

Finance Committee Meeting

May 8th, 2023

Meeting was called to order at 9:00am

Members Present: Howard Goldstein, Jim Newman, Tom Murphy

Also present: Emily Day, Accountant; Jeff Madison, Administrator; Gary Haley, Select Board member; Mark Friedman, School Representative; Sarah Thulin, Conservation Commission Chair

Final Review of Annual Town Meeting Warrant: Jim requested the meeting to discuss the school budget. Tom expressed concern with town residents' confusion surrounding the override question and school budgets.

The committee also discussed the implications of Article Eighteen (convey set-off lot to heirs of Shirley A Francis Jardin submitted as a petition). Tom noted that the property is buildable, and its market value is potentially close to \$1,000,000. Additionally, town counsel has indicated that even if the article passes, it will require an act of the legislature to give the land back. Tom requested that the fin comm take a position on the article. The committee and Sarah Thulin discussed the article at length (complexity, legality, and encumbrances on the property).

Next, the committee discussed the high school budget and recent opposition across the island due to the legal issues surrounding the athletic field project and appeal of Oak Bluffs planning board special permit denial. Aquinnah will be the final vote on whether the budget is approved for FY24 (budget needs 4 towns to vote in favor). The High School committee has directed their attorney to come to a settlement with the appeal and voted to limit the spending on the appeal legal expenses to only the monies available in the FY23 budget (no spending on the issue from FY24 budget). The committee discussed the issue at length including the next steps for the high school should Aquinnah not approve the budget and how other town meetings approached the budget. Jeff noted that Aquinnah's share of the budget is 2.4% and the debate surrounds the issue of the turf and is not of financial consequence at this time.

Tom entertained a motion that the finance committee support approval of the high school budget; Howard seconded. Howard amended the motion to include the non-binding recommendation regarding the legal fees used for the turf field litigation; Jim seconded; **Finance Committee voted 3-0**, motion and amendment passed.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00am