

Shutesbury Select Board Meeting Minutes
February 23, 2016 Shutesbury Town Hall
Amended 3.29.16

Select Board members present: April Stein/Chair and Michael DeChiara
Select Board member participating remotely due to geographical distance: Mike Vinskey
Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator; Linda Avis Scott/Administrative Secretary

Guests: Ralph Armstrong/Personnel Board; Gary Hirshfield, George Arvanitis, Eric Stocker, and Jim Walton/FinCom members; Jim Hemingway

Stein calls the meeting to order at 6:37pm.

Public Comment period: no one attends

Agenda Review: DeChiara requests the new agenda format be adopted. Stein: tone of DeChiara's 2.22.16 email regarding the agenda format was uncalled for. DeChiara: non-responsiveness to the voted change by the Select Board in the agenda format is frustrating.

Administrative Actions Considered:

1. Select Board Meeting Minutes:

A. DeChiara moves the Select Board approve the 1.12.16 meeting minutes; the motion is seconded by Vinskey; the 1.12.16 meeting minutes are approved as amended: Vinskey: aye, Stein: aye, and DeChiara: abstain.

B. DeChiara moves the Select Board approve the 12.15.15 meeting minutes; Vinskey seconds the motion; the 12.15.16 meeting minutes are approved unanimously.

C. Approval of the 1.5.16 meeting is tabled until the next meeting.

D. DeChiara moves the Select Board approve the 1.21.16 meeting minutes; Vinskey seconds the motion; the 1.21.16 meeting minutes are approved unanimously

E. DeChiara moves the Select Board approve the 1.26.16 meeting minutes; Vinskey seconds the motion; the 1.26.16 meeting minutes are approved unanimously.

2. Vendor warrants totaling \$50,371.00 are signed.

3. Payroll warrants totaling \$89,572.95 are signed.

7:00pm Discussion Topics:

1. Regional Assessment Update: Torres, referring to Sean Mangano's/Amherst Regional Public Schools (ARPS) Director of Finance document "FY17 Assessments to Member Towns": the proposed method, 10% ability to pay, has yet to be voted on by the Regional School Committee; the vote may be on 3.1.16; the numbers are based on 10.1.15 enrollments; the 2016 spreadsheets by Roger Hatch/Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) are now available (similar to the 2015 spreadsheets used by the Shutesbury Regional Assessment Summer Study Committee (SRASSC)); because Leverett's enrollment numbers have decreased, Shutesbury and Leverett enrollment numbers have come

closer together; adopting the statutory method now, for us, would not be as significant a change. Torres: we are dealing with a new round of estimated numbers, as we do not have the final numbers; the main issue, for the Select Board to be aware of, is that the statutory method is unpredictable. Vinskey: why haven't the 10.1.15 numbers been used right along? Torres: property values and income are also used; when Mangano analyzed the factors, it became clear that enrollment numbers are driving the change. DeChiara: the five-year rolling enrollment numbers seem to be the same. Torres: the estimates are the same; it is how they are presented. DeChiara: we are more intensely acknowledging the volatility of the statutory method; reviews the prior and current numbers for each town. Vinskey: when do we look at the variables and decide? Torres: we are using numbers that came from the Governor at the end of January; the numbers could change with Chapter 70 funding by the House and Senate; these are the strongest numbers we have going forward; the Regional Assessment sometimes changes in May – July; if Chapter 70 increases after the budget is set, the four towns have an agreement that the assessment will decrease. Torres: for this year, there should be no further change; going forward, we will continue to negotiate for the five-year rolling average statutory method. Vinskey: we have agreed to meet with the other towns in June-July on the assessment method. DeChiara: our negotiating the 10% ability to pay results in a savings of \$44,907; we are twice as good as we were with the old estimate.

2. Planning for 2.27.16 Four-Town Meeting: Vinskey: are the FinCom and School Committee up to date on these numbers (from prior discussion)? Torres: the FinCom is currently meeting; she will update Steve Sullivan/Regional School Committee Representative on the numbers and will forward Mangano's document to the School Committee and encourage their questions in advance of the 2.27.16 meeting. DeChiara: where does Leverett stand? Torres: at the final meeting, Leverett agreed to the "10% Ability to Pay". Vinskey notes that the assessment method is not on the four-town meeting agenda; Shutesbury needs to have a consolidated point of view on regionalization for the four-town meeting. Torres: because he wanted to understand the Select Board's point of view, Sullivan asked for DeChiara's three points on regionalization. Torres asks the Select Board for guidance on whether should she attend the four-town meeting or the Wired West (WW) meeting also to be held on 2.27.16; expects there will be updates from the WW negotiating team, which may have some membership changes. Stein: as it is more important, supports Torres' attendance at the WW meeting and asks Torres if she would want to be on negotiating team. Torres: Craig Martin (WW alternate delegate) is not available to join the negotiating team; notes the need for strong WW towns to have representation on the negotiating team. Stein: Torres would be a good representative; we need to have as many voices at the table as possible. Vinskey: is there a disagreement about process? Stein: there is a difference of opinion about Torres' involvement with WW which she sees as good use of Torres' time; having her at the negotiating table would strengthen our getting this (Broadband) done. DeChiara: we are going to discuss this topic at the Municipal Light Plant (MLP) meeting on 3.15.16; to have a town administrator so deeply

