

Shutesbury Board of Selectmen Tuesday July 30, 2013 Meeting Minutes

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

Also Present: Town Administrator Rebecca Torres, Administrative Secretary Leslie Bracebridge recording, and Pelham resident Fred Vanderbeck.

Member April Stein opened the meeting at 6:30 P.M. at the Shutesbury Town Hall

Appointments

Police Chief Harding:

- Benjamin Peters will be brought on as an Auxiliary Officer next week. Benjamin will start by sitting in at the dispatch center to see how the calls originate and how the dispatch operates.
- Upon Chief Harding's request, Highway Superintendent Tim Hunting has agreed to re-paint the school markings on the roads at the intersection of West Pelham and Leverett Roads when Tim has the repaved sections of Wendell and Locks Pond Roads painted.
- Dog Officer Long will be sending out some letters in response to dog complaints. Her Dog Officer phone is fixed and is again accepting messages.
- Things are working out positively with new Sergeant Masiuk.
- Officer Sawicki will start working on his own on the August schedule weekend shifts.
- Officer Gelinis is not available on weekends so is only working Monday nights.
- Schools resume on August 27.

Topics

1. Knot Weed:

- Becky is working on an RFP for a range of knotweed treatment options including chemical and mechanical methods in anticipation of the varying wishes of voters.
- The RFP is time sensitive as chemical treatments depend on flowers in bloom over an up-coming 6-week period.
- There are 22 known patches of knotweed on the list that was presented to the Select Board.
- Becky advised against asking for information about private knotweed colonies, as was suggested by the group of residents who brought the roadside knotweed list to the Board:
 - Private property owners may become confused about what the town can do.
 - Public money cannot be used on private property.
 - Any town survey should only include what the town can address.
 - Information about knotweed treatment options can be posted on the website for private property owners to refer to.
- Becky was not able to attend the July 25 Conservation Commission meeting and does not know if the subject of knotweed was brought up with that Committee yet.
 - Becky had to prioritize working with the Conservation Commission and Highway Superintendent Tim Hunting to prepare a Notice of Intent (NOI) to replace a culvert on Baker Road that has had a temporary repair, and is awaiting a culvert replacement. See more under "Topics That the Chairman Could Not Reasonably Have Anticipated" below.
 - The culvert NOI deadline was met, so now Becky can turn her attention to the knotweed.

2. Cell Tower – AT&T 3rd Party:

- Recently AT&T sent a cell tower contractor to approach Shutesbury about installing a cell tower.
 - With that in mind, a survey of the land behind town hall was done by a third party.

- An AT&T attorney is reviewing a sample RFP (Request for Proposal) with Shutesbury's Town Counsel Donna MacNicol. Over the years, Town Counsel has done similar work with the same AT&T attorney preparing RFP's for other towns.
- Is the Selectboard interested in putting out an RFP? AT&T would definitely respond; other companies might also respond.
- The proposed location is about 500 feet back into the woods. The farther it is away from public sight lines the better chance it would have of getting community support.
- Very diverse groups of our community have lobbied for better cell service.
- In addition to its proposed improvement of cell service on Route 202, it will likely improve cell service to the general area local to Town Hall including: West Pelham, Pelham Hill, Town Farm and Cooleyville Roads.
- It will not improve cell service at the Lake. AT&T is not interested in the Lake area, as there is not enough density to provide the return that they need on their infrastructure investment.
- A cell tower on town property behind Town Hall would create a cash flow for the town.
- They would build an access road on the east side of the field.
- No one expressed support for a camouflaged tower.

Selectmen unanimously voted to sign and send out the RFP for a Wireless Telecommunications Tower as prepared by Town Counsel and the attorney for AT&T.

- Becky will share the approved RFP with the Planning Board, ZBA, and Conservation Commission.
- Becky invited the Select Board to send her any questions for her up-coming meeting with Town Counsel and the AT&T attorney in Greenfield.
- The base taxes would be \$15,000/year and could grow to \$30,000 or \$50,000 if other companies add onto the tower.
- The location is so far out in the woods, that it would be years before the town would have another use for the same location.
- Becky invited questions to be added to the list for when she meets with Town Counsel and the AT&T.
- If a tower is going to come to the town, it would be nice for the revenues to also come to the town.
- The final approval would be a vote of town meeting.

