and parents to form a community relations and Project support team.
- The TSC thanked everyone for their comments. They asked that all information be accurate, which had not always been the case. For example they took exception to the previous statement about a \$170,000,000 Project cost.

Adjournment

• ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MR. WATTS THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING UNANIMOUSLY ADJOURNED AT 5:36PM; 3 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.

Appendix A: Meetings/Events:

- TSBC – 3:30PM, Monday, August 22, 2022 - Zoom
- AISC – 6:30PM, Wednesday, August 31, 2022 – MVRHS – Zoom
- MVRHSC – 6:00PM, Thursday, September 1, 2022 – MVRHS – Zoom
- MVRHSC – 6:00PM, Monday, September 12, 2022 – MVRHS - Zoom
- TSC – TBD, Tuesday, September 13, 2022 – ESF – Zoom

continued >

Appendix B: Actions

- Mr. Watts/Town Financial Office – submit itemized list of all Project spending.
- Ms. Houghton/Professional Team – report on black mold.

Appendix C: Documents on File:

- Agenda 8/9/22
- Cover email & Tappé Architects Invoice (2 p.) 7/20/22
- Cover email re: June 2022 invoices for Tisbury Elementary School
- Tappé Architects Invoices (3 p.) 6/24/22
- Bishop Materials Laboratory 2/17/22
- Gale Associates (2 p.) 4/13/22
- Urgent Request to Our Honorable Selectmen, the School Committee and TSBC...
- Chat:
 - rich 39:47 Rich Saltzberg, MVTIMES
 - Lyndsay Famariss 40:06 Lyndsay Famariss
 - B Santos i 840:13 Brian Santos, WTR iPhone
 - Elizabeth Anne Williamson 43:03 Anne Williamson, grade 3 Tisbury School teacher is “Elizabeth Anne Williamson”. My laptop mouse pad is freezing and making it difficult to navigate in a timely manner.
 - Ross Seavey - Building Commissioner 02:03:23 I’m on the zoom if you need me

Minutes respectfully submitted by Office On Call/Marni Lipke.

Marni Lipke – Recorder

Date

Amy Houghton – TSC Chair

Date

Minutes approved 9/13/22