

## Selectmen's Meeting Minutes 11/29/17

### Chilmark, Aquinnah & West Tisbury Joint Selectmen November 29, 2017 Meeting Minutes

Present: Chilmark Chairman Bill Rossi, James Malkin, Warren Doty, Executive Secretary Tim Carroll, Rob Hannemann (Chilmark FinCom) Rob Lionette (UIRSD Chilmark representative). West Tisbury Chairman Cynthia Mitchell, Skipper Manter and Kent Healy, Town Administrator Jen Rand, West Tisbury Town Accountant Bruce Stone, (W. Tisbury FinCom) Doug Ruskin. Lyndsey Scott, Aquinnah Selectmen Julianne Vanderhoop & Gary Haley, Town Administrator Jeffrey Madison. Superintendent of School Matt D'Andrea, School Business Administrator Amy Tierney, Judith Flanders and Videographer from MVTV.

At 3:00 PM Cynthia Mitchell called meeting to order in the West Tisbury Library.

Ms. Mitchell said since our last meeting Amy Tierney of the Superintendent's office Bruce Stone West Tisbury Town Accountant and Ms. Mitchell took a stab at a listing all of the things in the formula that are ripe for review. That list was distributed. Chairman Mitchell suggested we hear from Chilmark and utilize the list we drafted for discussion after. Chairman Rossi asked Rob Hannemann who worked on this plan to speak to the proposal. Mr. Malkin said the Selectmen asked Rob Hannemann and Rob Lionette (Chilmark UIRSD Committee member) to come up with a proposal that was simple that is easily presented to our tax payers. Mr. Malkin said we have found that the school budget is very complex with many parts we wanted to present something equitable, fair and simple to all parties.

Mr. Hannemann said school populations change with time but in a small school like Chilmark School those fluctuations lead to more costs per student. Mr. Hannemann said that is what we looked at for the baseline formula. Mr. Hannemann gave data statistics from his research for this recommendation. Mr. Hannemann said we believe that an appropriate formula change might be to take a look at the per student cost. Bruce Stone said there are some items for discussion: will this just apply for Chilmark and West Tisbury as they are considered inter-district exchange of students or does this also apply to Aquinnah. Another item to determine considering is the site cost per student, the effect of school choice of inter-district school children. For instance this year there are 11 school choice students at the Chilmark School. They contribute about \$5,000.00 per student in the formula for transfer of funds. For the 11 students Chilmark scores \$55,000.00. West Tisbury has 9 (school of choice) students that are being assessed \$300,000.00.

Mr. Stone said the concept of school of choice is they are taking space but not adding additional cost of running the school net out the school choice element to get the per student cost.

Mr. Hannemann said we would not go into hammering out the proposal without first getting support for this plan from all three towns involved. Ms. Mitchell asked if anyone had comments to add. Mr. Manter said one of his favorite topics is the assessed amount the towns pay per student and the calculation per pupil cost; there is a big difference between the two. The one the tax payers are concerned about is the amount you are paying per your student. Mr. Manter recommended rather than the pupil cost in the funding formula rather what you are paying per pupil. Ms. Mitchell asked for clarification on Mr. Manter's statements. Mr. Manter said it should be based on what tax payers are assessed not school of choice figures. Mr. Stone said that is what his recommendation is.

Ms. Mitchell said Chilmark's plan may have legs for us to work with. Mr. Hannemann said there is only one middle school and the comparisons should be for K-5. Discussion continued concerning leaving the middle school cost in place. Selectmen agreed to have a smaller group meet to discuss hammering out some figures within the plan outlined by Chilmark representatives.

Mr. Malkin and Ms. Mitchell recommended Mr. Hannemann Mr. Stone and Ms. Tierney meet to work on this to see this through. Mr. Malkin asked if someone from Aquinnah would like to partake in this. Town Administrator Jeffrey Madison said with Aquinnah not having any school their kids are all school of choice to either Chilmark or West Tisbury. Mr. Madison said as long as the formula is fair we are willing to go along with it. Mr. Madison said he did not feel capable of coming up with a recommendation for a formula as it is too complicated. Mr. Madison said that Aquinnah was being treated fairly with the current formula without any changes but want all towns to feel as though the formula is fair. Mr. Madison said he believed Jim Newman would be willing to sit in at the meetings but without him being here could not speak for him. Ms. Mitchell said the working group should be made up of people who are familiar and intimate with the formula such as Amy Tierney, Bruce Stone. Mr. Madison said he would see if Aquinnah Town Accountant Emily Day would be available to work with that group.

