Martha’s Vineyard Commission
Minutes for the Regular Meeting of
September 20, 2001

The Martha’s Vineyard Commission (the MVC or the Commission) held its Regular Meeting on Thursday, September 20, 2001, at 7:30 p.m. in the first floor conference room at the Commission Offices in the Olde Stone Building, 33 New York Avenue, Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts.

At 7:41 p.m., a quorum being present, James Vercruysse – a Commission member at large from Aquinnah as well as the Chairman of the Commission – called the Regular Meeting to order. [Commission members present at the gavel were: J. Athearn; C. Brown; D. Flynn; J. Greene; T. Israel; C.M. Oglesby; M. Ottens-Sargent; K. Rusczyk; L. Sibley; R. Toole; J. Vercruysse; K. Warner; A. Woodruff; and R. Zeltzer. Mr. Best arrived at the Meeting at 7:50 p.m., and Ms. Cini took her seat at 8:11 p.m.]

Discussion: Regional Repercussions of Steamship Authority Policy Decisions.

The first agenda item was a discussion of the regional repercussions of Steamship Authority policy decisions. [See the Full Commission Meeting File of September 20, 2001 (the meeting file) for a copy of the Agenda.] Chairman Vercruysse noted that Joseph Eldredge of West Tisbury had asked for a few minutes before the Commission to offer some observations on the direction he believed the Authority should be taking. Mr. Eldredge referred the Commission members to a handout he had distributed containing a copy of his op-ed piece in the September 11 edition of the Vineyard Gazette, as well as an essay entitled “The Environmental Impact Process as a Planning Tool.” [See the meeting file for a copy.]

Mr. Eldredge explained that he had had a lot of experience with the Environmental Impact Analysis process, particularly with the Park Plaza development in Boston’s Back Bay, where the entire community had been brought in on the process to identify all the negative impacts and to cut the job down to the size it needed to be. “And it ended up being much better than it ever would have been,” he said. Since that time, continued Mr. Eldredge, the Massachusetts Environmental Protection Agency (MEPA) had watered down the Environment Impact Analysis requirements, exempting, for instance, water-dependent activities from environmental analysis.
Daniel Flynn, the County Commission representative, stopped Mr. Eldredge. “This is on the agenda as a discussion session and not as a Public Hearing,” he observed, “and now we’re hearing from the public.” Chairman Vercruysse explained that Mr. Eldredge had requested “a minute or two of time.” Mr. Flynn argued that he already had an issue with the discussion itself, “but to be hearing from the public on a matter that was put on the agenda [as a discussion] does not give the entire public an opportunity to come in here and discuss this issue.”

Tisbury Selectmen’s Appointee Tristan Israel remarked that Mr. Flynn should have raised this point before Mr. Eldredge had begun to speak. “What you did was, you waited to hear what the message was, and then you objected,” said Mr. Israel. “I think that at this point it would be very rude not to let Mr. Eldredge finish what he has to say.”

Mr. Eldredge proceeded. “I’m asking this Commission to think it has control over the Steamship Authority,” he went on. “This is the planning entity for the Island. It has certain skills. It has the ability to engage additional skills, to examine all of the environmental impacts of the high-speed [ferry] process. I am not trying to stop the idea of high-speed ferry service. But if it turns out that that concept and the realities of that would make the safeguards and permitting and everything else, would make it not economical, we would not have spent a year’s worth of money ahead of time.”

Mr. Eldredge continued for some minutes until the Chairman asked him to conclude. “That’s all,” responded Mr. Eldredge. Chairman Vercruysse then described how in the last All Island Selectmen’s Association meeting, the members had voted to ask the Board of Governors to postpone any decision on fast-ferry service out of the New Bedford.

Mr. Flynn again objected, this time pointing out that he did not see anything in the Commission’s legislation that gave it the authority to discuss Steamship Authority policy with the intention of taking a vote on it. “So I take exception,” he declared. Linda Sibley, a Commission member at large from West Tisbury, commented, “I saw this as a process of educating ourselves ... I’m not looking for this body to take a position on a Steamship Authority decision.” [Mr. Best arrived at this point, 7:50 p.m.]

Ms. Sibley continued that she had not expected J.B. Riggs Parker, the Vineyard’s Board of Governors representative, to be present that evening (he was). What she had imagined, she said, was that the discussion would raise a number of questions which could then be posed to Mr. Parker at a later time.

Mr. Flynn remarked that all the Commission members were on a learning curve. However, the prospects of fast-ferry service out of New Bedford had been an issue on the table for more than six months, he said, and anyone who had wanted to get educated could have attended one of the many meetings about SSA issues that had taken place during that period.
Robert Zeltzer, a Commission member at large from Chilmark, noted that he had a problem with both sides of the discussion. No one could argue, he said, that one of the major impacts to this region was Steamship Authority policy. And he could not see the harm, he went on, in the Board of Governors getting another perspective from the MVC. In addition, the discussion itself could provide clarity for the whole community, although Mr. Zeltzer did object to any sort of back-and-forth discussion between the Commission and members of the public.

Chairman Vercruysse pointed out that they were not there to make any decisions but to reach conclusions and perhaps come up with recommendations. Mr. Israel remarked that although there had been numerous public meetings about Steamship Authority policy, he did not see the flexibility and responsiveness to the community’s viewpoints that he thought would be among the major purposes of such meetings. And although he had learned a lot from the discussions, “to me, on the big issues, it seems to be – and I hope I’m proved wrong – a dog and pony show. You know, okay, we’re going to have the public hearings, we’re going to listen to people, but we’re going to barrel right ahead and do what we’re going to do.”

Mr. Israel related that he had received the impression that more townspeople than not were against the idea of a fast ferry out of New Bedford. In addition, he said, his own community had particular concerns, and things had in fact happened in Vineyard Haven Harbor over which the Town felt it had had no control. Although the Authority had responded on some of the smaller issues, he continued, decisions had been made – for instance, the decision to move the Schamonchi to Oak Bluffs – that had had major economic impacts on Tisbury.

Mr. Israel also expressed his concern that six months earlier “people here were scared to death of New Bedford, and [said] we’ve got to have Island unity, New Bedford was the devil ... and now all of a sudden these same people are holding hands with New Bedford, and Nantucket is being demonized.” He also wondered about the current economic picture, even before the events of September 11. “What’s the rush?” he asked.

Christina Brown, a Commission member at large from Edgartown, offered the opinion that a consideration of the question of whether the MVC supported the fast ferry proposal or not was not appropriate at this time. “But I think as a planning agency, there are things we need to pay attention to that we may not have been as much as we should have,” she observed. She then referred the members to the undated Staff Report regarding the Highways and Harbors District that had been distributed earlier. [See the meeting file for a copy.]