involved in WW is a benefit however has an impact on the needs of the town. Vinskey: WW is getting to the point that it is all encompassing; Torres has been involved in WW from its beginning and it now involves more time. Stein: recognizes that Torres has been involved from the beginning and to pull her out would be detrimental. Vinskey: Torres should go to WW on 2.27.16. Stein and DeChiara are planning to attend the 2.27.16 four-town meeting; Torres will post this meeting for the Select Board. Torres: Arvanitis will be present at the four-town meeting to provide any needed town financial information; we have examples that provide evidence of our needs, i.e. the Leverett/Cooleyville/Prescott Roads (L/C/P) project requiring repair, the fire station gas leak reparations, and culverts needing replacement. Vinskey emphasizes the need to have pertinent information available for the meeting.

3. Town Administrator's Update:

- A. The Building Committee has not met so there is no movement on the town hall downstairs dividing wall; they are not yet convinced it is a problem. Vinskey: who will determine if it is a problem? Torres: she has obtained a mold testing kit and will consult with the person who evaluated the space before the new floor was installed to request a re-evaluation. Driving rains coming from the east are causing the school roof to leak; this leak should be resolved by sealing the parapet. The rear door on first floor town hall entry door needs repair. The Building Committee has yet to discuss the Select Board memo.
- B. There have been partial pick-up problems with the trash hauler; we will start negotiating the contract next year because the current contract ends in FY17; we should start talking with the Solid Waste and Recycling Committee within the next few months; they handle both the hauler and Massachusetts Regional Recycling Facility contracts and use a consultant to assist in negotiations.
- C. The Master Plan Working Group held one meeting however did not have a quorum. Vinskey clarifies that Jon Thompson is not a member of the group; he was assisting to organize the group's email and first meeting date; the next meeting is scheduled for 3.9.16. DeChiara emphasizes the need for parents of young children to be on the committee. Vinskey: will continue to work on this. Torres: copies of the current Master Plan will be made available; it is accessible online.
- D. The Personnel Board is putting together updated booklets for themselves, the Select Board and department heads.

At 7:52pm, DeChiara moves the Select Board to go into Executive Session for Reason #3/Salt Issue and return to Open Session; Vinskey seconds the motion; Stein: aye, DeChiara: aye, and Vinskey: aye.

Open Session is resumed at 7:59pm.

8:00pm FY17 Wages with Personnel Board and Finance Committee:

1. Salaries for non-contract, non-school employees Arvanitis: a 1% increase for all non-school/non-contract employees will be a \$10,607 increase in the budget. Torres: as per contract, the police are locked into a 3% increase that is included in the \$10,607. Arvanitis: at 2%, the budget would increase by \$16,292; the budget is balanced – it has the five-year rolling average in it – so, with the 10% ability to pay, we will have additional funds. Torres: the school may not request funding for the playground for this year; there is funding available for the capital lines. Stein: we are beginning to pay for the fire truck this year. Arvanitis: funds are in the budget for the fire truck payments and interest will be less than expected. Arvanitis: the FinCom discussed the 2% salary increase; at 3%, the budget would increase by \$21,824. Vinskey: Social Security is not giving a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) this year; what is basis for the FinCom’s recommendation? Arvanitis: the prediction is that business will be increasing wages at about 2.5% this year; business increases are probably based on performance; 1% is too low; the additional expense of a 2% increase supports employees and aids in retention. Stein: what about a 2.5% increase? Arvanitis: about \$18,000, we do not tie our pay increases to performance. Torres and Arvanitis: yes, this would be a COLA. Armstrong: the business sector is looking at a down turn. Walton: what index do we tie our increases to? Arvanitis: we had three years of no increases due to a lack of Chapter 70 funding; we then had a 3% increase to catch up. Torres: we did not reduce to 0%, we reduced to 1.5% wage increases; the departments were at 0%. Stein: why not a 3% increase like the police have? Vinskey: the increases need to be tied to something that is concrete; the current process seems too random. Stocker: there is something to be said for the 3% increase. Walton: could there be a common tool to use, i.e. state salaries? Torres: four other towns are doing a 2% increase. DeChiara notes the need to be comparable to other towns. Arvanitis: would never want to go below 1.5%; it is good to discuss wages. Vinskey: is concerned about taxpayers who will not receive wage increases. Arvanitis: municipal employees are paid less than the private sector; we do look at other municipalities. Arvanitis: from a Personnel Board perspective, the pool of professionals in the municipal sector for treasurers is very small. Stein: we have worked hard to be comparable to like towns. Arvanitis: it is important to retain our treasurer and accountant. Stein acknowledges that there are people in the community on a fixed income. Stocker: likes Stein’s recommendation for a 3% increase in order to be the same across the board. DeChiara notes the need for non-school employees to be treated as fairly as possible. Stein: are there any longevity bonuses this year? Torres: is double-checking on this with Voelker. DeChiara asks about the document “Town of Shutesbury Salary Plan FY16”? Torres: the document was provided to give the Select Board a sense of current salaries. Torres: FY16 is the third year on the police union contract. Vinskey states support for a 2% increase in wages. Hirshfield: there is a \$5,600 difference between a 2% and 3% increase. Arvanitis: the total budget is \$6,000,146. DeChiara: not giving an increase would not decrease the tax rate. Stein: through our negotiations on the regional assessment, we have saved the town funds. Torres: previously, the police union agreed to whatever the other town employees received; currently, they have a three year contract; in a new contract, the wages for each year could be held open for finalization when the rates are set for all of the town employees. DeChiara: tying the police and other employees together may be a plan for next year. Arvanitis: the majority of those in the room agree with a 3% increase. Stocker moves the FinCom recommend a 3% salary

