Dukes County Commission (DCC)
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 6, 2026
4:00 PM
Remote Meeting

Dukes County Commissioners: Christine Todd, Doug Ruskin, Peter Wharton, Don Leopold, Tristan Israel, *Randy Milch

County Staff: Juliet Mulinare, Martina Thornton, Paulo DeOliveira, Suzane Jakel

Others: Geoff Freeman, Kate Putman

Christine called the meeting to order at 4:00pm.

Minutes from 4-15-26 & 4-23-26
Peter/Doug move to approve the minutes from 4-15-26 & 4-23-26. Doug- yes, Peter- yes, Don- yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries.

Airport Grant Assurances (document on file)
Geoff presented MassDOT Grant Assurances for approval to secure a grant for 80% of the airport's project to replace the segmented circle ($15,239.15).

Doug/Peter move to approve the grant assurances for the airport as presented. Doug- yes, Peter- yes, Don- yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries.

Tristan joined 4:04pm

Appointment process for an interim commissioner
Juli Vanderhoop resigned as a county commissioner. Christine would like to get the information about the open position out to the public. Doug introduced Kate Putman and would like to have her considered to fill the open commissioner's position. Martina stated that in the Administrative Code, it is stipulated that there should be notice out the opening to the public first and the press release, of Juli's resignation, went out today. DCC will review any interested parties at the next meeting.

Committee Updates
Finance Committee – The audit has been completed. The finance committee will review it at its next meeting. The auditors will be invited to the DCC meeting to answer any questions once it is finalized.

Employee step increase - FY26 budget amendment - The personnel board decided to grant a step increase at the anniversary of a hire date as opposed to the promotion date. This has budgetary implications and will require both DCC and CAB approval for budget amendments. The Finance committee voted to recommend if the DCC agrees with the personnel board's decision to amend the budgets and have Martina and Juliet propose how to cover the increase. Martina presented the recommendation in her Manager's report.

***Randy Joined at 4:32pm**
Discussion followed.

Doug/Tristan moved to not approve the decision of the personnel board and approve the step increase for the Director of Veterans Services effective at the promotion date anniversary in August. Doug- yes, Peter- yes, Tristan- yes, Don- no, Randy- Yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries.

Doug wanted to add that the Personnel Bylaws should be updated so it is clear going forward. It was decided to create a separate motion for that.

Doug made a motion to change the Personnel Bylaws so it reflects that the step increase is granted at the anniversary of the hire date, unless there was a promotion, it which case the step increase going forward will be granted at the anniversary of the promotion date;

and for the board to go through whatever process is necessary to update the Personal Bylaws so the process is clear should it occur in the future that a promotion happens mid-review period. Discussion followed.

Doug then rescinded both of his motions.

Randy/Tristan moved that the County Commission begin the steps necessary to amend the Personnel Bylaws So that step increases are made effective the pay period after the anniversary of the hire date or the most recent anniversary of the promotion date, whichever is nearer. Doug- yes, Peter- yes, Tristan- yes, Don- yes, Randy- Yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries

Land Use Committee-
Tristan/Doug moved to go into executive session in accordance with MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21 (a) 2 to consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body, invite Martina Thornton and Juliet Mulinare into the executive session and to return in open session.
Doug- yes, Peter- yes, Tristan- yes, Randy- yes, Don- yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries.

Meeting paused at 5:00pm
Meeting reconvened at 5:40pm

Tristan/Randy move to have the county complete a survey of the Katama property on Arrow Ave and explore the option of declaring it surplus. Doug- yes, Peter- yes, Randy- yes, Tristan- yes, Don- yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries.

Nominating Committee – In view of the time Randy requested this topic be discussed at the next meeting. All agreed.

Manager's Report-
Martina announced Diane Conroy LaCivita resigned effective May 12th and the County started advertising for her replacement.

After Action Review hotwash for the Winter Blizzard was conducted on April 30th with emergency managers and key partners participating in person and on Zoom. The final report should be available in the next month or so.
Island-wide Emergency Management Strategic Plan – deadline for comments on the draft was May 1st. Martina is hoping that the plan will be finalized in the next week or two, at which point it will be posted on the county website and disseminated to all the commissioners.

Martina is working with key partners to find a replacement for *First Stop*. She is currently working on a contract with *FindHelp,* which hopefully will be presented at the next meeting. The contract will also be brought to the finance committee to review the financial ramifications. There is a request for the county to be the license holder of Vineyard

Volunteers. Healthy Aging will cover the cost for FY27 but they are looking for someone else to be the contracted licensor. Christine requested we review this at the next meeting.

New Business-

Doug would like to bring up the Governance Task Force as it has concluded their efforts in its initial research.

He feels the full county commission should undertake an exploration of the possibilities of a regional county of government format by actively engaging the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), and one or two other counties that have taken this form to understand more fully what they went through in getting it accomplished, and how they have achieved the success they have. He feels that would require a few people going to Franklin and possibly other places. He has informally requested that Randy, Kate, and Martina take a trip.

Also, he thinks that simultaneously we should be approaching finance committees and select boards in open meetings to talk about what we've been doing, and gauge their interest in shared services, and the extent to which they believe the county could be a facilitator of those services. So far from his conversations, there is feedback in both directions on whether the county is the right vehicle for that.

Christine sees nothing wrong with supporting the efforts to explore the possibilities. She doesn't think we need a vote on this, as we've already voted to support the Governance Task Force to do the exploration. Tristan feels the group should travel first to gather information before going to the finance committee meetings. Martina has a lot of information that was already supplied by the FRCOG. She feels several questions could be answered with these documents. She would like to make sure DCC has the pertinent information that was already shared before going to Franklin, asking questions. She feels that this exploration is separate from the county's effort to entice the towns to work together and share services; these two things should not be tied together. Christine agreed they are entirely different initiatives.

Randy would like to read that Franklin paperwork. He would like to get a copy of it all and read it all before we go on a trip. He thinks people approaching FINCOMs and select boards before doing the research would lead to not knowing what to ask them, only very broad questions, which would be regarded as sort of an odd thing to ask in the context. Martina will prepare a document summarizing the FRCOG governance structure and services - showing what relevant information can be comparable to Dukes County, what is different, and what is the same and send it to Randy along with all the documents received from FRCOG.

Doug would like to continue this conversation and asked for 15-20 minutes at the next meeting.

Don would also like to review the documents Franklin sent and have a plan before we create any travel arrangements.

**Tristan left at 5:56pm

Calendar – Next DC Commission meeting is on Wednesday, May 20th at 4pm

Randy/Peter moved to adjourn. Doug- yes, Peter- yes, Randy- yes, Don- yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries.

Meeting ended at 6:01pm

Certified by:

T. George Davis, Clerk of Courts