

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
5:00PM, Tuesday, October 1, 2024
West Tisbury School or By Zoom Cloud Conference**

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Present: Acting Chair – Alex Salop, Jim Newman, Roxanne Ackerman*,
Robert Lionette*, Skipper Manter,
Others: Sara Salvi – CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA)
Supt.'s Shared Services Office: Richard Smith, Mark Friedman,
Principals: Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Kate Squire, Mary Boyd,
Staff: David Crawford,
Towns: Greg Orcutt – WT FinCom,
Press: Julie Soikkeli – MVTM, Daniel Greenman – MV Times,
Louisa Hufstader – Gazette,
Recorder: Marni Lipke *Late arrivals or early departures

Call to Order (Agenda item #II)

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 (Agenda item #VII)

A. Including But Not Limited to June 17, 2024 – Tabled due to incorrect date.

Finance (Agenda item #II)

A. Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Audit Presentation (See documents on file.)

* During this conversation Roxanne Ackerman and Robert Lionette entered the meeting.

As part of the CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) UIRSD audit, Director Sarah Salvi was standing in for Chris Rogers. Thanks went to Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) Business Administrator Mark Friedman and Accounting Manager Lynn Rebello for the smooth process.

- The terms of engagement were reviewed (see 9/18/23 Minutes p.1 #IV A). The audit expressed an opinion on whether financial statements are fairly presented according to Generally Accepted Accounting Principals (GAAP) and reported on internal controls and compliance.
- The opinion was Unmodified with no findings in internal controls/compliance, which was the best opinion available. There was only 1 management letter comment.

The net **Governmental Activities** position was -\$5,600,000 mostly due to the Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) and pension liabilities. Unrestricted liabilities were volatile, moving substantially up or down depending on the market, discount rates, actuarial calculations and healthcare trends.

- (A new major fund would be added in FY24 for the Inter-municipal agreement on the Chilmark heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) project.)
- Net OPEB liability was \$6,400,000 (~ \$1,000,000 lower than FY22) at a 6.5% discount rate. The decrease was mostly due to UIRSD contributions/assets.
- At 45% of the current obligation the UIRSD was significantly ahead of the Actuarially Determined Employer Contribution (ADEC) but it still maintained the \$50,000 annual increase to its Dukes County OPEB Trust contribution—on top of the increases for new staff (\$71,000 in

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FY25). There was a request to ask the Towns and Finance Committees to reconsider the annual \$50,000 increase.

- The net pension liability jumped from \$314,000 in FY22 to \$1,843,000 in FY23 due to the UIRSD proportionate share of the Dukes County Retirement Fund market investment loss of ~ \$35,000,000 as of December 2022.

The net **General Fund** position was \$649,000 of which \$440,000 was committed, \$27,000 was assigned and \$182,000 was unassigned.

The only **Management letter comment** was on Information Technology (IT) security. IT controls were audited by a separate CLA team and were an increasingly important part of the audit as the world got scarier. The components were:

- IT Risk Assessment,
- IT Policies and Procedures,
- Vendor Management Policy,
- formally documented and approved Disaster Recovery Plan,
- Inventory of all MVPS owned IT machines and devices,
- User Access, insuring new and terminated users' access was properly granted or revoked.

The UIRSC had two major concerns.

- The FY23 audit was being presented well into FY25. The audit was completed in late spring but UIRSC scheduling delayed the presentation. The 2024 Fiscal Year was closed last month and the FY24 audit would begin shortly, with a spring 2025 presentation goal.

- The IT Management Comment was a repeat of several years running.

- Ms. Salvi explained this was a fairly standard list seen in many communities, and was an ongoing process likely to remain as a Management Comment despite steady work by the MVPS technology team, because IT threats constantly changed and increased. Each year a couple issues would be resolved but another would appear—e.g. the Steamship Authority, Nantucket and Oak Bluffs recent losses due to scam/fraud. In this way the Comment was not really a repeat.

- As a MVPS-wide issue all schools came through Central Office servers and consequently all school technologists were working on security together—each with their own local perspective. However only the regions: i.e. UIRSD and Martha's Vineyard Regional High School District (MVRHSD) included this Management Comment.

