

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
5:30PM, Thursday, April 13, 2023
West Tisbury School and by Zoom Cloud Conference**

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

Others: Supt's Shared Services Office: Richie Smith, Mark Friedman, Hope MacLeod, Ellie Parece,
Principals: Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Susan Stevens, Edg. School - Shelley Einbinder,
Staff – Kristine Cammorata, Cana Courtney, Kaitlyn Kurth, Catherine Mafcher, Melissa McNickles, Ellen Rossi, Bea Whiting,
Parents - Alyson Cameron Parry,
WT FinCom – Greg Orcutt,
Chilmark Pre-School – Alicia Knight, Debbi Zetterberg,
Press – Shavanáe Anderson – MVTV, Jenna Bernstein – MV Times, Louisa Hufstader – Vineyard Gazette,
Recorder: Marni Lipke

*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. The agenda order was altered to accommodate those with other commitments.

(Recorder's note: Discussions have been summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.)

Approval of Minutes (Agenda item #II)

A. Including But Not Limited To: 3/13/23, 3/20/23 as Amended, and 3/27/23

• ALEX SALOP MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:

- MARCH 13, 2023, MARCH 20, 2023 AS AMENDED, AND MARCH 27, 2023;

ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, ABSTENTIONS AS ABSENT.

Principals' Report (Agenda Item #III)

A. Donna Lowell-Bettencourt – West Tisbury School (WTS) (See documents on file.)

1. Grant Update

The UIRSD portion of the Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) Student Opportunity Act (SOA) co-teaching English Language Learners (ELL) grant would be spent as follows (MVPS 500 student ELL population numbers now about equaled MVPS SpEd numbers):

- this year – Professional Development (PD) with an ELL coach, and on-line PD exploring the Harvard Universal Design for Learning;

- next year – ELL coach to implement co-teaching in classrooms, and on-line Harvard Universal Design PD moving from exploration to implementation, plus an additional Special Education (SpEd) co-teacher in both the WTS and the Chilmark School.

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- year 3 – continue all programs from year 2, plus the 2 ELL WTS teachers would spend one period a day co-teaching.
- Staff would receive stipends for after school training/planning. This summer's PD programs were already over-enrolled.
- Hoping to continue support beyond 3 years, Administration aimed to apply the grant without expanding staff, but rather shifting positions and/or utilizing positions vacant by attrition so there could be an ELL co-teacher and/or a SpEd co-teacher in a classroom.
- This grant would expand co-teaching into WTS elementary grades depending on how the situation unfolded. Chilmark was likely to implement it in the 2nd/3rd grade classes where there was the most need.
- Standing WTS middle school co-teaching models (which required a year's pre-planning, study and incremental rollout) had benefited all students as shown in data and positive parent feedback. It required an intense partnership between 2 teachers with complimentary or similar styles constantly collaborating on lesson planning, teaching, individual student evaluation, etc. It was an expensive but desirable model which allowed content learning for various groups (ELL, SpEd, etc.) in the regular classroom instead of in pull-out sessions.

2. UIRSD Wellness Policy – 2nd Reading

(See documents on file & 11/21/22 Minutes p.3 #B1.)

The Wellness Committee updated the policy for both schools. Significant changes included:

- addition of staff wellness policy,
- elimination of specific nutrition guidelines since the State mandated extensive guidelines, reporting, and on-site visits for all school lunch programs.
- The UIRSC requested the paragraph on Committee oversight be clarified to refer to the single Wellness Committee. Thanks went to the Wellness Committee for their great work.
- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED THE SECOND READING OF THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL DISTRICT WELLNESS POLICY; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Finance (Agenda item #IV)

B. Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Budget Recertification – VOTE

(See documents on file and 12/22/22 Minutes p.2 #II.)

In an extremely atypical action (and in time for Town Meeting season), it was proposed the FY23 budget line for the Chilmark School heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) first debt payment be reduced. The line was funded in accordance with the 80/10/10% capital formula, whereas if it reverted to Excess and Deficiency (E & D) would become operating formula funds. If approved, the funds would probably end up in each Town's Free Cash and could be put towards future debt costs to cover the upsettingly high project cost (see Minutes: 3/9/23, & 3/13/23 p.3-4 #IV). This was a UIRSC decision by Massachusetts General Law (MGL). The UIRSC expressed concern over:

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- reducing the budget while spending contingency funds (see below: #III B 2);
- a complaint about a vote precedent benefiting the Town of Chilmark when contingency spending had a tendency to burden the Town of West Tisbury.
- *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO REDUCE THE FISCAL YEAR 2023 UP ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET CHILMARK HEATING/VENTILATION/AIR CONDITIONING DEBT PAYMENT (INTEREST CH HVAC) LINE ITEM BY \$95,000, FOR A TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET OF \$13,807,739.93 AND ASSESSED BUDGET AT \$13,575,245.07; ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED; 4 AYES, 1 NAY—SKIPPER MANTER, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

A. Expense & Revenue Reports

Moving into the last FY23 quarter, the budget was tight so end-of year E & D was projected to be modest. Charter School tuition was higher than expected, reducing the revenue.

