

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
6:15PM, Monday, December 12, 2022
West Tisbury School
and By Zoom Cloud Conference**

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Present: Chair – Alex Salop, Roxanne Ackerman*, Robert Lionette, Skipper Manter,
Jim Newman,

Others: Supt's Shared Services Office: Richie Smith, Mark Friedman,
Ellie Parece,
Principals: Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Mary Boyd, Susan Stevens,
Towns: WT FinCom – Greg Orcutt,
Press: Vineyard Gazette – Louisa Hufstader, MV Times – Eunki Seonwoo,
*Late arrivals or early departures of UIRSC members

Call to Order (Agenda item #I)

The Up-Island Regional School Committee (UIRSC) meeting was called to order and warrants were presented for signatures. The UIRSC held a moment of silence for accident victim Riley Ignacio-Cameron of Aquinnah.

Chilmark Copier Lease Approval (See documents on file.) (Agenda Item #II)

This 24 month lease was to replace 2 leased copiers at a slightly reduced monthly rent.

• *JIM NEWMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE LEASE OF NEW COPIERS FOR THE CHILMARK SCHOOL AT \$683.21 PER MONTH; ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Budget (Agenda Item #III)

(See documents on file, & Minutes: 11/14/22 p1-2 #II, & 11/21/22 p. 4-5 #VII B, & 12/7/22 p.1-3 #II.)

* During this discussion Roxanne Ackerman entered the meeting by Zoom at 6:20PM.

- The UIRSC had requested 2 UIRSD FY24 budget versions, at 4.65% and at 6.5% increases.
- Given only 2 or 3 business days, Administrators were only able to present Version #3 at a total decrease of \$964,000 after the School Choice offset for a \$14,866,957.50 or 6.94% operating budget—or 6.47% assessed increase. The assessment presented major Chilmark and Aquinnah increases. Any further reductions would involve staff cuts.

West Tisbury School (WTS)

- Extra-curricular programs were trimmed, including the after-school \$10,000 expansion which would continue the student waitlist for activities. An option for parents to contribute to the program and or to find a benefactor, would require the creation of an account and withdrawal procedures.
- The grant funded Summer School Program Special Education (SpEd) teachers salary would be cut by \$1,500—this was separate from the Extended School Year (ESY) SpEd program.
- Water Systems Maintenance could be reduced \$1,500 in line with trending.
- The new custodian position hours was decreased to below 0.5 Full Time Equivalent (FTE), also eliminating benefits.
- Smaller cuts included: Nature's Classroom (covered by student tuition increase), audio/visual (A/V) maintenance and equipment, kindergarten (K) supplies, Student Data, Computer Maintenance, etc.

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- The Contingency lines were shifted from the school sites to the Districtwide part.
- FY23 Health insurance had been running consistently over-budget due to both insurance rate increases and staff family vs. individual plan choices.
- The bottom line (including the \$80,000 Contingency shift) was \$291,000.

Chilmark School

- Principal's R & D (Research & Development) and Undistributed Supplies were cut \$2,500 each,
- while Undistributed Conferences and Workshops was cut \$2,200.
- Furniture would be borrowed from WTS surplus for a \$5,000 reduction.
- Extra Custodial services was reduced \$1,000.
- K Education Support Professionals (ESPs) were reduced consolidating the ESPs to 4 positions total.
- Grounds Maintenance was reduced \$750 in accordance with spending trends.
- Smaller cuts included: Student Data, Office Equipment, Other Food Expenses, K Supplies, Computer Maintenance, etc.
- Contingency was shifted to the Districtwide part.
- The new ESP position was eliminated although the Reading Specialist was increased from 0.8 to 1.0 FTE to compensate (see 11/21/22 Minutes p.2-3 #IV B).
- There was a discussion on the 2023-24 UIRSD kindergarten enrollment. Chilmark School projected 7 incoming K students, but WTS K (usually 2 teachers/classrooms and 1 ESP for 20-24 students) did not start K registration until January and enrollment was very fluid due to summer registration, English Language Learners (ELL) and late residential moves.
- The UIRSD Regional Agreement allowed families to choose which School to register K students.
- The Chilmark School had 29-30 2nd/3rd Grade students requiring two 2nd/3rd sections.