Ms. Brown read aloud the penultimate paragraph of said Staff Report:

“Time has come to establish a true working partnership with the SSA to ensure that planning objectives for the Island can be met. Regional issues that affect the Island need to have Island participation and input (similar to
the Cape Cod Transit Task Force...). Unless the Commission is aware of and understands and participates in these planning efforts, there are liable to be decisions made that the Island may not feel are in its best interests.”

“I heartily agree with that and wish I had had the eloquence to say it that way,” remarked Ms. Brown. “I believe that the Steamship and the decisions the Steamship makes have an effect on the Island, on the issues that we deal with – traffic, the economy, the infrastructure of the Island itself ... I hope the Commission, both the members and the Staff, do more planning and, most importantly, ask the Steamship what we can do as a planning agency to work with them.”

Ms. Sibley offered the opinion that if the Authority was going to run a fast-ferry pilot program, she would like to see it structured in such a way that it would actually answer some questions. “To date, it sounds like you’re just going to do it and see what happens,” she said. From studying the document entitled Information Packet For Martha’s Vineyard that the Steamship had compiled, it seemed to her as though the only way the fast ferry plan was going to work was if more foot passengers came to the Island. [See the meeting file for a copy of the Information Packet.]

J.B. Riggs Parker, the Martha’s Vineyard representative to the Steamship Authority Board of Governors, began his remarks by noting that Ms. Brown had made some “very good points. I think that the Steamship has asked, and will continue to ask, your help in trying to organize the Island’s attitude towards the Steamship and what it should do.” Mr. Parker mentioned two of the pressing problems that the Authority needed help with: the fuel that was currently being carried on the ferries, occupying a great deal of space and making hazardous trips which passengers could not be on; and the possibility that the Steamship Authority might have to carry additional fuel tanks because of difficulties Ralph Packer was having with the lease to his ramp operation in New Bedford.

“I think the Steamship should work towards a program to get the fuel off the boats,” Mr. Parker declared, “and I believe it can be done. And I believe this group can be very instrumental in helping to organize that and helping to oversee it so that it is done in such a way to respect the private interests involved, to respect the public need for fuel at a reasonable price under the circumstances, and to make sure that the process is subject to review by the public. And I think that’s very important.”

Mr. Parker then said that he had spoken to State Representative Eric Turkington earlier in the day, “and he authorized me to say that he agrees with that, even though he has in the past been part of the group that suggested that ... fuel go on the boats to eliminate the anticompetitive situation which we believed to exist. As Eric says, ‘We tried that, it didn’t work.’ And now we have to do something different.” He urged the Commission to study this issue and to make recommendations to the Authority.
Turning to Ms. Sibley’s second comment about the plan requiring additional passengers in order to make the high-speed service out of the New Bedford feasible, Mr. Parker stated, “There is no push to make high speed happen. It’s an exploratory process. It’s not over yet. We haven’t even got a charter boat we can put on the route.” He added that he believed that if a boat was available, it should be tried on a trial basis because it had the potential to alleviate a lot of car problems on the Island if people could be persuaded to leave their cars in New Bedford. “Will it bring extra passengers? There is no evidence to suggest it will,” he said. “In fact, the evidence that’s available from Nantucket is that it won’t.”

“In the last four years,” Mr. Parker continued, “the total passengers carried by the Steamship Authority and the Hy-Line in competition with the Steamship Authority has gone down each year. In that same period of time, the proportion of those passengers who went on high-speed – both Hy-Line and the Steamship – rather than the traditional method in the old boats has risen from roughly 8 percent to 34 percent and is rising still this year.”

Chilmark Selectmen’s Appointee Jane A. Greene put on the table the following: that the easy and obvious answer to the problem of fuel transport would be a small tanker that came in and delivered to Ralph Packer’s tanks. “I think we should start talking, and bring Ralph [Packer] into the circle,” she said. She then asked Mr. Parker to come sit up front with the Commission members. Mr. Parker remained in the audience.

Mr. Zeltzer remarked that he agreed with Ms. Sibley regarding the need to set the proper parameters for any study undertaken on the fast ferry service. The Nantucket route, he said, was significantly longer than the one from Woods Hole to the Vineyard. “Nantucket is a poor use of a statistic,” he noted. Mr. Parker pointed out that the Nantucket-Hyannis route was almost exactly the same length as the New Bedford-Martha’s Vineyard run.

Mr. Parker mentioned as well the number of miles of driving that would be saved – plus the fact that no bridges had to be crossed – by someone coming by car from Boston or the western suburbs. “This is a prospect for an alternative service which for most of our ridership would be faster and more convenient and would encourage the leaving of cars behind,” he said, “and that’s a very important thing.” Ms. Cini arrived at this point, 8:11 p.m. Another thing to consider, Mr. Parker concluded, is that Cape communities had no interest having any more Steamship Authority parking lots.

Ms. Sibley remarked that her study of the Information Packet indicated that there would, in fact, be an increase in the number of foot passengers if a New Bedford fast ferry run was undertaken. “The argument is, they would be people who used to be one-to-four-day car drivers,” she said, “so maybe you don’t see that as a total increase.”

Ms. Sibley inquired if there was a strategy for measuring if people were actually no longer bringing their cars for one to four days but were coming as foot passengers. And
since the car reservations opened up by the decrease in the numbers of one-to-four-day passengers were going to provide greater accessibility for Vineyarders, she wanted to know what the strategy was for controlling the newly available reservations so that they went to Vineyarders and not to new one-to-four-day visitors.

Finally, Ms. Sibley said, the Information Packet seemed to indicate that in order for the New Bedford fast ferry run to work, there would have to be this shift from one-to-four-day visitors to fast-ferry foot passengers. “How will you determine in advance what you would call a failure?” she wondered.

Mr. Parker answered that the push for such a shift would be accomplished by advertising, by public information on the Steamship Authority Website and by information distributed on the boats. It would also help the process, he said, if the Martha’s Vineyard Commission were to take the position that the Steamship Authority should try to discourage one-to-four-day visitors. “There are more draconian strategies that could be applied,” he noted, “but I’m not suggesting that they should be.”

Regarding Ms. Sibley’s question about the measurement of success or failure, Mr. Parker pointed out that the Authority had extensive measurement capabilities. “The fact that we now know that 37 percent of our traffic from Woods Hole is one to four days is a result of our measuring capabilities,” he said. As far as making the freed-up space available to Island riders, he went on, the Authority would simply increase the proportion of the boat that was dedicated to Preferred Space.

Mr. Parker addressed Ms. Sibley’s final question – whether the success of the New Bedford fast ferry run depended upon a shift in the type of passengers. “Yes, it does,” he declared. “If we do not achieve a shift, such as is occurring, has occurred for years on the Nantucket route, we would know that. We certainly wouldn’t go into it on a long-term basis. We would have to try it, I think, a minimum of a year or two.”

