

Town of Oak Bluffs & Town of Tisbury
Joint Finance and Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 20, 2023, 5:00pm
OB Town Hall Meeting Room/Zoom Conference

OB FinCom Members Present: Chair – Sherry Countryman, Mimi Davisson, Maura McGroarty, Sean DeBettencourt, Reuben Fitzgerald*, Mike Taus*, Bob Malecki (zoom), Ryan Ruley (zoom)

Tisbury FinCom Members Present: Chair – Nancy Gilfoy, Louise Clough, Rachel Orr, Allan Rogers, Dan Seidman (zoom), Ruth Konisberg (zoom)

OB Members Absent: Richard Weiss

Recorder: Juliet Mulinare (OB Recorder), Marni Lipke (Tisbury Recorder)

At **5:07pm** Ms. Countryman called the Oak Bluffs Finance and Advisory Committee meeting to order.

Introductions

Members of both Committees introduced themselves.

Overview of Towns of Oak Bluffs and Tisbury

The Committees discussed the various ways the towns of Oak Bluffs and Tisbury are similar and ways they are different. Similarities included the size of the overall operating budget, the percentage each town contributes to the School, equalized values and assessments. Ways the towns differ include the tax rate, the number of properties in each town, how much ‘other revenue’ is generated, and how much room each town still has to grow (Tisbury close to full build-out, Oak Bluffs is not). Additional considerations include that both towns are currently conducting a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan, and both towns share ownership of the lagoon.

Ms. Countryman stated that the point of this meeting is to start a conversation between the two towns that will hopefully open lines of communication to reduce costs and create synergy and collaboration amongst the down-island towns.

Other differences that were pointed out between the two towns is that Tisbury is mostly an EJ (Environmental Justice) Community, and Tisbury has a higher rate of ESLs in the Schools.

Discussion

The Committee discussed a number of issues relevant to both towns, including:

- **Paid Parking**

Members of the OB FinCom were curious how paid parking has been working in Tisbury. OB has been discussing this recently, but it has been contentious. Tisbury has multiple paid parking lots, as well as a sticker that residents purchase to park on the street overnight. Ms. Gilfoy stated that the town has been having some issues with the vendor who runs the paid parking at the Park & Ride and Tisbury would be interested in looking at other options. Ms. Orr stated that the big difference between paid parking lots in Tisbury and Oak Bluffs is that the lots in Tisbury were developed as paid parking lots, not converted from free parking. Ms. Countryman stated that the goal of paid parking would be to generate revenue; Ms. Gilfoy stated that Tisbury doesn’t make much money on their paid parking. The Committees discussed the use of newer, more efficient technologies available for implementing paid parking. The Committees also discussed the lack of available commercial vehicle parking in both towns.

- PILOTs

The Committees discussed the lack of PILOTs each town receives. OB receives one payment (\$14k) from Elderly Housing, and Tisbury receives about \$13k/year through agreements with some non-profits. The Committees discussed the success Boston has had in implementing PILOTs. Ms. Gilfoy stated that the Tisbury Assessor will be attending a PILOT training in August. The Committees agreed that strong policies are essential for implementing a successful PILOT program.

- Cost of Living Policies

The Committees discussed how each town determines their Cost of Living Adjustments every year. Ms. Countryman stated that OB recently implemented a policy that determines COLAs based on a five year rolling average of CPI inflation to ease significant annual fluctuations. The Committees discussed various options for combining services that could reduce costs for both towns. Areas discussed included Animal Control, Shellfish, Library, Council on Aging, DPW, Schools, Police/Fire.

- Community Impact Fees

The Committees discussed the properties that would qualify for the CIF, if implemented, and the revenue that could be generated. There are complications with local registration and enforcement. Tisbury Committee members stated that Tisbury conducts inspections on all Short Term Rentals (STRs), which makes them easier to keep track of and regulate. The Committees discussed what other communities are doing, including the residential exemption recently implemented in Provincetown.

*Mr. Fitzgerald departs the meeting.

*Mr. Taus joins the meeting.

- Outreach to Taxpayers

The Committees discussed ways to better reach and inform the voters throughout the year, but especially leading up to Annual Town Meeting. The Committees discussed the process and timing for submitting warrant article requests in each town, as well as the role of the Selectboards in approving or denying requests.

- Other

The Committees discussed how to be more proactive and collaborative with each other. They also discussed what “Advisory” means as it pertains to the Financial Advisory Committee’s title. Are the FinCom’s generally meant to advise the Selectboard on important budgetary decisions, or is their responsibility more towards educating the tax payers? The Committees discussed that the Tisbury FinCom votes on non-financial warrant articles; the OB FinCom does not. Ms. Countryman gave both Committees a brief update on the Embarkation Fee legislation. The Committees also agreed to exchange contact lists and to share agendas moving forward.

Adjournment

At 6:44pm a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Taus and seconded by Ms. Davisson. No further discussion, roll call vote:

Malecki – Aye, Ruley – Aye, Davisson – Aye, McGroarty – Aye, Countryman – Aye, Taus – Aye, DeBettencourt – Aye.

Motion passes unanimously (7-0-0).

Meeting Documents on File:

None.

Respectfully Submitted
Juliet Mulinare, Recorder

Minutes Approved: 9/7/2023