

**UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
5:00PM, Monday, December 15, 2025
West Tisbury School**

Page 1 of 8

Present: Chair – Robert Lionette, Skipper J. Manter, Jessica Mason*, Alex Salop, Marsha Shufrin,
Others: Supt.'s Shared Services Office: Assistant Superintendent Megan Farrell, Business Administrator Mark Friedman, Student Support Director Hope MacLeod, Principals: Donna Lowell-Bettencourt, Kate Squire, Mary Boyd, Staff: Molly Martone, Parents: Jackie Freedman, Allison Cameron Parry, Towns: CSB: Marie Larsen, CTAC: Susan Andrien, Maggie Brellis-Farrell, Michelle O’Conner, Wampanoag Cultural Council – Brad Lopes, Chilmark Preschool – President Rebekah Thomson, Press: Louisa Hufstader, 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 at 5:07PM. (*Recorder’s note: Discussions are summarized and grouped for clarity and brevity.*)

- Instead of a moment of silence for the weekend tragedies, Chair Robert Lionette extended gratitude to UIRSD guidance counselors, administrators, and staff for creating an inclusive, supportive environment.
- Because it contained a Public Hearing, Chair Lionette consulted the Attorney General’s Office about the change in this meeting’s location. They advised:
 - the law had not caught up with post-Covid meeting practice, so
 - as the hybrid link was unchanged and the meeting location was within the district,
 - the matter could be referred to the 3 UIRSD Town Clerks, who allowed the change despite reservations.

The change was posted 48 hours in advance. UIRSC members did not object.

Approval of Minutes (Agenda item #II)

A. Including But Not Limited to November 17, 2025, December 1, 2025

Executive Sessions Approved but Not Release May 28, 2025 and October 2025

- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING MINUTES:*

- NOVEMBER 17, 2025, AND

- DECEMBER 1, 2025 AS AMENDED FOR TYPOS;

ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSTENTION due to absence; JESSICA MASON—AYE, MARSHA SHUFRIN—ABSTAIN, ALEX SALOP—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.

UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
December 15, 2025

Page 2 of 8

District (Agenda item #III)

A. Request For Proposal (RFP) Town of Chilmark Summer Programming

Robert Lionette was a huge fan of the Chilmark Summer Program, however as the Program was now being documented in an RFP (as suggested—see 1/27/25 Minutes p.2) he had 2 requests to send to the Chilmark Select Board (CSB):

- to eliminate all enrollment prioritization—currently 5 tiers defined by Chilmark residence, year-round and seasonal, and other Island residence year-round and seasonal; and
- to consider adding an addendum to the RFP for financial support of shared space to codify the current UIRSC/Summer Camp relationship.
- A long discussion focused on enrollment priorities.
- Some members preferred including UIRSD students as a first priority and asked how many Aquinnah and West Tisbury children were turned away. General information was that it was a very small number.
- The Program would be housed in the Chilmark Preschool so the shared space was the playground which was the purview and responsibility of the UIRSC.
- This was a Town of Chilmark program so that prioritizing Chilmark residents seemed a reasonable action. Other summer camps on the Island depended on a rush first-come-first-serve application frenzy.
- Students were best served by continuity of regional friendships and carpools. It was difficult to balance the Town's realistic, practical concerns for a Town-based program with regional continuity, and further to balance the pragmatics of prioritization versus equal access.
- CSB member Marie Larsen emphasized this as a Town program under Town jurisdiction. She explained that the Program was part of the Chilmark Community Center (CCC) which was founded to bring Town residents and Town summer people together. The CSB comment deadline was December 18th and the Board would consider any UIRSC comment along with all others. She empathized that the Summer Camp and the UIRSD had a long history of easy cooperation and relations.
- Chilmark Preschool President Rebekah Thomson thanked everyone and took the opportunity to advocate for a priority for all current Preschool children, primarily for continuity of care for busy Island families. (The Preschool had a lease with the Town.) She also advocated for Aquinnah children who would otherwise have to travel to down-Island summer programs.
- As the Aquinnah representative, Marsha Shufrin also advocated for Aquinnah family inclusion.
- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED THAT THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE WOULD LIKE TO ASK THE CHILMARK SELECT BOARD TO CONSIDER GIVING ALL UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT CHILDREN FIRST PRIORITY IN THE CHILMARK SUMMER PROGRAM; ALEX SALOP SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 3 AYES, 1 NAY, 1 ABSTENTION: JESSICA MASON—ABSTAIN, ALEX SALOP—NAY, MARSHA SHUFRIN—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.*
- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE CHAIR TO DRAFT A LETTER ON THE ABOVE MOTION; MARSHA SHUFRIN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: JESSICA MASON—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, MARSHA SHUFRIN AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE.*
- Robert Lionette would draft the letter and send it to members for review.

UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD

December 15, 2025

Page 3 of 8

B. Brad Lopes, Wampanoag Tribe

Chair Lionette apologized for the confusion over the meeting location and looked forward to a January meeting in Aquinnah. Wampanoag Tribe Education Director Brad Lopes apologized for not attending in-person.

- Mr. Lopes while working on day-to-day operations was constantly advocating for higher State and Federal engagement. The Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) [WTGH(A)] and the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe Education Departments and the Native Education Council would meet with the new Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on creating a Native Education Advisory Council within the DESE Board.

- The Tribe After School Program was planning fun activities for the winter break. This week all greatly enjoyed the Holiday gift distribution.

- The Education Dept. was meeting with their Youth Council (13-24 year olds), hoping to get them to Unity Council this year to network with other tribal nations.

- Summer Turtle Camp for 5-12 yr. old tribal children had many cultural and non-cultural activities. He also invited any education staff interested in working at the program.

- The Education Dept. was partnering with the Aquinnah Cultural Center so that when Brad Lopes visited and taught in classrooms he represented both the Tribe and the Center. He had great fun visiting 2 Chilmark School classes and looked forward to expanding his activities with the UIRSD schools (see below #IV A 1.)

C. Indian Policies and Procedures

• Mr. Lopes was not a fan of the above agenda title and asked it more properly be referred to as “Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) or WTGH(A) Policies and Procedures.

• The new Tribal Council and government officials might not be familiar with the Impact Aid/Policies and Procedures process, but he assured the UIRSC that all would be ready for the January 31, 2026 application deadline.

- It was determined that 17 children lived on Tribal Trust land.

Principal's Reports (Agenda Item #IV)

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

2. Donations

Both donations had been installed.

- A “buddy bench” for students to sit on when they were looking for friends or playmates. The previous wooden buddy bench fell apart from age. The new one, donated by a family of WTS alumna, was engraved granite.

- The WTS Hawk sculpture had now been joined by an Owl sculpture, both in honor of the family children's graduation.

• *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO ACCEPT WITH GRATITUDE:*

- *A WEST TISBURY SCHOOL BUDDY BENCH FROM THE STEDMAN CORPORATION, AND*

- *AN OWL SCULPTURE FROM THE CABOT FAMILY;*

SKIPPER MANTER SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: JESSICA MASON—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, MARSHA SHUFRIN AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.

UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
December 15, 2025

Page 4 of 8

1. Principal's Report

- As Student Council elections were sometimes a popularity contest, a new process was tried. Seventh and eighth graders interested in leadership roles met and, working collaboratively, chose officers (see documents on file). The Council had been very active and had great ideas:
 - planned and executed Spirit Week and “Winter Wonderland” door competition,
 - expanded distribution of Friday Flyers (a school parent update) to students,
 - instituted “Leaders Read” for volunteers to read stories to classes.

The UIRSC invited the WTS Student Council to present at one of their meetings, and might modify meeting time to accommodate.

3. West Tisbury (WT) School Improvement Plan (SIP) – Tabled

A. Kate Squire

1. Principal's Report

- Principal Kate Squire explained that the goal of working with Mr. Lopes was to expand the land acknowledgement by incorporating WTGH(A) culture into School curriculum.
- 2025 was winding down to the Holiday season. The 1st / 2nd Grades loved Mr. Lopes visits. This week the Kindergarten through 2nd grades would showcase family and round-the-world traditions. The 3rd/4th grades were sharing their ancient civilization projects with their families.
- All were invited to the Winter Solstice Celebration, Friday, December 19th at 1:45PM.
- In January the new Phys Ed teacher was spearheading the annual Thursday skating time.
- Prin. Squire was redesigning the School website with a tech specialist for a January launch.

