

DRAFT FY25 Budget Hearing February 21, 2024 4:00 PM Meeting Minutes

Present: Select Board: Chairperson Bill Rossi, James Malkin and Marie Larsen. FinCom: Chairperson Susan Murphy, Vicky Divoll, Linda Coutinho, Deb Hancock, Don Leopold and Bruce Golden. Marshall Carroll was not present. Others: Tim Carroll, Diana DeBlase, D Barnes, Sarah Smith, Janet Weidner, Carolyn Stoeber, MVTV videographer

At 4:04 PM Fincom Chairperson Susan Murphy called meeting to order in Select Board meeting room. Select Board Chairperson Rossi called meeting to order.

Minutes: Minutes of prior meetings were discussed but tabled to a future meeting for approval.

Chairperson Murphy asked to start with the budget updates.

Town Accountant Sarah Smith gave highlights:

- the School has reduced their budget significantly (reduced over \$100,000.00)
- Fire department adjusted 2/1
- Tri Town Ambulance slightly adjusted from the last version
- Dog officer lines were corrected
- Harbor department some figures were moved around within the department (amount did not change)
- Animal inspector we put in the stipend of \$2,100.00
- Library directors salary was reduced back to 38 hours
- Historical Commission office expenses added \$400.00
- Debt 710 & Debt interest 751 were finalized – DOR allowed us to carry forward the unexpended HVAC debt (2023 HVAC allocation) to reduce our obligation.
- Health insurance figures came, so we have figured those into this budget

Chairperson Murphy said this is final review of FY 25 budget and asked if there were items that still needed work. Mr. Malkin said concerns he had have been addressed and a 5.3% increase is suitable.

Ms. Coutinho said the Fire department when asked to level fund, their increase was substantial. Tim Carroll said we have an email from Chief Bradshaw saying we can flat line #5125 & #5126. Discussion ensued. On-call must get paid minimum wage. Chairperson Rossi said this should come to the town to vote on stipend increases. Ms. Larsen said we are coming from a chief that was paid next to nothing to the chief now who is being paid top dollar and I need to know more and transparency is needed.

Ms. Divoll said as liaison to Fire Department can warn him of increases that won't go over well during hearing. Mr. Leopold said there is strong feeling in the fire department that volunteer is on way out and paid department is on the way. How do we get a handle on this in the next few years? Whether or not volunteer department is viable in the future. Chairperson Murphy said the on-call budget line is up 156% from last year. Ms. Larsen said we need the top limit to number of recruits to know what to budget. Ms. Coutinho said years ago jobs were more flexible now with a car accident they must stay at scene for hours my son will not leave work now to respond to a call, he can't afford it.

Ms. Smith said with reduction given from Fire Chief the increase to the fire department budget is now reduced to 14%. Mr. Malkin said we could say to Fire Chief bring it to 12% or we can accept it as 14%.

Ms. Larsen said 12% feels arbitrary and may feel like a punishment. I want to help him get training on how to manage budget. Chairperson Murphy said this is a far cry from level funded. There was further discussion of fire department budget. Chairperson Rossi said the communication the Select Board gets from the Fire Chief is exponentially improved from previous years from fire department. Ms. Divoll said do we tell department to reduce by a certain amount and have them determine what lines get adjusted. Tim Carroll said FinCom recommends and direction is from Select Board.

Mr. Golden moved to vote to recommend - Fire department budget as adjusted to 14%. Ms. Coutinho seconded the motion.

SO VOTED: 4 Ayes, 1 abstain Linda Coutinho as both her son and husband are on the fire department, 1 Nay Chairperson Murphy 1 not present Marshall Carroll.

Chairperson Murphy asked if there was any other budgets to discuss.

Ms. Coutinho asked about the intern on the Select Board budget. Mr. Carroll said that would be corrected to be \$2,500. The cola was applied to all across the board.