Ms. Mitchell outlined the 10 points that Mr. Stone and Ms. Tierney prepared for this meeting as parts of the formula to review. They are as follows:

School district choice and shared services budget

9 year plan to set this straight (shared services) Mr. Manter said this was first brought to the attention of the school budget advisory in 2008. Mr. D'Andrea said we are in our first year of this and are budgeting for our second year.

1 child at a time as they move into the system will be assessed from the town they come from, but only as it relates to shared services budget. Skipper Manter said we should limit the school of choice, total now we have 51. Mr. Ruskin asked for clarification; the sending town pays \$5,000.00 to the town of school the pupil attends. The up island school district receives this money. That was confirmed. Mr. Ruskin also asked if the shared services portion was also paid in addition to that. Mr. D'Andrea said the shared services assessment is determined by the number of students in the school. Previously when they were determining the assessment they would count the school choice students they would count all the kids in the building and did not say this is a school choice student from Edgartown so it should not count towards West Tisbury. That's what we are doing now (Now that assessment goes to Edgartown).

Within district school choice

Bruce Stone said this was incorporated into #4 Chilmark proposal

Capital Cost

Ms. Mitchell said this has been amended once in 2007. It's referred to as the "80/10/10"

Though that is not what happens. Owning school/town pays 80% no more no less. The other 2 towns pay the capital cost of that school based on number of kids in the school. A thought here is to change the 80% to be able to rise and fall with the census.

For instance at West Tisbury School in a past year 70% of the students were from West Tisbury with 30 % from Chilmark & Aquinnah. In that year had this Capital formula been more flexible -West Tisbury would have paid 70% of the capital cost. Mr. Doty said it is fine the way it is (80/20 adjusted). Present attendees consented to leave this unchanged.

Chilmark proposal

Discussed previously in meeting

Baseline cost to towns

Ms. Mitchell said similar to Chilmark's threshold concept except it would set a floor for Aquinnah. The Chilmark and West Tisbury schools will host Aquinnah students. This is a minimum threshold for Aquinnah. Mr. Madison said he would like to see what that (figure) would be. Mr. Manter said every town pays same amount per student. Ms. Mitchell said regardless if students are coming from Aquinnah they would always pay no less than x figure baseline. Mr. Ruskin said its worth considering but each town would have to pay in a minimum beyond which the rest of the budget is proportioned. Ms. Mitchell said that is the topic of #10 on this list.

Ms. Mitchell said we already do this with Tri Town Ambulance. (Ms. Mitchell is on the board of Tri Town Ambulance Committee) with the formula for Tri Town we divided the cost to run the department equally so 1/3 of cost to each town. This formula cost Aquinnah more per capita but it's worth it for the service. Mr. Doty said per population we have three very unequal towns. This works for Tri Town Ambulance but would be unfair to use for education. Ms. Mitchell said its worth taking a look at.

Ms. Tierney said there are items that the regional agreement doesn't address; school choice, Charter School and the reimbursement, Medicaid or impact aid. Ms. Mitchell said for example impact aid for Aquinnah because it's a Bureau Indian Affairs.

Mr. Madison said yes because its federal property we get a stipend. Ms. Mitchell said the stipend comes to the district but it gets totally allocated to Aquinnah. Ms. Mitchell said that should follow the pupil to a school. Ms. Mitchell said Aquinnah should not get the assessment credit it should go to school that is educating pupil. Ms. Tierney said they are impacting the district. Mr. Madison said he was not comfortable with recommending our board to follow that. Mr. Madison said because it's ours. Firstly it a minuscule amount 5,000.00 to 6,000.00 dollars. And secondly from the talks we have had with the residents of Aquinnah they are supporting seeking an increase of the Federal education stipend.

Mr. Doty recommended dropping this idea and leaving as is. Ms. Mitchell confirmed that idea is off the table.

Employee Benefits - Health Insurance

Mr. Tierney said the benefits and payroll obligations have previously been in the district part of the budget. Ms. Tierney said we have now taken the health insurance and put it into the two sites (W.T School & Chilmark School), but left all of the benefits and all the other payroll obligations in the district (Up Island Regional School District) site. Ms. Tierney said she argued that it should stay regional. Mr. Manter said this is a school committee issue and recommended looking at dividing up all of the employee benefits and health to the two separate sites. Ms. Mitchell said its money and is up for discussion for our formula analysis. Ms. Mitchell said when we do these calculations we will take the other 15% of the payroll costs and do what you did with the health insurance.