- At the end of the meeting it was announced the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) feasibility study debt exclusion passed the West Tisbury ballot.

Old / New / Business (Agenda Item #VI)

B. Impact Aid Audit and Wampanoag Tribe Policies and Procedures

(See Minutes: 2/21/23 p.2 #C, & 3/20/23 p.3 #V A.)

The Federal audit was monitoring the Wampanoag Policies and Procedures. Two issues needed UIRSC attention:

- twice yearly meetings with the Wampanoag Education Department with more outreach to the Tribe and families;
- assessing equal participation (as defined by Impact Aid).

The UIRSC discussed previous issues of permission to video meetings versus the current Zoom meeting law, (the UIRSC would ask about availability of video equipment for its May meeting).

Principals' Report (Agenda Item #III)

B. Susan Stevens – Chilmark School

2. Use of Contingency Funds for New Positions

(See documents on file & 12/19/22 Minutes p.2-4 #IV D.)

Head of School Susan Stevens presented configuration and necessities for multi-age classes.

- Kindergarten enrollment jumped from 4 to 10 students so currently there were 28 Kindergarten/ 1st Grade (K/1) students in 2 sections, 26 2nd/3rd grade (2/3) students in 2 sections and one 4th/5th (4/5) grade section. (Single grade classes would result in 6 sections.)
- In multi-age classrooms teachers worked with two simultaneous curriculum loads while addressing student learning that spanned a wider range than single grade classes; for example children in a k/1 class might be fresh out of preschool or advanced 1st graders. In addition there was the usual individual class configurations of special needs, ELL, socio-economic and behavioral issues. Consequently, each multi-age classroom needed a teacher and an Education Support Professional (ESP)—in many schools a teacher and an ESP were expected in single grade classes.

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- The UIRSC asked about one-year-only positions because of the constantly changing Chilmark population, as well as the above mentioned ELL/co-teaching grant. (ESPs were scarce due to the low pay scale).
- While acknowledging the need, Skipper Manter reiterated his usual objections to the use of contingency funds for Chilmark School beyond its formulaic contribution. MVPS Business Administrator Mark Friedman advised revisiting the Regional Agreement's challenging structure that made it difficult to act as a region, since it delineated 2 separate school funding mechanisms except for some minor discretionary language. Counter discussion noted:
 - a relative sense of sharing and that over the years the spending evened out fairly;
 - that the issue should have been addressed when the additional contingency was voted;
 - that the entire MVPS should be one regional district.
- *ROBERT LIONETTE MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE CREATION OF AND ADVERTISEMENT FOR TWO CHILMARK SCHOOL EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL ONE-YEAR-ONLY FISCAL YEAR 2024 POSITIONS UTILIZING CONTINGENCY FUNDS; ROXANNE ACKERMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 4 AYES, 1 NAY—SKIPPER MANTER, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

1. Update on Space Issue

(See documents on file & Minutes: 8/15/22 p.1-2 # III A 2, & 10/19/22 p.1#III A1.)

The Chilmark School was using every available space, including corridors and closets to accommodate its population: the computer lab was now the Special's room, the equipment closet was break-out space and the math specialist was in the breezeway. The School had come to a compromise with the Chilmark Preschool on continuing occupation while a long-term solution was executed, but requested the Preschool fund some transition improvements needed to increase space flexibility—in this case removing plug-divots from a floor for multiple use and safety.

- The School would acquire a bin as the most efficient, wildlife-proof storage for equipment and materials.

• There was a comment that the UIRSC should pay for the flooring as a school improvement, but this was not considered helpful since the Preschool/School resolution had involved extensive effort on all parts.

IV. C. Chilmark Preschool Renewal of Lease – Discussion and VOTE

(See Minutes: 8/15/22 p.1-2 # III A 2, & 10/19/22 p.1#III A1.)

• Chilmark Preschool representatives thanked the UIRSC for their continuing support and reviewed the history, success and community benefits of their venture. They currently served 20 children with 7 on their wait list—which, added to Chilmark School enrollment, met the 100 student building capacity. They recognized the School's current space needs and mentioned the long-term goal for Preschool space on campus. They had limited funds and asked to consult the School Advisory Council (SAC) moving forward.

- There was some confusion over proper Preschool lease payment procedure.

• The UIRSC requested the cost of the floor modification in order to judge the scale and follow protocol to accept it as a donation.

