

Tisbury School Committee
4:00PM, Tuesday, September 9, 2025
Tisbury School Cafeteria

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TSC Members Present: Acting Chair Jen Cutrer, Alicia Lesnikowska,
Staff: John Custer – Principal, Mark Friedman – Business Administrator,
Hope MacLeod – Student Support, Meredith Goldthwaite,
Others: Dan Anjo – W.T. Rich, Marni Lipke – Recorder,
Town: Chair Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Elaine Miller – FinCom

The Tisbury School Committee (TSC) meeting was called to order at 4:04PM.

I. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes

• **ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. ALICIA LESNIKOWSKA AND SECONDED BY MS. JEN CUTRER THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 23, 2025 MEETING WERE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED; 2 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.**

II. Superintendent's Report

A. All Island School Committee (AISC) – See below: Meetings/Events

B. Shared Services Update (See documents on file.)

- Student Support Director Hope MacLeod reported a great start to the new school year and Tisbury staff's welcoming of Project Headway and Compass classrooms.
- In keeping with previous years, Ms. MacLeod presented a Shared Services snapshot of the current and previous school years, including parent surveys (all positive) and comparisons with State statistics. TSC members were welcome to review the data for questions and/or discussion at the next meeting.
- Ms. MacLeod offered to review Shared Services programs for new TSC member Ms. Lesnikowska.

III. Tisbury School Building Project

A. Project Update

Mr. Dan Anjo, reported for Construction Manager W.T. Rich. The School was complete and various warrantees would expire in December.

- There were order problems with the solar panels that should have been installed this summer. Current status was:
 - A contractor was hired for the parking lot foundations.
 - Eversource approved the interim application, and
 - installation was on track to be finished by December 31, 2025.
 - However a second Eversource inspection/permit was required after completion, which could take 7 to 30 days.
 - The TSC emphasized the urgency of the project because the FY26 utility budget was predicated on solar power (see 1/14/25 Minutes p.3 #B1 & p.5).

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B. Approval of Invoices (See documents on file.)

• ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. LESNIKOWSKA AND SECONDED BY MS. CUTRER THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED AND RECOMMENDED (2 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS) THE FOLLOWING JUNE 1 THROUGH AUGUST 31, 2025 INVOICES TOTALING \$576,847.07 TO BE SENT TO TOWN HALL FOR APPROVAL AND PAYMENT:

- CHA – OPM INVOICE # 39235-52 FOR \$12,500.00,
- CHA – OPM INVOICE # 39235-53 FOR \$5,500.00,
- W.T. RICH 7/23/25 INVOICE FOR \$469,882.00,
- RDA SOFT NET INVOICE # 2507670 FOR \$742.32,
- RDA SOFT NET INVOICE # 2506670 FOR \$616.83,
- SWEETWATER INVOICE # 46581463 FOR \$13,816.08
- SWEETWATER INVOICE # 45185998 FOR \$1,632.78
- RH LORD 7/22/25 INVOICE FOR \$44,776.81
- CARROLL'S MOVING & STORAGE INVOICE # 41250 FOR \$1,250.25,
- HUBTECH INVOICE # 24-25145 FOR \$26,130.00.

IV. Martha's Vineyard Regional High School (MVRHS) Building Project Report

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Facilities Assessment Subcommittee reviewed the proposed schematic and with a few comments/suggestions but no criticisms unanimously recommended to the full MSBA Board that the project proceed. On August 27th the full Board approved the schematic with positive comments including commending the strong Educational Plan. The next MSBA deadline for further schematic design was December 18th.

- The MVRHS Building Committee was now meeting twice monthly (see below: Meetings/Events.)

A. Tisbury Finance and Advisory Committee (FinCom) Discussion

FinCom Chair Nancy Gilfoy presented the Project through the filter of Town finances.

