

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
5:30PM, Monday, December 16, 2024
West Tisbury School and/or By Zoom Cloud Conference**

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Present: Chair – Jim Newman, Roxanne Ackerman*, Robert Lionette,
Skipper Manter,
Others: Supt.'s Shared Services Office: Richard Smith, Mark Friedman,
Principals: Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Kate Squire, Mary Boyd,
Chilmark PreSchool: Anne Mayhew, Marie Larsen – CSB
Rebekah Thomson,
Press: Lynn Fraker – MVTV, Louisa Hufstader – Vineyard Gazette,
Recorder: Marni Lipke *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 (Agenda item #II)

A. Including But Not Limited to November 18, 2024, and December 5, 2024–Tabled.
The UIRSC requested that minutes to be voted be attached to the same email as the meeting's agenda posting.

Principal's Reports (Agenda Item #III)

A. Kate Squire– Chilmark School

* During this conversation Roxanne Ackerman entered the meeting at 5:38PM.

Principal Kate Squire gave a shout-out to the teachers for their energy and dedication in the week before Christmas. Events included student research and presentations on symbols of peace around the world, a canned food drive, a gently used clothing swap, and caroling around Chilmark Town Center.

1. Preschool Update

A letter went out this fall informing all interested parties that the PreSchool would not open their new building in September 2025. The additional year of Preschool tenancy would force more use of the Chilmark Community Center. Preschool representatives were meeting with the Chilmark Select Board (CSB), Community Center, Public Library and Prin. Squire to work out a detailed agreement by February 2025 and to insure there would be no additional costs to the UIRSD.

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

- Boys and girls basketball season was stacking up wins, and so many children were playing that there were multiple teams.
- Parents were very grateful for the after school activities which had grown impressively. Winter clubs had been posted: free writing, sewing, coaching (training) cows with Slough Farm, Biokits, photography, Leggo, guitar, gardening, dog training, karaoke, art studio, and nature detective. The late bus route was often lengthy and hard to predict as it depended on who was on the bus.

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- The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) donated a truck which students and families filled with whole and dry goods for the Food Pantry—hopefully to be repeated every year. The PTO would recognize the students with hot chocolate and cider, and staff’s hard work with a breakfast.

C. 2024 Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) – Tabled

D. 2024 School Climate Survey – Tabled

E. 2024 School Equity Audit – Tabled

Director of Support Services – Tabled (Agenda Item #IV)

Superintendent's Report

This would be a busy week of meetings: the UIRSC Budget Public Hearing, Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) Building Committee, Tisbury Special Town Meeting (STM), Negotiations, All Island School Committee (AISC) and MVRHSC Budget Public Hearing.

Finance (Agenda item #VI)

D. Acceptance of Grant/Rural Aid (See documents on file)

The MVRHS did not receive any Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Rural School Aid Grant funds, but for the first time the UIRSD did. The grant could “be used for wide variety of school operational costs, with a priority on promoting regional cooperation. Administration was looking for UIRSC guidance since the funds must be spent within FY25—a short timeframe. Discussion included:

- a new electric lunch delivery van (see 10/19/15 Minutes p.2 #III.C);
- legal or Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS) expenses for MVPS regionalization and strategies to improve long-term operational efficiency;
- FY26 capital expenses (see below IV.A);
- legal costs for updating the UIRSD Regional Agreement;
- requesting guidance from UIRSD Principals.

• *ROXANNE ACKERMAN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE \$172,327.76 RURAL SCHOOL AID GRANT; ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE.*

Personnel - Nothing to report. (Agenda Item #VIII)

A. Leave of Absence (LOA)

B. Resignation

C. Retirement

Public Hearing (Agenda item #V)

A. Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) Budget Presentation and Discussion

(See documents on file, & Minutes: 10/28/24 p.2 #D, & 11/18/24 p.1-3 #II, & 12/5/24.)

- The Public Hearing was called to order at 5:59PM.

Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) Business Administrator Mark Friedman reviewed the highlights of Version #4C.

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- The **Superintendent's Shared Services (or Central) Office** assessment increase was \$271,577.91 or 13.2% over FY25 which was a 1.7% increase to the UIRSD Budget bottom line.
- The **WTS Site** had reduced a 0.5 to a 0.3 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Special Teacher increase. The Site showed a 9.8% increase which was 5.5% to the UIRSD bottom line.
- The **Chilmark Site** was unchanged from Version #3.
- The **Districtwide Site** showed a 3% rise in payroll expenses mirroring FY24 actuals.
- Medicaid funds could not be shown as both revenue and offset, so the offset was eliminated here—showing a \$38,000 variance to the Site.
- Line items on debt had been updated. Borrowing costs for capital expenses (see below, & 11/18/24 Minutes p.2) would be minimal and interest/principal payments would start in FY27.
- Dukes County Retirement expenses were up \$27,644, and
- final Transportation expenses were up \$18,929.
- The UIRSC requested that line item numbers be eliminated from the Budget Highlights report.
- The **Assessments** Report was updated to show total gross expenses before School Choice offset at 9.07%. The Medicaid reimbursement was shown in the revenue section at \$26,552 (the FY24 actual).
- The \$50,000 Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) increase was offset with Excess and Deficiency (E & D). At the current payment level the entire liability would be paid off in 2035.
- The UIRSD was a little ahead of the debt payments for the Chilmark School heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) project which would be coordinated in FY26 and FY27 when final numbers were available.
- The UIRSD Regional Agreement required budget certification by December 31st and apportionment by February 28th. The UIRSC requested the Regional Agreement be posted on the MVYPS website.
- The Public Hearing was declared closed at 6:25PM.