Districtwide

- The Videography line (see 3/18/13 Minutes p.5 #E) was also for videoing UIRSC budget workshops—regular meetings were required public access. However the funds were fairly consistently unspent since \$1,400 in FY20. The UIRSC agreed to cut the line in half to \$1,000.
- This Version eliminated the FY24 \$50,000 Other Post Employee Benefit (OPEB) increase as conversations with auditors showed the UIRSD well over the Actuarially Determined Employer Contribution (ADEC). The Aquinnah Finance Committee (FinCom) agreed to forego the \$50,000 increase. The West Tisbury and Chilmark FinComs would consider it at their next meetings.
- In addition the OPEB line was reduced in consideration of eliminated or reduced positions.

The UIRSC thanked the Administrators for this exercise but emphasized their request for both 4.65% and 6.5% Versions.

- Superintendent Richie Smith spoke as follows.
- Version #3 constituted some cuts as well as elimination of program growth.
- During a period with the highest inflation in 40 years on top of unprecedented staff pay raises, every Island elementary school was dealing with a-typical budget increases.
- A 4.65% Version would force personnel cuts in both schools. Administrators emphasized the responsibility of notifying staff before discussing reductions in public meetings. Speculating publicly on taking people's jobs in these anxious times would be an unfair action to take for a budget exercise.
- Each version and the 4% version in particular, took many hours of work during the Central Office's busiest budget season for all 6 MVPS essentially drafted by one person. The UIRSC was likely to only briefly consider and not approve a 4.65% version. Given the timeframe, Administrators concluded that the additional and challenging version was not a productive use of its limited time.

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- Robert Lionette reminded Supt. Smith of his goal to keep MVPS budgets to 2.5%. Supt. Smith responded that given this year's unusual parameters he was unable to keep the Central Office budget at that level and so waived the goal for FY24.
- The Chilmark School budget was already at bare bones with no reserve to deal with unexpected mid-year expenses and a 20% population rise.
- A member suggested offsetting the increase with Excess and Deficiency (E & D) and the OPEB Line.
- Others' experience was that taxes increased and had to be paid. Some School Committee members were against the lasting damage of severe cuts.
- Skipper Manter repeated his emphasis on spending rather than assessments.
- Robert Lionette raised the issue of student/teacher ratio, maintaining the UIRSD had an embarrassment of riches in this area, assuming that all staffing and programs were good. The 4.65% version was a challenge to Administrators. Roxanne Ackerman suggested re-opening the union contracts to raise the class size cap. Others considered that although these were worthy conversations, it was a very late hour to request such extensive and philosophical changes, which should be addressed with stakeholder input at length during the course of a year.
- WTS Principal Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, defended the UIRSD student achievement success as evidenced by parent feedback and the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) graduation statistics: Special Education/co-teaching record, huge gains in Spanish language, WTS Districtwide ELL program—all despite impressive population increases in both schools.
- UIRSD Schools had worked hard to contain increases:

FY20	Central Office UIRSD assessed 5.88%,	WTS 5.50%,	Chilmark 14.06%
FY21	Central Office UIRSD assessed -2.8%,	WTS 3.04%,	Chilmark 2.59%
FY22	Central Office UIRSD assessed 5.84%,	WTS 3.27%,	Chilmark 6.64%
FY23	Central Office UIRSD assessed 6.15%	WTS 4.25%,	Chilmark 23.21%
FY24 Version 3	Central Office UIRSD assessed 4.2%,	WTS 7.6%,	Chilmark 13.18%.
- Administrators and some UIRSC members advocated for regional solutions as a better alternative.
- The UIRSC was interested in containing increases over the coming years and needed to understand budget strengths and weaknesses. It was important to present voters with the serious consequences of not approving the requested increase, to which Supt. Smith agreed.
- The UIRSC also requested drafts of 2 warrant articles: 1) universal preschool pilot, 2) WTS feasibility study with the internal position capacity to support the work.

Meetings/Events

- Manter Eggnog Drive-Thru – 6:00-8:00PM, Saturday, December 17, 2022 – #4 Briarwood Lane
- UIRSC - 6:15PM, Monday, December 19, 2022 – WTS
- UIRSC Public Hearing - 5:00PM, Thursday, December 22, 2022 – WTS

Adjournment

- *JIM NEWMAN MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 7:42PM; SKIPPER MANTER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE.*

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Documents on File:

- Agenda 12/12/22
- Axion Purchase Agreement/Security Agreement 10/6/22
- UIRSD FY24 Budget Version #3 12/12/22, Proposed Changes from FY23 Budget (3 p.)
- Up-Island Regional School District FY24 General Fund Budget – Version #3, 12-12-2022 (12 p.)
- UIRSD FY2024 Assessment – V#3 12/12/2022
- Chilmark School Weekly Peek (3 p.) 12/09/2022

Minutes approved 1/17/23