Tisbury School Committee
11:30AM, Friday, July 24, 2026
Tisbury School Cafeteria

TSC Members Present: Chair Amy Houghton, Jen Cutrer,
Staff: John Custer – Principal, Jaime Curley – Superintendent,
Mark Friedman – Business Manager,
Student Support Director – Hope MacLeod,
Others: Marni Lipke – Recorder

* Late Arrivals or early departures of TSC members

The Tisbury School Committee (TSC) meeting was called to order at 11:40AM.

I. Approval of Past Meeting Minutes (June 16, June 30)

• ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. JEN CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MS. AMY HOUGHTON THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 16, 2026 AND JUNE 30, 2026 MEETINGS WERE APPROVED; 2 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS.

II. Tisbury School Building Project Report

A. Project Update (See 6/16/26 Minutes p. 2 #III A.)

• Solar installation was proceeding with hopes of completion/operational in late July—although Eversource inspection timing was unpredictable (see below: Actions).
- Climate Committee Chair Melinda Loberg contacted Principal John Custer about the installation progress and was referred to Facilities Director Mike Taus and W.T. Rich.
• Town Administrator Joe LaCivita informed Ms. Houghton that an individual had filed a formal complaint with threat of a lawsuit protesting lack of Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) and Town approval for the parking lot solar canopies.
- Both Tappé Architects and CHA Owner's Project Manager (OPM) worked with the Tisbury Building Inspector and the Fire Department on correct specifications. The building permit application was correctly filed for both the roof and parking lot installation although there was an error in the final permit that was likely to be corrected shortly. The TSC had contacted the Tisbury Building Inspector's office, Mr. Mike Owen of CHA and Mr. Dan Anjo of W.T. Rich about the oversight. Technically it was probably not necessary to get Planning Board or ZBA approval.
- A net zero School facility remained an important Town and Tisbury Select Board (TSB) goal in the Tisbury School renovation/addition project (see 10/23/17 Minutes p.1 #V) and the issue was discussed at several TSC and Tisbury School Building Committee (TSBC) public meetings (see Minutes: TSBC 1/25/21 p.4 #7, & TSBC 2/18/25 p.2 #3 & 5a, & TSC 3/12/24 p.4-5 #VI, TSC 9/10/24 p.1-2 #II A, & 3/10/26 p.2 #III B). In addition an article to fund the current work was passed at the 2026 Annual Town Meeting (see 2/17/26 Minutes p.2).
- The TSC suggested there be a press announcement when the installation was completed.

B. Approval of Project Invoices – Not available – Tabled

III. Personnel

B. Medical Leave of Absence (LOA) Request (See documents on file.)

• **ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MS. HOUGHTON THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY ACKNOWLEDGED (2 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS) A MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR FOURTH GRADE TEACHER MEREDITH GOLDTHWAIT FROM SEPTEMBER 2, 2026 TO JANUARY 22, 2027.**

- A long term substitute position was posted for the semester.

A. Approve Creation of One-Year-Only (OYO) Kindergarten (K) Teacher Position (See below: Actions.)

This request was triggered by the 41 student K enrollment for the 2026-27 School Year. Many of the new students' status was unknown as they had not attended pre-schools so there was an assumption of a large proportion of high needs students. However, the FY27 School Budget was set and approved belying a general attitude that funds could always be found for what was needed.

- The position was advertised with an Until Position Filled (UPF) deadline. The timeline was complicated by a candidate interview scheduled for Monday, July 27th. The TSC and Prin. Custer discussed possible solutions, delays, explanations, etc.

• The TSC shared the situation at the All Island School Committee (AISC) where Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS) K enrollment was reported as:

- Edgartown School – 38-40 students (3 sections);
- Oak Bluffs School (OBS) – 32 students (2 sections); and
- West Tisbury School – low 30s (2 sections).

• The OBS Committee (OBSC) and the Up Island Regional School Committee (UIRSC) seemed amenable to re-opening school choice (policy) for Tisbury K students which might reduce Tisbury enrollment enough to retain only 2 K sections.

- Research was needed on regulations/restrictions of re-opening School Choice.
- The timeframe required: an inquiry from Superintendent Jaime Curley, consultation with school Principals, a vote by each school committee, notification to Tisbury parents (offering smaller K sections in other schools) and an application and selection process.
- Further discussions at the AISC could codify the process for any future similar situations among all MVPS.

• Although common sense suggested smaller sections for challenged students, Student Support Director Hope MacLeod reported that past experience showed small classes were often less effective than larger sections which had a critical mass of student ranges.

