

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
5:00PM, Monday, September 15, 2025
Chilmark School and by Zoom Cloud Conference**

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Present: Chair – Robert Lionette, Skipper J. Manter, Jessica Mason,
Alex Salop, Marsha Shufrin*,
Others: Recorder Marni Lipke, CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) – Sara Salvi
Supt.'s Shared Services Office: Superintendent Richie Smith,
Business Administrator Mark Friedman,
Principals: Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Kate Squire, Mary Boyd,
Chilmark SAC – Nelia Decker, Robyn Dori, Jackie Guzalak
Staff – Christopher Mara,
Press: Louisa Hufstader,

*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 at 5:07PM.
(Recorder's note: Discussions are summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.)

Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Audit – Presentation (Agenda item #II)
(See documents on file.)

* During this conversation Jessica Mason and Skipper Manter entered the meeting.

The Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) Finance Department was starting work on the FY25 audit. CliftonLarsonAllen (CLA) representative Sara Salvi thanked the Department for all their work and help with audits and conveyed Mr. Chris Rogers regret that he could not attend this meeting. She would be happy to pass on any questions and responses.

- As always the report (completed July 2025) included the Terms of Engagement, an Executive Summary, Financial Highlights and a Management Letter. Financial statements were examined to ensure they conformed to Generally Accepted Accounting Principals (GAAP) and internal controls were in place according to grant and law compliance.

- UIRSD financial statements received an unmodified opinion and no findings—the best possible outcome. There was only one informational management comment.

- Due to the sensitive nature of Information Technology (IT) security, CLA had separated IT comments in a side letter for all their clients. The comments (currently in draft form) could be viewed privately by UIRSC members and reviewed (possibly in an Executive Session) with MVPS technologists for accomplishments and recommendations.

- The summary of long term assets: capital, Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB), pension, and debt reported at about a \$4,500,000 deficit due to the long-term liabilities.

- Net investment of \$2,200,000 was up from \$1,800,000 in FY23 with additional capital assets.

- At \$559,000 mostly in grants and contributions, restricted assets were up from FY23's \$498,000—grants varied from year to year.

- Unrestricted assets dropped from \$7,900,000 in FY23 to \$7,000,000 in FY24 due to OPEB and Pension pay down.

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- The General Fund report was a clearer picture of financial status.
 - The total fund balance ended the year at \$711,000 a slight increase of FY23 \$649,000.
 - \$85,000 was committed for the FY25 budget;
 - \$92,000 was encumbered; and
 - \$534,000 was unassigned as compared with the prior year's \$182,000.
- Net OPEB liability continued the 5-year trend from FY20-FY24, decreasing long-term liability from 24% funded to \$5,600,000 or 55.6% funded. The current discount rate was 6.5%
- Net Pension liability fluctuated differently due to the Dukes County Contributory Retirement System. It was 85% funded at \$1,400,000, down \$400,000 from FY23, with a 7% discount rate.
 - Discount rates equaled or were set close to the municipal bond rate—discount calculation was part of the Actuarial Report. The higher the discount rate the lower the liability.
 - Both long term liabilities were in excellent positions.
- The 1 informational Management Letter comment was about a new Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) 101 accounting/financial reporting standard starting in FY25. It required that historically estimated amounts for small leaves (bereavement, maternity, jury duty, etc.) now had to be included in compensated absences; in other words not just accrued sick/vacation leave estimates.
 - This was purely a reporting standard and would have no effect on UIRSD budgets, spending or other finances as they were already included in current budgeting/spending.
 - CLA staff offered its services to assist MVPS financial staff with this additional task.
- Chair Robert Lionette suggested that as IT was a MVPS-wide issue a joint Martha's Vineyard Regional High School Committee (MVRHSC)/UIRSC meeting with Technologists would be expeditious. CLA noted considerable IT security progress had been made.
- The UIRSC thanked both CLA and MVPS Business Administrator Mark Friedman and his financial team for their work in keeping the UIRSD on an A+ financial footing.

Approval of Minutes – Tabled (Agenda item #III)

A. Including But Not Limited to 5/28/25 Amended Minutes, 5/28/25 Executive Session, and 8/18/25 – Later in the meeting the UIRSC reviewed Minutes delivery.