3. Regionalization Update: In the presence of Fred Vanderbeck from Pelham who regularly attends the Regional School District Planning Board meetings, Becky & Fred reported on previous meetings:

- Once the Amherst members of the Committee started to talk about financials and assessment formulas they were not comfortable with the way things were going. They need to take more time to think about a 3 town K-6 region with the possibility of Shutesbury joining, and have put off a vote until spring 2014. It's very complex, more time and consideration is needed.
- The financials do not benefit Amherst, and if Shutesbury joins, Amherst would lose a little.
- Shutesbury could gain, but only with the statutory assessment method, and Leverett and Pelham are not happy with the statutory assessment method.
- The more it's looked at, the less efficiency is identified in the PreK to 6 model. The Superintendent would have even more school committee members to manage than with the current schools configuration.
- Everybody is "taking a deep breath" to re-evaluate things.
- In March Shutesbury had caused the towns not to go forward with a PreK to 12 even the majority of members wanted PreK-12.
- At the most recent Regional School District Planning Board (RSDPB) meeting people who had previously supported PreK-6 said what they really wanted: PreK-12.

- A list was made by the financial team about PreK-12 assessments and different configurations.
- The outcome was that all 4 towns would re-look at all alternatives.
- Becky didn't get the exact wording of the final motion. Basically, it was to extend the deadline of the vote until April. There will be no November vote on the issue of regionalization.
- People are sorting out a lot of issues.
- A new meeting of the Regional School District Planning Board is scheduled for August 7th.
- Elaine wants a Shutesbury Regional School District Planning Committee (SRSDPC) meeting before the Board meeting, but we're not sure it can be scheduled with a lot of different conflicts.
- The deeper we went into the complexities of the agreement and the financial data, it became more pronounced how complicated it is.
- The Finance Subcommittee was working toward a plan where no town would pay more in the next year than they had paid in the previous year.
- Shutesbury and Amherst would lose in 2nd and third years with Mark Abrams' plan as presented.
- The issue of Shutesbury turning down regionalization in 1992 is still present.
- In 1992, as in the current 7th -12th grades agreement, all 4 towns have to agree.
 - This is why Shutesbury withdrew in March.
 - If any town turns down regionalization, the process stops.
 - Having a totally separate town meeting article for a change from all 4 towns agreeing to the majority of towns agreeing has come up by a member at the July RSDPB meeting.
 - The 4th town would have to go along with whatever change is agreed to.
- Becky: "We would not have a region today if that existed." If Amherst joins with Pelham and Leverett and that is put into place, then Pelham and Leverett could tell Amherst what to do at any given time. The concept is not well thought out.
- Fred: In the eastern part of state, not all, but some votes are decided by a majority.
- Fred: this would be a separate issue (from Regionalization.) The change would take a vote of all 4 towns. Becky sees this as a safeguard.
- Fred answered the question: Do people see Shutesbury as an impediment? "Yes."
 - Becky thinks they are not being thoughtful enough about the bigger picture. Until getting all 4 towns to agree as a committee is embraced, there will be no regionalization.
- April: It's complicated and it's not a done deal for the other towns.
- Becky: Pelham is in because the numbers are so good. If Pelham's numbers had come in the way Shutesbury's did, Pelham would have been out.
- Fred: The big reports have been talked about more than the finances in the last few years.
- Fred: The other part of the Pelham issue is fewer kids:
 - If there was a school issue in the past, parents used to show up and vote and leave.
 - Now their numbers are less than half of what they were.
 - You can't sustain the school on School Choice, or raise taxes.
- Fred: The August 7 RSDPB meeting is very important. That's when moving forward will be determined with more clarity than how it was described at the Amherst Select Board meeting. (See the status report of Chairman Andy Steinberg written for the Amherst Board of Selectmen.)
- Discussion of PreK-12 or PreK-6: PreK-6 would be much easier to sell to the smaller towns. Amherst prefers a PreK-12. The majority of the committee preferred PreK-12.
- Fred: Over time the preference depends on who is on the school committees. Becky: That is why a regional agreement has to go beyond school committees and why all 4 towns need to vote to make significant changes like closing a school or changing the agreement. Fred: closing a school is dealt with in statute including the DESE except for Shutesbury because Shutesbury's school is paid off.
- Fred - There are different views in Pelham for different uses for the school:

