

Chilmark FinCom April 20, 2023 4:00 PM Meeting Minutes

Present remotely: FinCom Chairperson Susan Murphy, Vicki Divoll, Bruce Golden, Rob Hannemann, Don Leopold and Marshall Carroll. *Eric Glasgow was not present.* Others: Select Board member Marie Larsen, Town Moderator Janet Weidner, Accountant Ellen Biskis, Robert Lionette, School Superintendent Richie Smith, Mark Friedman, Abigail Rosen, Doug Ruskin, and Diana DeBlase.

At 4:04 PM Chairperson Murphy called the meeting to order on the Zoom platform.

Reconsider vote of MV High School Budget:

Chairperson Murphy said this meeting was posted because actions 2 weeks ago taken by the MVRHS School Committee. 5 to 4 vote to take cap off the spending for the legal fees for lawsuit vs town of Oak Bluffs Planning Board. Chairperson Murphy said we as the FinCom voted unanimously to recommend the MV High school budget. Chairperson Murphy said she supports all the hard work and the budget process for the high school. This (today) process is to bring the legal budget line for the high school under consideration and what our actions might be to send a message. Chairperson Murphy said we still have time to rescind our vote to recommend the MVRHS budget.

Ms. Divoll said we really appreciated the hard work that went into the budget and keeping the increase under 2.5%. We (FinCom) are trying to control the future spending we will be responsible for. We had no intention of revisiting our vote on the budget. But the removal of cap on the lawsuit spending prompted this reconsideration of recommending budget for the MVRHS.

There was discussion on the procedure of action the FinCom would proceed with.

Mr. Golden moved that the Finance Committee rescind the vote to recommend the Martha's Vineyard High School budget and to vote to not recommend the MVRHS Budget. Ms. Divoll seconded the motion.

Mr. Leopold asked that Superintendent Smith or Mark Friedman to help us understand the schools perspective, and what rescinding the vote would do to the school operations beyond the issue of the lawsuit.

Mr. Hannemann asked that we have discussion by FinCom members prior to input from the school representatives. Mr. Hannemann said the school (MVRHS School Committee) has overstepped their bounds (with this lawsuit) and are acting as if they are more important than the towns. They have broken trust with the towns.

Mr. Hannemann said while we are concerned with future spending on the legal issue. Want relation to schools and towns to revert to working together. Last thing we want is programmatic problems for the students.

Mr. Carroll said he agreed with Mr. Hannemann's remarks.

Superintendent Smith said he and Ms. Divoll have spoken quite a bit and he appreciates her candor and transparency. Mr. Smith said he completely understands what Mr. Hannemann is saying. When West Tisbury took action and voted the MVRHS Budget down he understood that. Mr. Smith said that doesn't mean he agrees with it but does understand and respect that.

Mr. Smith gave a description of the implications as Mr. Leopold asked for.

Mark Freedman also spoke to the new approach in FY23 budget 2.11% increase. There is no explicit budget amount for legal issues. Reduced to 375,000 for FY24. Cost of 1 residential placement is in the \$350,000 range plus. If we are directed to revise we would not know what the reduction would be so if Chilmark has recommendation please share. MGA provision vote a budget (non-binding) vote a specific message to officially communicate to the School committee.

Rob Lionette said he was heartened by support of the FinCom. Mr. Lionette said concerning with simple majority vote we can continue to use legal funds. Also this is a school committee problem. Don Leopold said he believes he understands the purpose of rescinding recommendation; has nothing to do with the budget but we believe our only voice to show our displeasure of the School Committee spending.

Mark Freedman gave clarification on process; if 4 or more towns don't approve it reverts back to school committee the committee has 30 days to revise and bring back to the towns. Then have a Special Town Meeting within 45 days (would have to be held at end of June).

Chairperson Murphy said the MVRHS school committee must address what the towns have objected to. Pressure on the 5 school committee members who went the legal route. Fiduciary responsibility to the town the budget you presented was wonderful but.

Mr. Hannemann asked to call the vote.

Mr. Golden moved to rescind recommendation for MVRHS budget. Ms. Divoll seconded the motion. Roll call: Don Leopold: No. Vicki Divoll: Yes. Marshall Carroll: Yes. Bruce Golden: Yes. Susan Murphy: Yes. 1 not present Eric Glasgow.

Ms. Divoll moved to not recommend MV Regional High School assessment. Mr. Golden seconded the motion. Roll call: Don Leopold: No. Vicki Divoll: Yes. Marshall Carroll: Yes. Bruce Golden: Yes. Susan Murphy: Yes. 1 not present Eric Glasgow.

FinCom discussed when we go to town meeting and explain why we don't recommend; it is about lawsuit only.

Mr. Leopold thanked Chairperson Murphy for calling meeting to give all a chance to be heard.

With no further items for discussion Mr. Golden moved to adjourn. Mr. Leopold seconded the motion. Members voted unanimously to adjourn. At 4:50 PM meeting adjourned

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Diana DeBlase. **Approved 01/24/2024**