

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes 10/25/17

Joint Meeting of Aquinnah, Chilmark and West Tisbury Selectmen October 25, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Present: *Aquinnah Selectmen*, Chairman Jim Newman, Julianne Vanderhoop and Gary Haley.

Chilmark Selectmen, Chairman Bill Rossi, James Malkin and Warren Doty.

West Tisbury, Chairman J. Skipper Manter, Cynthia Mitchell and Kent Healy. Others: School Superintendent Dr. Matt D'Andrea, Jeffrey Madison, Tim Carroll, Jennifer Rand, Rob Hannemann, Bruce Golden, Robert Lionette, Doug Ruskin, Greg Orcutt, Amy Tierney Videographer from MVTv and MV Times reporter Rich Saltzberg.

At 2:00 PM Meeting was called to order in the West Tisbury Library Conference Room.

Ms. Mitchell said we are meeting to continue discussion on the Up Island Regional School District (UIRSD) funding formula and how to proceed in the future.

Dr. D'Andrea (school superintendent) gave an outline of the UIRSD educational and academic descriptions for Chilmark & West Tisbury elementary schools. Some of the big financial tickets are health benefits for employees and their OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) the facility maintenance projects for each school are also budget items to be considered too.

Ms. Mitchell asked to talk about the fairness of the funding formula. The discussion of education has merit but this meeting was called to discuss the funding formula. We are three towns' two schools and one region. The agreement was formed in 1993, agreement has been amended once. Ms. Mitchell said there is concern by West Tisbury tax payers that the formula is unfair to tax payers. Ms. Mitchell said we got together at the Howes House 1 & ½ years ago at that time we talked in general about it. From Ms. Mitchell's recollection Mr. Rossi said the discontent was from West Tisbury and requested from WT at that time to come up with a plan that they would like to see and to send it to Chilmark and Aquinnah for discussion. In response to that we (WT Selectmen) appointed a subcommittee to come up with a report that they submitted to us in January of 2017. Rather than support or not support the report we decided to pass it on to you and have you look at it and get back together and use it as a jumping off point.

Mr. Rossi said we were curious to see if the West Tisbury Selectmen accepted that recommendation (report from the Sub Committee) West Tisbury Selectmen confirmed they did not. Mr. Rossi said without the acceptance and recommendation of the West Tisbury Selectmen Mr. Rossi did not take the report seriously. The report represented the West Tisbury tax payer only it did not take into consideration that we are three towns that have children in the UIRSD.

Mr. Rossi said we are steadfast in keeping a school in our town center in Chilmark. Mr. Doty said we all want to feel that this is a good partnership that is fair for everyone. Mr. Doty said we have built into the UIRSD formula; site specific expenses. So if we choose to have a smaller school with a greater expense that is already accounted for in the formula. Mr. Doty said it's been in practice for over 25 years and we need to look at that and see if it is working. Ms. Mitchell said the capital formula needs to be reviewed too. The capital formula has been changed once in the lifetime of the UIRSD at this time it is 80, 20 prorated (aka 80% 10% 10%).

Mr. Malkin asked why the UIRSD cost is more than the other island towns. Ms. Tierney said essentially because UIRSD runs two buildings. Also UIRSD is the largest district (geographically) so the bussing is a bigger ticket than the down island schools. Mr. Hannemann asked for the supporting documents for Ms. Tierney's statements.

Ms. Mitchell asked to return to the subject of the formula and not about the cost at this time. Ms. Mitchell said we are looking to have the formula be fairer to all parties. Mr. Doty said Chilmark is aware that one of our partners (W. Tisbury) is unhappy and from our perspective this causes morale issues in our Chilmark School when there is continued discussion by W. Tisbury members to close it. Mr. Rossi said to move in a productive manner we could look to adjusting the school of choice cost because now it looks as if a West Tisbury child attending Chilmark would cost more than if a Chilmark student attended West Tisbury. Mr. Carroll asked if the UIRSD also had the superintendent shared services budget to address in this UIRSD formula. Mr. Manter said this was not a district line cost per pupil item (shared services).

Ms. Mitchell asked how we make progress on the formula fairness in the next 15 minutes. Mr. Rossi said what he mentioned earlier about school of choice cost between towns in the Up Island District could be addressed. Mr. Malkin said prior to our discussion with representatives from each UIRSD selectmen and accountant we looked at the financials and where our previous attempt for discussion may have stalled is the actual figures we were reviewing were not lining up.

Robert Lionette said he has an idea he would like to discuss. There are natural break numbers (of students) at what these buildings (school) need to be at to run effectively. Chilmark figure is 62 students so when the enrollment is below that figure that is when the formula becomes unfair. Ms. Mitchell said she is talking about the structure of a formula; when the threshold of a school is not met there is a cost (financial) to that. Mr. Doty said so if Chilmark's base line is 62 and our enrollment is 52 then we would have to pay some kind of premium. Ms. Mitchell said this is a concept discussion to see if it's something we can agree on. Mr. Manter said you then get two schools competing for the same students and he doesn't think that is fair. Mr. Malkin said competing for students is what school of choice is about.

Ms. Mitchell asked if we could continue with discussion of concepts at this stage and the figures would fall into place once we find an agreeable fair formula concept to agree on and bring to our Annual Town Meetings in 2018. Mr. Doty said if the next time this group meets we can bring three ideas; option a, option b and option c that is on the table. Mr. Doty said for this group to get together again we need to have something to look at for our discussion.

The next group meeting (all who are present) was set for Tuesday November 21, 2017 at 2:00 PM here at the West Tisbury Library conference room for 1 hour. Mr. Doty requested each recommendation be available prior to this next meeting at least a day prior, preferably 1 week prior to November 21 meeting. At 3:00 PM there was a motion to adjourn, motion was seconded. **SO VOTED: 9 Ayes**
Minutes respectfully submitted by Diana DeBlase. Approved 11/07/2017