

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD  
3:00PM, Friday, February 7, 2025  
Chilmark School and/or By Zoom Cloud Conference**

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Present: Chair – Jim Newman, Roxanne Ackerman, Robert Lionette,  
Skipper Manter, Alex Salop,  
Others: Jay Grossman, Debbie Milne, Recorder: Marni Lipke  
Supt.'s Shared Services Office: Superintendent Richie Smith,  
Principals: Kate Squire, Staff: Christopher Mara,  
Chilmark Preschool: Caroline Flanders, Anne Mayhew,  
Rebekah Thomson, Deb Zetterberg,  
Towns: Chilmark: Jim Malkin–Select Board,  
Town Administrator Tim Carroll, Linda Coutinho – FinCom,  
Press: Lynn Fraker–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.)

**Status of the Chilmark Preschool Lease, Including Timing, UIRSD Involvement**

(Agenda item #II) (See 1/27/25 Minutes p.3 #VIII A.)

**Procedure for Third-Party Access to the Chilmark School, and Access to Licensure and Insurance Documents for Entities Using Either the School or Preschool**

(Agenda item #III) (See 1/27/25 Minutes p.1-3 #VIII B.)

(Recorder's note: The agenda items are taken together because the discussion often conflated the issues.)

- After resolving 7 of the 9 outstanding issues in the Chilmark Preschool lease, there were ongoing negotiations regarding:

- shared use areas (septic, water, walkway, playground, etc.), and
- third party use.

Recently the Chilmark Select Board (CSB) informed the UIRSC that they were no longer needed as a party to the lease. UIRSD Counsel Murphy Lamere & Murphy advised that:

- all 3 entities should be a party to the lease since the Town could not negotiate shared assets, and
- a separate UIRSD/Preschool agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would not sufficiently protect the UIRSD.

- The UIRSC noted that shared use resources were supported by the 3 UIRSD Towns, and through use of School Choice funds all 6 Island Towns, and consequently wanted to be a signatory on the Preschool lease.

- Town Administrator Tim Carroll and CSB Chair Jim Malkin reviewed the history of both the Chilmark Preschool residency and the Chilmark Town Affairs Council (CTAC) summer Camp.

- Summer Camp use of the Chilmark School dated back to the old Menemsha School House and agreements were made for use of the present building with Principals Kathy Collins, Carlos Colley, as well as recent Head of School Susan Stevens.

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- A 1998 agreement guaranteed community use of the new school including the Martha's Vineyard Film Festival, and further maintained that when not in use the School reverted to Town control; and further designated Town center as a campus with cooperative use of the School, Library and Chilmark Community Center (CCC).
- The Chilmark Task Force was formed in response to a crisis in dropping enrollment with the recommendation to start a feeder Preschool. The UIRSC declared a classroom surplus space and the Town put out a formal Request For Proposal (RFP) for use of Room 131. The RFP included other user groups. (See Minutes: 1/26/04 p.4 #VII A, & 3/15/04 p.1 #II, & 4/7/04 p.3, & 4/12/04 p.2, & 7/12/04 p.3-4 #B, & 8/24/04 p.3 #B.)
- The Preschool invested capital to bring the room to preschool code including a new bathroom.
  - Currently a Preschool teacher worked directly with CTAC and had both a Town and State license to run a summer Camp for 60 children in the morning, as approved by public health and the Chilmark Building Inspector. As 60 students was too many for the single bathroom, portopotties were rented, rather than inconveniencing Principal Kate Squire by allowing children to spread through the halls to use other restrooms.
- The Preschool had no authority over the camp which was a separate entity.
- The Camp gave precedent to Chilmark, Wampanoag and UIRSD families.
  - Mr. Malkin gave a brief editorial citing other Chilmark summer controversies and stating CTAC wanted no further changes or embroilments in 2025 that might jeopardize more than 20 years of a successfully run program, and an important resource for Island parents during the busy summer months. The Town expected that 2026 and subsequent summer camps would use the new Chilmark Preschool building. However, the Preschool lease/building was the priority and if necessary the Town would give up the summer Camp in favor of proceeding with the Preschool.
  - Superintendent Richard Smith acknowledged the interests of both sides and in terms of the lease referred to precedents for long term use, and hopes that future school committees would not be dealing with the same issues.
- He asked UIRSC to specify what they objected to in the 20 yrs. of summer Camp occupation.
- Other Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) local school committees determined use of their buildings by third parties, primarily taking into account liability and child safety.
- Third party users should restore the space to its previous condition and leave the building in better shape than they received it.
- Massachusetts General Law Chapter 71 Section 16 was cited:

“A regional school district established under the provisions of the preceding section shall be a body politic and corporate with all the powers and duties conferred by law upon school committees, and with the following additional powers and duties:

(r) To rent or lease with the approval of the commissioner of education surplus space in a school building of the district to house public or private profit-making businesses or nonprofit organizations; provided, however, that if said school building is in actual use such joint occupancy shall not interfere with education programs being conducted therein; and provided, further, that if said school building is not in actual use, such lease must be approved by the city or town in which the said building is located. Such leases may be made for periods not exceeding ten years. The monies received from such rental

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or lease shall be kept separate and apart from other funds in the district treasury by the district treasurer, and the principal and interest thereon may be expended without further appropriation by the regional school district committee for the upkeep of the facility in which such surplus space is located; provided, however, that any balance remaining in such account at the close of a fiscal year shall be paid into the excess and deficiency fund, so called, of the regional school district as unencumbered funds and expended as provided in section sixteen B1/2.”

- The Preschool project exposed the UIRSC to information that required due diligence regarding its property, including liability concerns. The discussion covered several issues and opinions:
  - UIRSD as a tenant of Town-owned building and land, paying some upkeep and insurance like any tenant but, acknowledging Town prerogative to run programs and build the Preschool;
  - the difficulties resulting from the lack of a Chilmark/UIRSD Chilmark School lease;
  - the short timeframe given Camp registration began February 5<sup>th</sup>;
  - Camp coinciding with heavy summer maintenance work (floors, repairs, cleaning, etc.);
  - the importance of sharing all expenses so the UIRSD was not subsidizing a third party;
  - building insurance coverage;
  - upcoming Chilmark Annual Town Meeting (ATM) vote on some CCC issues;
  - Camp adult /child ratio for younger children;
  - Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Early Education and Care (EEC) licensing versus State camp licensing;
  - Camp occupancy levels of 60 children in a single classroom—usually in rotating groups;
  - UIRSC responsibility to the building leader;
  - use of public buildings by private entities;
  - expansion of the Camp from 20 3-4 year olds 3 hrs./day to 60 3-8 yr. olds all day without notifying the UIRSC. There was confusion over a second afternoon camp with less children, by a 2<sup>nd</sup> user who was now hoping to come under the same umbrella as the original morning camp.
- There was sometimes heated disagreement between Robert Lionette and the Chilmark representatives over CSB/UIRSC negotiations and actions.
- Principal Kate Squire favored working cooperatively for and with the Preschool and the Camp, provided Camp space could be contained so that children did not run through the halls.
  - As she could not be present everyday she suggested a substitute such as a custodian be assigned to monitor School use.
  - She had drafted a comprehensive agreement for the Chilmark School’s use of the CCC next year so that there would be no cost to the District. This could be a template for some of these issues e.g. inventorying existing conditions and defining who was responsible for repairs.
- Speaking for the Preschool, Attorney Caroline Flanders (a resident of West Tisbury) had talked to Murphy Lamere & Murphy and suggested a way for consensus. Attorneys were reluctant but did not outright reject a separate agreement to the lease. It was possible to craft a binding contract or MOU on the shared resources if it was inextricably linked to the lease, a process that might take some time and work.
- Robert Lionette expressed his concern and discomfort with a number of unsettled issues and asked that a motion on the camp be submitted to CTAC and the attorneys before being voted. Other members respectfully disagreed.