- The MVPS received a \$99,000 cyber security grant now being implemented. UIRSD Technologist David Crawford took the comment very seriously. One vendor was helping with a network audit and a new vendor would generate policies and help with a disaster recovery plan. Encrypted cloud-based financial access was limited to one person in the School and one in the Central Office, password resets were required every 90 days, etc. However the changes took extra labor hours on an ongoing basis.

- Policies would go through principal review, UIRSC vote and enactment. Although the audit was limited to the financial portion of the network, policies and procedures also had to encompass student/staff information and teachers and staff behaviors without unduly restricting the access to the internet needed by an education-focused network.

- As an Islandwide structure with a single shared financial software, the MVPS were nonetheless decentralized and consequently challenges included: not much support for the central node, and

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keeping everyone informed and involved. Consequently the UIRSC suggested this was an All Island School Committee (AISC) issue.

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

- At 25% of FY25, 25% of the assessed **revenue** had been received with no concerns to report.
- This early in the fiscal year there were no **expense** concerns of note. Small variances such as longevity still needed to be reconciled from FY24, were more than offset by savings and/or might simply be reassignments waiting to be updated.
 - Student insurance premiums went up another 15% but were only budgeted at 3%. This single MVPS policy allocated by enrollment had been rising steeply—and should be addressed by the AISC. Building insurance premiums (held by each Town) were also rising more than 10% per year. The UIRSC asked about other organizations that were using School facilities.
 - The **West Tisbury (WTS) site** was not fully reconciled with some salary transfers were needed to update shifts in staffing positions.
 - The **Chilmark site** budget was divided into: regular, special education (SpEd) and kindergarten sections so variances might show up in one section but were still available for transfer within the entire site. For example the partially grant funded co-teaching position salary (see 3/18/24 Minutes p.3-4 #3B) should be moved to the SpEd section.
 - Most **Districtwide** large payments were billed towards the end of each fiscal year.
- The UIRSC returned again to their repeated conversation about whether to transfer line item funds quarterly or annually, issues being:
 - better clarity of financial standing throughout the year;
 - additional work for the financial department;
 - possibly having to transfer funds back again as the budget shifted during the year.

C. Grants/Donations (See documents on file.)

- *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO ACCEPT THE \$500 GRANT FROM THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD BANK; SKIPPER MANTER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.* The grant would go into the scholarship fund.
- The 3rd grade was integrating the read aloud book Wild Robot into science/technology/engineering/math (STEM) and socio-emotional curriculums.
- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE PARENT RENTAL OF THE EDGARTOWN MOVIE THEATER FOR THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND PARENTS TO WATCH "WILD ROBOT"; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.*

D. Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) Budget Process

The UIRSC discussed when to start budget workshops, noting that Principal Kate Squire was new to the process, but that it was too early in the year for some information, such as principal wish lists and ongoing union negotiations. Topics that lent themselves to early discussion were:

- a level service budget;
- the \$50,000 OPEB increase,

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- the WTS renovation/energy feasibility study (see Minutes: 1/17/23 p.4-5 #VI A&B, & 1/23/23 p.1-3 #II, & 2/21/23 p.1 #IV, & 3/20/23 p.4), and
- general fund versus warrant article protocol (see Minutes: 10/16/23 p.2, & 10/25/23 p.1#II).
Although the State had not objected to UIRSD practice, it now seemed the division between operating versus capital/borrowing funding was more nuanced than previously understood.

E. Surplus Chilmark School Cafeteria Tables (See documents on file.)

Two circular folding tables with permanently attached stools were ~ \$2,500 each new.

- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO DECLARE SURPLUS 2 CHILMARK SCHOOL CAFETERIA TABLES AND TO OFFER THEM TO THE UP ISLAND TOWNS FIRST; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.*

Principal's Reports (Agenda Item #III)

A. Kate Squire— Chilmark School

Principal Kate Squire reported new things at the Chilmark School.

