

Town of Oak Bluffs Finance and Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 1, 2022, 5:00pm
OB Town Hall Meeting Room/Zoom Conference

Present: Chair – Sherry Countryman, Vice Chair – Richard Weiss, Maura McGroarty, Sean DeBettencourt, Reuben Fitzgerald, Dion Alley, Mike Taus

Absent: Mimi Davisson

Others: Deborah Potter, Jason Balboni

Recorder: Juliet Mulinare

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

Announcements

Ms. Countryman informed the Committee that Ms. Washington, the woman who was interviewed for the open position on the Committee, has declined the offer to join at this time. The other prospective member, Eric Turner, has also declined. If any of the Committee members know of someone who might be interested, please let Ms. Countryman know.

The Town is moving forward with the effort to secure SRF (State Revolving Funds) for the CWMP; they had a meeting with DEP a couple of days ago. Ms. Potter clarified that this ties into the debt exclusion because the Town is not able to spend any of the \$26 million until the exclusion passes at Town Meeting and the Town has to have financing in place for a complete application for SRF funding. The Committee discussed the application process and noted that this funding request is only for phase 1 of the Wastewater project.

Approval of Minutes

The Committee reviewed the minutes from the July 21, 2022 meeting.

Mr. Weiss moved the minutes be approved, seconded by Mr. Taus.

Brief discussion about the role of the Accountant as it pertains to FinCom meetings. She is not required to attend but a couple of Committee members noted that it has been very helpful in the past when the Accountant has attended. No further discussion, roll call vote taken:

Weiss – Aye, McGroarty – Aye, DeBettencourt – Aye, Fitzgerald – Abstain, Alley – Abstain, Taus – Aye, Countryman – Aye.

Motion passes (**5 – Aye, 0 – Nay, 2 - Abstain**).

Scheduling STM; Approval of Warrant

A Special Town Meeting has been scheduled for November 1st, 2022. The FinCom will need to meet to review the articles and make their recommendations. The deadline for Departments to submit article requests is 9/9/22 and Ms. Potter will send them to the FinCom by 9/29/22. The Committee could meet that day but Ms. Potter stated that she might not have a final list of articles at that time, if Departments are late in submitting. The deadline for Finance Committee recommendations is 10/6/22. The Committee can opt to hold two meetings to review the articles, or can meet only on 10/6, which might make for a long meeting. Ms. Potter will not know how many articles there will be for discussion until the submission deadline has passed. The Committee discussed whether two meetings are needed and Ms. Countryman asked members to remain flexible until there is more information available.

Embarkation Fee Sub-Committee Update

Ms. Countryman met with Nancy Gilfoy, Chair of the Tisbury FinCom, who was enthusiastic about further discussion regarding the SSA's Embarkation Fees. Tisbury has not looked at this before and was excited about the prospect of generating more revenue for the Town. Ms. Countryman is encouraged by the potential collaboration. Ms. Gilfoy told Ms. Countryman that she had previously spoken with John Snyder, Finance Director for Tisbury, who told her the Town has been hesitant to attempt to change the fee because it may open the door for the SSA to make other changes to the agreement. The Committee was unsure what agreement Mr. Snyder was referring to.

Other Committee Updates

Mr. Alley updated the Committee on the School Union contracts; three have been ratified: Food Service, Administration and Custodial have all reached an agreement on terms. Mr. Alley explained the provisions of each contract, which varied slightly but were overall fairly consistent amongst all three groups. All contracts eliminated the bottom four steps of the classification plan and added two steps to the top; raises between 2-2.5% will be given each of the three years of the contract term; employees will receive a one-time \$1,000 stipend in the first year (although the Custodians will receive this each of the three years). The Teacher's Union has moved from arbitration to fact-finding and is still in process with no update to report. It was noted that High School budget talks for FY24 will start in September so they can set up their Committees, appoint officers and set meeting schedules for the fall.

Discussion of Topics for Future Meetings

Ms. Countryman asked for the Committee's opinion on whether it was useful to bring other Departments into the FinCom meetings for discussion. Members of the Committee agreed it was helpful and thought it would be useful to invite the Harbormaster, the Affordable Housing Committee, a representative from some of the island's Social Services – perhaps MV Community Services, and the Assessor, to start. The idea would be to invite these representatives to meetings that are not otherwise dedicated to budget discussions. The Committee discussed whether it would be useful to have multiple meetings with the same Department Heads, or whether it would be more productive to learn from them at one meeting and then discuss at another meeting.

Ms. Countryman stated that it would be interesting to see how the budget has changed over the past few years and asked Ms. Potter for information on budget trends as it would be helpful information.

Mr. Weiss stated that he would like to visit with Highway, Harbor, Police, Fire and School as the five biggest Departments in town. The Committee then discussed how best to interface with the Selectboard. Ms. Potter clarified that the Selectboard does not assemble the budget requests, the Town Administrator does and presents to the Selectboard for approval. The Committee felt that more communication would benefit both the FinCom and the Selectboard. Mr. Balboni responded that that is part of the reason why he has been attending FinCom meetings and that he would start that conversation with the rest of the Selectboard as well. Mr. Taus suggested that members of the FinCom should reciprocate and be present at Selectboard meetings to help with efforts to collaborate. Mr. Balboni stated that every Selectboard meeting starts with updates from other Boards and Committees and they would welcome FinCom updates at that time.

Member Comments

The Committee briefly discussed the Streetscape Project. Ms. Potter explained that the first phase of the project, which was completed last spring, expended \$1.63 million of the \$2.73 million that was approved

by the voters for the project. Ms. McGroarty asked to see reports on expenditures, Ms. Potter stated that she had already sent those out but would send them out again.

Ms. McGroarty asked about the impact of the one-time stipends given to Town employees. Ms. Potter responded that the total amount for the stipends came out to approximately \$109,175. It was clarified that the money used to cover these stipends was already available and would not be an additional expense to the tax payers.

Public Comments

None.

Adjournment

At 5:55pm a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. DeBettencourt and seconded by Mr. Taus. No further discussion, approved unanimously (7 – Aye).

Meeting Documents on File

1. STM Calendar November 1 2022 Updated
2. TA-ATA Report 2022.08.23

Respectfully Submitted
Juliet Mulinare, Recorder

Minutes Approved: 9/15/22