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• *ALEX SALOP MOVED THAT THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE WOULD ALLOW THE CHILMARK TOWN AFFAIRS COUNCIL TO RUN A SUMMER PROGRAM IN ROOM 131 OF THE CHILMARK SCHOOL UNDER THE FOLLOWING PROVISIONS:*

- *PERMISSION WAS RESTRICTED TO 2025 ONLY,*
- *FOR 7 WEEKS WITH DATES AND HOURS AS LICENSED BY THE BOARD OF HEALTH AND AS ADVERTISED ON THE CHILMARK TOWN AFFAIRS COUNCIL WEBSITE,*
- *FOR A MAXIMUM OF 60 CHILDREN,*
- *CHILMARK TOWN AFFAIRS COUNCIL TO SUBMIT A VALID MASSACHUSETTS CAMP LICENSE AND ADHERE TO ATTENDANT CONCURRENT OCCUPANCY REGULATIONS;*
- *ALL MAINTENANCE COSTS WILL BE BORN BY THE CHILMARK TOWN AFFAIRS COUNCIL;*

*ROXANNE ACKERMAN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 4 AYES, 1 NAY, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—NAY, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE.*

• The UIRSC requested that Caroline Flanders work with Town Counsel to craft a legally binding agreement that can be attached to the Town/Preschool lease. Mr. Carroll agreed that Town Counsel was comfortable talking to Ms. Flanders.

**Vote to Reconsider and Recertify the Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) Budget**

(Agenda item #IV)

(See 1/15/25 Minutes p.1-2 #II A.)

This budget was likely to be recertified again after the All Island School Committee (AISC) meeting (see below: Meetings/Events). However it was recertified here in order to present a reduced budget for upcoming Finance Committee interviews.

• Skipper Manter again objected to the continuing steep rise in UIRSD budgets, which were not sustainable for the Town of West Tisbury. He requested the MVPS budget chart the Oak Bluffs School Principal showed at the last AISC meeting.

• It was noted that:

- UIRSD pupils test scores were the highest on the Island and some of the highest in the State;
- Administrator requests were reasonable and need-based, e.g. additional Chilmark School class;
- regionalization being considered at the AISC level would save substantial funds by increased efficiency, State reimbursements, economies of scale, and mitigation of inter-school competition.

• *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO REVISIT AND RESCIND THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET CERTIFIED ON JANUARY 15, 2025; SKIPPER MANTER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE.*

• *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO CERTIFY THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET VERSION #5 AS PRESENTED FOR A TOTAL EXPENSE NET WITHOUT SCHOOL CHOICE OFFSETS OF \$17,714,690.66 OR 7.69% INCREASE, AND A TOTAL ASSESSED BUDGET OF \$17,514,488.60 OR 8.80% INCREASE; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 4 AYES, 1 NAY, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX SALOP—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—NAY, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE.*

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

Meetings/Events

**• UIRSC – 5:30PM, Monday, March 17, 2025 - TBD**

• WT FinCom – 5:00PM, Thursday, January 30, 2025

• Chilmark FinCom – 4:00PM, Monday, February 10, 2025

**• UIRSC – 5:30PM, Mondays – Location TBD:**

**March 17, 2025**

**May 19, 2025**

**April 21, 2025**

**June 16, 2025**

• AISC – 5:30PM, Thursday, March 20, 2025 – MVRHS Hybrid

**• Annual Town Meetings**

- West Tisbury, 6:00PM, Tuesday, April 8, 2025 – WTS

- Chilmark – TBD, Monday, April 28, 2025 – CCC

- Aquinnah – TBD, Tuesday, May 13, 2021 – Town Hall

**Adjournment**

*• ALEX SALOP MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 4:45PM; SKIPPER MANTER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, JIM NEWMAN—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, ROXANNE ACKERMAN—AYE.*

**Documents on File:**

*• Agenda/Revised (2 p.) 2/7/25*

*• Friedman cover email re: UIRSD FY26 Revised Budget for Health Insurance 1/14/25*

*- Up-Island Regional School District, FY26 General Fund Budget, 2-07-25 (9 p.)*

*- UIRSD, FY2026 Assessment – V#5, 2/07/2025*

**Minutes approved 3/5/25**