Finance—Mark A. Friedman, School Business Administrator (Agenda Item #V)

A. Expense and Revenue Report – Tabled

D. Public Hearing Session

Chair Robert Lionette opened the Public Hearing at 6:01PM.

C. Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) Budget Session

(See documents on file, & Minutes 10/28/25, & 12/1/.)

- Business Administrator Mark Friedman had assembled 7 fiscal years of high-level statistics as context for FY27 Budget Version #4.
 - Chilmark enrollment rose from a low of 50 to the current 74 students. WTS had fluctuated and spiked at 352 (probably due to the acceptance of Tisbury students during their facility crisis—see 9/16/19 Minutes p.1 #III A). This year it was 317 students. The UIRSD showed fairly even total enrollment from 371 to 410 with this year about in the middle of the curve.
 - DESE per pupil costs (statistics running a few years behind) excluded debt and Other Post Employee Benefits (OPEB) because different districts had different methods of paying them.
 - Year-to-year, UIRSD assessments were very close to its total expenses as State revenues were usually even or slightly negative due to Charter School charges.
- The **Superintendent's Shared Services (or Central) Office** FY27 budget had not yet been approved, but was likely to increase ~ 7.6%, however Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) enrollment shifts would allocate a larger share to the UIRSD at ~ 12.8%.
- The WTS site showed ~ \$753,000 in contractual increases for current staffing and program models with slight adjustments in longevity.

UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD

December 15, 2025

Page 5 of 8

- Health insurance was estimated at 15% awaiting Cape Cod Municipal Health Group (CCMHG) determination in late January/early February. Other insurances (dental, student accident, building, etc.) increases were also included.
- There were very few non-required changes from Version #3:
 - ° School Choice numbers and revenues were up slightly for a \$10,000 offset increase, and
 - ° Water testing increased \$600 to \$5,600 as requested (see 11/17/25 Minutes p.3 #3).
- The WTS site total was \$853,000 or 8.6%. Lines such as Fuel had been reduced where possible.
- The **Chilmark School site** contractual increases were ~ \$150,000 or 5.4%.
- School Choice offset had been slightly increased for about 2% decrease.
- The **Districtwide site** changes were as follows.
 - Central office was reconfiguring payroll to eliminate postage for a 10% savings.
 - The Retiree health insurance increase had already been set at 15% for an FY27 increase of \$135,000—and FY26 would have to absorb an additional ~ \$96,000.
 - Based on discussions with FinComs OPEB was level funded this year so the \$50,000 increase was removed.
 - Debt service (on a slightly different allocation formula) for the 2 small projects (see Minutes: 3/17/25 p.4 #C & 5/28/25 p.3 #B 1) and the Chilmark School Heating/Ventilation/Air Conditioning (HVAC) would start in FY27. The bond for the 2 smaller projects (Chilmark Bell Tower and WTS HVAC) had not yet been borrowed.
 - The 12.9% Districtwide increase was required expenses except for a handful of staff raises.
 - Overall UIRSD expenses rose 9.7% of which contractual/required/debt was 7.2%.
 - The Town of Chilmark asked for written explanations of proposed initiative expenses over 2%.

Assessments were slightly varied by revenue such as School Choice. (The UIRSD had no eligible spending and therefore no Circuit Breaker revenues for the last 2 years.)

- At 27 students each Chilmark and Aquinnah were equally assessed.
- State reimbursement rates were likely to remain flat. As noted above Chapter 70 was counter balanced by Charter School costs. In addition the UIRSD did not meet its Transportation target so Ch. 71 revenue might decrease, leaving a net State revenue of \$223,000.
- Medicaid revenue was also likely to decrease.
- School Choice costs (sending students) were estimated flat at \$50,000.
- Interest rates were based on FY26.
- Miscellaneous revenues usually generated ~ \$2,000.
- Mr. Friedman assumed the same Excess & Deficiency (E & D) \$135,000 offset as last year (\$50,000 to OPEB and \$85,000 to the Contingency line). This year's E & D was estimated (but not yet certified) at ~ \$476,000.
- Projected revenue was ~ \$245,000 for a total ~ \$19,158,000 assessed budget 9.57% over FY26.

