

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD  
5:30PM, Wednesday, December 5, 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: Diamond Vanderhoop, Recorder – Marni Lipke,  
Supt.'s Shared Services Office: Richard Smith, Mark Friedman,  
Principals: Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Mary Boyd, Susan Stevens,  
Towns: Aqhinnah Town Accountant – Emily Day,  
WT FinCom – Greg Orcutt,  
Press – Eunki Seonwoo – MV Times,  
\*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.

**Chilmark School Generator** (Agenda item #II)

The heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) project continued on budget and on the revised schedule—hopefully by the end of 2023. Final work (but not the punch list) was in process including a new trench, new electrical panels and almost all the wiring for the HVAC panels. The Project weekly working group advised the installation of a docking station in the basement so the building would be generator-ready (~ \$12,000+), as well as a small power supplier able to run the water pump and a few lights (~ \$4,000+). Although not within the scope of the HVAC Project budget, there was ~ \$90,000 in the previously approved \$106,000 Chilmark School generator article (see Minutes: 1/20/22 p.3 #IV A, & 2/22/22 p.4 #B).

- The UIRSC debated the following issues.
- There was concern that this minimal power supplier would take funding away from a full generator, but the Chilmark Select Board (CSB) did not support the 70kw/\$700,000 generator.
- Some insisted the “generator” or power supply be large enough to include some heat.
- There were questions about the fuel source and whether it was a manual or automatic supply.
- The HVAC project funding sources were reviewed (see 5/4/21 Minutes p.2 #V B).
- A backup solar array would involve extensive work, but the old boilers would remain as a backup system, with some fuel in reserve. The UIRSC asked about boiler maintenance costs.
- The added insulation greatly increased heating efficiency.
- As the work would be done over the holiday break a decision was needed.
- *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO AUTHORIZE EXPENDITURE UP TO THE AMOUNT OF THE ~ \$106,000 CHILMARK SCHOOL GENERATOR ARTICLE RESIDUAL FOR CHILMARK SCHOOL GENERATOR ELECTRIC WORK AND A GENERATOR TO RUN AND POSSIBLY HEAT SOME OF THE SCHOOL; ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

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**Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) Actuarial Study – Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) 74 & 75** (See documents on file) (Agenda item #III)

This report was accepted by the Dukes County OPEB Trust Board.

- The UIRSD total liability had changed from ~ \$11,800,000 to ~ \$11,960,000—calculated with many factors, including a drop in life expectancy.
- Contributions paid off 46% (up from 37% in 2022) leaving a liability of ~ \$6,400,000 **net**.
- The UIRSC had had the highest discount rate possible for a number of years.
- The FY24 Actuarially Determined Employer Contribution (ADEC) (annual donation to stabilize the liability and pay it off in 30 years) was ~ \$753,000 down from FY23 ~ \$848,000.
- The FY24 contribution was: annual contribution (\$658,000), pay-as-you-go (\$369,000), and new employee funding, about a quarter of a million dollars over the ADEC.
- The proposed \$736,000 FY25 contribution (with \$50,000 annual + \$28,000 new hire increases) would result in faster pay-down, but not an increased discount.
- The UIRSD debated priorities as to faster pay-down of a large liability or reducing the FY25 high expense/assessment budget increase.

**Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Budget – Possible Vote To Be Taken** (Agenda item #IV)  
(See documents on file & 11/20/23 Minutes p.2-5 #IV B.)

- After a discussion on Superintendent Shared Services budget logistics, and on public hearing regulations, the UIRSC agreed on a December meeting date (see below: Meetings/Events).
- Health and seasonal issues precluded much administrative consultation so Version #4 expenses had changed very little, the major addition being the \$98,799 Contingency line.
- Superintendent Richie Smith endorsed both school budgets as based on student needs, in particular the continuation of the pandemic relief support teachers previously funded by Elementary and Secondary School Relief (ESSER) grants. Administrators were reluctant to cut what was essentially a level-service, student-centered budget but given the 9% expense and 13% assessment increase, it was agreed that some undefined reduction was necessary.
- **Revenues** had been updated to reduce the assessment increase to 12.54% as follows:
  - \$38,000 averaged Ch. 70 rise to just over \$1,000,000—including programmatically dedicated Student Opportunities Act (SOA) funds;
  - FY23 actual plus 2 years of inflators for Ch. 71 reimbursement, offset by Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) estimated transportation costs;
  - Charter School tuition/reimbursement reduction; and
  - School Choice funds at FY23 levels; and interest slightly higher in keeping with rising rates.
- Last year the UIRSC zeroed out Excess and Deficiency (E & D) through budget offset (a partial cause of this year's sharp assessment increase) and returns to the Towns, leaving no residual to rollover. Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) Business Administrator Mark Friedman estimated this year's E & D at ~ \$180,000. He recommended a \$50,000 offset to the Contingency line but no further E & D draws.

