

**Dukes County Commission (DCC)  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 8, 2025  
4:00 PM**

Dukes County Commissioners present in person: Don Leopold, Peter Wharton, Randy Milch, Doug Ruskin, Tristan Israel

County staff: Martina Thornton, Juliet Mulinare, Paulo DeOliveira  
Others: Nicholas Vukota – MV Times, Juli Vanderhoop

Christine called the meeting to order at 4:00pm

Minutes 12-4-2024, 12-18-2024 and 12-23-2024

**Randy/Don moved to approve minutes from December 4, 2024, as presented.** Discussion: Doug proposed adding in the motion regarding the approval of the Airport leases that “any future leases will be approved in accordance with the new policy adopted on October 30, 2024”. Randy – this was in the resolution that was approved as part of the process of approving any future leases. Don agreed that this might be redundant as it is in the policy. Tristan believes that the county did both.

**Randy/ Don moved to approve the minutes with the amendments suggested by Doug. Peter - yes, Doug - yes, Randy – yes, Don – yes, Tristan – yes. Motion carries.**

**Randy/Doug moved to approve the minutes of December 18, 2024**

Doug suggested adding the names of the two people present from RM Packer Co. and under the two budget amendments it will also require CAB approval. Lastly, add a statement that the bond documents for the Airport bond were signed by the commissioners present.

**Randy/ Don moved to approve the minutes with Doug's suggestions. So voted. Peter - yes, Doug - yes, Randy – yes, Don – yes, Tristan and Christine - abstained. Motion carries.**

**Doug/Randy moved to approve minutes from December 23, 2024 as written. Peter - yes, Doug - yes, Randy – yes, Don – yes, Tristan – abstained, Christine - Yes. Motion carries.**

Chair announcements – Christine Todd

- Christine welcomed Randy Milch to a full term as Dukes County Commissioner and thanked him for his contributions so far.
- Christine acknowledged Tristan’s 15<sup>th</sup> year of serving as Dukes County Commissioner as well as all his involvement in other committees and boards and his commitment. (Tristan announced that the celebration of the life of his wife Janet will be on February 22nd)
- Christine thanked Juliet Mulinare as County Treasurer
- Christine acknowledged the great work of distribution of the ARPA funds and thanked all commissioners who were involved in this process and Peter Wharton especially for spearheading this.

- Christine mentioned that the Commissioners began negotiating Martina's contract and are committed to do this over the next couple of months as her contract ends by the end of June.
- The County Commissioners have started discussions about the possibility of the next Charter Study Commission, and they will create a committee that will look into the process and will come up with a recommendation to the full board about possible next steps.

Randy thanked Christine for her leadership and all the effort in making this board work well. Doug agreed with that.

#### Appointment of DCC member to a vacant seat

Trip Barnes was a write-in candidate with the most votes for County Commissioner although he was campaigning for the Martha's Vineyard Commission. He subsequently submitted a letter declining to serve on the Dukes County Commission and therefore there is an open seat on the Commission that the County Commissioners can fill in with their appointee. Discussion followed.

**Randy/ Tristan moved to appoint Juli Vanderhoop to the vacant seat on the Dukes County Commission. So voted. Peter - yes, Doug - yes, Randy – yes, Don – yes, Tristan – yes, Christine - yes. Motion carries.**

#### Vote for DCC chair and vice chair

**Doug/Randy moved to Christine Todd as Chair and Don Leopold as Vice-chair for the next two years as he feels the continuity is important and they both have done a great job. So voted. Peter - yes, Doug - yes, Randy – yes, Don – yes, Tristan – yes, Christine - yes. Motion carries.**

#### 2025 DCC meeting calendar

The proposed calendar was reviewed. Discussion followed. Peter suggested hybrid meetings with some of the meetings being in person. Doug agreed to meet in person as much as possible and at least one per month and run a hybrid meeting for the public. Tristan asked that the attendance in person is not mandatory as he might not always be able to attend in person. Christine will work with Martina before each meeting if it will be posted as in-person, hybrid, or remote participation only.

Christine also asked for county commissioners to take note and attend the scheduled meetings with the town Finance Committees along with Martina and the Annual Town meetings of your town.

#### Priority Setting for 2025 – Don Leopold

Legislative Actions

Communications

Improving on continuous Improvements

Don put the question to the group as to what they felt good about the last term, as a whole?

Christine was proud of the active approach of the county commissioners in the process of interactions with the towns in the annual process, in the transition period of the treasurer's office, and in selecting Juliet Mulinare as our county Treasurer. Christine is thankful that Martina handles all the transitions and challenges in the Treasurer's office, Health Care Access office and the Veterans Department and distribution of the ARPA funds. Peter commented that DCC made improvements in the relationship with our legislative delegation. ... Tristan – commissioners have a great and varied set of strengths.... Doug ... looking at emergency management on MV... Don... what we have done with respect to the Steamship

Authority is also an accomplishment and the meeting we initiated was an example of leadership. We are trying to get ahead of future problems with the Land Use Committee as well.  
Don brought the questions of shortfalls.

Doug- would like to see more coverage in the paper as it is hard to change the negative view.