Principal's Reports (Agenda Item #IV)

A. Kate Squire

1. Chilmark School Advisory Committee (SAC): School Improvement Plan (SIP) Update (See documents on file.)

- Principal Kate Squire introduced Chilmark SAC staff and community members present and commended the active SAC including current UIRSC and past SAC member Jessica Mason. This 2-year, 5-goal SIP coordinated with Islandwide objectives and the Chilmark School Mission Statement. It had been designed to bridge the transition from Prin. Susan Stevens to Prin. Squire. SAC was debating the structure and length of the next SIP and the UIRSC discussed timing in terms of school years vs. budget season.

1. Refine/Codify the Educational Framework – Multi-age classes had been restructured to best meet research-based student developmental needs from:

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- ° kindergarten (K)/1st grade, 2nd/3rd grade, and 4th/5th grade classes,
 - ° to a straight kindergarten, two 1st/ 2nd grade class, a 3rd/ 4th grade and a straight 5th grade.
- The 6 classroom configuration and adjusted recess and morning meeting schedule also promoted:
- Islandwide curriculum trends such as the Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) literacy program (causing a re-examination of project based learning);
 - all class access to special teachers including literacy and Special Education,
 - Massachusetts Tiered System of Support (MTSS), and Sarah Ward's extremely useful Special Development Opportunities Professional Development (PD)—which also had coordinated parent trainings.

2. Ensure Inclusiveness – Small but important steps were taken in understanding and responsiveness.

- Wampanoag Tribe Education and Outreach Coordinator Brad Lopes was invited to help with curriculum and PD. On his advice the historic map of the Vineyard will be donated to Martha's Vineyard Museum (MVM).
- Puberty curriculum was updated and some traditions changed to reflect Tribal students' culture.
- A weekly Chilmark Chat highlighted student activities and linked home and school.

3. Provide Academic & Socio-Emotional Support

- Prin. Squire was facilitating MTSS meetings which was integral part of the program.
- Guidance Counselor Joan Rice was at School 3 days a week and taught each class a bonus half hour per week.
- Last year's 5th Grade Special Needs pilot with Mariah McGregor was really successful.
- Three staff renewed their Safety Care training and one staff member was now a trainer.
- Three times last year Social Worker Jim Levine held valuable 1.5 hour consultations on supporting students with trauma-based behaviors.
- Academic curriculum was updated and aligned with the Frameworks, as was the Handbook.

4. Review, Evaluate, Catalog School Traditions – A January meeting on School history attracted multi-generational attendance: former teachers and students, grandparents and parents, for spirited discussions and a variety of opinions. Adjustments to the traditions were being finalized accordingly to reflect curriculum, communications and community respect.

5. Create a Sustainable School Environment –

- The new heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) system reduced oil consumption.
- Island Grown Initiative (IGI) would donate a food composter to encourage more composting. The School, students and families could use the resulting enriched soil.
- A nitrogen filter was being added to the septic system.
- The UIRSC requested any objectives that carried financial obligations be flagged for budget consideration.

2. Principal's Report

It was exciting to have a full School.

- This was kindergarteners first full day.
- The 4th/5th grades returned from their Shenandoah field trip, sailing all the way to Mattapoisett, MA. Days were filled with school, ship work, crafts and singing.

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- The Pizza Pot Luck was a big success and lots of Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) events were planned.
- Thursday was Back-to-School night.

3. Out of State Travel

Helmets would be worn. The UIRSC appreciated that the issue of transportation was addressed.

- *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO APPROVE OUT OF STATE TRAVEL FOR 12 STUDENTS, 2 STAFF AND PARENT CHAPERONES FOR THE CHILMARK SCHOOL FIFTH GRADE SKI FIELD TRIP TO SUGAR LOAF, MAINE FEBRUARY 2-6, 2026; SKIPPER MANTER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX SALOP—AYE, JESSICA MASON—AYE, MARSHA SHUFRIN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE.*

4. Bell Tower Update

Prin. Squire met with the Architect and Owners Project Manager (OPM) on contracts and design. The Project should go out to bid around December 1st. Hopefully demolition/removal would happen during February Break and ground level bell installation in Spring 2026 for Project completion by mid-summer 2026.

