

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
6:00PM, Monday, March 18, 2024
By Zoom or at the West Tisbury School**

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

Others: Robin F., Fenner Construction – Keith Fenner, Recorder – Marni Lipke, Supt's Shared Services Office: Richie Smith, Mark Friedman, Hope MacLeod,
Principals: Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Mary Boyd, Susan Stevens,
Towns: WT FinCom – Jeffrey DuBard,
Chilmark: Select Board – Jim Malkin, Town Administrator Tim Carroll, Chilmark Preschool – Virginia Barbatti, Barbara Binder, Anne Mayhew, Rebekah Thomson,
Press: Louisa Hufstader – Gazette, Julie Soikkeli – MVTV

*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.
(Recorder's note: Discussions are summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.)

Approval of Minutes - Tabled (Agenda Item #II)

A. Including But Not Limited to February 12, 2024

Principal's Reports (Agenda Item #III)

B. Susan Stevens – Chilmark School

5. Preschool Discussion

(See documents on file & Minutes: 1/10/24 p.1-2 #2, & 1/18/24 p.1-2 # III, & 2/12/24 p.4 #VIII.)
Robert Lionette apologized for the UIRSC to the Town of Chilmark and to the Chilmark Preschool for failing to follow up on their commitments:

- approval of the Preschool lease,
- consultation with the UIRSD attorney on any amendments to the lease,
- drafting/negotiating a related Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and
- failure of Robert Lionette to act as liaison.
- As it was impossible to consult with counsel and amend the lease within 48 hrs., the best option seemed to be an MOU between the UIRSC and the Preschool Board of Directors on specific concerns and concrete issues (parking, septic, traffic, etc.) as they arose. The UIRSC requested:
 - an update on the most recent Chilmark Select Board (CSB) approval on access plans,
 - a UIRSC member be appointed to sit on the Preschool Building Committee, and
 - the UIRSC have a say in the oversight and approval process.
- Preschool Board member Anne Mayhew responded that the Board was decidedly in favor of working cooperatively and respectfully with all interested parties and endorsed the MOU.

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- As things were moving very quickly and to keep things as streamlined as possible, they discouraged the additional hurdle of UIRSC approval, but welcomed UIRSC representation on a Campus Committee (Chilmark Community Center (CCC), Chilmark Public Library, etc.) to start at the end of March/beginning of April to keep everyone informed and gather input as necessary.
 - Construction access discussed 3 possible routes but the routes across the soccer field and behind the school were rejected in favor of the one across the tennis courts. Hopefully, heavy lifting construction from September 2024 to May 2025, would finish in time to rebuild the courts for the summer. Lighter construction traffic would then be through the School but fenced away.
 - The building permit was still in process. The UIRSC/Chilmark School would be informed about impacts to the play space.
 - CSB member Jim Malkin emphasized the Town voted at Town Meeting and was committed to this Preschool contract at all possible speed. He thanked the UIRSC and Robert Lionette for their acceptance of the situation. For the record: the Town wanted to get this done. The Town was committed to schooling and education and considered this took priority over tennis and tennis issues, over the School playground, and over other things that were going on.
 - UIRSC issues covered in the 30 yr. lease included: repair vs. capital work, indemnification, insurance, costs, etc. ostensibly covering any UIRSD liability.
 - Given this lease, and while noting the challenges for everyone, Preschool representatives again emphasized they wished to cooperate and pay their share of all factors.
 - After some discussion:
 - *ROBERT LIONETTE MOVED TO:*
 - *APPOINT JIM NEWMAN AS THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CAMPUS COMMITTEE, AND*
 - *AUTHORIZE HIM AS NEGOTIATOR FOR THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE CHILMARK PRESCHOOL AND THE TOWN OF CHILMARK:*
 - SKIPPER MANTER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY; 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*
 - Chilmark Head of School Susan Stevens requested that construction drivers be coordinated to avoid School recess time. The Preschool had formed a Traffic Committee.
- At the end of the meeting,
- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO SUBMIT THE PRESCHOOL LEASE TO COUNSEL FOR FEEDBACK ON A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING; ROXANNE ACKERMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Principal's Reports (Agenda Item #III)

A. Donna Lowell-Bettencourt – West Tisbury School (WTS)

1. Principal Report – Nothing new to report.

2. Surplus – Vote Needed (See documents on file.)

- In order to clear storage:
- *ROXANNE ACKERMAN MOVED TO DECLARE SURPLUS ALL WEST TISBURY SCHOOL ITEMS AS LISTED, TO BE OFFERED FIRST TO THE THREE UP ISLAND TOWNS, AND THEN TO ALL MARTHA'S VINEYARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS: SKIPPER MANTER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY; 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

3. Student Opportunity Act (SOA) – Possible Vote Needed

(See documents on file.)

