

# **The Dukes County Advisory Board on County Expenditures**

## **Minutes**

**Wednesday, March 13, 2019**

**1:00pm**

**Dukes County Administration Building**

**9 Airport Rd., Edgartown, MA 02539**

**County Advisory Board (CAB):** Arthur (Art) Smadbeck (Edgartown – 38.60%), Skipper Manter (West Tisbury – 12.45%) Bill Rossi (Chilmark – 16.56%), Brian Packish (Oak Bluffs – 14.10%) and Melinda Loberg (Tisbury – 13.52%)

**Dukes County Commissioners (DCC):** Leon Brathwaite, Tristan Israel, Christine Todd

**County Staff Present:** Martina Thornton – County Manager, Paulo DeOliveira- Registrar of Deeds, Ann Metcalf – County Treasurer, Beth Kaeka – Assistant Treasurer, Chuck Cotnoir – DC Emergency Manager

**Others:** Lynn Franker—MVTV, Landry Harlan – MV Gazette

**Art called the meeting to order at 1pm.**

### **Minutes:**

**Melinda/Skipper made a motion to approve the CAB Minutes from December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019 as presented. So voted. Edgartown – yes, West Tisbury – yes, Chilmark – abstains, Tisbury – yes. Motion carries.**

### **Approval of Lease at 29 Breakdown Lane, Tisbury to Island Health Care (IHC) - Vote:**

Art spoke about the lease at 29 Breakdown Lane and how it had been approved by the other deciding boards, thus asking the CAB to approve the lease as well, thus allowing the county to enter into said lease.

**Skipper/Melinda made a motion to approve a lease with IHC for the second floor at 29 Breakdown Lane. So voted. All in favor. Motion carries.**

### **FY2020 County Budget – Public Hearing:**

Martina reviewed the proposed FY2020 budget and the changes that had been since last meeting. She mentioned that she didn't feel comfortable asking the board to approve the airport portion of the budget, as there had been a financial committee meeting held the day before this meeting (March 12<sup>th</sup>) and in that meeting, discrepancies had been discovered between the Treasurer's Office figures and the figures that had been published. She said it wasn't clear at the moment what the final totals would be.

Art asked if that is public input and questions on the proposed county budget. One such resident, Nelson Sigelman, had requested that his name be put into public record for asking if the proposed budget could

be published on the county website, a question which Martina had answered directly before the CAB meeting.

**Art closed the public portion of the meeting at 1:06pm.**

Skipper asked for clarity on how much the raise of assessment of the towns would be, which was verified to be 2.5%. He then went on to discuss his displeasure in the additional percentage raise of 5% for County Programs, stating that: "it's a bad way of raising assessments for the town... and it doesn't even mention that there's a 5% fee, an administrative fee. They're just asking to appropriate the money... He also went on to say that he felt it was redundant to assess the county for county programs.

Bill asked Martina if doing the assessments on these county programs took away valuable time as a County Manager, which may be better spent elsewhere. Tristan brought up the idea of cutting these programs out of the county entirely and have them fund themselves, without taking up precious county time or budget.

Skipper continued his argument that the county was paying too much for these ever-rising "administrative fees" for programs run by the county. Melinda offered a counterpoint to Skipper's argument stating that it is, "widely accepted that an administrative processing fee is typically around 5%," and that the MV Community Services' current 14% administrative fee is essentially unavoidable. There was further discussion regarding these two points. Brian commented later on that the Oak Bluffs selectmen had discussed this same issue and came to the same conclusion as Skipper, but Brian admitted that he supported the hiring of a new staff member to alleviate some of the tension and workload causing the high fees, but asked at what point the fees needed to be capped.

Martina addressed the board's concerns, explaining that a paid intern had been hired to maintain the workload, but that even with the additional support the office was still struggling to keep up with the demand. Brian recommended that the intern's pay be added to the county's main budget instead of being billed in as 'administrative fees.'

Another member of the public joined into the conversation and said that, "The towns originally were very small, but each year the towns get larger and larger and larger, and this has required more and more services, and it's requiring more and more work to be done to administer these programs. So somewhere you've got to stop and say, 'okay, where's the line? We have to increase because there's more work that's coming in and somebody's got to do it! You can't say that people are already here, so they can do that! So as the towns grow more and more, there's more people, more services required – we're a service government. We're going to have to have compensation for this extra work that is happening because of population increases and service increases."

