

Dukes County Advisory Board on Expenditures (CAB)
Meeting Minutes
March 20, 2025
1:00 PM
Hybrid meeting

County Advisory Board Members Present: Arthur Smadbeck – Edgartown, Skipper Manter – West Tisbury, John Cahill – Tisbury, Jeffrey Maida – Chilmark, Thomas Murphy- Aquinnah

Other County Officials Present: Martina Thornton, Juliet Mulinare, Christine Todd, Doug Ruskin

Art Smadbeck called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

Approval of Minutes from 12-26-24 and 3-5-25

**Skipper/John moved to approve the Minutes from 12-26-24 as presented.
Jeffrey – yes, Tom – yes, John – yes, Skipper – yes, Art – yes. The motion carried.**

John would like for the 3-5-2025 minutes to be more detailed. The approval of the March 5th minutes has been tabled.

FY2026 County Budget Review (Summary and detail on file)

Martina asked if the supplemental income request to the towns should be recalculate with the new EQV numbers that were released for FY2026. In the November meeting, it was agreed to put the \$120,710 supplemental income request to the towns for funding as part of their annual town meeting. The split between the towns was based on FY2025 EQV. Art suggested recalculating it based on the new percentage of EQV and circulating the new numbers. Martina mentioned that this would require amendments on the town meeting floor, and for some towns, it will be an increase. She cannot be at all the town meetings and requested the CAB members to be available to make these amendments at their respective meetings.

Martina then proceeded to review the FY2026 proposed budget and the budget memo that was circulated (on file). She outlined various budget considerations, including general increases across departments, insurance premium estimates, health insurance rates, COLA adjustments, and utility costs. Martina also highlighted changes in staffing and budget allocations for specific departments. On the revenue side, she mentioned maintaining registry fee projections, adjusting Norton Point Beach revenue expectations, and using over ARPA interest income to offset the fiscal 2026 budget deficit.

Skipper stated that the ARPA interest is a one-time interest to date. He does not believe we should use this for shortfalls in the budget. He also questioned the decline in the Cape & Islands revenue. Martina explained that the revenue coming in is the same, but only a portion goes into the County budget, as less can be justified as economic development and tourism. The decreased number is due to the variables in the areas that are using the funds.

The Registry of Deeds would like to do a complete overhaul of its recording system. Skipper suggested that the State should take over some of the Registry of Deeds operations to save the county money. Skipper also questioned how much the county is spending on IV (accounting software) and Harpers (payroll software). He brought up again that he would like to see the County “sell” the Courthouse. He questioned if the cost of the new Veterans services officer budget should be lowered due to a new employee coming in. Martina would like to wait to see who will be hired and what step they will start at, and what health insurance plan they will need before changing that department’s budget. Skipper said he would not approve hiring at step 2, as a member of the personnel board.

Doug Ruskin commented that the County is not ready to “sell” the courthouse and that they are working with the state to find a solution to the maintenance of the building.

There were no other questions or comments regarding the FY2026 budget.

Manager & Treasurer Updates

Martina thanked the towns that put the supplemental income in their budget.

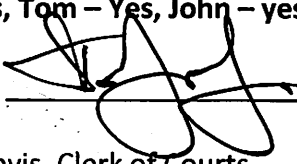
Martina also mentioned the county's plan to discuss the sustainability of funding the county with one-time requests and the possibility of implementing a prescribed mechanism in the Massachusetts General Law. The board encouraged the county to have a detailed and thoughtful discussion on this topic with the towns’ finance committees before coming back to the county advisory board for approval.

There was a discussion at length on letting the courthouse go. The Board would like the State to pay for the necessary upkeep and improvements. Doug would like to have the State pay, but keep the ownership of the building. Doug asked the question if the Courthouse is an asset to the Island as a landmark building. Jeff asked if the State could make changes because it has a historic landmark status. If the State is willing to “take” the building, can there be restrictions on the lease to not allow changes to the building?” Tom looked for the statement made at the last meeting about a State Law stating there must be a courthouse in each County and could not find that law. Martina asked Liza Williamson, the Clerk Magistrate, for that information, and she is looking into it.

John/Tom moved to adjourn the meeting at 1:44pm. So voted.

Jeffrey – yes, Tom – Yes, John – yes, Skipper – yes, Art – yes. Motion carried.

Certified by:



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. George Davis', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

T. George Davis, Clerk of Courts