West Tisbury Selectmen’s Appointee Kate Warner pointed out that many of the one-to-four-day passengers were not tourists but people like her mother who were coming to the Island for the weekend. If she came as a foot passenger from New Bedford, said Ms. Warner, her mother would have to have a car on the Vineyard, since she was too elderly to rely on public transportation, plus she lived all the way down a dirt road.

That led to the question of the number of cars on the Vineyard, Ms. Warner continued. As Selectman Fred Morgan was recorded as saying at an All Island Selectmen’s Association meeting, she noted, many summer residents had three or four cars. “I know a number of summer residents for which this is true,” she said, “and that’s our end of the stick, and it’s a pretty bad end.” Ms. Warner added that she liked “the sound of the plan,” the concept of having fewer cars coming over on the ferries. “But I’m worried about our end of it,” she remarked. “I think the Commission really has to work hard on our end of it.” “I would agree with that,” responded Mr. Parker.
The discussion turned to the point about fuel delivery made earlier by Ms. Greene. “The bottom line is,” said Ms. Greene, “that every port in this country has a tanker come in and off-load fuel, and then it’s distributed by truck to the gas stations … There’s no reason a small tanker can’t stop here, off-load and get on. It takes away all the hazard of the boats with one load a week, probably, in the summertime, maximum, and maybe once a month in the wintertime. The chance of explosion is reduced dramatically. And there’s no reason we can’t be doing that, especially if Ralph [Packer] gets kicked out of New Bedford.”

Oak Bluffs Selectmen’s Appointee Kenneth N. Rusczyk related that he had seen a tanker off-loading in Nantucket. “I think we should explore those areas,” he agreed.

Mr. Israel expressed concern that when the Schamoni had been moved to Oak Bluffs, “some sort of deal” had been struck. The same appeared to be true in Ralph Packer’s New Bedford ramp situation. “The point of the story is, the community is the last to know,” he said. If some sort of arrangement was made to have a tanker off-load at the Packer tanks, said Mr. Israel, there had to be a process whereby the people of the Town of Tisbury were included in the decision-making.

Ms. Greene noted that first of all the Steamship Authority would not be handling the fuel deliveries; a private company would. In addition, she said, “the EPA, the Coast Guard and everybody else have such strict regulations that, yes, Tisbury can put in its two cents. But I think that you’re going to find that you’re pretty well covered.” Mr. Israel reiterated his concern that the Town of Tisbury needed to be respected.

Ms. Warner observed that this issue would arise with a number of topics, not just fuel delivery. She mentioned the subject of trash and whether or not an Island composting facility would be workable – this was another issue that the Commission and the Towns needed to be involved in. “I don’t think your [Mr. Israel’s] concerns go unheard,” she said. “I think they’re going to be magnified by a number of topics we need to address.”

Mr. Flynn suggested that before the dialogue went too far, the Commission should bring in the private people who handled fuel on the Island to get a feel of the history of fuel delivery to the Vineyard.

Mr. Israel wondered what the status of the Vineyard’s proposed composting facility was. Commission Executive Director Charles W. Clifford responded that he had asked Transfer Station Manager Charles Noonan a number of times to come before the Commission with an update but that Mr. Noonan had never arranged for that. Ms. Warner volunteered to look into this matter.

Mr. Flynn had a series of questions for Mr. Parker: what was the SSA’s bond limit; how close to that ceiling were they currently; how much of that bond capacity was used for the Hyannis terminal, the Nantucket terminal and the Flying Cloud; what revenue was used
by the Steamship Authority to service that debt; and were the revenues from the
Nantucket runs currently adequate to service that debt.

Mr. Parker answered that the bonding limit was currently $50 million and the SSA was
now at “about $46 million and change.” The Flying Cloud cost $8 million, and $2
million of that came from a Federal high-speed ferry grant, he went on; the balance came
out of the capital funds. “The Hyannis terminal and the Nantucket terminal I would
actually have to check,” he said, “because some of the bonding for that has been
refinanced, and whether it can be attributed directly to that now, I can’t really give you
that number. But I’d be happy to look into it.”

Mr. Parker consulted an annual report, then continued: “The 95 Series A Steamship
Bonds, which amounted to eight million eight hundred thousand, were used to re-fund on
anticipation notes, and the remainder of the funds were deposited in capital improvement
funds for use in funding the reconstruction of the Hyannis terminal ... I can’t tell you
exactly what that number is.”

Continuing his explanation, Mr. Parker said, “The 99 Series A Steamship Bonds, which
were fifteen million eight hundred thousand, were used to re-fund five thousand in bond
anticipation notes, which were used to borrow money, and it was re-funded by these
bonds. The remainder of the funds were deposited in the capital improvement fund,
producing funding for construction of the high-speed passenger ferry.”

“So, the answer is,” said Mr. Parker, “it’s not clear to me exactly what’s attributable to
Nantucket.” He continued: “The next question that you have, Art Flathers could
probably tell you that ... I’ll have it next week. As to cost centers, we do have cost
centers, and we separate our revenues and cost support into routes as well. The books are
maintained – I’m not an accountant, so I can’t tell you exactly how the books are
maintained – but [Treasurer and Acting General Manager] Wayne [Lamson] is able to
draw from them these route allocations, and they do exist.”

As to whether or not the Nantucket route revenue was sufficient to cover its current debt
service, Mr. Parker emphasized, “It was last year. I do not know how it’s doing this year,
specifically with respect to the debt service. But in prior years it clearly was not. The
Vineyard surpluses funded deficits on the Nantucket line. Now, how much of that was
attributable to capital and how much of it was attributable to operating losses I cannot tell
you off the top of my head.

Mr Parker continued: “But those deficits on the Nantucket run amounted to about seven
million dollars the last 10 years, and Wayne has now done a study that goes back farther
than that, and it’s more than seven million if you put it all together on a 20-year basis.”

Mr. Parker explained that there was a policy – sought and obtained by former Vineyard
Board of Governors representative Ronald Rappaport – to have that deficit made
available to the Vineyard for its capital needs over a period of years. “That policy is still
in effect,” he said. “It hasn’t been changed, but it has not currently been followed in recent rate increases. It is my proposal to follow that policy.”

Mr. Flynn wondered if the Authority would go back 20 years and try to recover the imbalance from that entire period. “Well, the policy only applies to 10 years,” replied Mr. Parker, “and I’m against changing those policies without good reason.” He then spoke of the many capital projects, including the renovation of the Oak Bluffs terminal, that were in need of funding. “We’ve been living – as people do – from paycheck to paycheck and not putting anything aside,” he added, “and I don’t think that can continue.”

Mr. Zeltzer again questioned the suitability of using the Hyannis-Nantucket high-speed ferry route as a valid predictor of the success of a New Bedford-Martha’s Vineyard high-speed ferry route. He pointed out that proximity to population centers created traffic and flow and that somebody who wanted to go to Nantucket for a short time had to deal with the traffic over the bridges and down to Hyannis.