Skipper said that he agreed that the budget should then increase instead of the current system of additional administrative fees. There was further discussion. Melinda said that the townsfolk were the ones who these programs are for and they deserved to know the actual costs of running said programs. It was suggested that the county could simply raise the assessment cost by more than 2.5%. Art brought the discussion to a head stating that he did not believe that raising the county assessment would pass in all seven towns and therefore the board should approve the administrative fees for this year. The board discussed that point shortly before agreeing to move on to the next budgetary concern brought to the table by Skipper.

Skipper felt that “the assessment should be asterisked as part of the vote that will be minus whatever unreserved fund balance is left, minus the 10% that we’re allowed to keep, as offset the assessments, according to statute. He wanted it that to be a part of the motion to certify the budget.” Bill/Martina were concerned that there wouldn’t be enough money to do just that. There was another lengthy discussion.

**Skipper/Bill made a motion to certify the county’s FY2020 budget as proposed, that the assessments for the second billing cycle will be minus the auditor’s certified, unreserved fund balance minus 10% to be kept in the unreserved fund balance for emergency expenses. There was a short discussion. So voted. All in favor. Motion carries.**

#### **FY2019 Budget Amendments – MV Center for Living, VHCAP:**

Martina introduced two small amendments made to the FY2019 budget, both for the MV Center for Living, who had not introduced employee healthcare coverage until the middle of the year, saving some money, but had also not projected enough money for their general liability, insurance, and workers comp. employee taxes.

**Skipper/Melinda made a motion to approve the amendments as written for the MV Center for Living. So voted. All in favor. Motion carries.**

Martina also introduced another amendment, this one for the VHCAP to increase their healthcare line by \$5,000, as they were in the process of hiring a new administrative assistant who would require a different health insurance plan. The money would be moved from the hospital contract.

**Skipper/Bill made a motion to approve the amendments as written for the VHCAP. So voted. All in favor. Motion carries.**

#### **County Manager’s Report:**

- Termination of service contract with MV Center for Living, negotiation of new contracts for FY2020 – Martina briefed the board that two employees of the MV Center for Living had left and so the current contract had to be terminated in order for a more accurate contract to be formed and agreed upon. She asked the board if they’d accept a generalized umbrella contract from the county for the towns for health and human service provisions, to alleviate the hassle of having a separate contract for each service provider in each town. There was a short clarification discussion.
- FY2018 county audit – The full audit had not been released yet, so Martina passed out the three budgetary preview pages she had received from the auditors. The board expressed annoyance that the auditors had taken so long to produce a report, and they asked to receive a copy of the full report as soon as it was surrendered to the county and Martina. She agreed.
- FY2020 & FY2021 DOR determined EQV and county tax – Martina clarified the figures for the board. She was also happy to announce that the town’s surplus checks were ready to be mailed out.
- Martina also mentioned that the county would be receiving a check for \$34,951.49 from the Cape Cod Municipal Health Group as a reimbursement for health and human

services issued in the county. It was her hope that the board would amend the FY2019 budget to include this check as revenue and add those funds to the OPEB trust. There was a brief discussion. **Skipper/Melinda made a motion to amend the FY2019 budget to include a contribution to the OPEB trust fund that will be offset by the check coming from the Cape Cod Municipal Health Group. So voted. All in favor. Motion carries.**

- Legislation update – Martina explained a new bill that had been filed by representatives in neighboring counties regarding excise taxes and fees. The bill would change the formula in which these taxes would be distributed to the county and state, thus changing all revenue that would be set aside as recording fees into revenue for the county itself. This change would add a projected \$350,000 in net revenue to the county. Paulo explained more in depth where the funds could actually be applied and the potential complications.

**Melinda/Bill moved to adjourn the meeting. So voted. All in favor. Motion carries.**

**CAB meeting was adjourned at 2:03pm.**

Respectfully Submitted by:

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T. GEORGE DAVIS, Clerk of Courts

**Documents presented at the meeting and part of the Official Records:**

- Agenda
- CAB Minutes from April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019
- FY 2019 Amended Budget & Related Figures