

Shutesbury Board of Selectmen Tuesday February 12, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Members present: Chairwoman Elaine Puleo and Members Al Springer and April Stein.

Also Present: Town Administrator Rebecca Torres, Administrative Secretary Leslie Bracebridge recording.

Chairman Puleo opened the meeting at 7:06 A.M. at the Shutesbury Town Hall.

Topics

1. Regional School District Planning Board (RSDPB) update-numbers:

- By last Thursday's RSDPB meeting the consultant had determined that the percentage used in calculating the 7-12 enrollment was the PreK-6 percentage and they had to be corrected in his report. When he went back and did so, the numbers for gains and losses for the potential member towns were more consistent.
- The adjustment affected Pelham's original higher savings, but is recognized as more realistic by a spokesperson for that town as well.
- All representatives, finance directors, and finance people from all towns are going through the report and double-checking the figures.
- There is not yet a final report from the financial consultants.
- Until we get the first 5 years of bills, we are not going to know exactly what it will cost. This is just a "guesstimate." These are just ballpark figures. The projection is a snapshot in time. It is a complicated model that will change as student enrollments, state aid, cost of health insurance and other costs change.
- What are the costs for Shutesbury's teachers to ramp up to Amherst's pay? - \$268,000 for Leverett and Shutesbury combined. Shutesbury's alone is in the back pages of the workbooks.
- Are the workbooks online yet? Probably not until they've been double-checked. It is what it is.
- Amherst's town forum has been changed from tomorrow night to March 2.
- It would be wonderful to have the Consultants present at the forums but there is nothing in the budget for that and the Board did not get the CIG (Community Incentive Grant). Once the consultants are done, they're done.
- The workbooks will be made accessible as soon as they are complete.
- One problem is so many questions are regarding issues that will be determined by the future regional agreement. We can only say how issues may be addressed at this time.
- There are so many things unknown and we're trying to make a decision.
- The only decision we're making is if there is enough value to go forward.
- Many decisions will be dependent on future circumstances. There could be a time when a decision (that isn't right now) might be the optimum thing to do.
- Amherst might want to close a school. The flexibility to utilize the resources of all the 4 towns is where there is potential in the concept.
- The next vote is saying we're willing to get more details and give the information to the public to vote on in November.
- The consultants gave an excellent presentation.
- The people who went to all the meetings knew what was being said, but it was hard for the people who have not been to all the meetings to absorb all the information.
- A 5-year rolling average is fair.
- The Shutesbury Regional School District Study Committee members will be the only people who will be voting on whether or not to move forward in March.

- The big concern that people are missing is the fact that things are changing, have changed, and will continue to change, and that's what we're looking at. We are looking at the issue because what we had at the region 5 – 10 years ago is gone.
- Ed Reform has caused so many alignment issues that the Shutesbury School curriculum has changed.
- Does it make sense to create a question and answer sheet for the Website? The questions and answers will be posted as soon as it is complete. Elaine has made one and sent it out to committee members for review. Everyone is sending answers. Elaine and Andy are compiling them, they will be posted and they will be available for the meeting.
- The meeting will start with a presentation of where the process has gone. We will sit there until all the people have asked all the questions they want to ask. We will stop when people are repeating the same questions.
- Shutesbury's forum is February 27th, Leverett's is the 28th, Pelham's is March 2nd and Amherst's is March 2nd.
- Everything is based on enrollment numbers if we use the same agreement. Shutesbury's numbers are staying the same and other towns are dropping, so Shutesbury's total assessment will go up.
- The 1990 School Building Committee used figures based on a trajectory that went up but instead, enrollment peaked and went down.
- There are not a lot of building lots left, and people aren't moving out as much as they used to.
- The goal of regionalizing is to find an assessment formula that is beneficial to all communities.
- Regionalization is not going to create a savings in the tax rate. It is to continue to provide the level of education provided now.
- This is a snapshot of today, that's all that we can do.
- Is Union 28 in agreement with the numbers? Director of Finance and Operations Michael Kociela is working on it.
- If Leverett and Pelham decide to regionalize and Shutesbury does not, what would happen? It is possible but not certain that Union 28 would go away. (The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education) DESE has to approve all of the proposed changes.) we possibly would be in a vulnerable place:
 - We could contract out for a Superintendent.
 - Erving is self-sufficient by tuitioning out its students.
 - New Salem-Wendell is a region on its own, so they already get their transportation aid.
- All 4 towns will vote on the same day. If all 4 towns do not agree, there is no agreement and all 4 towns will have to re-think.
- If we vote to regionalize K through 6 and one town doesn't approve, it would be possible for the approving towns to re-negotiate and go forward. If the question is for K through 12 and all four towns do not approve, it does not happen.
- Leverett residents see their future big tax bills for independent Internet as a shift in household costs from their current residential telephone and Internet bills to taxes.
- We're trying to get the savings to \$125,000 for each town for year one and then to expect it will fluctuate.
- The first 5 years will cost more but also there will be assistance from the state.
- The people who are questioning and worrying are coming to the meetings. Many people say: I don't know, I don't have kids in school, I don't care.
- One criticism is that the educational arguments are not as clear as people had hoped:
 - How can you know?
 - Does it help for our teachers to be in a group team teaching and training together?

- What about really cool training materials that are purchased and shared all around the region. Those things are unknown.
- How will it be fair when Amherst has the highest number of votes? (They have the most votes at the region now.)
 - When you walk into that (Regional School Committee meeting) room you do not wear your Shutesbury hat. It's about kids; not about my town's kids.
 - The hope is that it could give us more resources for maybe an alternative school and utilize what we have.
- Change is always hard; but change happens. We know things are changing now and will continue to change. The question is do you let change happen to you or do you influence the way you change.