Ms. Hancock asked about Harbor department, how many pilings in harbor and what is process. Tim Carroll said survey done, plan is to replace 30 a year to keep ahead or up to plan. Mr. Carroll said we can afford 20 for \$30 k

Ms. Coutinho said with Beach Budget #630 can we reduce lifeguard salary line. Mr. Carroll said we were unable to fill positions. Mr. Malkin said liability not to have positions filled.

Mr. Malkin said we need a placeholder for police department salaries as we are in negotiations. Mr. Carroll said there are 2 of those items we need to talk about.

Mr. Carroll discussed rain day averages deducted from the Beach department. \$15k put into Select Board reserve, but holding for their use, Board of Health for Landfill monitoring expenses if needed.

Ms. Smith asked to flag budget #699 Cultural Council asked for \$5,000.00 up from \$3,500.00

Ms. Divoll moved to recommend increase to \$5,000.00. Ms. Coutinho seconded the motion

SO VOTED: 6 Ayes, 1 not present Marshall Carroll.

Select Board; Ms. Larsen moved to approve this budget increase. Mr. Malkin seconded the motion.

SO VOTED: 3 Ayes

Mr. Carroll discussed working with Treasurer and figured out the 20 years of debt service payments that Tri Town Ambulance will be paying Chilmark and the shorter term that the UIRSDC will be repaying the Chilmark School HVAC.

The School has Chilmark paying the 80% and the other two towns are assessed by the district for their remaining 20%.

TTA debt for just the EMS building is split equally between the three towns. But since Chilmark has already paid two years of debt service, it results in approx. \$12,000 more for each of the other towns to pay in addition to an equal third. It has still resulted in less than the \$800,000 I told the TTA to carry in

their preliminary budget for FY2025. These will be recorded in our departmental budgets and then a credit listed after the appropriation.

Additionally the TTA budget has been reduced by the 80% of receipts received in the prior calendar year for many years. We should have been appropriating those funds and Town Counsel and our Auditor have approved a method of listing it inside our annual departmental budgets for TTA. D Barnes said she will have a detailed spreadsheet to follow.

Mr. Carroll said we need a place holder for pay Classification & Compensation study going on and school has line for contract negotiations. Our police department collective bargaining, expenses related to the bargaining. Place holder in department 910 for salary reserve of \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Ms. Smith estimated this additional 100k brings budget increase to 5.9%

Warrant articles

Mr. Carroll said we have \$799,000.00 estimated free cash

Mr. Carroll began listing the draft warrant articles and how they would be funded.

Mr. Malkin said he and Linda Coutinho are in discussions with CTAC and recommend joint maintenance increase to \$10,000 from both parties (from \$5,000 each).

Mr. Carroll said he raised the FinCom reserve fund from 40K to 75K last year and have not had to hit it yet but because the size of our budget and size of an issue the 40K was wipe out. Mr. Carroll said this may be a funded partly from assessors overlay.

Mr. Carroll said the \$10K for Reserve for Compensated Absences should increase to \$15,000

Mr. Carroll explained the stabilization funds and listed the recommended funding.

Mr. Carroll listed the raised and appropriate items.

Ms. Divoll asked do we support getting an additional UTV. Discussion ensued. Mr. Carroll gave information about support for UTV (he is assistant Chief).

Ms. Hancock discussed information from Harbormaster for harbor pilings warrant article and list of repairs. Existing stairs need replacing, are not equal rise. More discussion ensued on list of repairs. Mr. Carroll recommended this list be brought to Harbor Advisory if had not been reviewed. Mr. Malkin then recommended Ms. Hancock, Ryan and himself get together about the list.

Mr. Carroll discussed the Traffic Calming speed humps, and said we are looking to put one in before ATM. Chairperson Rossi said it was agreed previously to be a speed table not hump.

Mr. Carroll spoke of a 5 year facilities maintenance funding plan. \$50k would be a starting point. Written plan that Select Board adopts and this would fund them.

Chairperson Murphy asked if these are approved at ATM are the funds available to spend the following day. Mr. Carroll said if from free cash yes but if raise and appropriate it is available July 1. If from other fund should be immediately available though sometimes there are restrictions.

