

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD  
5:30PM, Wednesday, January 15, 2025  
Chilmark School and/or By Zoom Cloud Conference**

**Page 1 of 4**

Present: Chair – Jim Newman, Roxanne Ackerman\*, Robert Lionette, Alex Salop,  
Others: Supt.'s Shared Services Office: Richard Smith, Mark Friedman,  
Principals: Kate Squire, Mary Boyd,  
Staff: Christopher Mara,  
Towns: Chilmark: Marie Larsen–Select Board, Linda Coutinho–FinCom,  
West Tisbury: Greg Orcutt–FinCom,  
Press: Lynn Fraker–MVTN, 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.*)

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

\* During this conversation Roxanne Ackerman entered the meeting at 5:40PM.

Chilmark Select Board member Marie Larsen stated that although the Town planned to use the new Chilmark Preschool for summer camp 2026, they expected to continue to use the Chilmark School in summer 2025. Robert Lionette stated that:

- the issue was not on the agenda;
- without refusing the request, there was no record of UIRSC officially authorizing such use;
- and that the matter should be put on the next agenda with counsel present.

**Finance** (Agenda item #II)

**A. Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) Budget Discussion and Possible Certification**

(See documents on file, & Minutes: 10/28/24 p.2 #D, & 11/18/24 p.1-3 #II, & 12/5/24, & 12/16/24 p.2-4 #V A & VI A & B.)

- With the exception of a slight correction to the Referee line item that did not affect total expenditure, there were no changes to the Budget.
- The \$50,000 increase to the Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) Trust contribution would continue but be offset by Excess and Deficiency (E & D).
- Union negotiations were a driving factor in all Martha's Vineyard Public School (MVPS) budgets. If the settlement exceeded projected funds, administration would bring the matter to the UIRSC. A possible source was the ~ \$332,000 E & D balance, after the Contingency and OPEB contribution. Small variances were not worth budget re-certification, which involved heavy paperwork and reporting.
- The UIRSC considered revisiting the 3 year rolling average enrollment numbers to smooth out the spikes and dips in Town assessments. This would require amending the Regional Agreement with legal counsel crafted language. However, the amendment might trigger the Department of

## UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD

January 15, 2025

Page 2 of 4

Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to require further revisions to bring the Agreement to current code. This would be followed by a UIRSC vote and then by votes at all 3 Town Meetings.

- This might also be part of the All Island School Committee (AISC) Regionalization Working Group discussions.

- The UIRSC requested budget totals and percentages be kept on a spreadsheet.

- *ROXANNE ACKERMAN MOVED TO CERTIFY THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET VERSION #4D AS PRESENTED FOR A TOTAL EXPENSE NET WITHOUT SCHOOL CHOICE OFFSETS OF \$17,822,307.65 OR 8.33% INCREASE, AND A TOTAL ASSESSED BUDGET OF \$17,622,105.59 OR 9.47% INCREASE; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX SALOP—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE.*

- This year there would be significant differences between the Regional Agreement assessment formula and the State DESE statutory formula. Use of the Regional assessment would require all 3 Towns to approve the assessed budget.

- *ROXANNE ACKERMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE REGIONAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSING THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE.*

- FY25 Rural School Aid Grant funds could be used to alleviate previously proposed FY26 capital repair projects (see documents on file & below p.3 #B).

- In previous discussions the UIRSC had some dissent on whether to continue presenting capital items as warrant articles. The issue was revisited at some length.

- This was a grey area in DESE regulations which did not specifically reject warrant articles and had not objected to previous UIRSD practice.

- The UIRSC felt the warrant article votes added a measure of transparency and voter choice to capital expenditures. However most of the ATM article deadlines had passed.

- Inclusion in the operating budget spiked and dipped the totals.

- Some years (including FY26 see above p.1) it might be possible to smooth out spikes by using E & D funds to keep assessment neutral. This was most efficiently included in Annual Town Meeting (ATM) UIRSD budget votes—otherwise it required the 45 day delay, Town Select Board consent and/or Special Town Meeting (STM) vote. There was not enough E & D to cover the bell tower and the Feasibility Study.