- At their last meeting the Committee cut the square footage and consequently the Project cost by \$50,000,000. But at the currently guessed Island share of \$234,000,000, the Project was still more than twice previous estimates.
- There were two possible project approval methods:
 - a simultaneous Island wide vote with majority approval;
 - a Town by Town Meeting vote, allowing a single town to veto the project.
- If the Project was approved and Tisbury voters then rejected the debt exclusion ballot, the Town would have to cut \$3,100,000 from its budget.
- According to the agreed Project formula and the 22.9% Tisbury share the following calculations were posited.
 - Cost was \$1,300/sq. ft. including Island factors (labor shortage, material shipping, housing issues) but not tariff impacts.
 - 4% interest came to ~ \$53,000,000 (~ \$3,100,000 in debt payments per year for 30 years) for an 8.6% tax raise.
 - 20-40% MSBA reimbursement could vary with spending caps, eligible components and energy efficiency bonus.

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- Tisbury statistics from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) reported:
 - the lowest per capita income on the Island;
 - the 3rd largest population in the 2nd smallest land area making it the densest (2,865 properties) with no place to grow;
 - 7.57% as highest average tax rate on Island—43% of median income;
 - \$85,000,000 in Town debt at 14.2% of the operating budget (guideline maximum 10%)
 - MVRHS debt would raise it to 19.2%;
 - 464 students (local and MVRHS) at \$54,956 per student or 53% of the Town budget.
- Risk assessment showed: a possible Town bond rating drop, real estate/home sales decline, and unaffordable family housing. Remedies might be to increase the residential exemption, cut services or reduce programs. In addition Tisbury had other urgent capital projects: new Town Hall, wastewater, affordable housing, sea level rise...

- TSC and FinCom members discussed a number of issues:
 - These numbers including project cost, MSBA reimbursement, interest rates, etc. were conjecture and not yet set.
 - A family member had almost sold their house due to high taxes.
 - If the Project failed and the MSBA was rejected, the MVRHS would still be in need of extensive repairs for which the Island would pay twice as much.
 - Such high taxes across the Island added to the cost of living would drive families away and reduce the student population.
 - The possibility of revising the negotiated 2022 Project formula from 30% equalized value/70% enrollment was explored.
 - A 50/50 formula would reduce Tisbury's share to 18% (100% equalized value would reduce it to 13%).
 - However all understood that Island Towns would be extremely reluctant to renegotiate and any changes to the formula would require approval at all 6 Town Meetings making the timeframe extremely difficult.
 - The new MVRHSD Regional Agreement could be revisited every 5 years.
 - This was the largest project in the history of the Island.
 - The MVRHS was accepted into the MSBA program due to substantial deficiencies; serious heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) problems and needed climate change adjustments, under sized classrooms, inadequate vocational spaces for required equipment, etc.
 - Ms. Gilfoy thanked the TSC for their attention.

V. Financial Report

A. Fund Balances (See documents on file.)

There was nothing of concern. The Town had not yet set Balance accounting figures.

B. Vote to Transfer Student Activities Funds (Class of 2025 to 2026)

(See documents on file.)

• ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. LESNIKOWSKA AND SECONDED BY MS. CUTRER THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY (2 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS) APPROVED A TRANSFER OF \$2,462.36 FROM THE CLASS OF 2025 TO THE EIGHTH GRADE CLASS OF 2026.

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C. Grants

1. Vote to Accept Title 1 Grant and Authorize Spending

New protocol for Title One grants (previously administered through the Superintendent's Shared Services (or Central) Office) required funds be administered directly by the Town. Central Office staff had offered Town staff their assistance.

• ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. LESNIKOWSKA AND SECONDED BY MS. CUTRER THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY (2 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS) ACCEPTED THE 2025 TITLE ONE GRANT FOR \$87,573.

V. Principal's Report

A. Staffing Update (See documents on file.)

• With the exception of the long-running Industrial/Technology teacher vacancy, the School was fully staffed.

• At the end of the meeting, after 36 years of teaching, and TSC commendation as an amazing woman,

• ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. LESNIKOWSKA AND SECONDED BY MS. CUTRER THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY (2 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS) ACKNOWLEDGED WITH DEEP REGRET THE RETIREMENT OF SECOND GRADE TEACHER ALISON SMITH AS OF JUNE 22, 2026—BARRING ANY SNOW DAYS EXTENSION OF THE SCHOOL YEAR.