- A teacher will bring in her certified therapy dog on Fridays as a help to reluctant readers who were more relaxed and confident when reading to Molly.
- Many field trips were to local farms and to Menemsha to study topography and geology.
- Staff was focused on more service to Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Tier 3 students.
- Over the summer and continuing into the fall Prin. Squire was working with the Chilmark police on building and fire security including additional staff training.
- Everyone, especially grandparents were excited about a focus on community engagement:
 - ° a family picnic with an outdoor film,
 - ° the first of regular coffees at the Chilmark Community Center,
 - ° great feedback over the newly instituted Chilmark Chat encapsulating all School information.
- A couple future capital projects were noted: a security issue and the HVAC Owners Project Manager (OPM) report that the bell tower might need extensive repair.

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

1. Principal Report (See documents on file.)

- A video of summer school was shown. The Program continued to be a huge success with Chilmark and Aquinnah families participating. The fact that it was budgeted (although reimbursed by a different smaller grant than previously) and therefore had assured funding allowed parents to better plan their summer. Students preferred it to summer camp despite the academic component. Administration was able to expand staffing to meet demand for some 7:30AM drop-offs. Parent feedback wanted the program to continue throughout the summer.
- In exploring different approaches to reducing the distraction of personal IT devices (phones, air pods, watches, etc.) the WTS found the best option was Yondr pouches, which locked all phones in small pouches which could be easily unlocked on leaving school. This answered student concerns to keep their phones with them but allowed them to experience a phone free school day—students actually requested the pouches on opening day. The program was covered by a grant and relieved teachers of any further enforcement burden. Students refusing to use Yondr or who

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had devices too big for the pouches left their devices in the School office. There was some provision for teacher modeling. The Student Handbook had been updated accordingly.

- In partnership with Prin. Squire, Principal Donna Lowell-Bettencourt was working on community engagement including a much more active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) after the Covid pandemic period of inertia. Similarly parents attendance was way up (80 families) for:
 - Back to School Night with the West Tisbury Police helping with the grill cooking;
 - Curriculum Nights – Kindergarten in the spring and 1st through 8th grades in September;
 - Create a sign day with family participation and a horse.
- Student voices and visibility were elevated with School-wide posting of:
 - Student Spotlight interview by Prin. Lowell-Bettencourt; and
 - a front lobby TV screen highlighting what's going on in the school: classroom activities, Tribal re-culturalization remembrance, etc. (Students loved to watch themselves.)

2. Donation (See above II C.)

Superintendent's Report – General Update (Agenda Item #IV)

Superintendent Richard Smith received unsolicited praise from parents on the smooth opening, and robust agendas of the 2 UIRSD Schools, headed by 3 talented administrators. Succession planning concerns were allayed by Prin. Lowell-Bettencourt mentoring several excellent UIRSD and MVPS administrators.

- Both WTS and Chilmark continued to improve MCAS scores with strong English/Language Arts and Math, despite already high performances, an impressive feat.

Director of Support Services Update – Tabled (Agenda Item #V)

Superintendent's Evaluation (Agenda Item #VI)

UIRSC representative to the AISC Personnel Subcommittee Alex Salop reviewed procedure for this year's evaluation of the Supt. Smith. Each member should individually fill out the evaluation form and send in a copy by Thursday October 3rd. More evidence was available from Supt. Smith on request. The Subcommittee would process the results before drafting an evaluation. 2 videos explained the process. The evaluation was shifted to accommodate MCAS accountability.

- Supt. Smith attended the Superintendent Induction Program (SIP) where he presented the Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis (see 2/21/23 Minutes p.2 #V) and was advised that it could easily be morphed into a District Improvement Strategic Plan. The 3-year Program was a good networking and mentoring tool.

Personnel (Agenda Item #IX)

A. Leave of Absence (LOA)

- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO ACKNOWLEDGE A LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL BARBARA BINDER FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE FISCAL YEAR; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.* Ms. Bonder accepted a teacher's position.

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B. Resignations – None

C. Retirements – None

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

The Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) advised that School Improvement Plans should be scheduled to inform budget season.

Chilmark Pre-School and Lease Discussion to Include Liability Insurance Policies on UIRSD Schools (Agenda Item #VIII)

(Executive Session #6: To Consider the Purchase, Exchange, Lease or Value of Real Property If the Chair Declares that an Open meeting May Have a Detrimental Effect on the Negotiating position of the Public Body.)