The 3-year plan for SOA funds (submittal deadline April 1st—with possible future amendment based on student progress) identified the following evidence-based programs:

- expanding co-teaching at the WTS,
- having one co-teaching classroom in Chilmark (see also below: III B 3), and
- expanding the comprehensive summer school for all UIRSD students.
- SOA funds, based on constituent population, specifically addressed student achievement gaps in the following subgroups (identified through various State services such as Free and Reduced Lunch): students with disabilities, low income families, and English Language Learners (ELL). The UIRSD could have chosen other ways it was already addressing subgroup learning gaps, e.g. intentional hiring, new curriculum, early literacy screening.
- Superintendent Richie Smith thanked WTS Principal Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Vice Principal Mary Boyd and Ms. Stevens for this SOA report, replacing Shared Services Office reporting.
- Apart from the regular Ch. 70 SOA increase, all other funding sources were required to be reported to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), including a possible \$11,550 SOA grant.
- Cumulative SOA Ch. 70 increases were ~ \$76,000 in FY24 but only \$11,000 more in FY25.
- There was a conversation about how SOA funds were shown on the UIRSD budget documents.
- On request Prin. Lowell-Bettencourt assured the UIRSC no additional spending was involved.
- *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO APPROVE THE STUDENT OPPORTUNITY ACT PLAN AS PROPOSED; ROXANNE ACKERMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

B. Susan Stevens – Chilmark School

1. Update on Construction

- The generator project, although delayed by the propane vendor breaking a leg, was nearing completion. The generator was larger than initially proposed (see 12/5/23 Minutes p.1 #II) utilizing as much of the original funding as made sense.
- The UIRSC again expressed their concern about paying for maintenance and oil for the boilers as a backup heating system and expressed disappointment in paying for a generator that did not cover all Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning (HVAC).
- All interior HVAC project work was complete, with only a couple outside tasks remaining.

2. Other Projects – Gutters (See 1/10/24 Minutes p.1 #III B 1.)

The contractor would start work on cleaning and reshaping the gutters shortly.

3. Discussion of Special Education (SpEd) Co-Teacher for Next Year

(See above: #III A 3, & Minutes: 7/12/23.1-2 #III, & 11/3/23 p.3.)

Recently DESE notified the UIRSD that the SOA grant covering the 50% Chilmark Special Education (SpEd) co-teacher had to be utilized in Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) and could not rollover into FY25. The position had been in continuous advertisement since August 2023, but a part-time

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position was not an attractive draw. This left a deficit for the full-time FY25 position ~\$42,000 (\$54,000 with benefits). As a new DESE / State program the SOA grant regulations were volatile despite monitoring, for example the original grant award was for the full position, was then changed to 50% and was now restricted to FY24.

- The Administrative team proposed using the grant funds to advertise for a full time teacher for the remainder of the 2023-24 school year (SY23-24) with the commitment to continue full-time in for SY24-25. The spring was the ideal time to advertise for good quality teachers but the FY25 position could not be advertised without a funding source.

• In view of the small Chilmark site budget and the unknown FY25 status, the options were to:

- use new-hire savings usually generated through the summer and/or

- Contingency funds.

• Co-teaching was in line with Supt. Smith's system-wide commitments, sometimes requiring compromises on old structures. He noted that occasionally there were attrition savings from mid-year resignations or retirements.

• The UIRSC debated the issue at length.

- Skipper Manter immediately objected that 75% of Contingency belonged to West Tisbury and that Contingency was being used as a slush fund to obscure actual spending.

- Administration was further criticized for not foreseeing and covering this during budgeting.

- There was opposition to changing the FY25 budget before it was approved by UIRSD Annual Town Meetings (ATMs), so the UIRSC proposed revisiting the matter after the budget passed. (Amending the UIRSD FY25 budget at this time in the ATM schedule would be confusing and was not recommended. The bottom line would remain unchanged.)

- The Committee was reminded that this was a priority for all the UIRSD Administration, and some members expressed their commitment to co-teaching.

- Another option would be to advertise the full time FY24 position explaining to candidates during the interview that the District was pursuing FY25 funding.

• IN ORDER TO ADVERTISE FOR A CHILMARK SCHOOL CO-TEACHER AT THIS TIME JIM NEWMAN MOVED THAT TO MOVE FORWARD TO EXPEND UP TO \$62,000 FROM THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 CONTINGENCY LINE IF NECESSARY; ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION WITHDRAWN.