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

1. Principal's Report (See documents on file.)

- The first day was full of great feeling not only inside classrooms but outside at parent and grandparent drop-off attended by Michael the Horse, rainbow frames and a costumed Librarian.
- Students had been smiling a lot for picture day.
- Back-to-School Night was very well attended. A student run passport program promoted families visiting all areas of the School (not just their student's classroom)—the PTO sponsored a student passport lottery for a toy store gift certificate.
- Despite more Spanish and Portuguese speaking staff, thanks went to the MVRHS for sending a recent graduate to volunteer as a language ambassador/interpreter for Back-to-School Night.
- Open House was split between grades which allowed families time to discuss curriculum and needs with each teacher.
- The PTO met after the summer hiatus to plan fall and winter events.
- 6th Graders would head out tomorrow for their 4-day Outdoor/Nature's classroom field trip.
- As in Chilmark, kindergarteners were very tired waiting for pickup after their first full day.
- The School website had been updated and little kinks were being resolved.
- This year's staff event was a Superhero Challenge (staff were superheroes every day). Teams created such heroes as Powerful Pinata, Fabulous Fairy of Fun Book, Narwhal of Niceness, and the Bridge of Kindness from the Shared Services classrooms.
- UIRSC cited parent feedback in thanking all Administrators for their wonderful job well done.

Finance (Agenda Item #V)

A. Budget Totals and Percentages Spreadsheet

Mr. Friedman asked who had requested this information, which would be available next meeting. The UIRSC was interested in historical context to compare past increases or trajectory. The exhaustive line item budget worksheets already included 4-5 years of history.

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B. October and/or FY27 Budget Agendas

- The UIRSC discussed whether to request a:
 - level-service budget draft showing the same programs and staffing with only contractual or inflationary (e.g. health insurance) increases; or
 - a level-funded budget draft showing the same expenditure total as FY26, requiring cuts to account for contractual or inflationary increases.
- If level-funded a possible 3% flat increase was suggested with guidance from the Superintendent and Principals.
- Asking for a hypothetical percentage before seeing a level-service budget made no sense.
- Administration input could be solicited if the level-service percentage was too onerous.
- Other issues included: worksheet tracking of all salaries/positions, grant funded positions shifting into budgets, high UIRSD School performance, the assumption that what was available last year would be available again, hesitation on highly restrictive budgeting.
- The MVPS Cabinet was grappling with similar concerns and the current federal situation was being monitored for impacts on students and families.
- Mr. Friedman was waiting for the following FY27 budget season information:
 - October 1st Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) UIRSD census;
 - UIRSC and Administration goals; and
 - if possible a 5-year capital plan to map out debt and cash flow.

C. Title One (1) Grant Approval – Possible Vote

Through DESE the Federal Government requested the grant be restructured:

- from a consortium fund through the MVRHSD administered by the Central Office,
- to direct separate district receipt and administration—for the UIRSC the same staff would administer the grant.
- The change did not affect the grant goals or amount: \$63,126 for FY26, \$59,335 for FY25, \$59,980 in FY24.
- UIRSD Principals had already submitted spending plans to support students in need.
- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 TITLE ONE GRANT OF \$63,126; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX SALOP—AYE, JESSICA MASON—AYE, MARSHA SHUFRIN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE.*

D. WTS Science Lab Leak Insurance Claim – Discussion and Possible Vote – Tabled

Shared Services Update (See documents on file.) (Agenda item #VI)

- The year had a busy start, working with staff and teachers to transition and coordinate students and Shared Service programs.
- Student Support Director Hope MacLeod presented the yearly snapshot of information although this year's information had already shifted slightly. A survey of all families with students on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) garnered good feedback. Further information was available on the State website under: Resource Allocation and District Action Reports (RADAR), Special Education section. Information could be discussed at the next meeting.

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- The younger Compass (emotionally challenged) class had been shifted from the Oak Bluffs to the Tisbury School and Bridge Program populations shifted to bring more autism spectrum students to the WTS.
- ‘Communication Disability’ covered students with some form of speech/language challenge, including social or expressive language difficulties. Other disabilities sometimes presented first as communication problems in young children—and it was also a more palatable first diagnosis.
- UIRSD statistics compared with other Island schools were about in the middle, and were low compared Statewide.

Superintendent Update (Agenda item #VII)

(Chair Robert Lionette apologized for inadvertently using an outdated group that did not include Superintendent Dr. Richie Smith.)