Peter- would like to pick a partner on select boards in the towns. It seems they see us only if we have an issue. Would like to meet up with them outside of meetings.

Tristan – Feels like we need to find more money. More work needs to be done with legislation to increase cashflow. Long-range planning issues are being worked on at the land use.

Christine – ongoing relationship with the State and complications with the Courthouse. Engagement with the Associate Commissioners and appointed bodies, she feels a disconnect. If we can see them as part of our team and help us improve the image of the County.

Doug – zero response to our RFP for long-term county real estate and space needs.

Don – did not much further on the continuous improvement. Agrees with roles and relationships with our appointees. Don finds interesting information in the last Charter Study Commission and would like to put something back on our list of priorities such as barriers to cooperative partnerships and Courthouse disposition.

2008 Charter Study Commission did a great job in analyses and many of the points and issues that were stated have not changed.

Christine – is the car broken or the driver, we have a very different set of drivers today.

Don ended by asking the county commissioners to think about the next step and identify 3 to 5 accomplishments that this commission would like to see done and be proud of in December 2026.

#### 2026 Appointment Process Policy draft – discussion– Doug Ruskin

The policy is trying to accomplish a more consistent approach to appointments. There is a difference if we are appointing the full board like the Airport Commission or individual representatives to a board that others also appoint representatives to like the Steamship Authority or MV Commission. Doug is suggesting when we are ready, we invite the representatives of the boards to a future meeting when this policy is discussed. Discussion followed. The Administrative Code was reviewed, and this policy is not inconsistent with that. The policy should include the expectation to report back to the appointing authority.

#### FY25 Budget transfer - \$4K from CILP to natural resources dept. (5 min)

CAB did not approve the transfer as approved by the DCC within the department and instead suggested and voted for the \$4K to come as additional funding to that department from the Cape and Islands License Plate Fund.

**Doug/Randy moved to move \$4K from Cape and Islands License Plate to Dept. 2000 Natural Resources.** Discussion: Peter CAB does not have control over this funding, they can not mandate that we do this. Doug agreed. The full department is funded 100% by CILP anyway so this is not a big issue in

this specific case. **So voted. Peter - yes, Doug - yes, Randy – yes, Don – yes, Tristan – no, Christine - yes. Motion carries.**

#### Committee Updates

- Finance Committee – Doug – no meeting, will be meeting tomorrow.
- Land Use Committee – Tristan – met yesterday and worked on several topics – HVAC system at the Breakdown Lane, Courthouse – needs assessment by the state, and long-range planning RFP will be worked on at the last meeting. Doug mentioned that CAB again recommended to DCC to sell the Courthouse. They agreed to a joint meeting to discuss the management and financial issues the Courthouse poses for the County. The meeting will also include the Registry of Deeds and possibly others. DCC will schedule a joint meeting with CAB when we are ready. The Finance Committee will look at the financial implications and analyze the implications first.

Legislative Committee – Christine – Thomas Moakley will be in MV on Friday and is holding two public sessions: 11am-1pm at the Oak Bluffs Library and 2pm-4pm at West Tisbury Library and is looking for input into what legislative initiatives is the island looking for. He has also agreed to meet with us more in-depth and schedule a meeting soon. Martina clarified that the legislation was not filed as she was under the impression that we were asking the towns for support first.

\*Juli left the meeting

**Tristan/Doug moved to file legislation to amend the amount kept at the end of the year from 10 to 25%** Discussion: we would like to do it and we have filed it as a placeholder. We can start that as part of the FinCom meetings that we are about go to. Edgartown – increase revenues, cut expenses.

Randy, why is this specific legislation just being brought to our attention? Martina brought to attention legislation can be brought up for change throughout the year, not just by next week.

**Peter – no, Don – no, Randy – no, Doug – yes (not now), Tristan – yes, Christine – no. The motion does not carry.**

Communication Committee – Doug – draft OpEd is drafted and will be finalized next week, he met with the publisher of MV Times. Martina will file on behalf of the County. Randy asked to be disseminated before it's in the paper, so he is not blindsided. The committee is also actively editing the county website.

Improvements Committee – Don

Manager's Report ( on file).

Appointments are advertised with a deadline of January 31<sup>st</sup>.

#### Committee Update

**Finance Committee** – Norm- Meeting with Tisbury FinCom is scheduled for 1-15-25 at 6pm. Martina and Norm will be at the meeting, and hopefully at least 1 commissioner. 1-29-25 is Chilmark 4-6pm, and Oak Bluffs date will be picked soon.

**Land Use Committee** – no new update that has not been covered already.

**Communication Committee-** Doug – they are discussing improvement to the county website

No other committee reports.

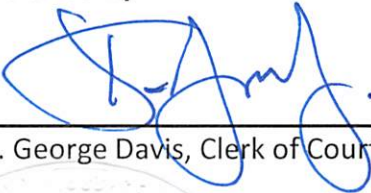
Manager's Report

New Business

Next Dukes County Commissioners Meeting will be on 1-22-2025 at 4:00pm via Zoom.

**Randy/Doug moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:57. So voted Peter- yes, Randy – yes, Don-yes, Doug -yes, Christine - yes. Motion carries.**

**Certified by:**



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T. George Davis, Clerk of Courts

