

**Finance Advisory Committee**  
**October 11, 2023**  
**4:00 pm**

A meeting of the Committee was held on the above date and time via the Zoom Application. Members present were: Leslie Baynes, Kelly McCracken, Paul Pertile, John O'Hara, Julia Tarka, Nedine Cunningham and Donna Lowell-Bettencourt.

Ms. Lowell Bettencourt opened the meeting with the first agenda item of the Draft Ambulance Billing and Collection Policy. Mr. Hagerty sent members a template from Oak Bluffs. He mentioned this draft policy coincides with the increased rates and using a codified policy which clearly spells out the parameters of ambulance billing and collection. Mr. Baynes supported it stating we are creating the template from a town that is using it. Chief Alex Schaeffer supports it. It's a framework to use as we have never had it before. Mr. Baynes asked if he was comfortable with the collections part of it. Chief Schaeffer supports it. Mr. Pertile asked if the department has ever used a collection agency. Mr. Schaeffer said no. Mr. Baynes suggested that we let the taxpayers know it will not go to a collection agency. Ms. Tarka asked Mr. Hagerty about the responsibilities of the Town Accountant and Town Administrator compared to Oak Bluffs. Mr. Hagerty said with regards to the financial reconciliation, it will be done by the Town Accountant, and hardship decisions will be decided by the Town Administrator along with the Fire Chief. Mr. Hagerty feels the approval of the hardships do not need to be reviewed by the Selectboard. Mr. Baynes made a move to accept it. Julia seconded it.

Ms. McCracken asked if the fees are just for the ambulance, or is there any other party involved as to whether or not the insurance will pay. Chief Schaeffer said that there are standard operating procedures and guidelines from the State. The fees are not directed at all by any outside party including the hospital. Ms. Lowell Bettencourt asked if there were any other comments. The previous motion was voted. All in favor – Unanimous.

Mr. Hagerty then moved on to the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Presentation Recap. Mr. Hagerty said that this recent meeting is one of 4 or 5 future meetings led by Tighe and Bond. He summarized that there are high risk issues that need to be addressed to maintain the plant. This is estimated to cost 10 – 12 million dollars. Tighe and Bond could not provide an estimate in terms of the overall costs of the plan. James asked Tighe and Bond, what have commensurate towns paid for this type of endeavor. Bill Burke referenced the Orleans plant (capacity of 250,000 gallons compared to Edgartown which is 750,000 gallon capacity). Orleans cost was \$70 million. James asked for comments from Mr. O'Hara (he attended the meeting). He thought it was a very good presentation. He was heartened by the fact that we are still running under our capacity, and was shocked that most of our equipment is from 1994. He mentioned that Oak Bluffs is doing a similar thing for \$100 million, not all at once. He urged the FAC members to attend future meetings. Mr. Pertile asked if we knew how many people are not tied in to Town sewer now and would they be forced to hook up. There was discussion about Tighe and Bond presentation showing build out estimates for the future and the capacity for the plant and how this affects residents who will need to tie in, those that have working private systems and the financial burden on every taxpayer. For example, the cost to tie in, betterments and possible options for grants. The committee members all recognized the burden of the financial implications for the town and the taxpayers. Mr. Baynes felt that the state will force Edgartown to have all residents, especially in areas like Ocean Heights to connect to the Town sewer. It is the only option to save our ponds.

Ms. Lowell-Bettencourt asked if they shared anything about money available to residents. Mr. Baynes said according to the written presentation, it was not discussed at the meeting. Mr. O'Hara mentioned the

attention to the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday and over capacity, which is partly due to all the people visiting for the week and increasing the use. He asked if we could look at the option of a peak load surcharge or levy

Mrs. Tarka asked if there was any conversation by FAC to increase short term rental tax and put money aside for these capital improvements. She said there are towns on the Cape doing it. Mr. Hagerly said we are taking the short term revenue money and putting it in a capital stabilization fund.. He said to put it into perpetuity would need a town meeting vote. It is worthy of conversation, because if money is used for affordable housing, then we also need to put in money for sewer.

Mr. Baynes wanted to know more about 7 figures being put aside for major projects. We have the high school, wastewater, possibly a senior center and work on our local school. Should the amount being set aside for perpetuity be increased? We are going to have to pay 40% of the high school. With no guarantee of pupil costs.

Mr Pertile asked when is the next meeting for Wastewater. James said end of October early November. James will notify them of the next meeting date.

Mr. O'Hara said Mr. Smadbeck was also at the Tighe & Bond meeting. Art has a lot of history. Art mentioned when we financed the last big number, the bank ended up forgiving part of the loan. He suggested we should be thinking hard about where this money comes from in addition to the tax payers. The discussion ended at this point.

The next agenda item -Fee increase public hearing 10/23/23. James formatted all the fee increases the same. Some minor changes from internal discussions with department heads (those changes are in red). The fees will take affect shortly after that hearing. Building rates for ambulance will increase to Tri-Town. Building inspector will increase to Nantucket. ZBA will nearly double similar to West Tisbury. Selectboard rates went to the highest similar town. Shellfish was compared to other towns and modified. Senior and residents not changed. Family non-residents, 1 week permits and non-resident seniors were increased. Mr. Baynes commented that we have the best shellfishing on the island. When any non-resident people come into our town, they are taking from our commercial shellfisherman. He enforced we are regionally contributing 40% to every project. We need to keep our rates high enough to continue to do this. Mr. Baynes felt that these are fair. We are contributing an enormous amount to the island. Donna asked if they needed to vote. James said no, the Selectboard is the voting authority.

Ms. Lowell Bettencourt said the committee members were in consensus of the changes. If anyone has any comments, speak up now. Mrs. Tarka mentioned earlier and it was agreed that for some areas we would be fine if they were even a little higher, for example ZBA. The recommendation is that we have consensus and support the increases.

#### Minutes

Ms. Tarka made a motion to approve the minutes from 9/20/23. Mr. O'Hara seconded. Ms. Scott - abstention, all the rest Aye's. Mr. Baynes said he appreciated James work. It is a lot

Next meeting date is November 30 at 5:00 p.m. for the budget brief, pre- budget kick off meeting by zoom or in person.

At 4:49, Ms. Tarka moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. McCracken seconded. Unanimous.

Donna Lowell-Bettencourt  
Leslie Baynes  
Robert Coad

Nedine Cunningham  
Paul Pertile  
Kelly McCracken  
Julia Tarka  
John O'Hara (Alternate)

Respectfully submitted,

James Hagerty Town Administrator

Documents:

- Collection Policy
- Rate spreadsheet