New Bedford, on the other hand, was very close to major highways and major population centers, Mr. Zeltzer went on. “I see that as generating an enormous amount of new traffic,” he said, also noting that to make leaving one’s car in New Bedford attractive, the cost of parking had to be less than the cost of bringing over the car.

“I worry, and we have to worry as a regional body, [that] this is going to bring bodies over here,” declared Mr. Zeltzer, “and whether they leave their cars behind or not, if we see the number of buses going down Beach Road, if we see the number of buses going along between Oak Bluffs and Edgartown, if you see the buses going into West Tisbury – I mean, how much more can this rural infrastructure that we have here take?”

“That’s a reasonable position for you to take,” responded Mr. Parker, “but I don’t think you have any evidence for it.” Mr. Zeltzer countered that the evidence was that proximity to population centers would produce more potential users of the high-speed service out of New Bedford.

“We will never know until we try it,” said Mr. Parker, who continued, “if we don’t try it, it will be tried by somebody else whom you cannot control, and that is something that has to be considered because if that happens, the revenue that will be lost to the Steamship Authority is the revenue that pays for winter service and all of the subsidies which we give…”

Mr. Zeltzer wanted to know if the high-speed ferry would be used only during the summer. “That’s the proposal,” answered Mr. Parker. Mr. Israel expressed concern about what a fast ferry, with its jetting and scouring, would do to the Vineyard Haven Harbor. There were faster, mid-speed boats, he said, and he wondered why the Steamship would use a maximum-speed vessel for the New Bedford run.
Mr. Parker explained that although a lesser-speed boat was a viable consideration, it would not produce the same number of trips per day and so might not achieve the same shift of passengers and might not make the same amount of space available to Island residents on the Woods Hole run. The problem was, he said, there were no mid-speed passenger ferries available to charter, so having a trial with one would be “a very difficult thing.”

As for the environmental issue, continued Mr. Parker, the high-speed ferry symposium put on by the Authority had given an enormous amount of information on the physics of high-speed ferries. “It was not well reported, but it is true,” he said, “that the current designs of high-speed ferries, which are principally engineered in Denmark to very stringent standards, are now applied to almost all the ferries that are out there, and they do not have anywhere near the kind of environmental damage that they had in the beginning of the high-speed ferry business.”

These ferries, Mr. Parker added, were nothing like the Tatobaum and the Sassacus, which were run by gas turbine engines using aviation fuel – which was why they produced so much noise, pollution and environmental damage. The vessels the Steamship was looking at were driven by standard diesel engines of the kind that were used in the existing ferries, albeit at a higher rpm, he explained.

Mr. Parker pointed out that said diesel engines were connected to water jets that operated close to the surface of the water and that the only time a high-speed ferry did any scouring at all was in reverse. Moreover, he said, there had been no evidence of environmental damage from the Flying Cloud on the Nantucket run.

West Tisbury Commission member at large Andrew Woodruff asked Mr. Zeltzer to clarify what he had been saying about population centers producing traffic, which Mr. Zeltzer did. “If I may, I think that one thing the Commission might well want to look into,” said Mr. Parker, “is what is the capacity for people to come here ... I mean, if we’re all full, nobody’s going to come here... I think the real problem is whether the Island allows itself to grow, allows itself to grow its capacity to receive visitors.”

Mr. Zeltzer remarked that it was not a case of people not being able to find a room at the inn; the problem was moving people on the Island. He pointed to the traffic problems on the State Road Corridor and at Five Corners in Vineyard Haven. “Do we want to suddenly widen our roads and put in a bunch of traffic lights and, you know, we could have five or six traffic lights going into Oak Bluffs if we want,” said Mr. Zeltzer.

Ms. Greene commented, “I’m a little bit alarmed that we’re only looking at one aspect. We’re looking at boats coming here. We need to look at the other direction, too. We have to look at the advantages and the disadvantages of a ferry going to New Bedford, high-speed, medium-speed, whatever speed, whether it’s an advantage to the Island people. One way to make it an advantage to the Island people would be to have a bus that would pick people up at the ferry and take them to the malls in North Dartmouth.”
Richard J. Toole, a Commission member at large from Oak Bluffs, observed that if the Authority continued to do business as it had, there would be a deficit. “Maybe the deficit’s not such a bad idea,” he said. “I guess my question would be, at what point, if nothing’s done — and I do understand that there are other issues besides money that you’re trying to address — but at what point would the deficit get to the point where we can’t just raise tariffs any longer, where we’re going to seriously have to think about putting it on the tax rate and spreading it amongst the Island Towns and Falmouth?” That would also mean, Mr. Toole added, that people flying in and out of the airport would be paying for the ferry as well.

Mr. Parker explained that in the past much of the revenue growth had been funded by expanding the capacity for bringing cars over to the Island. At the same time, he related, the Authority had begun to offer excursion rates to Vineyard residents, and these were used increasingly, as people living on the Island now had different expectations that those who lived here, say, 30 years before. Back then, Mr. Parker said, you went off the Island maybe a couple of times a year. “People who live here now expect more access to the mainland,” he stressed. “Whether that’s right or wrong, it’s the expectation. And they expect an excursion fare.”

Currently, excursion fares occupied 42 percent of the Authority’s capacity, Mr. Parker continued, and they provided 15 percent of the revenue. “The reason for that is, the excursion fare is a good deal,” he said. “It can’t be done completely at bargain rates when the amount of the capacity that pays the full rate is shrinking, because eventually you’ve pretty well taxed out the shrinking off-Island capacity. So that the more space we make available to Islanders, the more we eat into our revenue.”

Furthermore, said Mr. Parker, 68 percent of the Steamship Authority’s costs was tied to personnel, pensions and related matters. It was a complicated situation, he went on, with nine different unions. “Reducing the personnel costs is not just done with the stroke of the pen,” he noted. “It’s an arduous thing to do.”

Mr. Parker continued: “On the other hand, what you can reduce is the other 32 percent, and that’s the equipment … and property. So we have a problem. Now, if you want to operate at a deficit, that’s a possibility.” He explained how a part of the deficit, for a total of 50 percent, would be apportioned to each of the six Towns according to the property valuations in the Town. “Is that right? Is that fair? Only you can answer this question,” he declared.

Responding to further questioning from Mr. Toole, Mr. Parker related how reductions in the costs could come from efficiencies, like automation and maritime technology, which would reduce personnel costs. One of the reasons that their ferries were so hard to move, he went on, was that the Authority mixed all kinds of goods on the boats, “cars, pickups trucks, tanker trucks, the whole nine yards.” And all the efficiencies he spoke of, he said, could not be done quickly or easily without some costs.
“I don’t think that the Steamship Authority operating at a deficit is a sound way to go about business," observed Mr. Parker, “because as soon as you have said to an organization, ‘Hey, don’t worry about it, it’ll just go on the deficit,’ you lose all thrift, you lose all control over your budget, it gets easy to say ‘yes’ to things, things get hidden into the budget, because the taxpayers are going to pick up the tab,” he concluded.

