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**Minutes of the Commission Meeting  
Held on January 17, 2008  
In the Stone Building  
33 New York Avenue, Oak Bluffs, MA**

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**IN ATTENDANCE**

Commissioners: (P = Present; A = Appointed; E = Elected)

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|---|--------------------------------------|
| - James Athearn (E – Edgartown)         | P Ned Orleans (A – Tisbury)          |
| P John Breckenridge (A – Oak Bluffs)    | P Jim Powell (A – West Tisbury)      |
| P Christina Brown (E – Edgartown)       | P Doug Sederholm (E – Chilmark)      |
| P Peter Cabana (A – Tisbury)            | P Susan Shea (A – Aquinnah)          |
| - Martin Crane (A – Governor Appointee) | - Linda Sibley (E – West Tisbury)    |
| - Mimi Davisson (E – Oak Bluffs)        | - Paul Strauss (County Comm. Rep.)   |
| - Mark Morris (A – Edgartown)           | P Richard Toole (E – Oak Bluffs)     |
| P Chris Murphy (A – Chilmark)           | P Andrew Woodruff (E – West Tisbury) |
| P Katherine Newman (A – Aquinnah)       |                                      |

Staff: Mark London (Executive Director), Bill Veno (Senior Planner), Paul Foley (DRI Analyst/Planner), Christine Flynn (Economic Development & Affordable Housing Planner)

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 p.m.

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**1. APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

**Doug Sederholm** announced that he had appointed Richard Toole Chair of the Land Use Planning Committee and Jim Athearn Chair of the Planning and Economic Development Committee.

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**2. BUDGET**

Commissioners present: J. Breckenridge, C. Brown, P. Cabana, C. Murphy, K. Newman, N. Orleans, J. Powell, D. Sederholm, S. Shea, R. Toole, A. Woodruff

**Ned Orleans** explained the proposed budget.

- The original FY09 operating budget resulted in a 4.4% increase in assessment to the towns.
- After more consideration, staff and the Finance Committee are recommending a budget representing a 3.5% increase over the 2008 assessment. An increase in expenses over which there is little control, notably the increases in health insurance and pension contributions, prevented them from bringing the budget below 3.5%.
- The total budget has increased 4.3%, but the increased assessment to the towns totals 3.5%.

**Doug Sederholm** added comments.

- Individual assessments to the towns are based on equalized valuation. The assessment formula tends to give a larger increase when a town has had a re-assessment. Edgartown went through a recent assessment and bears the greatest increase because it has the highest increase in valuation.
- Staff has done as good a job in keeping the budget down. Operating expenses have decreased, payroll expenses have increased because of health and disability insurance and pension increases.

**Chris Murphy** said the Stone Building seems to need more maintenance than it's getting; he recommends putting in for maintenance next year. **Mark London** explained that every year they set aside \$12,000 for capital improvements; also, when the building was refinanced, money was set aside for improvements; they plan on moving ahead with renovations this spring, including the roof, gutters and windows.

**There was a discussion of year-to-date statements.**

- **Chris Murphy** said he would like to see a year-to-date expense column or statement, which Jeff Wooden, last year, said he would provide. It's a critical tool in making a good decision.
- **Christina Brown** said, when towns do their budgets, they give both the spent and budgeted amounts for previous fiscal years, but not the current fiscal year-to-date because a January total may not accurately reflect 50% of the expenditures of the budget.
- **Chris Murphy** said the more information the better.
- **Doug Sederholm** said, as a member of Chilmark Finance Committee, the year-to-date figures aren't particularly helpful except in terms of utilities, but the Commission can ask that it be added.
- **John Breckenridge** understands Chris's point, but fixed costs are such a high percent that the information may not give the Commission much guidance.
- **Mark London** said this format is the standard format worked out with the Commission's Finance Committee and the All-Island Finance Association. He didn't remember the discussion about providing year-to-date information, but suggested that this be done on a separate page. He noted that the budget does explain any significant variance between budgeted and spent amounts.
- **Ned Orleans** suggested that the chair direct the Finance Committee to work with staff to develop an appropriate budget format for next year that satisfies people's ideas.

***Ned Orleans moved, and it was duly seconded, that budget figure of \$1,281,497 for FY2009 as presented in Draft Number 7, dated January 15, 2008 be adopted by the Commission. A voice vote was taken. In favor: 11. Opposed: 0. Abstentions: 0. The motion passed.***

## **2. DRI CHECKLIST RECOMMENDED CHANGES**

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**Doug Sederholm** reported that Paul Foley has put together a very detailed and comprehensive list of projects the Commission reviewed in 2007, which is available on the website.