2. Budget Update, 4-Town meeting: Becky:

- Right now we're OK.
- On page 1, DOR and Shutesbury finance personnel all agreed to remove \$61,566 from the revenues line 20. \$14,000 will be used in next year's budget. The balance will be applied on the recap. This year it is held in escrow by the accountant.
- This is a budget and not a balance sheet, so the \$61,566 does not show up in the budget.
- The Governor's budget still has \$40,000 of aid that we are not adding to our budget revenue. Our bottom line is now tight and we hope the state aid will come through.
- The Capital items were discussed last week and further discussion will take place.
- OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits) is built into the budget. Free cash will also be put into OPEB. This year we are appropriating \$20,000 and asking \$30,000 from Free Cash.
- The Selectmen will meet with the Finance Committee and School Committee on March 5.
- We're holding steady on the budget. Some changes will still come.
- Right now employee compensation has been put in at 3% matching the Police contract for this year.
- There's potential for the legislature to make it more comfortable if they support the Governor's recommendation.
- A fire truck has been mentioned the last couple of years and the Finance Committee requested Chief Tibbetts to begin the process of defining exactly what the Department is looking for and fully spec out the parameters to that end.
- There was a newspaper article that said that Sunderland is going ahead with a regional fire department: Sunderland and Leverett are going to get together. Town Administrator Torres will talk with the Town Administrators from Sunderland and Leverett about the validity of the newspaper article.
- A front end loader is being requested by the Highway Department; it is estimated at \$141,500. The current front end loader needs new tires; it's 18 years old; it needs a transmission and the rust is starting to show. It has 6,700 miles on it. The anticipated front end loader lifespan is estimated at 20 years.
 - Construction companies use them every day for 20 years; ours sits much of the time. Construction companies are not feeding salt and sand into trucks. Construction vehicles are not used for public safety.
- The Old Town Hall is currently only used for records storage and protection. There is a growing push for the building to serve more of a display/museum function. Town Clerk Leslie Bracebridge expressed agreement that the building would make a very nice public display/activity space, though it would take a lot renovations, plus parking, handicapped access, water and septic for it to get a public occupancy permit. When the Old Town Hall is converted to a public display/activity space, Leslie feels it will be time for the town to build a newer larger records storage vault to replace the

1931 vault in current use at the Old Town Hall. Preferably the new vault will be at the same Town Hall as the town clerk's office.

- Fire trucks run \$400,000.
- A vibratory roller was not requested at this time.

3. **MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority) calendar:**

- The MSBA has a new grant opportunity, with very tight timelines, which focuses on windows, roofs and boilers,
 - The process includes selecting from a list of OPMs and contractors and the project has to be accepted by a town meeting vote by April.
 - There are a number of requirements and hefty fees that Becky will explore. The town will receive 31% plus a possible 30% back, depending on Shutesbury's EQV and income figures.
- Capital Plan Committee member Jeff Quackenbush and Town Buildings Committee Member Andrew Webster feel this grant is the best option.
- There are a lot of unknowns. Until you actually peel off the sheetrock from the wall you don't know what you'll find. The original estimate is \$100,000.
- We might need a special town meeting in March (for the school gym roof.)

4. **Flood Plain Bylaw update on notice:**

- There was no published legal notice of the Floodplain Bylaw Public Hearing.
- Therefore, the Attorney General's Office required a notice of the defect to instead be published after the fact, with a 21 day period for filing claims of the defect being misleading or otherwise prejudicial. This has been done.
- The claim period expires on February 14, at which time the Town Clerk will notify the Attorney General's Office of any complaints filed (none so far) and the 90 day Attorney General's approval period will resume. (Clerk's note: No claims were filed, the clerk certified such to the Attorney General's office and the Attorney General's office ultimately approved the bylaw on 2/21/13.)

Select Board Action Items

1. **Maintenance contracts for Generators:** No actions taken.

2. **New ALTRU LOI Proposal:**

- Altru representatives want to know exactly what the taxes will be, but the Assessors can't say.
- Becky will accompany Assessors to a DOR training session on assessing solar arrays.
- Relative to the "host customer fee," ALTRU made a proposal designed around how much revenue the panels bring in, and recalculated in 5-year reviews. If revenues go down, the "host customer fee" would go down by a similar percent but not below \$.005. Becky requested that ALTRU provide in the agreement a mechanism for the town to receive increased benefit if the revenues increased to the solar farm. This proposal accomplished this.

Selectmen unanimously voted to move forward with the terms identified above and further defined in more detail in the February 11, 2012, 5:58 PM email from Sustainable Strategies 2050 LLC President Rayo Bhungara to Shutesbury Town Administrator Torres put before the Select Board at this meeting. Selectmen still want to see the final read of the contract before signing it.

3. **Selectmen unanimously voted to approve the January 29, 2013 minutes as written.**

4. **And 5:** Selectmen will sign the payroll and vendor warrants as soon as they are available, completion of which has been affected by the circumstances of the February 8 historic winter storm.

Topics the Chairman Could Not Reasonably Have Anticipated

1. **Selectmen will invite the Water Resources Committee to the March 12 Select Board meeting** to review to the Water Resources Committee charge. Select Board representative to the Water Resources Committee April Stein reported:

- a. There are no problems right now.
- b. The Lake is clean and the random sampling of wells came back clean.
- c. The Committee is working meticulously to develop their mission assignment.
- d. The Committee has not yet determined if a plan is needed.

The Select Board **adjourned at 8:20 A.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Bracebridge
Administrative Secretary