

**Tisbury School Committee**  
**4:00PM, Tuesday, October 10, 2023**  
**Emergency Services Facility and by Zoom Cloud Conference**

1

**TSC Members Present:** Chair Amy Houghton, Jen Cutrer, Michael Watts,  
**Staff:** John Custer – Principal, Melissa Ogden – Asst. Principal,  
Richie Smith – Superintendent, Hope MacLeod – Student Support,  
Mark Friedman – Business Administrator,  
Sarah DeBettencourt, Rita Jeffers – Teachers,  
**Town:** Louise Clough – FinCom,  
John Custer, Rita Jeffers, Michael Watts – TSBC,  
**Others:** Aditya Modi, – CHA/Daedalus, Dan Anjo, – W.T. Rich,  
Emily Armstrong – IGI, Marni Lipke – Recorder,  
**Press:** Louisa Hufstader – Vineyard Gazette,

\* TSC/TSB members late arrivals or early departures

- The Tisbury School Committee (TSC) was called to order at 4:02PM. Mr. Michael Watts participated remotely for a portion of this meeting.  
(*Recorder's note: Discussions are summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.*)

**I. Tisbury School Building Project Report**

**A. Project Update** (See documents on file.)

- The 1929 building envelope should be weather-tight in January 2024; current work was masonry pointing, window lintel replacement and 85% of the new roof.  
- 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor interior framing and mechanical/electrical/plumbing/fire protection (MEP) were complete and would start on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor in October. Upper floors drywall was in progress.
- The new Gym steel and roof were almost complete and masonry exterior walls were in progress with the brick veneer starting this month. The elevator shaft was finished
- The foundation slab for the administration building was finished and framing work would begin in October.
- West and south site drainage systems were done, as was Spring St. utility work.

**B. Approval of Invoices** (See documents on file & below: Actions.)

These were standard payments with nothing unusual. The CHA Commissioning invoice was approved last month (see 9/12/23 Minutes p.2-3 B).

**ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. JEN CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MR. WATTS THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED AND RECOMMENDED (3 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS) THE FOLLOWING SEPTEMBER 1 THROUGH 30, 2023 INVOICES TOTALING \$3,919,388.48 TO BE SENT TO TOWN HALL FOR APPROVAL AND PAYMENT:**

- CHA AUGUST 29, 2023 INVOICE FOR \$45,000.00,
  - W.T. RICH SEPTEMBER 30, 2023 INVOICE FOR \$3,821,168.00,
  - TAPPÉ ARCHITECTS SEPTEMBER 25, 2023 INVOICE FOR \$48,125.00,
  - BRIGGS ENGINEERING JULY 29, 2023 INVOICE FOR \$5,095.48:
- MS. CUTRER—AYE, MR. WATTS—AYE, MS. AMY HOUGHTON—AYE.**

### III. Financial Report

#### C. Island Grown School's (IGS) Funding Proposal

(See documents on file, & 9/12/23 Minutes p.4 #III, & below: Actions.)

This was Island Grown Initiative/Island Grown Schools (IGI/IGS) 16<sup>th</sup> year working with Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) and they had become a model for nationwide curricula. Tisbury IGS teacher Sam Greene had a long teaching background and her lessons partnered with historical context, cultural studies, and real world science application.

- Director Emily Armstrong presented the IGS 2022-23 Tisbury School Year achievements—despite a site compromised by modulars and construction: growing, cooking and tasting food, farm field trips and school garden maintenance/construction in 160 lessons and almost 2,000 individual student engagements. The TSC expressed their appreciation and longtime endorsement.

- To help sustain the program IGS asked MVPS to fund 50% of costs. Tisbury's total share was \$28,060. The current budget line was \$7,691.

