

Town of Oak Bluffs Finance and Advisory Committee
Thursday, May 5, 2022, 5:00pm
Via Zoom Conference

Present: Chair- **Bob Gaffey, Dion Alley, Sherry Countryman, Mike Taus, Maura McGroarty, Mimi Davisson, Reuben Fitzgerald, Sean DeBettencourt**

Absent: **Richard Weiss**

Others: Deborah Potter – Town Administrator/Accountant, Carrie Blair, Walter Vail, Bernie Crossland, Juliet Mulinare – Recorder.

5:02 pm The Oak Bluffs Finance and Advisory Committee meeting was called to order.

Approval of Minutes

Review minutes from March 31, 2022 meeting. Mr. Taus moved the minutes be approved, seconded by Ms. Countryman.

Crossland – Aye, Taus – Aye, Alley – Aye, McGroarty – Aye, Countryman – Aye.
Vail – Abstain; Gaffey – Abstain (**5 – Aye, 2 - Abstain**).

Reorganization/Welcome New Members/Appoint Reps/Elect Chair & Co-Chair

Three new members to the FinCom were recognized and asked to provide some information about themselves and why they wanted to be on the Committee.

Mimi Davisson said she served on the FinCom 10 years ago and was dismayed that there were five open seats so she orchestrated a quick write-in campaign. She has a background in IT.

Reuben Fitzgerald is a teacher at the Tisbury School, originally from Ireland, he has lived in OB for 15 years and is interested in getting more involved in local government.

Sean DeBettencourt is a 4th generation islander and has lived in OB, on and off, his whole life. He wants to get involved in the town's finances because he sees that as the core strength of the town.

After introductions by the new Committee members, Mr. Gaffey expressed his gratitude to the departing members, Mr. Vail, Ms. Crossland and Mr. Vrooman (not present).

Mr. Vail said it has been an honor to serve with the rest of the Committee and he wishes the new members good luck.

Ms. Crossland expressed similar sentiments, stating that she joined because she wanted to make a difference and hopes she did.

The Committee moved to Appointments:

Capital Committee – After some discussion about the various entities that appoint the members of the Capital Committee (FinCom, Selectboard, Moderator), it was decided that Mr. Alley would be the FinCom's appointed member. Ms. McGroarty will seek an appointment from the Selectboard, and Mr. Gaffey will seek appointment by the Moderator.

Personnel Committee – The members discussed the two currently appointed representatives, Mr. Vrooman and Ms. Cook (member of the Conservation Commission), neither of whom are presently on the FinCom. There was some discussion about when Ms. Cook was appointed. Mr. Gaffey stated that he is not opposed to Ms. Cook continuing in her role but he would like to see more communication between her and the FinCom. Hearing no opposition from the rest of the Committee, Mr. Gaffey stated that Ms. Cook will remain in her role but he will ask the Personnel Board to report back to the FinCom more frequently.

FinCom Chairperson – Mr. Gaffey stated that he is stepping down as Chair after three years in the role; he recommended Ms. Countryman to succeed him. Mr. Alley seconds the recommendation. Ms. Countryman stated that she is interested in serving as Chair but wants the Committee to know that she

would like the FinCom to become more active in advising the Selectboard, she would like to meet more regularly during the off-season and she will bring an expectation that the Committee will work hard. With the appointment moved and seconded, the Committee took a roll call vote:

Taus – Aye, Fitzgerald – Aye, McGroarty – Aye, Alley – Aye, DeBettencourt – Aye, Davisson – Aye, Countryman – Aye, Gaffey – Aye. **(8 – Aye)**.

FinCom Co-Chairperson – The Committee was of the opinion that the Chairperson should appoint the Co-Chair. Ms. Countryman stated that she had spoken with Mr. Weiss and he is interested in being Vice Chair; she thinks he would be great. Mr. Taus moved the appointment of Mr. Weiss as Vice Chair, seconded by Ms. McGroarty.

Countryman – Aye, Taus – Aye, Davisson – Aye, Fitzgerald – Aye, McGroarty – Aye, Alley – Aye, Gaffey – Abstain. DeBettencourt – Abstain. **(6 – Aye, 2 - Abstain)**.

Report on High School Funding Formula

Mr. Gaffey stated that the High School funding formula is an extremely important matter, for OB in particular. Ms. Countryman is participating in discussions with the Selectboard and has been working with Selectperson Packish on the ad hoc Committee that was formed to reach a consensus among the towns.

Ms. Countryman gave some background on the project: the current regional agreement contains a formula based on student enrollment by town that dictates how much each town pays towards the School's operating budget. The regional agreement must be updated in order to qualify for the MSBA funding. This does not necessarily mean that the funding formula for the School's operating budget must be changed, but there must be a consensus among the six towns on the funding formula for the capital costs of building a new school in order for the MSBA to award State money (current cost estimate for a new school is \$105 million). The ad hoc Committee that was formed is working towards a compromise between the towns on how to pay for the new school. Oak Bluffs would like to see the funding formula for the operating budget modified as part of this process, but some of the other towns are opposed to that as it would increase their share. Oak Bluffs would like to see a funding formula for both the capital costs of the new school and the High School's operating budget based on equalized value of property in each town, rather than enrollment. The ad hoc Committee is discussing a combination of these two options. Most recently, a formula based on 75% enrollment and 25% equalized value was suggested. If the formula was 100% equalized value, Oak Bluffs' share of the cost would be about 15%. At 100% enrollment, it's around 28%. The Selectboard would like to be somewhere in between.

Ms. Countryman said the meetings have been productive and people have been proactive in throwing out ideas. It's a step in the right direction that each town has a seat at the table and is willing to discuss how to move forward, a different scene than just a few years ago. The Committee will continue to meet every week until agreement is reached. September is when the updated regional agreement and capital funding formula are due to the State. The meetings are not publicly posted but they are open to the public; they take place in the High School library.

FinCom Member Comments

Mr. Gaffey informed the Committee that the County is requesting an additional \$15k in funding to support the Center for Living; OB's share of that is \$3,200. This will be discussed further when Year-End transfers are discussed at the next meeting. Ms. Thornton, County Manager, also told Mr. Gaffey that there are substantial credits coming back to the Town at the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Alley stated that they are still working on teacher contract negotiations. They have been working on this since January. In an effort to resolve the issue in the short term, one year contract terms were offered but the Union was not interested. They are currently working with an arbitrator.

Ms. Davisson asked whether future FinCom meetings will continue to be on zoom or whether they will go back to in person. Ms. Potter responded that the Selectboard just had their first in-person meeting and will do so going forward. Whether meetings must be in person will depend on what the State decides. The Town is working on offering a hybrid option so people may tune into the meetings but not participate.

Adjourn: At 6:00pm Mr. Taus made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Alley. Countryman – Aye, Davisson – Aye, Fitzgerald – Aye, McGroarty – Aye, Alley – Aye, Taus – Aye, DeBettencourt – Aye, Gaffey – Aye and signing off as Chair for the last time. **(8 – Aye).**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Juliet Mulinare, Recorder

Minutes Approved 5/19/2022