

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
8:00AM, Friday, November 3, 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: Mark Friedman, Hope MacLeod,
Principals: Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Susan Stevens,
Chilmark SAC: Co-Chairs – Jessica Mason, Jessica Seeman,
Towns: WT FinCom – Greg Orcutt,
Chilmark FinCom – Chair Susan Murphy,
Hacker aliases - Keegan Bells, Darnelle Jackson
*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.

Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Budget Workshop (Agenda Item #II)

(See documents on file & 10/25/23 Minutes.)

- Updated Version #2 constituted a 6.8% increase, however the following items were still unknown/not included:
 - Chilmark Town debt service for the School heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) project (principal ~ \$2,100,000+);
 - \$50,000 Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) increase;
 - UIRSD share of the Superintendent's Shared Services (Central) Office budget;
 - Transportation estimated at a conservative 5% rise (3% operating increase plus bus purchases).
- There was a long discussion on budget version format, focusing on whether to include grant funded and requested items or not. Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) Business Administrator Mark Friedman explained that requested items had to be included in budget drafts in order to calculate costs, and to remove them (and then possibly replace them) would take extra time— and as they knew he was already overworked. All additional requests and attendant information were highlighted in the Version and listed in the Highlights. There was no consensus, 2 UIRSC members requested they be separated, 1 requested whatever was easiest for Mr. Friedman, 2 did not express an opinion.
- Contingency funded positions caused the 2 sites to increase and the District part to decrease.
- The non-union contractual salary pool for both Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and market correction was projected at 5% and distributed by site. The UIRSC requested the COLA and market correction be separated into 2 lines.

West Tisbury School (WTS)

- Principal Donna Lowell-Bettencourt outlined her requests.

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- Continue all the grant funded positions into the budget as follows:
 - 1.0 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) reading specialist teacher,
 - 1.0 FTE math specialist teacher,
 - 0.07 FTE health/wellness teacher (residual fill to a grant funded position),
 - 0.04 FTE co-teacher (residual fill to a grant funded position).

Benefits for grant funded positions were built-in but not shown on this line. MVPS policy was to post all grant funded positions as one-year-only. UIRSC noted when grants ran out positions were often shifted into the budget. Administrators responded it depended on the position's value.

• **THE MEETING WAS BRIEFLY HACKED.**

Later in the meeting there was a brief overview of grant funding:

- entitlement (or automatic) grants, usually through the Central Office (taking indirect administrative costs), distributed according to district/school population and demographics;
 - competitive grants, usually applied for by school principals (a grant writer would be a boon) and granted, reduced or denied, (spending restricted to application designation unless amended/approved).
- Prin. Lowell-Bettencourt reported the importance of the requested staff for pandemic recovery to prevent deficiencies from following students throughout their education. Feedback showed WTS doing a good job but it would take longer than the projected 2 years. Difficulties included: chronic absenteeism some due to colds, viruses, etc. and increased (and sometimes automatic) Special Education (SpEd) designation due to low skill thresholds—a Statewide trend.
 - Line 275 increased \$5,763 the Island Grown Initiative/Island Grown Schools (IGI/IGS) to ½ the program cost (see 3/18/23 Minutes p.3 #III A3). It could be spread over several years.
 - The Information Technology (IT) upgrade (see 11/21/22 Minutes p.5) 5th and final year (\$20,224) would likely be reduced. The UIRSC requested a report on future needs.
 - The Contingency funded Education Support Professional was currently at 0.5 FTE, and was deemed necessary for FY25.
 - The Summer School \$90,000 per year 2-year grant (see Minutes: 5/23/22 p.2 #B, & 1/17/23 p.1 #III A) did not include administrative costs—donated from Prin. Lowell-Bettencourt and Assistant Principal Mary Boyd vacation days. Further grant application/funding would not be known before Budget certification—the budget could be reduced on Town Meeting floor. The highly successful 4 full days/week, 5 week program attracted students with special teachers and activities but included tutoring/instruction and small group guidance-lead social-emotional learning (SEL) for brief periods. Set up required significant work and an on-site administrator was needed for discipline and emergencies. (The Extended School Year (ESY) summer school for special needs students rotated between MVPS.) Prin. Lowell-Bettencourt attested to the results in family feedback, MCAS test scores and academic progress. The UIRSC discussed UIRSD-wide programming and possibly MVPS collaboration. They thanked the Administrators for the extra effort and for donating their vacation time. The UIRSC asked to continue this discussion.