• *ROBERT LIONETTE MOVED TO RECOMMEND THE TOWN OF CHILMARK EXTEND THE CHILMARK PRESCHOOL LEASE FOR A 2 YEAR TERM; ROXANNE ACKERMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSTENTION—SKIPPER MANTER.*

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- Later in the meeting, an agenda item was requested to appoint someone to work with Mark Friedman and the Town of Chilmark on a Chilmark School lease.

Superintendent's Report (Agenda Item #V)

A. General Update

- For the third time in the School Year the All Island School Committee (AISC) failed to reach quorum on a last minute basis, so Superintendent Richie Smith decided to bring Islandwide issues to each local school committee. (He greatly appreciated the consistent UIRSC attendance at AISC meetings.)
- One of his priorities and charges as a 2-year Superintendent was promoting working together—an imperative to moving towards becoming an exemplary school system. He quoted Former Commissioner of Education Robert Antonucci:

“The school board is a legislative body that develops, evaluates and oversees educational policies. The Superintendent is the professional educator chosen by the board to implement policies and to provide professional leadership for a district’s schools. With such Vital responsibilities, a sense of teamwork is essential.

In an enterprise as complex as a school district, the line between policy and administration is rarely clear-cut. Nonetheless, harmonious and productive relationships can flourish if two-way communication is established and maintained.”

And he referred to the MVPS core values shared with the AISC in fall 2022:

- 1) Utmost care for our children—our work will always reflect the best interest of our students, all students. Their care is the most sustainable work that we will do.
- 2) Effective collegial and congenial relationships—will highlight our collaborative work in support of children. As Roland Barth stated, relationships are of utmost importance in our work as educators. The establishment and maintenance of strong and supportive relationships among adults, students and their families in the community are vital to student learning. This is job one.
- 3) Trust and effective communication—as nurtured by consistent collaboration and the internal accountability that is fostered when we work toward collective efficacy in our work to support schools.

He emphasized these themes at the start-of-school-year convocation of 600 MVPS educational community members, by urging everyone to be a good colleague that one would look forward to seeing each day. Staff was requested and expected to work together. The cabinet was expected and requested to work together (witness the principals’ collaboration on the above SOA ELL grant) and Supt. Smith now asked school committee members to work together, emphasizing the need for cooperation and collaboration. The Island was too small to be broken up into Town or district factions.

- He then spoke to the West Tisbury Annual Town Meeting (ATM)) vote to defeat the MVRHSD budget as a protest against legal spending on the turf/grass lawsuit. Supt. Smith respected the Town decision and overwhelming vote, but strongly protested Mr. Manter’s lack of forewarning or communication as the instigator of the motion. If the UIRSC protested being “blindsided” or

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pressured on information and actions, the relationship must work both ways in terms of UIRSC member communications. It was difficult to act as superintendent without clarity from committee members; when actions involved school matters he expected to be kept informed.

- Mr. Manter maintained this was not the first motion he had made to reduce school budgets and he had mentioned issue pushback to Supt. Smith. Supt. Smith differentiated between a mention of pushback and making the motion. All parties were aware of process and as a colleague Mr. Manter should inform Supt. Smith and all 13 other AISC members of his intentions.

- The conversation then returned to AISC quorum failures. Administration sent out notifications and reminders of meeting schedules, but despite easy cell phone communications, members often failed to respond in a timely manner. This caused the cancelation of guest speakers and delayed MVPS issues (e.g. non-union salaries, universal preschool and Islandwide space needs, etc.) as well as inconveniencing other members who might have arranged childcare, work schedules and transportation. The failure also signaled divisiveness that hampered such things as a timely response to the unexpected West Tisbury ATM MVRHS budget vote.

- School committee voluntary, impressive work and commitment were acknowledged with gratitude, and it was further noted that school committee meetings, subcommittees, issue complexity and workloads had proliferated in the 21st Century. Possible solutions were considered: limiting the number of meetings and/or meeting length and/or prioritizing agendas. Supt. Smith again emphasized the need to lean into each other and work together.

- He also again requested school committee input on their perceptions of MVPS Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) (see 2/21/23 Minutes p.2 #V). The data could be coded for common themes that would form the basis of ongoing strategic planning.

B. Student Support Services Update (See documents on file)

Old / New / Business (Agenda Item #VI)

A. School Choice Policy and Practice (See 3/20/23 Minutes p.1-2 #IV C.)

UIRSD Administrators were flooded with phone calls from anxious parents regarding loss of school choice opportunities and rumored school choice student evictions.

- The UIRSD accepted more school choice students than it sent, so there was a suggestion for a goal of accepting one school choice student for each student that “choiced” out of the District.