Mr. Carroll went through all of the Community Preservation articles. Carolyn Stoeber the Board Administrator was present to answer any questions with these articles. Chairperson Rossi said the CPC

held public hearing on these articles and voted in support of them all. Mr. Carroll said usually the FinCom votes to take no action on them but it certainly is a financial issue to the town.

Mr. Carroll spoke of the Peaked Hill RFP consultant and that consultant wanted to know how much we have for CPC funding. And Molly Flender Trust money. Mr. Carroll said there is about a million dollars in each place.

Mr. Carroll explained the prior year invoices totaling under 1K.

Mr. Carroll spoke about the Opioid settlement and we are getting some funds and Boards of Health are working to pool the funds to fund SUDS through the County organization.

OB asked for joint support for hazard assessment study roadway that is underwater. Subject to all towns participating.

Housing Committee request - Rooms excise tax from 4% to 6%.

There was discussion of the petitions submitted for Tennis at the Community Center. Mr. Malkin said we are working on revised MOA with CTAC and think will resolve the issues that the tennis group has.

Ms. Coutinho said they (Tennis petition) are asking for a bylaw that would lock us into tennis forever, we may need something different in that space. The masterplan is being worked on now. We may need a public bathroom or parking in that space, Preschool in the future. Chairperson Rossi said this is a political hot potato.

There was discussion on the proposal of petition. Mr. Malkin said this can be amended on town meeting floor.

There was discussion to wrap up the votes tonight. Treasurer, Accountant supplied the figures for the changes made tonight.

Chairperson Murphy asked FinCom if they were ready to vote the FY25 Budget without the warrant articles while the financials are being updated on them.

Mr. Golden moved to recommend the proposed FY25 budget that was amended tonight. Chairperson Murphy seconded the motion. SO VOTED: 6 Ayes, 1 not present Marshall Carroll.

Ms. Divoll said she would vote to recommend the Fire Department UTV.

Treasurer gave the updated figures for the warrant article changes made tonight. Mr. Carroll said his goal has always to leave \$100K in free cash. There was discussion to increase the \$25K for PC (computer updates) to \$50K

Treasurer gave additional updated figure for free cash after this latest change of \$113,839.22 but will confirm tomorrow.

Chairperson Murphy asked for a motion to recommend the warrant articles as amended tonight. Ms. Divoll moved to recommend. Mr. Golden seconded the motion. SO VOTED: 5 Ayes 1 Abstain from Ms. Hancock for traffic calming article as she believes it is a horrible idea. Chairperson Murphy said so you are recommending all but that then. Mr. Carroll asked for an amendment to the motion to remove that

one article (about the speed bump) from the vote to recommend and then vote. SO VOTED 6 Ayes 1 not present.

Chairperson Murphy asked for a motion to recommend the speed calming hump. Mr. Leopold moved to recommend, Ms. Divoll seconded the motion. SO VOTED: 4 Ayes 2 Nays Ms. Coutinho, Ms. Hancock, 1 Not present Marshall Carroll.

There was a motion to adjourn. Tim Carroll said that means you just recommended the room's tax and the tennis petitions. Ms. DeBlase read aloud the petitions.

FinCom members discussed the petitions. Ms. Hancock moved to not recommend both tennis petitions. Ms. Divoll seconded the motion. Mr. Golden asked why. Mr. Leopold said nothing in this for the town but potential cost. So Voted 6 Ayes to not recommend. 1 not present Marshall Carroll.

Tim Carroll asked if the FinCom would vote the room's tax increase. Chairperson Rossi asked to see the Article language in writing. Chairperson Murphy said we may have to come back to a meeting to vote this.

At 6:47 PM With no further items to discuss Meeting was adjourned.

Draft Minutes respectfully submitted by Diana DeBlase.

Documents:

- Draft minutes from prior meetings
- Budget figures for FY25
- Draft Warrant article numbers in list form
- Petition submitted for ATM from tennis group