Ms. Mitchell said that completes the discussion of the listed topics and asked if there was anything else to be discussed or if anyone would like to talk. Mr. D'Andrea said on the subject of fairness; has there been any discussion or determination of what you mean by fairness. What do we want to have happen and what are the criteria of fairness. Ms. Mitchell said that's a good question the people who are in attendance are the ones who determine what is fair that is why we are here to hammer it out. The ultimate arbiter on what's fair will be the voter (taxpayers). Ms. Mitchell said in West Tisbury we have considerable sentiment that the current portion that West Tisbury pays is more than its fair share. Ms. Mitchell said we will work on this with the smaller group and see if it is considered fairer. Ms. Mitchell said we will test to see if there is still appetite to considering withdrawing from the district.

Mr. Doty said it's enough to say that in most regional school districts around the country the move to consolidate schools has been driven by cost. (For instance) That in a district that's formed that had 5 elementary schools because there were 5 different towns they join together and create one high school 2 middle schools and three elementary 3 schools. They have consolidated their schools that's one of the reasons they regionalized. In our case (UIRSD) if that was why we regionalized then there would be just 1 elementary school, 1 middle school and 1 island wide high school. But that isn't why we regionalized because we have Chilmark wanting to keep a small school. So how do we as a region come up with a fair formula that allows one town to keep its small school yet operates as a district?

Ms. Mitchell said last year we had appetite from voters to have a warrant on our Annual Town Meeting to withdraw from the district. Ms. Mitchell said as Selectmen we decided not to entertain that for the warrant because we hadn't done the work first to see how fair we could make it yet. That's why we are here.

Mr. Doty said if the district were to recommend closing the Chilmark School we (Chilmark) would move to withdraw from the district because we want to continue to have a Chilmark School.

Kent Healy (W. Tisbury Selectmen) said he is new on the job and has a lot to learn but coming in new his thoughts are 2 schools cost more to run than 1 school. However having a choice of a smaller school or larger school is a major benefit to both towns. Having local schools enhances the sense of community in both towns and he said these 2 benefits far exceed the cost of a few hundred dollars per year for any household.

Mr. Ruskin (W.T. FinCom) said the district was formed in 1993 at the time there were solid reasons for doing it (he was not part of it). Having this much time pass the question I would ask is does it still make sense or does it make better sense to operate 2 separate town schools without a district.

Mr. Malkin said your (Ms. Mitchell) comment about what's fair will ultimately be decided by town votes. Mr. Malkin said he shares Mr. Healy's view in terms of there is advantage here in terms of choice of type of education. Ms. Tierney said whatever formula is agreed on it must be 100% agreed by all towns every year at the budget.

Mr. Carroll asked if one of the three towns could go with the State formula instead. Ms. Tierney said if you did not all agree on your regional formula it would go to the statutory formula. Ms. Tierney said they are close (regional agreement formula and state statutory) now within 1%. But the statutory formula is not on the table at this time. Mr. Doty said at the time of our regionalizing there was a state reimbursement for being regionalized that no longer exists. Ms. Tierney said you (UIRSD) do still get reimbursement for transportation (approx. \$180,000.00) from the State for being regional. Mr. Doty said that is not enough to support why we are doing this (regionalization).

Mr. Manter said at past town meetings the withdrawing from the district warrant failed but at the ballots in a non-binding question it passed. Ms. Mitchell said herself; Ms. Tierney, Mr. Stone and Mr. Hannemann and Ms. Day will meet and work on these concepts. Ms. Mitchell recommended this group (all three town Selectmen) get together again in early January 2018. Mr. Doty said these are very useful meetings. Ms. Mitchell said anything that we come to terms about here will not be voted on to affect the Fiscal 2019 budget but the agreement could be amended at 2018 Town Meeting.

Jen Rand said remember the first Tuesday in February (Feb. 6<sup>th</sup>) is the final, final deadline date for the warrant articles for West Tisbury Annual Town Meeting. If you can set a date for this next get together Ms. Rand said she would like to reserve this room (at W.T. Library) now.

Wednesday 3:00 PM January 11<sup>th</sup> was the agreed date to post the next meeting.

Mr. Manter said he wanted to amend the regional district agreement on the withdrawal option wording to say amendments to regional district agreement can be made at Annual Town Meeting or Special Town Meeting but adding or Town Elections as well. It was decided that that can be discussed further at the next meeting January 11, 2018.

At 4:04 PM Mr. Doty moved to adjourn. Mr. Malkin seconded the motion. All present voted in favor of adjournment.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Diana DeBlase.      Approved 1/09/2018

Document list:

10 point discussion list prepared by Ms. Tierney & Mr. Stone  
Chilmark proposal for formula revision