• *ROBERT LIONETTE MOVED TO MOVE FORWARD WITH AUTHORIZING UP TO \$62,000 FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET RESIDUAL FUNDS AND THE CONTINGENCY LINE ONLY IF NECESSARY IN ORDER ADVERTISE IN A TIMELY MANNER FOR A CHILMARK SCHOOL CO-TEACHER; JIM NEWMAN SECONDED; MOTION FAILED: 2 AYES—ROBERT LIONETTE, JIM NEWMAN, 3 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

4. School Improvement Plan (SIP) (See documents on file.)

Finance (Agenda Item #IV)

A. Expense and Revenue Report (See documents on file.)

• There were no significant concerns and all current issues could be resolved with intra-departmental transfers, e.g. small variances in Shared Services and WTS administrative lines.

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- Due to a lack of Martha's Vineyard Public School (MVPS) custodial substitutes, sick/vacation/personal days had to be filled with contracted services.
- In the WTS site a couple custodian retirements were being replaced—contractual separation costs would be transferred later in the year. Business Administrator Mark Friedman did not expect to use Contingency funds.
- The Chilmark site had a few more deficits (including Contingency fund transfers for the two new Education Support Professionals—ESPs – see 7/17/23 Minutes p.1-2 #III), but again were likely to be covered by transfers.
- Oil bills should drop precipitously now that the new system was in operation.
- The Districtwide site was being closely monitored because insurances and the Dukes County Retirement assessment were higher than budgeted but overall issues it was expected that issues could be resolved without cross site transfers.
- A warrant article for capital needs was shown in the Districtwide site.
- At ~ \$967,000, FY24 Ch. 70 was higher than projected but the differential would be needed for Charter School tuition and assessment overages leaving ~ \$60,000 in deficit overall.

B. Clean School Bus Grant Update (See 1/10/24 Minutes p.3-4 #IV B.)

The grant application was submitted and outside counsel was working on the inter-municipal agreement.

Superintendent's Report (Agenda Item #VI)

A. Chilmark School Principal Search Update

Chilmark School visits were over and the Search Committee visited the Edgartown and Willard Schools. The search was in its final stage selecting the candidate and negotiating a contract

B. Student Support Services Update – Services were in good shape/nothing to report.

School Choice Vote (See documents on file.) (Agenda Item #V)

The policy was reviewed including:

- priorities, lotteries, deadlines and Principal discretion;
- new school choice transfers for new MVPS students were allowed until January 1st.

It was suggested that the policy be amended to extend emergency acceptance outside the deadlines—Procedure #6. The recent Edgartown School school choice controversy was noted, and Supt. Richie Smith reported the UIRSC case being referred to, had been resolved.

- The UIRSC requested School Choice Policy amendments be placed on the April agenda.
- *ROXANNE ACKERMAN MOVED TO CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE AS A SCHOOL CHOICE DISTRICT FOR THE 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 4 AYES, 1 NAY—SKIP MANTER, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Personnel (Agenda Item #VI)

A. Resignations

These two Education Support Professionals (ESPs) were resigning to become WTS teachers.

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- *SKIP MANTER MOVED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE RESIGNATIONS OF WEST TISBURY SCHOOL EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS CHARLOTTE DELASIN AND ANNIE OLLEN AS OF JULY 1, 2024; ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

B. LOA – Tabled

Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair (Agenda Item #V)

Skipper Manter objected to Supt. Smith's email to the UIRSC regarding the new Chilmark School Principal contract negotiations, stating the issue should be debated in public meeting. Supt. Smith responded it was not any effort to avoid open meeting law but rather to preserve candidate confidentiality and to inform the UIRSC before any press/media announcements.

Meetings/Events

- AISC – 5:30PM, Thursday, March 28, 2024 – Oak Bluffs School
- UIRSC – TBD – 5:30PM, Monday, April 15, 2024 – WTS/Zoom
- Annual Town Meetings
 - West Tisbury, 5:00PM, Tuesday, April 9, 2024 – WTS
 - Chilmark 7:00PM, Tuesday April 23, 2024 – Community Center
 - Aquinnah – 7:30PM, Tuesday, May 14, 2024 – Aquinnah Town Hall

Adjournment

- *ROBERT LIONETTE MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 8:08PM; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Documents on File:

- Agenda 3/18/24
- Site Plan in Chilmark, Mass., Prepared for The Menemsha School, 9/25/23
- Lowell-Bettencourt cover email re: Up Island Regional Student Opportunity Act Plan 3/18/24
- UIRSD SOA Plan 2024-2027 (8 p.)
- Surplus Items from Storage
- Draft Chilmark School Improvement Plan 2024-2025 School Year (2 p.)
- All Expenditure Report – General Fund Fiscal Year 2023-2024 (15 p.) 3/18/24
- Revenue Report – General Fund Fiscal Year 2023- 2024 3/18/24
- Martha's Vineyard Public Schools School Choice Policy 2/11/2014