increase to the Select Board; members of the Finance Committee unanimously agree with Stocker's recommendation. DeChiara moves the Select Board accept the Finance Committee recommendation for a 3% increase for all non-school, non-union employee wages; Vinskey seconds the motion; Stein: aye, DeChiara: aye, and Vinskey: nay.

2. Four-Town Meeting Arvanitis notes the dramatic changes in the numbers. Torres: Mangano had the October 2015 enrollment numbers though his December figures did not capture the dramatic changes we see at the end of January; notes the assessment method is not on the four-town meeting agenda though the topic may be covered under "financial projections". DeChiara: the assessment dollar amounts have changed; the enrollment is the same. Torres: the change in FY16 and FY17 enrollments and the change to the minimum contribution resulted in the assessment amounts. Arvanitis: it is a \$70,000 swing for us. Stein: this points out how unpredictable the statutory method can be and makes the 10% ability to pay seem less radical. Stein: we are in pretty good shape given that a new dump truck has been requested, L/C/P has not held up, SES repairs are needed, various road projects need attention, the cost of the fire station gas leak, Broadband, and we have a town hall that is not big enough for our needs. Stocker: other towns have spent money while we have saved. Arvanitis: given the numbers, Pelham may be more amenable to the 10% ability to pay; Leverett's numbers are better. Stein: we are working on having a balance budget. DeChiara: we are working on a balanced budget based on the Ability to Pay. Arvanitis and DeChiara note the need to acknowledge the work done to achieve the ability to pay. Vinskey: if asked, who will be the presenter? Stein: will present if she is able to attend. Arvanitis: will talk about the budget and capital items and thank everyone for moving away from the alternative assessment method; our committees are not in favor of regionalization. DeChiara: the regionalization vote may be delayed. Arvanitis, Hirshfield, Walton, Stein and DeChiara will attend the 2.27.16 four-town meeting.

Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair

1. Vinskey states that he is not familiar with the discussion about the agenda format issue that was addressed earlier in the meeting and asks if there is anything else on the topic that the Board needs to talk about. Torres states that she created three sample agendas to try to meet DeChiara's requirements; asks if DeChiara is willing to review her samples and provide guidance about his recommended agenda format. DeChiara: agrees; wants to ensure the public knows when to attend a meeting on a topic of their interest. Stein: the tone of DeChiara's email on the topic was unacceptable. Vinskey: supports Torres and DeChiara working together and requests the topic be revisited in the future via an agenda item.
2. Vinskey, regarding the process for determining pay increases: we (Select Board) received information that there would be no 2016 Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increase and, this evening, we ended up increasing wages. DeChiara agrees with the idea of discussing wages without having to make a decision; based on the agenda, he knew that wages would be discussed during the meeting with the Personnel Board and FinCom. Vinskey: had the impression we were going to discuss wages relative to the budget. DeChiara: it may have been helpful to know we were going to need to vote.

Future Select Board Meetings:

1. Saturday 3.5.16 9:00am Shutesbury Town Hall
2. Tuesday 3.8.16 6:30pm Shutesbury Town Hall
3. Tuesday 3.22.16 6:30pm Shutesbury Town Hall
4. Tuesday 4.5.16 6:30pm Shutesbury Town Hall

Documents and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. 1.28.16 FY17 Assessments to Member Towns/Mangano and Arvanitis
2. Social Security Fact Sheet “2016 Social Security Changes”
3. Town of Shutesbury Salary Plan FY16

At 9:12pm, DeChiara moves to adjourn the Select Board meeting; Vinskey seconds the motion; motion passes unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Avis Scott
Administrative Secretary