

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
6:15PM, Wednesday, December 7, 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,
Hope MacLeod, Ellie Parece,
Principals: Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Mary Boyd, Susan Stevens,
Towns: WT Treasurer – Kathy Logue, Energy Chair – Kate Warner,
*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.

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

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

- * Towards the beginning of this discussion Roxanne Ackerman entered the meeting.
- Version #2 operating budget included items from the last meeting (except pre-school expenses) and came to \$15,127,522.98 or 8.81%—assessed at a little over 8%.
- Skipper Manter preferred spending to assessed budgets an objected to several formats.
 - ° Principals' requests not included but added as the UIRSC debated, instead of included and eliminated as the UIRSC debated
 - ° The inclusion of Excess & Deficiency (E & D) Contingency Line and the Medicaid offsets, instead of expenditure only. Martha's Vineyard Public School Business Administrator Mark Friedman explained that this was the format that had been used for the last 4-5 years, predating his term of office and which allowed accurate year-to-year comparisons. Mr. Manter emphasized this objection several more times during the meeting.
- The UIRSC examined a five year trend in UIRSD budgets with the lowest being 2.23% in FY20 and the highest being 6.31% in FY19 for an average percentage increase of 4.2%. This budget was already 2.5% above the FY23 increase. During Covid there was an exercise in 0% increase during the year because of unpredictable receivables.
- Other MVPS FY24 increases were about half the UIRSD 8.81%—and Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) which was at 2.3% despite very large population growth.
- As in previous meetings and in keeping with other MVPS, the recent collective bargaining agreement impact was about \$605,000 or 4.65%. (not including non-union salary adjustments). The highest inflationary pressures in many years was another factor before consideration of any discretionary items.
- The Superintendent's Shared Services (or Central) Office was up 4.2% as assessed by student population from the Office total increase of 5.97%.
- There was a discussion and decision to start the process by looking at larger overall items before specifics and to discuss items more directly under the purview of the UIRSC.
- Since the UIRSD had reached/exceeded its Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) liability

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Actuarially Determined Employer Contribution (ADEC) in FY23 the UIRSC requested notification/permission from the 3 town's Finance Committees (FinComs) (see 11/14/22 Minutes p.2-3) to discontinue the annual \$50,000 increase. Some members argued to continue paying down the liability faster than 30 years. Others noted the UIRSD was in excellent position, better than almost all the Island municipalities. After some debate on:

- \$50,000 as 0.03% of the operating budget,
- fluidity of liability and ADEC,
- overall UIRSD debt,
- whether FinCom permission was required,

it was agreed to ask/inform the FinComs that the FY24 \$50,000 increase be eliminated with annual monitoring for any ADEC changes.

- The Contingency line was established with E & D funding to eliminate the cumbersome E & D process (see 3/18/19 Minutes p.4 #E) so that emergency funds could be available as needed. If not used these funds rolled back into E & D at the end of the fiscal year. Issues included:

- inaccessibility of E & D, and continued cumbersome process;
- option to overspend lines and use of E & D to back fill;
- splitting it 80% West Tisbury School (WTS) site and 20% Chilmark site instead of Districtwide and the overall historical balance and recent use by each site;
- whether E & D sources could be traced to specific sites;
- arbitrary setting of Contingency at \$99,000—the E & D of the year the Contingency was established;

There was a brief conversation on regions serving all students that mentioned regionalization of the entire MVPS, Mr. Manter stating there was nothing regional about the UIRSD.

- E & D certification application was for ~ \$770,000 which was right at the 5% cap. The UIRSD Special Education Stabilization Fund (see Minutes: 12/16/19 Regular p.2 #V F, & 5/4/21 p.3 #C) was established but not funded. Since this was a common source of unexpected expenses the UIRSC could consider voting some E & D into the Fund.

- Increased E & D offsets to the budget was not advised because it resulted in spikes. A large offset was used to cover FY23 one-time expenses (one-year-only one-on-one positions, network security etc.). This offset was being gradually reduced (see Minutes: 12/17/21 p.1-3 #III-IV & 1/20/22 p.2).

- There was general consensus that 8.81% was not an acceptable increase. However the specifics of what could be cut and the tough decisions resided with the heads of schools. Chilmark Head of School Susan Stevens protested there were very few discretionary items in her budget. The UIRSC requested 2 proposed budgets one at 4.65% (level service contractual without inflation) and 6.5% to split the difference.

The next conversation was about the implementation of a universal preschool pilot year. The total price was estimated at \$250,000 for a dual format 180 day program for 18-20 UIRSD 4 year olds: a WTS classroom for about 10 children requiring a teacher and assistant, and hybrid subsidies for about 10 more in private preschools, matching or under the \$12,672/year State per pupil average ncost.

- The program would require UIRSC policies on entry and lottery procedures, agreements with private preschools and other legalities.

- It was suggested that initial Town minimum admissions be set (e.g. 2 from each Town) with the remaining being random choice by lottery.