- Supt. Smith referring back to the Chilmark SIP reported that all MVPS were working hard on the HMH reading curriculum. He acknowledged it was a big change and commended Prin. Squire for making the adjustment with project based learning. Common curriculum helped not only students but MVPS staff collaboration and MVRHS staff in particular.
- Preliminary MCAS reports were released and the UIRSC should be happy about both schools’ scores; commendations went to staff and leadership for continuing excellence.
- Principal Donna Lowell-Bettencourt and Asst. Principal Mary Boyd were pioneering the Recognize, Understand, Label, Express, Regulate (RULER) socio-emotional curriculum (see 8/18/25 Minutes p.3 #B1).
- Reminded of the power of praise, Supt. Smith expressed great pride in the new MVPS leadership: Chilmark School Prin. Squires, Oak Bluffs Prin. Jeremy Light, Edgartown School Prin. Kate Campbell, and MVRHS Interim Prin. Sean Mulvey. In addition he highlighted and acknowledged and the UIRSC applauded the 3 UIRSD administrators for many years of mentoring and excellence in education.

District (Agenda Item #VIII)

Chair Robert Lionette, acknowledging some of his failures at working with Towns, emphasized that UIRSC members were elected to represent the entire District and not as advocates for their individual Towns. Consequently he suggested emails to all 3 Town and the Wampanoag administrators for any District updates or issues of concern. Citing the below issues as examples.

C. Data Request re: Aquinnah (see 8/18/25 Minutes p.1-2 #III A.)

Although structurally correct that Aquinnah was responsible for the education of Wampanoag students, what was legal was not necessarily what was best; for example Wampanoag students could be the responsibility of the larger District community. The Chair suggested contacting the Aquinnah Select Board as to the reason for the ask, and then to include other Towns and the Tribe in the discussion.

B. Chilmark Lease

- The Chilmark Town Administrator reached out to 28 municipalities on different Town/School leases and issues—receiving 14 responses. The UIRSC asked:
 - why this was being done,

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- what was the timeframe, and
- what was the Town trepidation.

A. West Tisbury Lease

- UIRSD lawyers expected to present a draft West Tisbury/WTS lease as requested (see 8/18/25 Minutes p.5 #V C) for the October meeting. West Tisbury Town Administrator Jen Rand was eager to complete the process.

Next Meeting (See below: Meetings/Events.) (Agenda Item #IX)

The Chair suggested the following issues be addressed in larger discussions:

- a preliminary look at the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) Policies and Procedures —with a request that it be sent to the Tribe for comment.
- the obligation to meet in Aquinnah,
- moving UIRSC meetings to 5:00PM as well as rethinking when and how meetings were scheduled for the better convenience of members and staff—and remembering the public;
- presenting a template of the UIRSC budget workshop schedule;
- sending every draft budget to the 3 Town Administrators and Finance Committee Chairs to keep them up to date;
- in tandem with All Island School Committee Policy work, discussing and establishing UIRSC FY26 goals and accountability, e.g. completing the 2 school leases.
- Two UIRSC members did not constitute a quorum and so could meet for pre-agenda consultations. Members were invited to email the Chair with agenda requests.

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

Adjournment (Agenda Item #XI)

- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 7:00PM; JESSICA MASON AND ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX SALOP—AYE, JESSICA MASON—AYE, MARSHA SHUFRIN—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE.*

Meetings/Events

- West Tisbury STM– Tuesday, September 16, 2025
- Regionalization Subcommittee – 5:30PM, Tuesday, September 23, 2025
- **AISC – 5:30PM, Thursday, September 25, 2025 – MVRHS/Zoom**
- **UIRSC – 5:00PM, Monday, October 20, 2025 – TBD**

Documents on File:

- Agenda (2 p.) 9/15/25
- Friedman cover email re: FY24 UIRSD Audit Reports – Final 9/15/25
- Up-Island Regional School District Financial Statements and Required Supplementary Information, Year Ended June 30, 2024, (54 p. including covers & blanks) 7/7/25

continued >

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Documents on File (cont.):

- CliftonLarsonAllen letter re: Significant audit findings or issues (3 p.) 7/7/25
- Up-Island Regional School District Management Letter June 30, 2024, (5 p. including covers & blanks) 7/7/25
- Up-Island Regional School District, Fiscal Year 2024 Audit Exit Conference, September 15, 2025 (9 p.)

https://mvyyps.zoom.us/rec/share/s5XnN-q6B_82tVChyr99e6u0fCC_89NnNQPq2pu8ELl2a7Bm8ROa3yuvgpWOFLIA.PwuOfu8Fr04j5NvW?startTime=1757969571000

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Minutes approved 10/20/25