

FINANCIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD
FEBRUARY 19, 2014 – 4 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT: DONNA LOWELL-BETTENCOURT, CHAIR; LES BAYNES, CO-CHAIR; ALEX RENTUMIS; MORT FEARY JR.; BOB CLAY; STEVE JORDAN.

OTHERS PRESENT: CHRISTINA BROWN, JAMES JOYCE, MADELINE FISHER, MVC REPRESENTATIVES; FRED HANCOCK, BILL VENO, MVC MEMBERS; PAMELA DOLBY, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER 4 PM. APPROVE MINUTES FOR NOVEMBER 20, 2013; DECEMBER 5, 2013; DECEMBER 11, 2013; JANUARY 6, 2014; JANUARY 8, 2014 AND JANUARY 15, 2014 – A MOTION WAS MADE, SECONDED AND VOTED TO APPROVE. UNANIMOUS.

A LETTER WAS RECEIVED FROM HIGHWAY SUPERINTENDENT, STUART FULLER, TO ALLOW HIM TO OVERSPEND THE SNOW REMOVAL BUDGET AS OUTLINED IN CHAP. 44, SECTION 31D. A MOTION WAS MADE, SECONDED AND VOTED TO APPROVE. UNANIMOUS.

THE MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION MEMBERS AND REPRESENTATIVES WERE PRESENT TO DISCUSS THE FY15 BUDGET REQUESTS. CHRISTINA HANDED OUT A PACKET OF INFORMATION (ATTACHED TO MINUTES). THERE WAS A DISCUSSION OF HOW THE BUDGET IS FORMULATED AND WHAT STEPS ARE TAKEN TO REDUCE SPENDING. EDGARTOWN'S SHARE IS 33% OF THE EQUALIZED VALUATION OF THE TOWN, MUCH HIGHER THAN ANY OF THE OTHER TOWN'S ON THE ISLAND. AS THE ENABLING LEGISLATION IS WRITTEN, NO CHANGES CAN BE MADE TO THE FORMULA WITHOUT STATE LEGISLATIVE INPUT. THE FAC FEELS THAT THE CHECKS AND BALANCES DON'T WORK WELL FOR EDGARTOWN. THEY HAVE NO SAY IN WHAT PROJECTS ARE APPROVED, NO INPUT INTO STAFFING LEVELS AND WHAT, IF ANYTHING, CAN BE DONE TO REDUCE THE BUDGET.

A SUGGESTION WAS RAISED THAT THE MVC SHOULD LOOK INTO THE IDEA THAT NOT ALL POSITIONS SHOULD BE FULL-TIME; THAT SOME COULD BE REDUCED TO PART-TIME AS THIS IS REALLY THE ONLY PLACE CUTS CAN BE MADE. IT WAS NOTED THAT THIS YEAR'S BUDGET HAS A ONE-TIME RESERVE FUND REFUND FOR THAT LINE ITEM BECAUSE OF LEGAL BILLS PAID. HOWEVER, IT WAS NOTED THAT THIS COULD HAPPEN AT ANY TIME A LARGE CASE DECISION IS CHALLENGED. THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR NOTED THAT THE BUDGET HAS INCREASED IN DOUBLE DIGITS FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS AND IT COULD REACH \$500,000.FOR EDGARTOWN'S SHARE IN TWO YEARS.

CHRISTINA VOLUNTEERED TO ORGANIZE A WORKING GROUP TO LOOK INTO SOME OF THE SUGGESTIONS RAISED AND COME UP WITH IDEAS PRIOR TO NEXT YEAR'S BUDGET MEETINGS. THE MEMBERS PRESENT FELT THAT THE MVC IS NEEDED AND IS NOT REDUNDANT; HOWEVER, MORE OPEN DIALOG IS THE KEY TO FUTURE COOPERATION. A QUESTION WAS RAISED THAT THE TOWN, FOR THE AMOUNT OF MONEY IT PAYS THE MVC, COULD FUND A DEPARTMENT TO DO THE SAME WORK. HOWEVER, FRED HANCOCK NOTED THAT THE TOWN'S ARE NOT GIVEN THE ZONING OVERRIDES THAT THE COMMISSION IS GIVEN BY STATE LEGISLATION. THEY ARE THE REGIONAL ZONING AND PLANNING BOARD ON THE ISLAND. IT WAS REQUESTED THAT A LIST BE PREPARED OF ONLY WHAT THE COMMISSION CAN DO AND WHAT TOWN'S CANNOT DO. ALL SIX TOWNS MUST BE IN AGREEMENT WITH ANY CHANGES, OR WE ARE JUST SPINNING OUR WHEELS. THE COMMISSION MUST BEGIN TO LOOK AT MAKING CUTS THEMSELVES AND BE WILLING TO WORK WITH THE TOWNS PRIOR TO PREPARING NEXT YEAR'S BUDGETS.

THE FAC FELT THAT THE NEXT STEPS SHOULD BE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT COST CUTTING, PROJECTS THAT ARE UP FOR APPROVAL; STAFF CUTS AND KEEPING THE FAC UP TO DATE. THEY ARE HAPPY TO MEET AS MANY TIMES AS NEEDED. EDGARTOWN IS LOOKING FOR A SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE TO HELP REDUCE THEIR ASSESSMENT.

NEXT ON THE AGENDA WAS THE WARRANT INTRODUCTION LETTER. A HANDOUT WAS GIVEN THE MEMBERS WITH SOME SUGGESTIONS TO INCLUDE FOR THIS YEAR. MANY OF THE MEMBERS FELT IT WAS TOO STRONG AND DID NOT MEET THE CRITERIA THAT NEEDS TO BE IN THE WARRANT BOOK. IT WAS DECIDED TO MEET AGAIN TO COME UP WITH THE FIGURES AND WORDING NEEDED. FINAL VERSION IS DUE BEFORE MARCH 2ND.

PAM NOTED THAT THE SPECIAL TOWN MEETING WARRANT FOR APRIL'S MEETING WILL NEED TO HAVE THE FAC APPROVAL. SHE SAID ARTICLES ARE DUE IN 2/25 AT NOON AND SHE CAN HAVE THE WARRANT READY TO VOTE THAT AFTERNOON. IT WAS DECIDED TO HOLD A SPECIAL MEETING ON FEBRUARY 25, 2014 AT 4 PM FOR THE APPROVAL MEETING. TWO MEMBERS ARE NOT ABLE TO ATTEND. WE WILL NEED A QUORUM FOR THE FINAL VOTE. NOTICES WILL BE SENT TO THE OTHER MEMBERS.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
GAIL AVAKIAN, ASSISTANT

DRAFT