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- Although the pilot year was for 4 year olds the eventual goal was for any UIRSD child over 2.9 years. The UIRSC considered:
- general research on the benefits of preschools;
 - MV Youth, grant, federal or state funding—being aggressively researched but not readily available;
 - equity issues and impacts on private preschools, most of which had waiting lists;
 - designed in coordination with Early Childhood Coordinator Jen Royale and in response to private preschool directors input;
 - family choice of hybrid and/or classroom options;
 - \$500,000 cost of only hybrid program, i.e. elimination of classroom option;
 - possible option to Request For Proposal (RFP) for 3rd party contract;
 - WTS and Chilmark classroom space issues—to be further discussed;
 - presentation as a warrant article versus requirement to be in the UIRSD budget (see 10/17/22 Minutes p.3 #2)—which would push the FY24 increase over 10%.

Environmentally Friendly Building Project (Agenda Item #IV)

The UIRSC thanked West Tisbury Energy Committee Chair Kate Warner for her patience.

- West Tisbury and the UIRSD had paid for an excellent energy analysis to electrify and insulate the WTS (see 9/19/22 Minutes p.4-5 #B) which was the current nationwide push for all schools. The energy portion of the project was estimated at \$23,000,000 with an additional \$6,000,000 for a temporary school during the construction period.
- Principal Donna Lowell-Bettencourt and Assistant Principal Mary Boyd suggested the WTS space needs list (see 10/17/22 Minutes p.2-3 #III) could be consolidated to a “linked” but separately secured wing with 3-4,000 sq. ft. of flexible classroom space and a gym with separate bathrooms for enhanced shelter and community use; plus a 20 ft. expansion of the cafeteria/kitchen in the existing envelope, all totaling ~ 12-14,000 sq. ft. A feasibility study for this portion was estimated at ~ \$800,000.

However there were several obstacles to the project.

- The project was not yet on the Town Capital Improvement list, which included the Howes House renovation and other items calling on the same funding that had been working their way up the pipeline for a number of years. West Tisbury Treasurer Kathy Logue suggested that it would take this project at least a couple years to come to Town consideration.
- The project would only qualify for the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Core Program, a competitive grant based on the dire needs of schools across the Commonwealth. The WTS having been well maintained, and recently (2011) undergone envelope improvements, (siding, doors, windows, etc.) was not likely to be considered as a prime candidate, particularly considering the lengthy MVRHS MSBA application process.
- (Unfortunately many of the 2011 renovations would have to be re-done to current energy standards.)
- The MSBA Core process included/required an MSBA lead exhaustive feasibility study (engineering, technology, location, renovation/new school options, etc.), that precluded any previous Town or School sponsored feasibility study.
- MSBA application process was a part-time job in and of itself thus segueing into the next obstacle...
- The capital oversight capacity of the Central Office was again emphasized, necessitating the consideration of a temporary or permanent MVPS Assistant Financial Administrator or UIRSD

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Financial Administrator. The UIRSC requested Superintendent Richie Smith advise the Committee on the Central Office vision of expanding the internal capacity (part or full time, permanent of temporary, supervision, etc.).

- Island MSBA grants usually covered ~ 38% of eligible expenses. The years-long delay might wipe out or minimize any revenue advantage because of ongoing construction inflation so waiting for MSBA was a gamble and might be a mistake.

Procurement Procedure Waiver for Grant Funded Food Trailer (Agenda Item #III)

The UIRSD received a \$223,000 State Food Security grant (to be spent by June 2023) that covered new WTS kitchen equipment (dishwasher, deep freeze, stove, ovens, etc.) and a \$65,000 food trailer for Chilmark School use as well as for gleaning processing and community gatherings/events. Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 30B recently changed the formal bid RFP level from \$50,000 to \$100,000. The food trailer had already procured 2 of the 3 required written quotes.

- *ROBERT LIONETTE MOVED TO ADAPT THE \$100,000 PROCUREMENT POLICY FOR THE PURCHASE OF THE FOOD TRAILER; SKIPPER MANTER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair (See Meetings/Events) (Agenda Item #V)

Meetings/Events

- WT Holiday Party – 5:00-7:00PM, Thursday, December 8, 2022 – Ag. Hall
- UIRSC Budget Workshop - 6:15PM, Monday, December 12, 2022 – WTS
- UIRSC - 6:15PM, Monday, December 19, 2022 – WTS
- UIRSC Public Hearing - 5:00PM, Thursday, December 22, 2022 – WTS

Adjournment

- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO ADJOURN; ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Documents on File:

- Agenda 12/7/22
- Up-Island Regional School District FY24 General Fund Budget – Version #2, 12-07-2022 (12 p.)
- UIRSD FY24 Budget Version #2 Proposed (Non-Contractual) from FY23 Budget (3 p.)
- Friedman cover email re: UIRSD FY24 Budget – Version #2 12/7/22
- School District as of November 13, 2022 *employee list* (10 p.)
- UIRSD FY2024 Assessment – V#2 12/07/2022
- Lowell-Bettencourt email re: UIRSD FY24 Budget – Version #2 12/7/22
- Doty letter
- MVYPS Budgets FY18-FY23

Minutes approved 1/17/23