• **ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MS. HOUGHTON THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY VOTED (3 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS) TO INCREASE THE ISLAND GROWN SCHOOLS FISCAL YEAR 2024 BUDGET LINE ITEM TO \$14,030: MS. CUTRER—AYE, MS. HOUGHTON—AYE, MR. WATTS—AYE.**

#### II. Approval of Past TSC Meeting Minutes (See below: Actions.)

• **ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MR. WATTS THE MINUTES OF THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 12, 2023 MEETING WERE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED (3 AYES, 0 NAYS, ABSTENTIONS AS ABENT): MS. CUTRER—AYE, MR. WATTS—AYE, MS. HOUGHTON—AYE.**

• **ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MR. WATTS THE MINUTES OF THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE JUNE 20, 2023 EXECUTIVE SESSION WERE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED (3 AYES, 0 NAYS, ABSTENTIONS AS ABENT): MS. CUTRER—AYE, MR. WATTS—AYE, MS. HOUGHTON—AYE.**

### III. Superintendent's Report

#### A. All Island School Committee (AISC) (See below: Meetings/Events.)

The November meeting would take up the Superintendent's evaluation, staff housing presentation/discussion, and Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) preliminary budget issues.

#### B. Student Support Services Update

(See documents on file & 5/9/21 Minutes p.1 #II B.)HMCL

- Special Education (SpEd) students had Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

- Specific Learning Disabilities categories might be: math, reading, executive functioning, comprehension, etc.

- Shared Services were MVPS programs consolidating resources for students with intensive needs, housed across the MVPS facilities. State mandates required no more than 7 intensive needs and 8 community peer students per class section. These programs were:

- Project Headway – 2.9 yr. old/pre-kindergarten (pre-K) high needs students identified through various referrals: pediatricians, community daycare/preschools, families, etc;
- Bridge Program – K to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students with physical/developmental problems including a subset of autism spectrum students;
- Compass Program – K - 12<sup>th</sup> grade students with social-emotional challenges.
  - The TSC noted the 2022-23 Tisbury School year snapshot and State data. At 13-14% SpEd (and ~ 10 504) students Tisbury historically trended lower than other MVPS, possibly because of its strong student support and aggressive Response to Intervention practice. However it was the only MVPS not housing a Shared Services classroom.
  - Student Support Director Hope MacLeod reported a sharp rise in Project Headway and Bridge enrollment already seen this year and expected to increase sharply next year. Classes were at or close to capacity even with the additional space, teacher and class at Grace Church Island Children’s School. Consequently the Superintendent’s Shared Services (Central) Office expected their FY25 Budget to reflect additional Shared Services staffing (at least 1 teacher and 5 Education Support Professionals—ESPs), as well as space possibly at the new Tisbury School. The TSC discussed:
    - how intensive needs students were recruited and the numbers projected;
    - whether this was a permanent change or a population bubble;
    - rising birthrate on Martha's Vineyard;
    - rates of students ‘graduating’ from Headway to Bridge and from a program into mainstream/hometown school classes;
    - configuration of students in program classes;
    - elimination of the Shared Services space during the Project Covid cutback;
    - possible use of modulars as a temporary solution,
    - application for Federal or State funds to offset some expenses.
  - This matter would be brought before the AISC for further discussion.

C. Policy (See documents on file & Minutes: 8/8/23 p.2, & 9/12/23 p.3 #III B.)

1. First Readings: Bullying, Physical Restraint, and Student Conduct

The proposed amendments were updates at Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) request to include more procedure.

- **ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MR. WATTS THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE FIRST READING OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE FOLLOWING POLICIES; 3 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS:**
  - **MARTHA'S VINEYARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS BULLYING POLICY,**
  - **MARTHA'S VINEYARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE POLICY, AND**
  - **MARTHA'S VINEYARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS PHYSICAL RESTRAINT POLICY AND PROCEDURE PURSUANT TO 603 CMR 46.00.**

E. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Accountability Reports (See below: Actions.)

Superintendent Dr. Richie Smith met with all MVPS Principals on 3<sup>rd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade MCAS results. Principals created interventions and reports and some principals were paired for practice and result sharing. The TSC had reviewed the data and noted this was only one educational marker, as well as the learning disruption from the construction project. They asked to be informed on:

- intervention/solution progress,
- whether data showed true loss or population changes;
- what financial adjustments were needed to facilitate remediation.

### III. Financial Report

#### D. Revised Budget Request for Maintenance, Operations (Per Jay Grande)

The TSC acknowledged (and Professional Team of Architects, Construction Manager and Owner's Project Manager—OPM) endorsed the need for a qualified facilities manager with a skill set encompassing complex building systems and computer-technical expertise (and by the way noting similar Central Office needs). It was agreed that the position sit in the Tisbury School rather than Town or Central Office budgets, however, it might become a foundation for a facilities department.