- Those present noted their own school experience with classes of 30-40 students—although current student and education needs were quite different. Nonetheless, small classes were a MVPS characteristic, not necessarily mirrored in other U.S. districts.

• Prin. Custer and staff had explored many options such as:

- combining the 1st Grade into one 25 student section and shifting a first grade teacher into a third Kindergarten section; and
- 2 K sections with additional Education Support Professionals (ESPs).

• ESPs could be re-assigned so an additional ESP would not be needed for the 3rd K section. The TSC noted the Tisbury School's excellent support system.

There was a long discussion on how to finance the position.

• The following resources were examined for reliability and availability. All would have some impact on the 2026-27 School Year.

- $50,000 of Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) Title One grant funds, strongly projected as available, were predicated on confirmation and spending parameters that included a general education teacher. However, using it to fund a teacher would result in resource and materials cuts usually available to staff.
- The Revolving Lunch Fund FY26 residual and an additional $30,000 shift of FY27 food service staff salaries, would leave about $20,000 as a cushion (projecting the same State $212,000 reimbursement as FY26).
- There was $110,000 in new hire savings in the General Fund; and
- School Choice Funds could be a reserve/backup.

• Aside from the usual unknown possibilities in the coming school year, TSC noted:
  ° the semester of double pay (LOA and substitute salaries) voted above (see # III B);
  ° any delays in and/or unknown expenses of the new solar array;
  ° the constant prospect of a residential placement;
  ° a possible mid-year retirement of another K teacher.

- The new teacher salary and above medical LOA estimated cost was ~ $200,000.

• The TSC emphasized the Town financial status, including the debt assessment from the $333,000,000 Martha's Vineyard High School (MVRHS) Project, and an imminent Town Hall project. These and other factors were likely to result in a stringent FY28 budget, which, given the current union contract increases, would require cuts and/or draws on School Choice funds.

- Although the OYO aspect was stressed throughout, the TSC strongly speculated that despite staff assurances there could be pressure for three 1st grade sections in FY28.

• ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. CUTRER AND SECONDED BY MS. HOUGHTON THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE UNANIMOUSLY (2 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS) <u>PROVISIONALLY</u> APPROVED THE CREATION OF A ONE-YEAR-ONLY KINDERGARTEN TEACHER POSITION FROM THE GENERAL FUND PENDING:

- EXPLORATION OF EXPANDING SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS WITH OTHER MARTHA'S VINEYARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT COULD REDUCE ENROLLMENT MAKING THE POSITION UNNECESSARY;

- AND IF NECESSARY AND AVAILABLE UP TO $50,000 IN ADDITIONAL TITLE ONE FUNDS. (See below: Actions.)

• Prin. Custer thanked the TSC for the creative, incisive and helpful discussion.

- Chair Amy Houghton and former teacher and current TSB member Connie Alexander were invited to speak at the Opening Day Teacher Assembly.

Adjournment

• ON A MOTION DULY MADE BY MS. HOUGHTON AND SECONDED BY MS. CUTRER THE TISBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING UNANIMOUSLY ADJOURNED (3 AYES, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSTENTIONS) AT 1:12PM.

continued >

Appendix A: Meetings/Events:

• TSC – 4:30PM, Tuesdays,

September 15, 2026	**January 12, 2027**	**May 11, 2027** (w/SAC)
October 13, 2026	**February 9, 2027**	**June TBD, 2027**
November 10, 2026	**March 9, 2027**	
December 8, 2026 (w/SAC)	**April 13, 2027**	

Appendix B: Actions

- Prin. Custer/Ms. Houghton – draft press announcement for School solar completion.
- Supt. Curley – research regulations on re-opening School Choice, re: grade or district restrictions.
- Supt. Curley – contact OB and WTS Principals re: possible School Choice K slots.
- Prin. Custer – explain nature of provisional position to applicants/candidates.
- Ms. Houghton – contact MVRSC, Ms. Lepine and AISC Chairs re: posting local meetings to approve School Choice re-opening.

Appendix C: Documents on File:

- TSC Agenda 7/24/26
- Tisbury School Fund Balances Fiscal Year, 2025-2026 7/22/26
- Tisbury School Fund Balances Fiscal Year, 2026-2027 7/22/26
- Anjo/WT Rich email re: TSC meeting notice for 7//24/26 1/23/26
- Goldthwait email re: Medical Leave of Absence Request 7/15/26

Minutes respectfully submitted by Office On Call/Marni Lipke.

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Marni Lipke – Recorder Date

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Amy Houghton – TSC Chair Date

Minutes approved by TSC 9/15/26