B. Rural Aid Grant Budget (See documents on file, & 10/20/25 Minutes p.6 #V B.)

Administration made the following capital project recommendations for funding with Rural Aid Grant moneys—that recommended a focus on regionalization. (Some Capital projects were funded from 2 sources.)

UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD

December 15, 2025

Page 6 of 8

- WTS security cameras (see 11/17/25 Minutes p.2 #IV A 1), asphalt repair, mini-splits in 2 rooms and an IP hybrid phone system upgrade.
- Chilmark School projects were: conversion of a teacher's room, a technology network closet and a new flagpole.
- The All Island School Committee (AISC) Regional Subcommittee requested proportionally allocated funding for the regional consultant study (on a one-year timeline)—UIRSD share \$3,000 or 20%. The UIRSC fully supported the study but requested this be reviewed in terms of MVRHSD/UIRSD duplication.
- *SKIPPER MANTER MOVED TO APPLY THE \$119,538 RURAL AID SCHOOL GRANT TO THE CAPITAL PLAN LIST AS PRESENTED; JESSICA MASON SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 5 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: JESSICA MASON—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, MARSHA SHUFRIN—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.*

E. Capital Projects Excess and Deficiency (E & D), Warrant Articles

(See documents on file.) (10/20/25 Minutes p.6 #V B.)

- \$230,374 in additional FY27 projects would require other funding.
- WTS exterior lighting, parking repair, repair of concrete cracks. (Some Building Inspector's list items were on the plan for later implementation—see 10/20/25 p.6 #3.)
- The Chilmark School priority was door upgrades/American Disabilities Act (ADA) access (see 11/17/25 Minutes p.2 #IV A 1), supported by all 3 Town Police Chiefs for emergency measures. Prin. Squire implored the UIRSC to authorize this spending. Then heating/cooling for the Special Education and Literacy/Math classrooms.
- All other projects were pushed out at least a year.
- As usual Skipper Manter objected to the use of E & D as not within the Regional Agreement formulas. Despite repeated requests, E & D revenue sources were not tracked and therefore spending could not be according to formula. As this was a much repeated conversation, counter argument were:
 - It was not reasonable to ask staff to spend an inordinate amount of time on possible minutiae tracking (see 12/21/20 Minutes p.2 # VI A).
 - The Capital Plan showed E & D spending would balance out to the usual 80/20 WTS/Chilmark School formula (without the Chilmark roof which would probably be bond funded).
 - There was a brief discussion on possibly altering the \$135,000 E & D operating offset for OPEB and \$85,000 of ~ \$97,000 Contingency line (see Minutes: 5/26/20 p.2 #B & 6/2/20 p.4, & 5/4/21 p.3 #D, & 1/13/22 p.2, & 12/5/24 p.2).
 - *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE USE OF \$230,374 FROM EXCESS AND DEFICIENCY FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS AS PRESENTED; MARSHA SHUFRIN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 4 AYES, 1 NAY, 0 ABSTENTIONS: JESSICA MASON—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, MARSHA SHUFRIN—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—NAY, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.*
- This came to a total of ~ \$ 365,345.74 E & D offset, leaving a remainder of ~ \$110,000. Further depletion of E & D was not recommended.
- The UIRSC commended the Capital Plan and complimented everyone involved.

UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD

December 15, 2025

Page 7 of 8

F. Warrant Article Request, Town Deadlines

- The \$80,000 WTS Space Needs Study was recommended as a warrant article as promised continuity after the Feasibility Study article failure (4/14/25 Minutes p.2 #B). Chilmark was the earliest deadline for warrant articles on December 31, 2025.
- Members also passed around and examined UIRSD counsel opinion of DESE capital spending guidelines. Mr. Manter maintained it showed that all capital spending should be in the operating budget and that the UIRSC had no statutory authority. However, Mr. Friedman and others were comfortable with the provisos and “grey” area allowing warrant article spending.