Aquinnah Selectmen’s Appointee Megan Ottens-Sargent asked Mr. Parker to expand on his statement that if the Steamship did not take up the New Bedford fast passenger ferry concept, it would tried by somebody else whom the Island could not control. [See page 9 of these Minutes.]

Mr. Parker explained, “If the competition were to run, for instance, a line to New Bedford and it were to be a success, if they were successful at shifting passengers from our Woods Hole line to that line, they would receive those revenues. The Steamship would not. Those are high-end revenues. Those are the revenues that finance excursion tickets, rate subsidies, school kid subsidies, all the things that we do. And the list of subsidies is as long as your arm. We do not want to give up high-end traffic. That’s what forced Nantucket to have a high-speed boat.”

Ms. Ottens-Sargent asked about the high fuel costs for a mid-speed vessel, referring to some figures provided in the Information Packet. Mr. Parker responded that it was clearly more expensive to run a high-speed ferry than a mid-speed one and more expensive to run a mid-speed ferry than a 14-knot boat. However, he explained, the faster the ferry, the more daily trips it could make. Thus, the crew costs were spread over more trips and more revenue, so that although they were considerable, the fuel costs were not as significant as they might appear to be, he added.

Responding to another question from Ms. Ottens-Sargent, Mr. Parker related that the high-speed ferries built today were more efficient than the ones built a few years ago, “but it’s not to the point of making them as fuel-thrifly as a 14-knot boat. Heck, a 6-knot boat is even more thrifty. Fuel rises in direct proportion to the dead weight of the vessel moving at a certain speed, and you raise the dead weight, fuel goes up, and you raise the speed and the fuel goes up.”

Ms. Ottens-Sargent referred to the fact that high-end visitors were the ones who supported the economy. What about the idea of an historic vessel like the Nobska that had a high ticket price but took longer to get to the Vineyard? she wondered. In addition, instead of pushing the idea of shopping in the North Dartmouth malls, Ms. Ottens-Sargent thought a better strategy would be to promote shopping on the Vineyard. She concluded, “So, when I look at the Steamship Authority and the lifeline to the Islands, I think it is the perfect vehicle for the community to talk about what we can do to slow this pace down a little.”
Mr. Parker responded, “If you don’t want to keep the one-to-four-day cars off the Island, then I wouldn’t advise you or the Steamship to go into even a pilot program for a high-speed ferry ... because that’s the principal objective, to keep the cars off the Island.” As for the Nobska, he said, “I would only say about that, she sits in a shipyard, she is far from ready to go in the water, there is no sign of any way that’s going to happen, and I really don’t think unless you want the Steamship to operate at deficits that you want the Steamship to pick up the Nobska.”

Returning to Ms. Greene’s argument for looking at other factors, Ms. Sibley suggested that the MVC generate a longer list of benefits and detriments that the Steamship Authority should be evaluating. “Go to the question of do we, in fact, want to accommodate new capacity for Island travel,” she said.

On the one hand, Ms. Sibley went on, the Vineyard had promised Woods Hole that it would reduce that traffic on their end of the run. However, she pointed out, if the reduction of one-to-four-day-visitor cars at Woods Hole was replaced by cars belonging to Island residents, there would in fact be no net reduction in traffic on the Woods Hole Road.

In addition, Ms. Sibley proposed that perhaps it was not healthy for Islanders to demand greater access to the mainland. “It is, after all, an Island,” she said, adding that this issue should be subject to public debate. If the demand for accessibility led to other, unwanted consequences, she observed, maybe the questions to the Island had to be posed differently.

Ms. Sibley also expressed doubt that the number of cars on the Vineyard would be reduced by the New Bedford fast passenger ferry route. Once people fly in, for instance, they get into their cars, she remarked. “Most of the people who arrive here for more than 24 hours are not going to use public transportation,” she concluded.

Mr. Parker responded that Falmouth’s principal concerns had been parking and the freight trucks on Woods Hole Road, not car traffic. From the Steamship’s standpoint, he continued, the parking lots were “not big winners,” with only two of them making money. “They’re done for the convenience,” he said.

As for Ms. Sibley’s second point, Mr. Parker observed: “Maybe the people on the Island should understand what it is to live on an Island and demand less. Hey, I’m for it 100 percent. That’s not something the Steamship can do. That is something you people can do. You people can control the number of cars on this Island ... Nantucket is working very hard now to try and get Home Rule so that they actually control how many cars you can have in the garage.”

Mr. Parker went on that if the Vineyard joined with Nantucket in that effort, “that is something that could really make a difference to both Islands, and it would, of course, change the picture as to what the Steamship has to service. The Steamship only provides
transportation for what these Islands want. The Steamship isn’t inducing people to come here. They provide the transportation to get them here. It’s the marketing that goes on for this Island, including the marketing of my good friend from the Vineyard Gazette. She’s been popularizing this Island for 25 or 30 years, and I hope she reports that in her paper.” [Mr. Parker was referring to Gazette Senior Writer Julia Wells, who was in attendance.]

James Athearn, a Commission member at large from Edgartown, noted that he had been “stewing all night” on the issue that Ms. Ottens-Sargent, Ms. Sibley, and now Mr. Parker had spoken to. “The Commission has the unique charge of protecting the character of Martha’s Vineyard,” he remarked, “and the essential character of Martha’s Vineyard is that it’s an Island. And on an Island you have some unique things that happen in the community to make it a place different from the mainland.”

Mr. Athearn continued: “And to the extent that the Steamship Authority, like all corporations tend to do, goes and gets it more efficient and makes it easier to get to the Island, that’s the same extent to which the character of Martha’s Vineyard can be eroded. And so that’s where the Commission does come in, and we can defend the special character of Martha’s Vineyard, which is both cash in our pocket as well as our enjoyment of life, by starting to put restrictions on [the boat traffic], which I think people asked us to do back in 1978.”

“So that’s what I think we ought to do,” Mr. Athearn concluded, “look at not making it easier to go back and forth to the Vineyard and accepting that an Island is an Island and paying the cost ...” “How are you going to get people to give up technology?” asked Ms. Greene.

Ms. Warner said that she agreed the Commission needed to look at the quality of life issue and that this was connected to the policies of the Steamship Authority. “We also cannot forget,” she went on, “that one of the things that made ... the high-speed [ferry] needed for Nantucket was competing with the airlines. And we’ve been warned many times, as Nantucket people certainly have, that our air traffic will only increase, as theirs has, because our population is increasingly wealthy. And so perhaps ... we keep some of those people on the ground by offering more convenient service.”