- 27 projects were reviewed by the Commission; 16 were approved with conditions, none were denied, 6 were remanded, 1 was withdrawn, 2 were granted extensions, 2 are on hold, 5 are under review.
- He reviewed the list by town:
  - Aquinnah: Wampanoag Community Center;
  - Chilmark: Middle Line Road Housing Project, Murphy Family Land Bank Subdivision;
  - Edgartown: North Summer Street, GOOD (Field Club in Grant's Pit), 44 North Water Street /Shiretown Inn Property, Morgan Woods Modification, Vineyard Golf;
  - Oak Bluffs: Balance Restaurant, Martha's Vineyard Hospital Building Permit; YMCA, Oyster Bar, Viera Park, Moujabber Addition, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints;
  - Tisbury: Dukes County Savings Bank, Mansion House modification; Vineyard Haven Yacht Club, 18 State Road, Dunkin Donuts, Bridge Housing Modification, Havenside;
  - West Tisbury: Hart Plumbing, Fisher Subdivision, Ferry Tennis Center.

**Christina Brown** presented the major proposed changes to the DRI Checklist proposed by the Land Use Planning Committee, which she asked Commissioners to review prior to the Public Hearing which will be held on February 21<sup>st</sup>. If Commissioners vote to adopt the changes, then the Commission recommends them to the Secretary of Environmental Affairs for approval.

- The most notable proposal is that if a property went through a DRI review and was not built – because it was withdrawn, denied, or the approval lapsed – the property would no longer be considered a DRI, and would not have to be referred to the Commission unless another Checklist item was triggered.
- The words *with concurrence* would be added to a number of items.
- Some definitions were added for clarity.
- There is a new high-traffic-generating list, based on a more scientific list based on square footage and trip generation.
- The list of questions that a local board can ask in considering a discretionary referral was modified.

A public hearing will be held on February 21<sup>st</sup>. The proposed changes and revisions are on the Commission website. The changes are intended to help town boards refer projects that have a regional impact and not refer projects that don't.

### **3. STREAMLINED PERMITTING REPORT**

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**Mark London** explained the draft study of Permitting Processes on Martha's Vineyard.

- The question is periodically raised about whether the way the Commission and towns handle the permitting process can be improved. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been looking at how the permitting process works, particularly for bigger projects. They set up a program whereby regional planning agencies were given funding to look at best practices for improving the process.

- The Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies did a statewide look at permitting processes and developed a report, available on the Commission website, of 26 best practices in permitting. The aim is not to lower standards, but to look at ways the process can be made clearer and quicker.
- Part of the Commission grant money was used to hire Ed O'Connell to look at permitting processes on the Island.
- Staff went through all 26 techniques identified by MARPA and is preparing a companion document. Ed O'Connell interviewed 23 stakeholders on how the processes are working now at both the town and Commission level.
- The report will include a description of each technique, its current use on the Island, stakeholders' comments, and the applicability on the Island.
- Some of the most promising techniques focus on improving communications, identifying a single point of contact, clarifying submittal requirements, and allowing concurrent review by various boards.

**Ed O'Connell** added more detail.

- The outreach was the most important part of the process. Stakeholders include town board members and staff, applicants, architects, and engineers, conservation group members. They tried to get a broad look at the existing processes.
- Among the more promising techniques in the short-term are:
  - Formal designation of a signal point of contact;
  - Creation of a local permitting guide;
  - Implementation of interdepartmental meetings;
  - Improvement of town websites;
  - Wider use of permitting tracking software;
  - Cultivation of a culture of training.
- The towns will choose what they'll do and not do. Several of the towns on the Island already use these techniques to varying degrees.
- Many of the techniques can be adopted administratively. Other techniques are promising but are not as likely to be implemented in the short-term, either because they require legislative/town meeting action, or because there is less consensus between, for instance, the regulators and the regulated.

**Mark London** added.

- This look at the permitting process, and Ed's current efforts to inventory regulations, will be useful for the Island Plan.
- Many of the techniques don't cost a lot of money and, in fact, save money. For instance, the Commission website includes all materials for a DRI review application. He noticed this morning that several recent DRIs had had between 100 and 250 downloads of various documents, meaning that these people got the information they were looking for without having to use staff time.

**Peter Cabana** said he really likes what he sees.

**Mark London** clarified that the "single point of contact" idea is to have one person in the town keep track of all the permits. There is the possibility of looking at combined public hearings and

there is discussion of finding a way for town boards to continue work on a referred project while the Commission goes through its review process.

**Ed O'Connell**, responding to Kathy Newman's question, said the Commission would do its best to make staff available to help facilitate some of the techniques. The question speaks to the question of creating a culture of training and bringing some education around to towns.

#### **4. OTHER**

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The Commission's next meeting is January 31, 2007, for discussion and decision on the Island Road District proposed amendments and the Edgartown Special Ways proposed regulations.

Wednesday, January 23, 2007, is the Island Plan Social Environment Work Group kick-off at the Oak Bluffs Senior Center.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

  
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Chairman

  
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Clerk-Treasurer

4-10-08  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

4-17-08  
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Date