* Jessica Mason left the meeting.

- As this was also a much repeated conversation, the UIRSC was reminded that it was:

- UIRSD (and other Massachusetts districts) past practice that DESE had never censured;
- more transparent than a single line item in an operating budget that no one read.

• *SKIP MANTER MOVED TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING AT 7:10PM; MARSHA SHUFRIN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 4 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS: ALEX SALOP—AYE, MARSHA SHUFRIN—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—AYE, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.*

* Jessica Mason rejoined the meeting.

• *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO CREATE A \$80,000 WARRANT ARTICLE FOR A WEST TISBURY SCHOOL SPACE NEEDS STUDY; MARSHA SHUFRIN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 3 AYES. 1 NAY, 1 ABSTENTION: JESSICA MASON—ABSTAIN, ALEX SALOP—AYE, MARSHA SHUFRIN—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—NAY, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.*

C. Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) Budget Session

• IT WAS THE CONSENSUS OF THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE TO USE THE REGIONAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET.

• The UIRSC discussed the high percentage increases of recent UIRSD budgets, some maintaining that it was without restraint and fiscally unsound. There was some acknowledgement that it was unsustainable but that the solution was to re-think and regionalize Island schools to eliminate redundancy—which was not within UIRSC purview.

• The budget was usually re-certified when Central Office and Health Insurance figures were set.

• *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO CERTIFY THE UP ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET VERSION #4 AS PRESENTED FOR A TOTAL EXPENSE OF \$19,403,683.29 OR 9.72% INCREASE, AND A TOTAL ASSESSED BUDGET OF \$18,927,363.83 OR 8.25% INCREASE; MARSHA SHUFRIN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED: 4 AYES, 1 NAY, 0 ABSTENTIONS: JESSICA MASON—AYE, ALEX SALOP—AYE, MARSHA SHUFRIN—AYE, SKIPPER MANTER—NAY, ROBERT LIONETTE—AYE.*

* Jessica Mason left the meeting.

Superintendent Update—Richard M. Smith, EdD, Superintendent

– Nothing to Report

(Agenda Item #VI)

Shared Services Update—Hope T. MacLeod, M.Ed, BCBA, Director Student

Support Services – Nothing to Report

(Agenda Item #VII)

UP-ISLAND REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
December 15, 2025

Page 8 of 8

Next Meeting Date - Monday, January 26th at 5:00PM at West Tisbury School
(See below: Meetings/Events.) (Agenda Item #VIII)

- Accounting for Martin Luther King Day, the next meeting was the 4th Monday in January; an Aquinnah location was being determined.

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

Adjournment (Agenda Item #X)

- *ALEX SALOP MOVED TO ADJOURN AT 7:20PM; MARSHA SHUFRIN SECONDED; MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY: 4 AYES 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.*

Meetings/Events

- AISC – 5:30PM, Wednesday, December 17, 2025 – MVRHS/Zoom
- UIRSC – 5:00PM, Monday, January 26, 2025 – Aquinnah TBD

Documents on File:

- Agenda & Revised Agenda (2 p. each) 12/15/25
- Notice of Public Hearing & Revised (2 p.) 12/15/25
- Lowell-Bettencourt email re: Student Council and Friday Flyers 12/15/25
- Friday Flyers (8 p.) 12/12/25
- 2 Photos: buddy bench, & owl sculpture (2 p. each)
- Friedman cover email re: FY27 UIRSD Budget – Version #4 (2 p.) 12/13/25
- UIRSD, FY27 Budget Version #4 Proposed 12/15/2025, Changes from FY26 Budget (3 p.)
- Up-Island Regional School District, FY27 General Fund Budget, Version # 4, Proposed 12-15-25 (12 p.)
- UIRSD FY2027 Assessment – V#4 Proposed 12/15/25
- 5 Year Capital Plan, with Funding Source Suggestions – 12/15/25, Draft #2 C -
- UIRSD Student Census, F721-FY27 Budgets (3 p.)

<https://mvyps.zoom.us/rec/share/>

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Minutes approved 2/9/26