Vineyard Legislative Liaison Russell Smith reminded the Commission that the Authority was controlled by the State Legislature, and the licensing procedure given to the SSA was for the purpose of protecting their viability. Since the Authority had already purchased the New Bedford run, Mr. Smith continued, the agency had to look at making that run as viable as possible. “I think we all generally do [agree] that if we could get some of the people coming up from the south to get off the road in New Bedford, that would be a good admirable thing to accomplish,” he said, adding that he was not completely sold on the idea of the fast ferry.
Mr. Smith noted that like Mr. Zeltzer he thought that the parking element could make or break New Bedford as a viable run. “Everyone who comes to Woods Hole pulls in, they look at the number of days they’re going to stay, they look at the cost of parking, they look at the ticket to get the car on the boat, then they make the decision whether they’re going to bring the car or not,” he observed.

Much to Mr. Parker’s credit, continued Mr. Smith, the Board of Governors representative had instigated a broad public discussion of where the SSA was headed over the next 20 years. Regarding the freight issue, Mr. Smith thought that it would never be more economically viable to go 28 miles over water than it was to go seven. However, last year the All Island Selectmen’s Association had agreed with the community of Falmouth that the increasing volumes of trucks on Woods Hole Road was affecting their quality of life.

Other factors to consider, Mr. Smith said, were that 10 years before, the Steamship had not been running fuel and 10 years before, the Island had had six landfills open. So most people on the Vineyard would agree, he thought, that there were many more 60-footers moving through the community of Falmouth.

In response to that increase, related Mr. Smith, the All Island Selectmen’s Association had supported having New Bedford run a freight boat at a cost of $1.3 million a year to remove 2,000 trucks out of Woods Hole. “It makes no economic sense,” he said, “but if you look at the SteamsMp Authority as a $55 million-a-year business, if it costs us $1.3 million to decrease the impact … on our neighbor, then you can make that case that that’s a good thing to do.”

As for the fuel issue, Mr. Smith pointed out that if the Steamship Authority was to take fuel off their boats, it would leave one distributor able to bring fuel to the Island but perhaps not the other.

In addition, Mr. Smith suggested that the New Bedford freight run could be made more viable by picking a few commodities and requiring them to go out of New Bedford. The hazardous loads, he said, were a good place to start. But the long-term goal would be for the Steamship Authority to get out of that business totally, he concluded.

Chairman Vercruysse called for a short recess. The time was 9:34 p.m.

The Regular Meeting resumed at 9:39 p.m. A brief discussion ensued regarding whether sometime in the near future the Commission should host a Public Hearing on Steamship Authority issues. “We can talk about that,” said Mr. Vercruysse, recommending that the members attend the All Island Selectmen’s Association meeting on October 3. The discussion then turned to the possibility of a public meeting on transportation issues. “Something like this would be a standard agenda item for the JTC,” noted Mr. Flynn, referred to the recently re-instituted Joint Transportation Committee.
Mr. Parker said spoke: “I just want to say if you’re through with me that I really appreciate the opportunity to have talked to you and I thank you very much. The interchange is very constructive, and I want to give you all the information I can. And I want to hear what you have to say and help you understand what our problems are. I’ll try to understand what your problems are. I thank you very much.”

Concurrency Vote: Vineyard Clay House Modification (DRI #489-1M-4); [On the Site of the Tisbury Service Center].

Next, the Commission considered whether or not a proposed fourth Modification to DRI Decision No. 489-1 required a full Public Hearing. [Due to conflicts, Ms. Sibley, Mr. Toole and Mr. Zeltzer left the conference room for the duration of this meeting segment. Thus, the Commission members seated for the Concurrency Vote were: J. Athearn; J. Best; C. Brown; M. Cini; D. Flynn; J. Greene; T. Israel; C.M. Oglesby; M. Ottens-Sargent; K. Rusczyk; J. Vercruysse; K. Warner; and A. Woodruff.]

Commission DRI Coordinator Jennifer Rand provided a synopsis of the request of Lisa D. Spain, the Vineyard Clay House Applicant, to waive the requirement for a full Public Hearing on her proposed Modification to the earlier Decisions regarding her project (DRI Nos. 489-1M and 489-1M-2). Ms. Rand explained that the Modification entailed the introduction of live entertainment on the premises of the Clay House, something for which the Applicant can not previously applied.

Ms. Rand continued that she had received a letter from the Applicant’s landlord indicating that live entertainment was indeed a use that he and Ms. Spain had agreed on. “At this point, I’m comfortable with the ownership issue and having permission to go forward,” remarked Ms. Rand.

Chairman Vercruysse clarified with Executive Director Clifford exactly what the Commission would be voting on. After consulting with her Minutes, Ms. Rand reported that the Land Use Planning Committee (LUPC) had voted to recommend that the Modification come to Public Hearing. John Best, a Commission member at large from Tisbury, wondered who had voted on that recommendation. After some discussion, it was determined that those persons were: C. Brown; M. Cini; D. Flynn; R. Toole; K. Warner; and A. Woodruff.

Ms. Warner recalled that the discussion in committee had centered around that fact that although the Town was perfectly well-equipped to handle an entertainment permit, there was the issue of entertainment being offered on the second floor of a building without handicapped access to that level. The committee had also discussed lighting, traffic and related subjects, Ms. Warner went on, and this in the presence of Tisbury Building Inspector Kenneth Barwick, who had attended. Overall, she said, the committee had concluded that to say that this Modification was not a change in use was incorrect.
Mr. Israel pointed out that all sorts of things that were not supposed to have happened on the property had been happening incrementally since before the original Decision. He also related how the Board of Appeals had granted a variance to reduce the amount of parking required by the Clay House prior to the new use (live entertainment) on the property.

Mr. Israel emphasized that the property contained a number of uses and that the Commission had to look at it as a whole. “I think there are legitimate issues here that we could look at and perhaps regulate if we so chose or not,” concluded Mr. Israel, “so I think it should come before the Commission.”

Ms. Brown disagree with Mr. Israel’s point that the Applicant had circumvented the process. “This is the process,” she emphasized. She agreed, though, that as a property that had already received a great deal of scrutiny, it would perhaps be appropriate for the Commission to look at it further in Public Hearing.

Mr. Flynn observed that he failed to see what the regional issues were in this case and that the Town was capable of deciding the question of permitting entertainment. Mr. Israel argued for some minutes that regional issues were, in fact, at stake.

Mr. Athearn wanted to know what the Town could do if the Commission did not concur with the referral. “The ZBA would have to revisit the parking variance is what Mr. Barwick told us,” answered Ms. Rand, “because that is the issue in the Town’s mind, because a parking variance was given to them based upon a particular set of facts and that particular set of facts seems to have changed.” “With a Public Hearing?” asked Mr. Athearn. “Yes, I would assume,” replied Ms. Rand.