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**• Chilmark School site**

- The School would need the additional Education Support Professional (ESP) to cover its 2 kindergarten/1<sup>st</sup> grade (K/1) classes.
- The Professional increment line was the same as other sites.
- The Artist in Residence was needed for all outside instructors and contractually mandated staff planning time (see 11/20/23 Minutes p.2 #1).
- The 0.4 to 0.6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Guidance increase was needed in case the new Principal was not guidance certified, and for pandemic recovery (see 11/3/23 Minutes p.3).
- The new Principal Research and Development increase could be cut leaving the line at its previous level. The UIRSC noted that although not directly affecting students, lack of continuing training had a long term effect on education quality.

**• West Tisbury School (WTS) Site**

After the line-by-line FY24 budget review the WTS was operating on a tight budget; nonetheless Principal Donna Lowell-Bettencourt suggested a few possible reductions.

- The \$5,764 Island Grown Initiative/Schools (IGI/IGS) program 50% funding could be spread over 2 or 3 years (see Minutes: 9/18/23 p.3 #III A 1, & 11/3/23 p.2).
- The new custodian could be cut to 0.4 FTE to avoid paying benefits and OPEB.
- The Summer Program (previously grant funded) could be reduced by \$30,000.
- The final year of the \$20,224 Information Technology (IT) upgrade (see 11/21/22 Minutes p.5) could be reduced or postponed.

**Districtwide Site**

There was not much room for adjustment in the Districtwide part.

- The Town estimated the Chilmark HVAC debt at 5% (~ \$33,765 less than the current 6.5% estimate), but final figures were not available.
- The Contingency reserve could be adjusted downward—or eliminated.

**• The UIRSC considered the issues.**

- Each small cut helped to accumulate a more significant reduction.
- There was general consensus not to cut the highly successful Summer School program (see 11/3/23 Minutes p.2).
- Possible partial reductions were considered: IGI, Artist in Residence, IT upgrade—but only if it would not cost more to re-instate it.
- Although the UIRSC suggested cutting the 0.4 FTE custodian as not directly impacting students, Ms. Lowell-Bettencourt and Mr. Friedman strongly recommended retaining the position as necessary for building maintenance and daytime relief for overworked Head Custodian Jamie Labbe, one of the best on the Island, and essentially doing a facilities manager work (see 11/3/23 Minutes p.2).
- The WTS 0.5 FTE and Chilmark 1.0 FTE co-teaching position (see Minutes: 4/13/23 p.1-2 #III A1) evaluation metrics clearly showed excellent results, especially in high-needs student MCAS scores (see 10/16/23 Minutes p.3 #B3, 11/3/23 p.3) as well as in regular progress monitoring.

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- Hopefully the need for the part-time reading and math specialists would diminish as the number of students below grade level or needing intervention dropped and pandemic recovery progressed.
- A call to reduce the overall budget spending increase to 5% would not give guidance on where the cuts should be, and others did not support the action.
- A perspective was presented that almost 7% of the 9% increase was contractual and therefore Administrators were actually asking for an additional ~ 2.8% —a reasonable increase with a high student education impact.
- There were 44 school choice students at the WTS.
- The UIRSC requested Administrators cut \$50,000 from the proposed FY25 Budget.

**Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair – None** (Agenda Item #VIII)

**Adjournment**

- *ON A MOTION DULY MADE AND SECONDED THE MEETING UNANIMOUSLY ADJOURNED AT 7:41PM; 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS;*

**Meetings/Events**

- AISC – Thursday, December 7, 2023 – MVRHS/Zoom
- UIRSC/Public Hearing – 6:00PM, Wednesday, December 20, 2023 – WTS/Zoom

**Documents on File:**

- Agenda/Revised Agenda (2 p.) 12/5/23
- KMS Actuaries, Up-Island Regional School District, Participant in the Dukes County Pooled OPEB Trust, Other Post Employment Benefits Program, Financial Report and Disclosures, Government Accounting Standards Board Statements 74 and 75 Disclosures as of June 30, 2023 (54 p.) 11/8/23
- MGL Section 38N: Proposed annual budgets; public hearings required: quorum
- UIRSD, FY25 Budget Version #4 12/05/2023, Changes from FY24 Budget (3 p.)
- UIRSD FY2025 Assessment – V#4 Proposed 12/05/2023

**Minutes approved 1/10/24**