

Dukes County Commission (DCC)
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 18, 2026
4:00 PM
Remote Meeting

Dukes County Commissioners: Doug Ruskin, Randy Milch, Tristan Israel, Peter Wharton, Juli Vanderhoop, Christine Todd
County Staff: Juliet Mulinare, Martina Thornton, Diane Conroy-LaCivita, Suzanne Jakel

Other: Norm Werthwein, Sue Silk, Sakiko Isomichi, Rise Terney, Ted Gavin, Robert Johnston

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

Minutes from 2-4-2026, 3-3-26, 3-4-26 – all sets of minutes were tabled until the next meeting.

Annual Appointments – Rise answered questions about her participation on the board.

Tristan/Doug moved to appoint Rise Terney to the Dukes County Housing Authority (3-year term). Doug- yes, Randy- yes, Tristan- yes, Peter- yes, Juli- yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries

Health Council report - Kathleen Samways presented a review of the Health Council's work. Any questions commissioners have shall be sent to Martina to give to Kathleen to respond to in writing.

MV Commission - Sakiko asked for support letters for two climate-related projects and grant applications:

Project 1: Coastal Resilience – two components:

1. Coastal Resilience Advisory Board - to build capacity to coordinate with all six towns and community groups to support regionally critical coastal infrastructure. This takes place concurrently with the second part of this project, described below. The Board would review the Resilience Roadmap and coordinate its implementation.
2. Resilience Roadmap - to build a roadmap of infrastructure upgrades to ensure a sound sequence of infrastructure upgrades in the near, mid, and long term. This takes place in 3 steps:
 - Step (1) review and update existing conditions, climate hazards, visions, and several studies and design concepts proposed for the area over the past decade (6 months). This process leverages the ongoing work advanced by the Town of Tisbury, Town of Oak Bluffs, and other entities.
 - Step (2) identify any missing components and explore alternative design concepts (12 months)
 - Step (3) high-level assessment of overall economic, ecological, and social impact of the infrastructure upgrades (6 months)

Project 2: Vineyard Marsh Stewards

Marshes act as buffers against storms and flooding, filter water, hold carbon, and host habitat for many species, including our food sources like shellfish. While some marshes are expected to be lost by almost a third, there can be an increase depending on land use over the next few decades. This 1-year project builds a support system for marsh stewardship across municipalities and nonprofits island-wide in 3 steps as follows:

1. Gather existing marsh data from the various State agencies and other entities.

2. Assemble with major salt marsh owners and municipalities to review data, review use and restoration activities, and discuss priority areas and preliminary collaborations.
3. Organize an educational event to share marsh stories and data.

Tristan/Randy moved to have Martina write and send letters of support for both of the climate related projects. Doug- yes, Juli- yes, Peter- yes, Randy- yes, Tristan- yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries

Associate Commissioners for Disabilities - Sue Silk requested the creation of a Dukes County Disability Commission. She wants to create a group to try to seek grant opportunities for projects that need to be updated on the island. She would like an assessment of every publicly owned building on the island for ADA standards. Sue is planning on meeting with volunteers to start working on this kind of project. The commissioners will review further if creating a commission is the right move or if it should be more of a committee.

Community Action Committee of Cape and Islands Board - Martina requested to appoint Diane Conroy-LaCivita to the CACCI board instead of her as a way to get Diane more in contact with a Cape agency that is providing the same services that Diane oversees.

Doug/Tristan moved to appoint Diane Conroy-LaCivita to the Community Action Committee of Cape and Islands Board (3-year appointment). Doug- yes, Peter- yes, Randy- yes, Tristan- yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries

Ted Gavin - spoke about his action in his first week as the Dukes County representative on the Steamship Board. He met with leaders on the topics of the construction of the terminal in Woods Hole, the new True North project, new reservation system. He has had a few listening sessions that he felt were successful. He reviewed several of the hot-button topics. He is aware of the complications and is working on clarifying some of those issues.