Ms. Greene inquired whether the Town gave out entertainment licenses. Ms. Israel responded that he was not aware that it did. Ms. Greene then stated: “I think this needs to go to Public Hearing. I have a real concern about the fact that there’s live entertainment, there’s alcohol being consumed, there are children on the premises at all times. I think we need to start looking at the fact that this is a regional issue, where it’s bringing in people from all over the Island, it’s affecting all kinds of people. People are going back and forth across State Road because there isn’t adequate parking, and we have lots of vehicles on that lot already.”

Ms. Greene continued: “This is a regional issue. It was stated that there would not be any live entertainment when the Applicant came before us in the beginning. What she described to us was little kids coming in and painting little pieces of pottery and going home. Then we’re going to have a cup of coffee, and then we’re going to go from there. All of sudden, what was presented to us is no longer what’s happening on that property. And the only way it’s going to be properly dealt with is we go to Hearing and we make a Decision and condition it.”
Ms. Greene made a Motion to Move to Item 6, Possible Vote. Ms. Spain, who was seated in the audience, spoke up at this point, noting that on two earlier occasions she had been permitted to speak to the Commission. Chairman Vercruysse gavelled her down. “It’s not right, it’s not right,” said Ms. Spain.

The Staff Secretary pointed out that this was the third Modification proposal for Decision 489-1 (Tisbury Service Center) that had been brought before the Commission by Ms. Spain (DRI Nos. 489-1M, 489-1M-2 and 489-1M-4). The fact was, she said, Ms. Spain had been permitted to speak when the Commission had considered the earlier two Concurrency Votes. [See the Full Commission Meeting Minutes of June 15, 2000 and October 12, 2000.] Mr. Israel remarked that if the Applicant wished to speak, she should be permitted to do so. “I appreciate that,” said Ms. Spain.

Ms. Spain began by stating that she respected the process she was going through and had gone through. She provided a history of her business at the former Coca-Cola distribution plant site, noting that from the beginning she had been straightforward about her intentions to have a gallery, a coffee bar and Internet access on the Vineyard Clay House premises. She referred to her letter to the Building Inspector accompanying the first Modification Application, where those intentions had been clearly stated.

At the time of the first Concurrency Vote consideration, continued Ms. Spain, she had explained that her mission was “to encourage creativity in any number of ways.” She went on for some minutes about the development of her business and her prior appearances before the Commission, emphasizing that she and her husband had fulfilled all the commitments they had made.

Ms. Spain described how early in 2001 some local musicians had approached her and her husband about providing a local venue for their performances. “At that point we granted their request,” she said. “We didn’t consider it live entertainment, and I apologize for that. We didn’t charge an admission fee. We created no revenue from it. And so we granted the request because we feel that the community really craves a family-oriented environment where people can share their creativity.” She added that not one time had there been a police call for disorderly conduct or any problem with alcohol or traffic.

Ms. Spain summed up by saying that the only element of their business not in line with Commission Decisions and Town regulations was the lack of a live entertainment permit. She urged the Commission members not to concur with the referral and to allow the Town to deal with the parking and entertainment issues.

Mr. Israel observed that he had no doubt that the Spains were “attempting to do fine things.” But, he stressed, the property as a whole had to be considered. In addition, he questioned the accuracy of some of Ms. Spain’s recollections. “It’s a slap in the face to the permitting process,” he declared.
Ms. Greene made a Motion That The Commission Put Ms. Spain’s Modification Application For A Change In Use To Full Public Hearing, duly seconded by Mr. Israel.

Ms. Ottens-Sargent noted that she had been persuaded by some of Ms. Spain’s and Mr. Flynn’s arguments in favor of handing this case back to the Town. She described the “almost organic process” that accompanied the development of a new business. She continued: “I don’t personally want to be in a position where I’m making it that much harder for a business that has such benefits, and I’ll just generalize and say the cultural benefits. Because I think one of the things that we’re seeing, as our Island changes and the demographics change and the middle class gets squeezed out and the young people get squeezed out, is we don’t have that kind of culture to the same extent that we used to. And I have confidence that the Town of Tisbury can deal with this.”

Mr. Flynn made this observation: “I would just like to say that, because I haven’t been here that long, that because a car comes from another Town to go to this, that’s a qualification as a regional issue?” “It’s already a DRI, Dan,” responded Ms. Greene. “I know, but that’s just amazing to me that that’s a regional issue,” said Mr. Flynn. “It’s a regional issue because of all the issues that are going on there,” related Ms. Greene. “The business plan that was presented to us is not the business plan that she’s operating under now... The Town can’t deal with it because the Town can’t condition it the way we can.”

Marcia Mulford Cini, a Tisbury Commission member at large, remarked that Ms. Spain should be congratulated on her success. However, that success had “led to an intensity of use that may very well rise to a regional impact,” she said, adding that she did not mean for her comments to detract from the enormous benefits the business offered to the community.

Ms. Brown expressed concern that although the issue before them was entertainment, all the other uses that had been before them and had already been approved could be retroactively opened up to further scrutiny. On balance, she said, a Public Hearing seemed to her to be an overreach.

Mr. Israel reiterated a number of his arguments for bringing the Modification to Full Public Hearing.

Mr. Clifford then conducted a roll call vote on Ms. Greene’s Motion. The results were:

**AYES:** J. Best; M. Cini; J. Greene; and T. Israel.

**NAYS:** J. Athearn; C. Brown; D. Flynn; C.M. Oglesby; M. Ottens-Sargent; K. Rusczyk; J. Vereruyse; K. Warner; and A. Woodruff.

**ABSTAINING:** None.
Ms. Sibley, Mr. Toole and Mr. Zeltzer returned to the conference room. The time was 10:07 p.m.

**Staff Reports.**

[The Commission members seated for the remainder of the Regular Meeting were: J. Athearn; J. Best; C. Brown; M. Cini; D. Flynn; J. Greene; T. Israel; C.M. Oglesby; M. Ottens-Sargent; K. Rusczyk; L. Sibley; R. Toole; J. Vercruysse; K. Warner; A. Woodruff and R. Zeltzer.]

Chairman Vercruysse referred to the Staff Reports that had been included in the member’s packets that evening. After a brief discussion, it was agreed that they would take the reports home to review them and would return to discuss them in the next Full Commission Meeting, on October 4.

Ms. Rand announced that the Mahoney’s Garden Center Applicant (DRI #528) had withdrawn his Application and intended to resubmit when his proposal package was complete, around the first of the year.

**Discussion/Vote: Executive Director’s Separation Agreement.**

The Chairman handed to each Commission member a sealed white business-size envelope. Each one contained a memorandum from Executive Director Charles Clifford stating the following:

> “The time has come,” the Walrus said,
> “To talk of many thing:
> Of shoes – and ships – and sealing wax –
> Of cabbages – and kings –
> And why the sea is boiling hot –
> And whether pigs have wings.”

> There is a time for everything:
> Of existing – and of expiring,
> Of sowing – and of reaping,
> Of arriving – and of departing.

