

**Town of Oak Bluffs Finance and Advisory Committee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 5:00pm**  
**OB Town Hall Meeting Room/Zoom Conference**

**Present:** Chair – Sherry Countryman, Richard Weiss, Bill Vrooman, Sean DeBettencourt, Maura McGroarty, Dion Alley, Mimi Davisson\*, Mike Taus

**Absent:** Reuben Fitzgerald

**Others:** Deborah Potter, Ryan Ruley

**Recorder:** Juliet Mulinare

**5:02pm** Ms. Countryman called the Oak Bluffs Finance and Advisory Committee meeting to order.

**Announcements**

The Committee discussed returning to the normal meeting schedule of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month. Ms. Potter stated that she did not think there would be a reason for the FinCom to meet again before Annual Town Meeting. The Committee decided to take a couple weeks off and resume meeting on April 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Approval of Minutes**

The Committee reviewed the draft minutes from the February 16, 2023 meeting.

*Mr. DeBettencourt moved to approve the 2/16/23 minutes, seconded by Mr. Vrooman.*

Brief discussion to clarify vote counts on a few articles.

*No further discussion, roll call vote:*

*McGroarty – Aye, Davisson – Abstain, DeBettencourt – Aye, Weiss – Aye, Countryman – Aye, Taus – Aye, Vrooman – Aye, Alley – Aye.*

Motion carries **(7-0-1)**.

Approval of the February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 minutes was postponed.

**Discuss and Vote to Amend Approved 2024 Budget and Corresponding Warrant Article**

The amendment to the approved budget is a \$160,000 reduction of the Oak Bluffs' assessment for the High School. This money has already been budgeted for FY24 so, because it will no longer go to the High School, it needs to be allocated elsewhere. Ms. Potter sent out options, including her recommendations, for how to reallocate the funds. She recommends \$110k to be put towards COLA changes and the remaining \$50k to go to OPEB liability. The Committee discussed other various ways to allocate the money.

*Motion placed on the floor by Ms. Davisson to follow the recommendations for redistributing the FY24 funds put forth by Ms. Potter. Mr. Weiss seconds the motion, discussion:*

The Committee discussed how much free cash will be left if all the Special Town Meeting articles pass; Ms. Potter said approximately \$200k. Ms. Potter's recommendations allow her more flexibility to deal with salary-related issues. Mr. Ruley stated that the allocation to COLA is an effort to pre-plan for appropriate COLAs, instead of determining the COLA based on available cash.

*No further discussion, roll call vote:*

*McGroarty – Abstain, Davisson – Aye, DeBettencourt – Aye, Weiss – Nay, Countryman – Nay, Taus – Aye, Vrooman – Nay, Alley – Abstain.*

Motion does not carry **(3-3-2)**.

The Committee determined that because it did not vote to accept Ms. Potter's recommendation, it needed to provide an alternative recommendation. Members of the Committee suggested the money could be put towards Professional Services, Public Building Maintenance or to allocate more money to OPEB. Ms. Potter stated that she did not think putting more money towards OPEB would make a difference to the Town's bond rating. The Committee discussed other annual OPEB contributions.

*After further discussion, Mr. DeBettencourt made a motion to allocate the surplus funds as follows: \$90k to COLA/Benefits, \$50k to OPEB, \$10k to the FinCom Reserve Fund and the balance to Public Building Maintenance. Ms. Davisson seconds the motion, no further discussion, roll call vote:*

*McGroarty – Abstain, Davisson – Aye, DeBettencourt – Aye, Weiss – Aye, Countryman – Aye, Taus – Aye, Vrooman – Abstain, Alley – Abstain.*

Motion carries **(5-0-3)**.

### **Discussion Regarding MVC Withdrawal Warrant Article**

Ms. Countryman explained that, even though the Selectboard has removed this as a ballot question she would like to revisit this to discuss the financial implications of the town withdrawing from the MVC. She stated that the Commission provides a substantial amount of assistance to the towns in the area of planning, and that to eliminate this resource the MVC provides and contract out for it elsewhere would likely cost the Town more than their MVC assessment.

Ms. Potter then explained that the ballot question would have been non-binding and a second vote would be required for the Town to withdraw. Mr. Ruley stated that he added the item to the Selectboard agenda to make sure a discussion on the matter took place. He continued that the discussion did take place and his fellow board members did not agree with putting this question on the ballot, so they voted it down. Mr. Ruley stated that this was demonstrative of a good public process. Some of the Committee members felt that it was premature and inappropriate for the Selectboard to discuss withdrawing from the MVC since it was not included on the posting of the Selectboard agenda, but rather added to the agenda at the last minute. The Committee felt that the issue needed more public discussion, to avoid confusion and provide context, before going before the voters at Annual Town Meeting. Since the item was removed from the ballot by the Selectboard, no further action by the FinCom is needed.

### **Discussion Regarding Budget/Warrant Article Process for Next Year**

The Committee reviewed the suggestions that were put forth to improve the budget and warrant article review process for FY25. Suggestions included starting the budget process earlier, or holding Town Meeting later but there were concerns about the logistics of both options. The Committee discussed a standardized budget form for out-of-town entities so that presentations can be streamlined and easier to understand. Ms. Countryman praised Ms. Potter for her use of standardized budget forms within Town Departments. The Committee also discussed how much detail was really needed in the budget narratives for town departments and whether there could be a Google Drive created for Committee members to access all the budget information in one location. Mr. Ruley suggested that the All Island FinCom meet to come up with island-wide standard budget forms for the regional entities to use.

\*Ms. Davisson departs the meeting.

Ms. Countryman thanked the Committee for their hard work, and Ms. Potter and Mr. Ruley for their time and commitment to helping the FinCom navigate the budget season. Mr. Alley stated that this group is good representation of the Town, with differing opinions but the desire to have important discussions to help the town. He also thanked Ms. Countryman for her leadership.

### **Committee Updates**

Mr. Taus informed the Committee that the MSBA has been meeting with High School officials regarding the feasibility study for the new High School. Funding for the study is on all six town ballots this spring, and all six towns need to approve the funding for the project to move forward with MSBA support.

### **Town Administrator/Accountant Comments**

None.

### **Member Comments**

None.

### **Public Comments**

None.

### **Adjournment**

*At 6:45pm a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Taus and seconded by Mr. DeBettencourt. No further discussion, roll call vote:*

*McGroarty – Aye, DeBettencourt – Aye, Weiss – Aye, Countryman – Aye, Taus – Aye, Vrooman – Aye, Alley – Aye.*

Motion passes unanimously (7-0-0).

### **Meeting Documents on File**

1. MVRHS FY24 Budget – Statutory Assessments – DRAFT 3-06-23

*Respectfully Submitted  
Juliet Mulinare, Recorder*

Minutes Approved: 4/6/23