- Thanks went to WTS Principal Donna Lowell-Bettencourt and Mark Friedman for their extensive explanation and data on 3-year enrollment and school choice look-back (see documents on file). UIRSD middle school enrollment included Charter School returnees and Chilmark students—which should be and was taken into account in accepting elementary grade school choice students. There was also the unresolved issue of increased shared services space.

- SpEd school choice students were rare—but included further (if not always complete) reimbursement.

- Administrators advocated for at least 3 categories: siblings of UIRSD students, continuing slots for UIRSD students whose family moved out of the District, and staff children. Prin. Lowell-

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Bettencourt formally requested the School Choice policy be re-opened and clarified around staff children.

- Discussion points were:
 - the usual objection to the \$5,000 compensation versus the actual per pupil cost;
 - what was more important: the best interest of the student for a school environment that allowed them to excel or finances and numbers;
 - space issues and class size,
 - trust in Administrator's duty to make responsible, informed decisions;
 - unintended consequences of withdrawing from an Islandwide program and pushback from other MVPS districts.
- *ROXANNE ACKERMAN MOVED TO REVERT TO PRINCIPAL DISCRETION FOR THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR SCHOOL CHOICE POLICY; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED; 4 AYES, 1 NAY—SKIPPER MANTER, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Personnel (Agenda Item #VIII)

A. Leaves of Absence (See documents on file.)

- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO APPROVE/ACKNOWLEDGE WITH THANKS AND CONGRATULATIONS THE FOLLOWING LEAVES OF ABSENCE:*
 - *WEST TISBURY SCHOOL KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL CANA COURTNEY FOR THE 2023-24 SCHOOL YEAR,*
 - *WEST TISBURY SCHOOL KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL LAIS SCHOENHERR FOR MATERNITY LEAVE FROM SEPTEMBER 2023 TO JANUARY 2024,*
 - *WEST TISBURY SCHOOL FIRST GRADE TEACHER TESSA REBELLO MATERNITY LEAVE FROM SEPTEMBER INTO NOVEMBER 2023;*
- ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

B. Resignations (See documents on file.)

- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING RESIGNATIONS:*
 - *WEST TISBURY SCHOOL ASSISTANT COOK JANICE GULLAND, AND*
 - *WEST TISBURY SCHOOL EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL CODRIN/CARMEN CREANGA;*
- ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*
- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE FOLLOWING RESIGNATIONS AT THE END OF THE 2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR:*
 - *CHILMARK SCHOOL KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL CELESTE DROUIN, AND*
 - *CHILMARK SCHOOL FOURTH/FIFTH GRADE EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL KYRA WHALEN;*
- JIM NEWMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Public Comment – None (Agenda Item #VI)

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

Adjournment

- *ROBERT LIONETTE MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:06PM; SKIPPER MANTER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.*

Meetings/Events

• STM/ATM

West Tisbury – Tuesday, April 11, 2023

Chilmark – Monday, April 24, 2023

Aquinnah – (STM) Wednesday, April 26, 2023 - (ATM) Tuesday, May 9, 2023

• **UIRSC Meeting - 6:00PM, Monday, May 15, 2023 in Aquinnah**

• **Cabinet Retreat - July 31 - August 3, 2023**

Documents on File:

- Agenda 4/13/23
- All Expenditure Report – General Fund Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (15 p.) 4/12/23
- Revenue Report – General Fund Fiscal Year 2022- 2023 4/12/23
- Up-Island Regional School District FY23 General Fund Budget – Version #8, 4-13-2023 Recertified (12 p.)
- UIRSD FY2023 Assessment – V#8 4/13/2023 - Recertified
- 603 Code of Massachusetts Regulations, Section 41.05, Regional School District Budgets
- UIRSD Wellness Committee cover letter re: review of current policy, 9/30/22
- Up Island Regional School District Wellness Policy (4 p.)
- UIRSD Student Support Services Update April 2023 (2 p.)
- Multi-Age Instruction
- Breese Architect, Menemsha School, 8-25-03 floor planning
- 5 photographs of materials, desks, etc.
- Combined Up-Island Pupil Enrollment Census – October 1, 2020 (2 p.)
- Combined Up-Island Pupil Enrollment Census – October 1, 2021 (2 p.)
- Combined Up-Island Pupil Enrollment Census – October 1, 2022 (2 p.)
- Drouin email re: Will not be returning the next school year, 4/20/23
- Rebello email re: Maternity Leave Request – Corrected Return Date 4/4/23
- Schoenherr Maternity Leave Letter of Intent 3/8/23
- Courtney email re: Next Year 3/31/23
- McNuckles email re: Leaving 4/5 ESP Position 4/12/23
- Creanga email re: returning to WTS 4/11/23
- Whalen email re: Employment Next Year 4/7/23
- Gulland email re: Resignation 4/23/23

Minutes approved 5/15/23