

Police Study Group (PSG) – July 22, 2021 6:00 pm virtual meeting

Attending members: Select Board members: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil, Rita Farrell,  
Town Administrator, ex-officio member: Becky Torres,  
Officer In Charge (OIC) of the Shutesbury Police Dept, (SPD): Kristin Burgess,  
Personnel Board member: Melody Chartier,  
Finance Committee member: Susie Mosher,  
Community at large members: Cheryl Hayden, Mike Vinskey, Mary Jo Johnson  
General Public: Gary Rehorka, Rachel Schwab, Brighid Murphy, Ellen McKay, Tim Logan, Kate McConnell

At this initial meeting of the Police Study Group Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil was elected chair. Susie Mosher volunteered to take minutes for the meeting. If transcripts can be obtained via the zoom recording, others may be willing to edit them into minutes for future meetings.

Melissa led a review of the Select Board's charge to the group. To inform our work, a report explaining the community policing practices and other day-to-day activities of the SPD will be written up by Officer Burgess by the end of August.

The charge to the committee addresses seven areas (summarized)

1. What are Shutesbury's needs in the area of public safety and policing?
2. Are the current functions of the SPD working for the town?
3. Is the current staffing structure of the SPD meeting the expectations and needs of the town?
4. Should alternative structures such as shared chief or contracted police services be explored?
5. What are the legal, administrative steps that would be required to implement an alternate model? What would the financial impact be?
6. What have previous explorations into alternatives for Shutesbury shown?
7. If alternative models do not prove worthwhile, what modifications to the current structure, or alternative delivery of some services would help? What would the financial impact be?

The data from the call log will be shared with Cheryl Hayden for the purposes of making a spreadsheet, enabling the group to quantify some of the daily police work.

Susie Mosher will find samples of community surveys used to ascertain the experiences and views of policing in other communities. We may adapt these ideas for a survey for Shutesbury.

Mike Vinskey will report on Shutesbury's history of past attempts to combine police departments with other towns.

The importance of community input was discussed. The Shutesbury survey would be one source of community input. It was voted to have our future meetings start with a public comment period in the same manner as the Select Board starts its meetings. The public can also email or write a letter with their input to the group. We discussed the possibility of occasional listening sessions over the course of group's fact-finding work. The Select Board may also hold a public session once the group reports on its findings and makes recommendations.

The pros and cons of meeting-in-person, virtually on Zoom, or using or a hybrid format was considered. Melody Chartier and Becky Torres will work together to see if the technology can adequately support a

hybrid meeting model. If they are successful, our next two meetings are scheduled for Thursdays – August 12 and 26 at 5:30 pm outside behind Town Hall if the weather cooperates.

Between now and the next meeting, committee members who are currently using their personal email addresses will create a separate email address for their town government work/communication. Approved minutes, informational resources, and links will be posted on the Police Department page on the town website for the public to read.

The group was asked to be mindful of how we speak about our group and its work. This is an information gathering process that will take time to research and discuss. It was also mentioned that we will speak objectively and directly in our meetings, even though there may be some uncomfortableness with our OIC in the group. Officer Burgess recognized that sentiment.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48 pm.