- The new and larger School would also need more custodial staff.

A. Fund Balances (See documents on file.)

B. Grants – nothing to report.

### IV. Principal's Report

A. October 1<sup>st</sup> Census (See documents on file.)

The official enrollment of 257 students (used for budgeting issues) had already changed as was usual at this time of year. There were 9 School Choice students.

B. School Events (See documents on file.)

- Members were invited to participate in School Picture Day. Unity Day was being planned. Principal John Custer would be a chaperone on the 6<sup>th</sup> grade trip to Nature's Classroom in Groton. The 4<sup>th</sup> grade was going to a Cape Cod Symphony performance and then to a Pirate Museum.

- Choral Day at Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) would include some Tisbury students and the Tisbury Music Teacher.

- Parent/Teacher conferences were scheduled for later in October.

C. Personnel (See documents on file.)

#### 1. Leave of Absence Request

- **ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MR. WATTS THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED (3 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS) A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER TEACHER SHANNON CARBON OCTOBER 2 – 27, 2023.**

A long-term substitute position was advertised but the wonderful staff met to fill in for students if needed.

#### 2. Retirement

- MS. CUTRER RECUSED HERSELF DUE TO CONFLICT OF INTEREST.

Administration and the TSC expressed their regret at the announcement, but very much appreciated his thoughtfulness in waiting until the end of the school year.

- **ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MR. WATTS AND SECONDED BY MS. HOUGHTON THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE ACKNOWLEDGED (2 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS) THE RETIREMENT OF EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL MR. ROY CUTRER AT THE END OF THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR.**

### III. Superintendent's Report

#### D. Superintendents Evaluation (See documents on file.)

The Personnel Subcommittee would consolidate each local school committee input at their October 26<sup>th</sup> meeting so the evaluation could be finalized at the November AISC meeting. Supt. Smith chose 4 categories and provided plenty of information to all members. This evaluation pertained only to Tisbury School.

1 B instructional leadership – Staff and TSC members emphasized Supt. Smith's consistent focus on staff relations. They liked that he spent the first year slowly building his connections to Principals by way of regular school walk-thru's, constant phone conversations and messaging. They praised his ability to keep people on track, dealing with small crisis but insisting on completing meeting agendas and discussions. They were also impressed by how value driven he was; he was present, accessible and true to his ethics. Staff praised his success in the difficult task of crafting a Professional Development (PD) day relevant to all MVPS employees.

- THE TSC RATED SUPT. SMITH AS PROFICIENT IN THIS GOAL.

Fiscal Systems 2 E – Supt. Smith's trust and reliance on the knowledge and expertise of his staff (e.g. Business Manager Mark Friedman, and Financial Administrative Support Professional (ASP) Rachel Hickey) allowed for a smoother budget process. Supt. Smith reported that Prin. Custer was very fiscally responsible, frugal and creative in hiring and using present resources of the staff and School, and consequently seldom needed his help. Ms. Houghton praised Dr. Smith's ability to cobble a team together but suggested two areas needing improvement:

- better infrastructure at the Central Office was critical to a strong reliable team; and
- clearly delineating his priorities in crafting the Central Office budget—not just aiming at a low percent increase.

- THE TSC RATED SUPT. SMITH AS PROFICIENT IN THIS GOAL.

Family Concerns – Prin. Custer knew Supt. Smith was able to broker a resolution for at least 3 families that reached out to him last summer because they were unhappy with some experience. Unlike many Superintendents that expected locals to resolve situations and not bother central administration he was available to parents and approached problems without hostility or tension. As a former guidance counselor Dr. Smith encouraged work between families and local administrators by improving the relationship and exhausting all options and once that was facilitated, he followed up with check-ins on how the children were and if there was any relief. There was a brief discussion on the balance between “getting too far in the weeds” and maintaining an overview. He would continue quarterly Parent Forums. He had also put out his direct phone number in meeting “Chat” columns. The TSC gave two critiques:

- although the education community saw and appreciated his strengths, Supt. Smith needed to display them to the wider community; and,
- further work on the highly charged inter-district relations.

- THE TSC RATED SUPT. SMITH AS PROFICIENT IN THIS GOAL.