Finance

(Agenda item #VI)

A. FY26 Budget Discussion and Possible Certification

- The UIRSC requested the total spending for each site—Superintendent Shared Services, WTS, Chilmark and Districtwide.
- Mr. Manter repeated his protest on the location of the Contingency line.
- *ROBERT LIONETTE MOVED TO CERTIFY THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT FISCAL YEAR 2026 OPERATING BUDGET AT \$17,947,770.15 OR 9.07% INCREASE ASSESSED AT \$17,747,568.09 OR 10.24% INCREASE; JIM NEWMAN SECONDED; MOTION FAILED: 3 AYES, 1 NAY, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—NAY, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE.*

B. FY26 Capital Projects Funding (See documents on file & 12/5/24 Minutes p.3.)

Total capital repairs/maintenance projects came to \$869,000, \$573,000 for WTS and \$296,000 for Chilmark. Some projects would require contingency reserves and/or an Owners Project Manager (OPM) and/or designer.

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- The range and cost of a WTS feasibility study was very difficult to guesstimate. CHA/Daedalus and Tappé Architects (the Tisbury School and MVRHS OPM and designer) advised that it could range from 0.75% (\$447,000) to 2.5% (\$968,214) of the estimated \$30,000,000 construction costs depending on project complexity.
- WT Energy Committee Chair Kate Warner suggested there were substantial grant funds available, although the UIRSC considered they were subject to current national political trends. The UIRSC discussed a number of factors:
 - the coming unknown expense of the MVRHS project and the politics of having simultaneous major capital projects;
 - steadily inflating construction costs that discouraged putting off projects;
 - WTS lack of energy efficiency;
 - possible use of E & D and/or Rural Aid funds for the one-time FY26 capital projects;
 - possible official March borrowing vote in time for Annual Town Meetings (ATMs);
 - modification and or elimination of Chilmark School bell tower;
 - Feasibility Study life term requiring construction within 5 years;
 - research on constraints of possible short-term borrowing cap;
 - need for a UIRSD project financial overseer/procurement officer, as Mark Friedman and Central Office staff had no capacity for another major capital project.
- **IT WAS THE CONSENSUS OF THE UIRSC TO:**
 - INCLUDE COST OF A FINANCIAL OVERSEER/PROCUREMENT OFFICER IN THE WEST TISBURY SCHOOL FEASIBILITY STUDY;
 - DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY STUDY AMOUNT BY ANY SHORT TERM BORROWING CONSTRAINTS;
 - REQUEST PROPOSALS FOR USE OF RURAL AID FUNDS;
 - REQUEST DRAFTS FOR FY26 CAPITAL PROJECT FUNDING WITH E & D AND/OR RURAL AID AND/OR BORROWING.

C. Expenditure and Revenue Reports – Tabled

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

(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.)

(See Minutes: 3/18/24 p.1-2 #III B5, & 4/22/24 p.2-3 #III B6, & 5/20/24 p.1-2 #VI, & 7/15/24 p.3 #VI, & 10/1/24 p.6-7 #VIII, & 10/28/24 p.5 #VIII, & 11/18/24 p.4-5 #VIII.)

Seven of the 9 areas of discussion on the Preschool land lease had been settled. UIRSC representative Robert Lionette proposed a joint meeting with the UIRSC, the Chilmark Select Board (CSB) and the Preschool to resolve the 2 remaining issues in lease—which were also larger UIRSD issues. CSB and Preschool representative Marie Larsen requested the summer Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for use of the Chilmark School also be finalized. There was general commendation for Prin. Squire’s spirit of generosity and collaboration.

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

Meetings/Events

- AISC – 6:00PM, Thursday, December 19, 2024 – MVRHS Hybrid
- UIRSC – 5:30PM, Monday, January 27, 2025 – Aquinnah/Wampanoag TBD
- UIRSC – 5:30PM, Mondays – Location TBD:
February 17, 2025 May 19, 2025
March 17, 2025 June 16, 2025
April 21, 2025

Adjournment

• *ROBERT LIONETTE MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 7:00PM; ROXANNE ACKERMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE.*

Documents on File:

- Agenda & Public Hearing posting (3 p.) 12/16/24
- Friedman cover email re: UIRSD FY26 Budget – Version #4 12/14/24
- Up-Island Regional School District, FY26 General Fund Budget, Version # 4, 12-16-2024 Proposed (9 p.)
- UIRSD FY26 Budget Version #4 12/16/2024 – Proposed, Changes from FY25 Budget (3 p.)
- UIRSD FY2026 Assessment – V#4 Proposed 11/16/2024
- Up-Island Regional School District, FY26 General Fund Budget, Version # 4C, 12-16-2024 Proposed (9 p.)
- UIRSD FY26 Budget Version #4C 12/16/2024 – Proposed, Changes from FY25 Budget (3 p.)
- UIRSD FY2026 Assessment – V#4C Proposed 11/16/2024
- UIRSD, Capital Repair Projects, 12/12/2024 Draft (3 p.)
- FY2025 Rural School Aid (3 p.) 11/22/24

Minutes approved 1/27/25