- (Both Rural Aid and E & D funds would vanish on June 30, 2025—E & D funds would only become available again after certification.)

- DESE clearly allowed borrowing but interest rates were high and rising. The process was considered.

- ° Previously capital items were detailed in the borrowing motion (see 5/10/11 Minutes).

- ° Counsel would draft specific action language to be voted by the UIRSC which should be completed by March 2025 in order that ATM votes were within the 60 day timeframe.

## UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD

January 15, 2025

Page 3 of 4

- ° Principal and interest payments on a short-term bond borrowed on or after July 1, 2025 would start in FY27.
- There was a question about timing some projects so as not to disrupt school days, leaving the short July/August timeframe. The larger projects would have to be put out to bid (it was already January). Luckily the \$72,000 West Tisbury School (WTS) heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) project was below the State Dept. of Capital Asset Management (DCAM) threshold and might be contracted with Island trades this summer.
- In a discussion on the Chilmark School bell tower (see Minutes: 8/24/04 p.2 #V.A, & 11/27/12 p.1, & 7/28/16 p.2, & 12/5/24 p.3) Ms. Larsen noted similar issues with the current Police Station/old Schoolhouse bell tower. It was unclear if Chilmark valued its historic value/quaintness above the \$225,000 cost of repairs. Removal of the bell tower and construction of a normal pitched roof was estimated at \$130,000. There was no UIRSC decision.
- The UIRSC also revisited the discussion on funding a feasibility study.
  - There was no Central Office capacity to manage another large capital project. Even the feasibility phase required meetings, paperwork, bidding/contracting, oversight, etc. The UIRSC would have to hire or contract with someone at School Business Administrator Mark Friedman's level.
  - Borrowing regulations prohibited funds being used to hire additional capacity or staff.
  - Some felt it was important to move forward in order not to fall behind.
  - If Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) funds were solicited (a 7-8 year process) they would require their own (and redundant) feasibility study.
  - There was no clear UIRSC decision. Mr. Lionette suggested the UIRSC move forward to borrow \$648,620. Mr. Friedman would request borrowing language from bond counsel.
- **B. Rural Aid Grant – Update** (See documents on file, & 12/16/24 Minutes p.2 #VI D.)
- The UIRSC was reminded that all spending must be completed by June 30, 2025, a tight for timeline for some items.
- Timed with the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) Rural Aid Grant award the UIRSD award was reduced to \$160,708.
- In addition to the spending on capital projects:
  - Mr. Friedman proposed \$23,000 for expertise on Regionalization Working Group discussions—although it might be a challenge to spend funds before the deadline; and
  - UIRSD Principals proposed ~ \$39,000 on a new English/Language Arts (E/LA) curriculum.
- *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO SPEND RURAL SCHOOL AID GRANT FUNDS AS PRESENTED; ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE.*

### Meetings/Events

- The Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head Aquinnah could not meet with the UIRSC until April.
- Vice Chair Alex Salop would Chair the January 27<sup>th</sup> meeting for Jim Newman who could not attend.

UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD

January 15, 2025

Page 4 of 4

• UIRSC – 3:00PM. Monday, January 27, 2025 – WTS/Zoom

• UIRSC – 5:30PM. Mondays – Location TBD:

February 17, 2025 – President's Day

May 19, 2025

March 17, 2025

June 16, 2025

April 21, 2025

**Adjournment**

• *JIM NEWMAN MOVED TO ADJOURN ABOUT 6:54PM; ROBERT LIONETTE SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE.*

**Documents on File:**

- Agenda & Public Hearing posting 1/15/25
- Friedman cover email re: UIRSD FY26 Budget – Version #4D 1/14/25
- UIRSD FY26 Budget Version #4D 12/16/2024 – Proposed, Changes from FY25 Budget (3 p.)
- Up-Island Regional School District, FY26 General Fund Budget, Version # 4D, 12-16-2024 Proposed (9 p.)
- UIRSD, FY2026 Assessment – V#4D Proposed 12/16/2024
- UIRSD, Capital Repair Projects, 1/15/2025 Draft
- UIRSD, Rural School Aid Grant, FY24 (2 p.)

Minutes approved 3/5/25