Professional Culture – Much of this goal was part of the above conversation. The TSC strongly noted the decided betterment in Central Office communications.

- THE TSC RATED SUPT. SMITH AS PROFICIENT IN THIS GOAL.

- The Evaluation also included 3 objectives.

Professional Practice – Supt. Smith continued to work on his PD and kept the TSC informed of his progress.

- THE TSC CONSIDERED SUPT. SMITH MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS ON THIS OBJECTIVE.

Student learning – The TSC considered the current aim to be general, getting MVPS through re-entry after the pandemic rather than a specific score. Dr. Smith cited his strengths, weaknesses, assets and threats (SWAT) survey, including changing demographics (SpEd, English Language Learners—ELL, etc.). He lead by empowering people to excel in their area, while providing a unifying strand, in this case a strengthened Central Office. The TSC felt they failed the Superintendent through lack of support and obsessive petty details and quarrels. They acknowledged this as an ongoing process.

- THE TSC CONSIDERED SUPT. SMITH HAD MET THIS OBJECTIVE.

District Improvement Goals – Dr. Smith maintained momentum during his transition. There was a discussion on the 6 very different schools and the impact each had on the others—for example in collective bargaining. Sometimes there was an intense discussion and then parties went separate ways so better inter-district relations was again emphasized and acknowledged as extremely difficult. It was also important to have the staff/ administrative team and the school committee team working together.

- THE TSC CONSIDERED SUPT. SMITH HAD MET THIS OBJECTIVE.

Dr. Smith felt good about this transparent evaluation and had gotten an idea of where School Committee members were going. The TSC thanked him and wished him all the best in the further evaluation process.

Adjournment

• ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MR. WATTS THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING UNANIMOUSLY ADJOURNED AT 6:26PM: 3 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.

**Appendix A: Meetings/Events:**

- AISC – Thursday, November 2, 2023 - MVRHS

- TSC – 4:00PM, Tuesdays, - ESF/Zoom

November 14, 2023

February 13, 2024

May 14, 2024

December 12, 2023 (with SAC)

March 12, 2024

June 11, 2024

January 9, 2024

April 9, 2024

- Project Status & Planning – 1:00PM Tuesdays,

- Annual/Special Town Meeting – Tuesday, May 28, 2024

**Appendix B: Actions**

Prin. Custer/Ms. Houghton – send Project motion & invoices for Town Hall payment.

November Agenda:

- Approval of Project Invoices
- Policy Amendments – Second Reading
- DESE Accountability Reports and Interventions

FY25 budget:

- pandemic recovery support teachers
- \$14,030 IGI/IGS (50% support)

continued

**Appendix C: Documents on File**

- Agenda 10/10/23
- Tisbury School Project, CHA (8 p.)
- TSC/SBC Meeting – Construction Manager Update, 10/10/23 (3 p.)
- Tisbury School Addition and Renovations Project Invoices, For Period: September 01, 2023 –September 30, 2023
- Island Grown School Programming @ Tisbury School
- Custer / Armstrong emails re: Island Grown Schools Cost Increase
- Island Grown Schools/ Island Grown Martha's Vineyard (12 p.)
- Preschool Special Education Numbers, Headway, Community and Peers, 2015-Current
- PK Children on IEPs (actual)
- Bridge Edgartown ASD numbers
- MVPS Proposed Bullying Policy
- Martha's Vineyard Public Schools Student Conduct and Discipline (7 p.)
- Martha's Vineyard Public Schools Physical Restraint Policies and Procedures pursuant to 603 CMR 46.00 (7 p.)
- Custer letter re: Thanks for School Resource Officer (SRO) 6/26/23
- Tisbury School Events (October 2023)
- School Attending Report “Worksheet”, Census Date as of October 1, 2023, 2023-2024, School: Tisbury School (2 p.) 10/2/23
- Cutrer resignation letter 10/3/23
- Custer / Carbon email re: Leave of Absence Request 9/28/23
- End-of-Cycle Summative Evaluation Report: Superintendent (7 p.) 2019

Minutes respectfully submitted by Office On Call/ Marni Lipke.

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Marni Lipke – Recorder

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Date

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Amy Houghton – TSC Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

TSC Minutes approved 11/14/23