> My last official day with this agency shall be December 31, 2001.

“That’s classy,” said Ms. Brown quietly. Otherwise, the room was silent for some moments while the members considered what they had read.

Chairman Vercruysse remarked, “This is a big event in Martha’s Vineyard Commission history. Chuck has been part of the birth and infancy and adolescence of this whole organization.”
“I am sorry to receive this,” said Ms. Greene. “I think it’s going to be disastrous. I’d like to make a formal request to you [Mr. Clifford] that you remain here until such time as we’re through with the golf course and the 40(b) application. We need your guidance, we need your wisdom, we need your knowledge. We will be lost without you. And I know you’ve gone through a lot of thought and a lot of concerns and a lot of hard times in the last few years. But we really, really, truly need you.”

Chairman Vercruysse explained that a legal Separation Agreement was part of Mr. Clifford’s decision. “The Executive Committee has sought Counsel and sought Labor Counsel,” he said, “and I’m going to pass that out, too.” He added that the agreement contained a provision for Mr. Clifford to stay on for a while to assist with the transition. The Commission members then spent some minutes examining the agreement.

Next, the Chairman remarked that the document perhaps seemed “stiff and formal” but that Counsel had advised him that such language was necessary. More than a minute passed. Then Mr. Israel asked, “What is it you want us to do with this?” “This is to be read and accepted by the Commission,” replied Chairman Vercruysse.

Ms. Greene wanted to know if the agreement took into account the fact that Mr. Clifford had refused raises some years because there had not been enough money in the budget to provide what he was entitled to. “Not specifically,” answered Chairman Vercruysse. “So how’d we come up with the numbers?” inquired Ms. Greene. “It wasn’t asked for,” responded Chairman Vercruysse. “These were the points that were talked about and asked for.”

Ms. Cini explained, “I just wanted to make a point to Jennie [Greene] that the whole underpinning for this entire approach was to be extraordinarily respectful of what Chuck is owed and what he wanted.”

Mr. Israel made a Motion To Accept The Separation Agreement. Ms. Greene suggested that the Commission table the question until they had taken home the document and read it. “I need a second,” said Mr. Israel. Mr. Best provided the second. A brief discussion ensued about procedure and motion-tabling. Then Mr. Israel’s Motion was taken up.

“I have to say that this letter was presented to me six minutes ago, this agreement was given to me about five minutes ago, and you’re telling me to vote on it. Nobody’s had a chance to think about a it,” said Ms. Greene.

Ms. Warner responded, “My guess is that a lot of work has gone into this on the part of Chuck, our lawyers, whoever this other lawyer was and the Executive Committee. And I think that this is a very difficult thing for the Commission, and I don’t think we should make it more difficult. I think we should respect what Chuck has asked for and go on.”
Mr. Zeltzer agreed that likely a lot of thought and work had gone into the agreement. However, he continued, the Commission member faced all kinds of decisions based upon the work of all kinds of professionals, “and we don’t make decisions in three minutes 12 seconds. And you’re asking us to vote on something, then I agree with Jennie [Greene] I’d like a chance to read and digest.” He added that he was not suggesting that the process “go on forever” but that the members have a few days to consider this.

Ms. Brown commented that the discussion was proceeding as if Mr. Clifford was not there. She then asked Mr. Clifford if he was comfortable with the agreement. Mr. Clifford answered that he was not going to discuss it. “I’m going to ask one thing,” Mr. Clifford said. “Vote the damn thing and get it over with.”

“This saddens me,” remarked Mr. Flynn, “but the fact is, this is an agreement that’s been made by the Commission and Chuck [Clifford].” He noted that Mr. Clifford had seven days after executive of the agreement to change his mind and that to respect his wishes, the Commission should call the question.

Mr. Zeltzer pointed out that there were contradictory passages in the agreement about when Mr. Clifford would be leaving. One section indicated he might stay as long as six months after the agreement was signed, while another gave a final employment date of December 31, 2001. In view of the fact that the Commission should be embarking on a nationwide search for the new Executive Director, it did not seem likely to Mr. Zeltzer that the search would be done by the end of the year.

“It’s going to take six months to hire a Director,” observed Ms. Greene. “Figure on that right now.” Mr. Israel pointed out that the Executive Director had seven days after signing to change his mind about the terms of the agreement. In addition, all indications were that Mr. Clifford would be assisting the agency with the transition, he said. Thirdly, remarked Mr. Israel, the Staff was well-trained and he expected that they would “do a fine job” until a new Executive Director was hired.

Chairman Vercruysse noted that the agreement gave the Commission the option to keep Mr. Clifford on board until his successor was in place. Ms. Greene referred to the conflicting paragraphs on that point referred to earlier by Mr. Zeltzer.

“I think we should vote because Chuck [Clifford]’s asked us to vote,” said Ms. Sibley. “Then we can discuss with him what he’s comfortable with...” She suggested that Mr. Clifford could stay on on a part-time basis to help with the transition. “He’s made it clear that he’s willing and able to do that,” said the Chairman, “to help in every way to get the right person.”

Ms. Greene recommended that paragraph 8 be changed so that if Mr. Clifford’s services were required after December 31, they would be available to the agency. She also voiced her objection that Mr. Clifford had not been able to discuss the Separation Agreement with the full Commission. “We just did,” said Mr. Israel.
The Chairman then conducted a voice vote on Mr. Israel's Motion To Accept The Separation Agreement. The results were as follows:

AYES: J. Athearn; J. Best; C. Brown; M. Cini; T. Israel; M.C. Oglesby; M. Ottens-Sargent; K. Rusczyk; L. Sibley; R. Toole; J. Vercruysse; K. Warner; and A. Woodruff.

NAYS: J. Greene.

ABSTAINING: D. Flynn; and R. Zeltzer.

The Chairman remarked, "This has been a long process, sometimes difficult, sometimes funny, but handled with grace by Chuck unbelievably, and I hope that he will agree to it."

The time was 10:27 p.m.

"Do we have any other business?" asked Ms. Greene. "I'd like to Move To Adjourn."

Mr. Israel reported briefly on the progress of the State Road Corridor Task Force, noting that the Town of Tisbury had been granted permission to establish a number of crosswalks. He commended Comprehensive Planner William Veno for his work with the task force.

Mr. Zeltzer pointed out that a Motion had been made to adjourn. "I would like to second that," he said. By voice vote said Motion carried. The Regular Meeting adjourned at 10:29 p.m.

[These Minute were prepared by Staff Secretary Webster using her shorthand notes and a tape recording of the Regular Meeting.]
Summary of Revisions to the
Meeting Minutes of September 20, 2001
Proposed by the Commission Members
in the Meeting of October 11, 2001

[An excerpt from the Meeting Minutes of October 11, 2001 follows immediately. It describes the revisions requested by the Commission members with regard to the Meeting Minutes of September 20, 2001.]

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