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- An FY24 request for an additional custodian was reduced and then eliminated (see 11/21/22 Minutes p.5). 3) but was returned by necessity. 3.0 FTE night shift custodians cleaned the building however Head Custodian Jamie Labbe was alone during the day. He was so busy with cleanups, lunch and requests that it was difficult to work on repairs, meet with staff or contractors, etc. If this request was not approved the WTS would have to sub-contract out more work. The UIRSC considered funding, possibly through borrowing.
- (In a continued discussion on capital spending protocol it was noted that Town interpretation of the legal opinion might differ from UIRSC interpretation—see 10/16/23 Minutes p.2.)
- 3-5 Year capital plans with facility maintenance schedules were being drafted for both schools.
- Building insurance was projected at a 10% rise but had been going up more steeply lately. The UIRSC requested the last 2 years be averaged for a more accurate projection.
- If all WTS requested positions were approved it would be ~ 37.4% of the total ~ \$777,000 ask.

Chilmark School

Head of School Susan Stevens listed requests, keeping in mind that the new Principal would be hired after FY25 budgets were set.

- Given current population and kindergarten (K) projections the 2 Contingency funded ESPs would be needed next year. There was only space for 5 classrooms, and class configurations (i.e. which multi-age grades would need 2 sections) had not yet been set. The 2 additional ESPs would result in one for each classroom.
- The restoration of the Artist in Residence (\$11,405) cut last year, would not only provide a variety of special classes but also the contractually required time for teacher lesson planning.
- Guidance should be increased from 0.4 to 0.6 FTE as the new Principal might not be guidance certified—currently Ms. Stevens filled in when needed.
- The previous year's grant for a 0.5 FTE co-teacher was a chronic vacancy. Ms. Stevens requested an additional 0.5 FTE position in the budget to bring the position up to 1.0 FTE—to attract candidates (see above p.2 discussion on grant funded positions).
- Placeholders for the new HVAC system would reduce heating but increase electric/power costs, including accounting for new air conditioning costs.
- Additionally, but not included in this Version, Ms. Stevens and the Chilmark School Advisory Council (SAC) strongly advised restoration of Professional Development (PD) cuts (Conferences & Workshops, Principal's Research & Development) for specifically tailored (rather than MVPS wide) PD both in multi-age and project-based learning. Younger teachers needed guidance in the complexities of multi-age instruction. Inexpensive observation trips (to the Charter School or other Massachusetts schools) were proposed so PD would pay the necessary substitute costs. Project-based learning could be shared UIRSD PD.
- The Principal search was not yet at job description so the salary line was not adjusted.

Additional Issues with Budget Implications

- The MVRHS budget was prefaced by reporting a shocking 55-60% of in-coming 9th graders were not at grade level, part of a nationwide trend that included students not ready for college. A high percentage of UIRSD students entered at 9th grade (and in Spanish 10th grade) level. The UIRSC discussed Islandwide conversations on standardizing curriculum and instruction.

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- Prin. Lowell-Bettencourt and the WTS SAC continued to be active in promoting universal free and Islandwide preschools not only in terms of need but also for learning progress and pandemic recovery. The goal was removed from the UIRSD School Improvement Plans (SIPs) because the initiative was now centered on enthusiastic buy-in by all MVPS principals. A dedicated All Island School Committee (AISC) meeting was suggested as well as public/private partnerships.
 - WTS was interested in getting one of the Tisbury temporary modules as a stopgap after the postponement of the space needs study (see 12/7/22 Minutes p.3-4 #IV). Issues included:
 - location,
 - use for preschool or Project Headway,
 - price (\$750,000 - \$1,100,000 plus utility hookup and transportation),
 - Ms. Stevens asked about using FY24 Salary Increment savings to re-instate the Artist in Residence this school year.
 - The UIRSC had no further directions for the next Budget Version.
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- The UIRSC decided on a date for the next Budget Workshop (see below: Meeting/Events.)
 - It was noted the UIRSC spent 1/3 of the meeting debating the format for a preliminary draft.

Adjournment

(Agenda item #VI)

- *ROXANNE ACKERMAN MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 9:37AM; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE.*

Meetings/Events

- UIRSC – TBD, Monday, November 20, 2023 – WTS/Zoom
- UIRSC Budget Workshop – 5:30PM, Tuesday, December 5, 2023 – WTS/Zoom

Documents on File:

- Agenda 11/3/23
- Friedman cover email re: UIRSD FY24 Budget - Version #2
- Up-Island Regional School District, FY25 General Fund Budget, Version # 2, 11-03-2023 (11 p.)
- UIRSD, FY25 Budget Version #2 11/03/2023, Changes from FY24 Budget (3 p.)

Minutes approved 11/20/23