The UIRSC was divided on whether the District should even be a party to the Preschool lease of Town land. There were also complaints that the process had become unnecessarily complicated.

- The Annual Town Meeting approved warrant article specified a 3 party lease between the Town of Chilmark, the UIRSD and the Friends of the Chilmark Pre-School.

- MVPS legal counsel advised there were issues within the lease that pertained to the UIRSD.

- The lease raised issues that had not been previously formalized.

- In general there was agreement between the 3 parties. It was felt it was the Pre-School's responsibility to complete the lease.

• The UIRSC agreed to review the issues and then to set protocol to return their decisions to the appropriate parties. It was assumed that the Pre-School would cease to use the School building as soon as its new building was completed, relinquishing the entire School to UIRSD use.

• A lease clause could codify the Chilmark School Principal and the OPM as responsible for all safety issues during construction, e.g. Prin. Squire might request ceasing or different scheduling of construction activities for the safety of the students. UIRSC suggested language was:

The OPM has responsibility for safety under the guidance of the Chilmark School Principal.

• The lease would define a communications protocol and the definition and nature of relationships.

• The current draft requested utilization of the school parking lot for Pre-School parking and parent drop-offs. Since there were:

- fewer parking spaces than there were Chilmark School staff, and

- school bus cornering issues,

- and the Chilmark Community Center lot would be equidistant to the Pre-school,

Robert Lionette recommended and the UIRSC agreed to ask Pre-School staff and drop-offs to continue at the Community Center parking lot.

• The septic system had been signed off but the Pre-School laundry would put additional pressure on the system. Consequently the ratio use of the School and Pre-school septic costs would have to be revisited, with possible future replacement at the same ratio.

- The School baseline could be set by monitoring current use.

• Since the current Pre-School design (as well as the construction process) would impinge on the playground the Pre-School would present a formula for replacement, maintenance, and upkeep of the playground equipment. There was some question as to whether the playground would have to

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be redesigned with some pieces appropriate for children under 5 years old. It was suggested that the re-design be with/under the direction of the Chilmark School but at the expense of the Pre-School. This could turn out to be a great benefit to everyone.

- Like all MVPS anyone could use the playground and consequently ratio costs were a fairly unanswerable question. It was suggested that the 3 main parties (School, Pre-School, Community Center Summer Camp) contribute to a playground maintenance fund.

• The lease would force codification of the UIRSD 30 year history with the Community Center Summer Camp. If Camp enrollment (from 3 to 18 yrs. old) was 50 it used a single classroom, and if 80 it used 2 rooms. Although this was the responsibility of the Town, the UIRSC noted the impact on the building, playground and septic system.

• *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO MAKE ROBERT LIONETTE RESPONSIBLE FOR REPRESENTING THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE INTERESTS IN NEGOTIATING THE PRE-SCHOOL LEASE; JIM NEWMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSTENTION: SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—ABSTAIN.*

Meetings/Events

• AISC – 5:30PM, Thursday, October 3, 2024 – MVRHS/Zoom

• UIRSC – TBD – 5:30PM, Monday, October 21, 2024 – Hybrid

Adjournment

• *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 7:25PM; ROXANNE ACKERMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.*

Documents on File:

- Agenda (2 p.) 10/1/24
- All Expenditure Report – General Fund Fiscal Year 2024-2025 (15 p.) 9/30/24
- Revenue Report – General Fund Fiscal Year 2024-2025 9/30/24
- Hi Donna, Here is some information about how we are using The Wild Robot...
- Ray/Martha's Vineyard Bank letter re: \$500 grant (2 p.) 8/15/24
- Community Engagement (8 p.)
- CLA Up-Island Regional School District, Fiscal Year 2023 Audit Exit Conference, October 1, 2024 (9 p.)
- Up-Island Regional School District Financial Statements and Required Supplementary Information, Year Ended June 30, 2023, (54 p. including covers & blanks) 7/26/24
- CliftonLarsonAllen letter re: Significant audit findings or issues (4 p.) 7/26/24
- Up-Island Regional School District Management Letter June 30, 2023, (7 p. including covers & blanks) 7/26/24

Minutes approved as amended 11/18/24