B. Opening of School

After so many years of upheaval, administration and staff welcomed the settled and familiar feeling of a smooth Opening Day, and thanked Tisbury voters for their support, and staff and custodians who kept the building looking new.

- Current enrollment was 298 students including Project Headway; with grade size ranging from 39 students in 5th to 22 students in 8th.

C. School Events (See documents on file & below: Meetings/Events.)

- Principal John Custer would be manning the grille at this Friday's School cookout.

- Open House and Back-To-School Night would be September 18th.

- The Special Town Meeting in the School Gym would be September 30th.

D. Community Preservation Act (CPA/CPC)

1. Discussion of Application for Funding

The School had no items needing CPC funding at this time.

Staff Comments

• Ms. Meredith Goldthwait echoed Prin. Custer's report on opening day, saying coming into the School was like a breath of fresh air, and stress had begun to wear away. Staff prided itself as always holding together to deliver powerful educations.

• The opening staff meeting took a moment to honor former Superintendent Dr. James Weiss who passed away recently.

• She commended Prin. Custer and Asst. Prin. Melissa Ogden for their great job hiring support staff.

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- Correspondence was read from School Advisory Counsel (SAC) member Anne Williamson thanking TSC members Ms. Cutrer, Ms. Amy Houghton, and Mr. Michael Watts for their “integral role in the success of the Tisbury School” their “dedication, time, governance, and support” and the welcoming atmosphere of TSC meetings, and interest in teaching staff and students (see documents on file).

Adjournment

• ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. LESNIKOWSKA AND SECONDED BY MS. CUTRER THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING UNANIMOUSLY ADJOURNED (2 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS) AT 5:16PM.

Appendix A: Meetings/Events:

- MVRHS Bldg. Com – 8:30AM, Thursday, September 11, 2025 – Zoom
- School Cookout – 5:00PM, Friday September 12, 2025 – Tisbury School
- AISC – 5:30PM, Thursday, September 25 , 2025 – MVRHS/Zoom
- Special Town Meeting – 7:00PM, Tuesday, September 30, 2025 – Tisbury School Gym
- TSC – 4:00PM, Tuesday, October 14 2025 – Tisbury School
- TSC – 4:00PM, Tuesdays,

<u>November 18, 2025</u>	<u>February 10, 2026</u>	<u>May 12, 2026</u>
<u>December 8, 2025</u> (joint meeting w/ SAC)	<u>March 10, 2026</u>	<u>June TBD</u>
<u>January 13, 2026</u>	<u>April 14, 2026</u>	

Appendix B: Actions - None

Appendix C: Documents on File:

- Agenda 9/9/25
- Tisbury School Fund Balances Fiscal Year, 2025-2026 9/8/25
- Tisbury School, Staffing – Update (as of September 9, 2025)
- Tisbury School Events
- Friedman/Modi cover emails Re: Tisbury ES Invoices 9/9/25
- Tisbury School Addition and Renovations Project Invoice Summary Sheet, For Period: June 01, 2025 – July 31, 2025
- Tisbury School Addition and Renovations Project Invoice Summary Sheet, For Period: August 01, 2025 –August 31, 2025,
- Shared Services Changes for 2025-2026 School Year (2 p.)
- Proposed MVRHS Project Estimated Budget, based on 199,900 square foot AR 1 (3 p.)
- Proposed MVRHS Project Estimated Budget, based on 199,900 square foot AR 1 (3 p.) 9/8/25
- Hickey email re: STA transfer (gift) 8/26/25
- To Whom It May Concern, Smith retirement letter 9/9/25
- Williamson letter 6/10/25

continued >

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Minutes respectfully submitted by Office On Call/Marni Lipke.

Marni Lipke – Recorder

Date

Amy Houghton – TSC Chair

Date

Minutes approved 10/14/25