FY27 Budget Amendments (spreadsheets on file) - The Finance Committee authorized Martina and Juliet to rework the budget and use up to \$15,000 of ARPA interest to balance the budget in an effort to eliminate the supplemental income warrant article. They have been able to do that with \$700 of the ARPA interest. Martina asked for approval of the FY2027 budget amendment as presented, including the use of \$700 dollars of the ARPA interest to balance the budget.

Randy/Tristan moved to approve the budget as presented and withdraw the placeholder warrant articles for supplemental income from the requests for the upcoming annual town meetings. Doug- yes, Peter- yes, Randy- yes, Tristan- yes, Juli- yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries

Committee Updates

Finance Committee – Juliet talked to a DOR representative, who gave her a different name to contact to answer the questions the committee has, and she will follow up.

Land Use Committee- Will meet next month.

Communication Committee – Will meet at the end of the month.

Governance Task Force – They are looking into the ability to make changes to the County governance structure without the need for a Charter Study. Randy pointed out the ability to create a town advisory board. The whole concept is to have the towns be proactive in asking for things, and the County be the delivery mechanism. The task force will start talking with the towns informally, and then formally, to move that message through. Doug hopes to have a fair amount done by the end of April. Tristan brought up his concern about the task force having those talks with the towns before reviewing with the full commission. Doug feels that the updates are enough to inform the commissioners. Tristan also suggested making some legislative tweaks that may make the commissioner's job easier, because legislation might change things in an easier way. Doug would like this to be a town-driven process. Tristan disagreed, stating the purpose of the task force was to look at different options to explore, to make the county work better, or have some other structure.

Nominating Committee – Nothing at this time.

Legislative Committee – Christine is looking for updates on legislation.

Manager's Report

Finance Committee recommendations to DCC: To approve up to \$25K to from ARPA administrative funds to support the technology transition costs.

Tristan/Randy moved to approve of spending up to \$25K from ARPA funds for IT costs. Doug- yes, Peter- yes, Randy- yes, Tristan- yes, Juli- yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries

The Emergency Management consultant proposal for the after-action report after the Winter Storm is \$17K. Martina will adjust the scope to better align with what the island needs and is requesting to use \$10k from the ARPA funds to be spent on the after-action report, as it would benefit the island-wide emergency management strategic plan we are undertaking, and it is outside of the original scope. The emergency managers discussed this at their meeting. They all agreed to participate, they agreed it is a good idea, and they are supporting getting the after-action report done.

Tristan/Randy moved to approve spending up to \$10K from ARPA funds for the after-action report as proposed. Doug- yes, Peter- yes, Randy- yes, Tristan- yes, Juli- yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries

Doug would like to allocate more money to IT. He thinks we need to spend a little more heavily on technology and get ourselves fully into the 21st century. He asked that the topic be put on the next Finance Committee agenda. Tristan suggested a meeting with Martina, Juliet, Paulo, and Brad to review the tech needs first and then come to the Finance Committee with additional requests if needed.

Emergency Management – Draft Island-wide Emergency Management Strategic Plan presentation and workshop with stakeholders will be held on **Wednesday, March 25th** at the Oak Bluffs Fire Station Meeting Room.

Elections: The nomination papers are available for pick up at the West Tisbury Town Clerk's office 7:30 am to 12:30 pm. The deadline to submit signed Nominating papers to the town clerks is **April 28th**.

Friends of Sengekontacket are requesting approval of an educational event on July 11th at State Beach. Martina is asking to waive the fee for a beach permit.

Tristan/Randy moved wave the beach permit fee for this event. Doug- yes, Peter- yes, Randy- yes, Tristan- yes, Juli- yes, Christine- yes. Motion carries

Calendar - DC Advisory Board on Expenditures – March 27th at 1pm
DC Commission meeting –April 1st at 4pm

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

Meeting ended at 6:07pm

Certified by:

T. George Davis, Clerk of Courts