- Some want to keep it a school.
- We are already integrated with Amherst.
 - Some lines might be changed, or
 - Some grades could come up to Pelham and some grades would go down.
- Because the school has cable, it could be used as a business incubator.
- Pelham is close to Amherst and close to Shutesbury parents driving to Amherst to work.
 - It has to be good decision making.
- Becky: You can group the small towns on some issues but not others. Each town has varying groups that are more vocal.
- Wendell voted it down and New Salem voted to regionalize with Orange.
- April: The economy and the world has changed in 23 years.
- Becky: If we went statutory and PreK-12, the potential to save money goes up.
- Becky: The region shares the spikes in special education, leveling them out.
- Fred: Amherst tries hard for inclusion.
- Becky: Shutesbury created a preschool years ago for inclusion. Union 28 does not share SPED costs. You can't see that (sharing of costs) in the regional assessment.
- April: Just in terms of diversity your child would potentially have a choice to go where you want to go. Al: We already have that with school choice.
- Becky: You have the potential of taking a school and making it a magnet school and competing with charter schools.
- April: Boundaries are artificial. For regionalization to happen, it will have to be in steps.
- Becky: Doesn't feel all the communities need to be restricted to the artificial PreK-6. For them to be held back by one community would not be fair. We are creative. We have more to talk about.
- April: Something has to change.
- Becky: Bring something solid that the voters can agree upon.
- Becky: It's difficult to have constant criticism about the complex process. It takes a lot of discussion to get to the place of agreement. That's why they brought in an advisor to communicate to the public. Calling it advertising is not fair to its purpose of how to take the information and present it to the public. We haven't solved what we're coming up with. Communication is critical and communicating a complex issue is tough.
- April: That is part of the process. There is the process of the committee and the process within the towns.
- Becky: Whatever we come up with has to be communicated in a clear way. Don't fault that effort.
- Al: But we will only get one opinion: to regionalize.
- Becky: When a committee comes up with a project, if the Selectboard decides we need something, and they bring it to the public, they are not going to give you why you don't want it; that's not rational. You don't need to tell people that.
- Al: People need to know if we don't regionalize this is what will happen.
- Becky: Things will stay the same. Financial stresses are what we can't be sure of. You can imagine if it is more efficient and streamlined, if there are better communications between the 2 systems, there would be improvements.
- April: If the committee had come to the meeting in March and said this doesn't make sense the process would have stopped. The research says that some form of regionalization makes sense.
- Becky: Unless after next 3 months we say: "This can't work." But if the 4 towns find a model that is more beneficial...
- April: Change is hard; it throws people off balance. There has to be some trust that nobody on the committee has a self-interest in it going one way or another. There is no purpose in that. It is OK

to trust that people are making good decisions for all of our children in the whole community. Why else would you guys be spending all these hours meeting?

- Fred: Since he wasn't at the meeting on July 18th he thought he'd see what the towns are saying. "We'll see you on the 7th."

Select Board Action Items

1. **Select men unanimously voted to accept the 7/16/13 Select Board Meeting Minutes as written.**
2. **Selectmen signed vendor warrants totaling \$422,585.97.**
3. **Select men signed payroll warrants totaling \$88,834.40.**
4. Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) FY 12 contracts to sign:
 - The Emergency Management Team agreed to purchase a storage trailer with the EMPG funds.
 - The total amount is \$2030 for a 20 foot long, 8'6" feet high storage container for emergency management supplies and equipment that are not temperature sensitive.

Selectmen unanimously voted to sign the grant application in the amount of \$2030 with any balance to be paid out of the town emergency management funds

Topics the Chairman Could Not Reasonably Have Anticipated

1. The Town Administrator, with Highway Superintendent Tim Hunting, has prepared a Notice of Intent to replace a culvert on Baker Road just east of the Schoolhouse Road intersection for the Conservation Commission. Because it is a stream crossing we have to replicate the stream base within the culvert. By hitting the Department of Environmental Protection deadline for a hearing on August 8th the town's request will fit into the Army Corps of Engineer's August 30 "window of opportunity" when this replacement can be made without needing to go through the Army Corps of Engineers' extensive permitting process.
2. There is a new draft of the blanket order of conditions for routine roads maintenance activities:
 - Becky doesn't know if the draft has the Highway Superintendent's comments incorporated into it.
 - The drafting has been going on for 4 years. It is hoped that it will be helpful when it is finally completed.
3. When Becky attended a meeting with retired County Highway Engineer William "Bill" Allen, he complained that Shutesbury was the only town in the county with a speed bump. He was pleased to hear that it had been removed.
4. The "Cherry Sheet" shows FY 13 school choice is \$60,375 not the \$44,000 budgeted for.

The Select Board **adjourned at 7:54 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Bracebridge
Administrative Secretary