

TA Report 3.26.10

WINTER USE OF LAKE WYOLA BY-LAW INFORMATION MEETING, Monday, April 5, 6:30pm at the town hall. The Winter Use of Lake Wyola By Law Committee is ready to review the new By Law at an information meeting at town hall on April 5, at 6:30 pm in preparation to bring to the May 1, 2010 Annual Town Meeting.

HOUSING REHAB MONEY IS AVAILABLE The Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) is pleased to announce that there is currently funding available for Shutesbury homeowners. "Income eligible applicants" who qualify for the full deferred payment loan will be able to borrow up to \$30,000 at 0% interest, deferred payment loan, secured by a lien placed on your property, and the loan is due when you sell or transfer the property. Homeowners must have annual gross income equal to or less than, 1 household member-\$43,450, 2 household members-\$49,700, 3 household members-\$55,900, etc. Please call Charity Day at 413-863-9781 ext. 132 or email at cday@fchra.org.

FIRE STATION GASOLINE LEAK – This week new air quality tests were taken at 2 homes. The surface water sample tests taken last week came back today. They show similar readings as those taken by DEP last December. DEP is ready to broaden soil testing by using a backhoe to do soil sampling in various areas behind the fire station. Conservation Commission did a site visit on Sunday in preparation.

DOG OFFICER found a home for the German Sheppard Dog stray she was taking care. Thank you all!

BUDGET AND FINANCE 2010

There will be a meeting in Amherst at the Regional School for the 4 Towns, April 3, 2010, for Selectboard, Finance and School Committees. The Amherst override on March 23 passed by a 2 to 1 margin. The next question now is will 3 of the 4 towns in the Amherst regional school district support the larger budget. If yes the new Amherst Pelham regional school budget will be \$28,287,033.

Saturday in Northampton, Senator Stan Rosenberg, and Franklin and Hampshire Council of Governments held a political discussion of current fiscal, educational and governance issues. The executive, and legislative bodies were well represented. The opening session featured many perspectives- Secretary of Administration and Finance Jay Gonzalez, Chairman of Senate House and Ways Committee staff member, Rep Jay Kaufman Chairman of the Revenue Committee and Rep. Stephen Kulik, Asst. Vice Chairman of the House Ways & Means Committee, as well as Michael Widmer, President of the Mass. Taxpayers Foundation. The story of tax revenue collapse, a loss of 13 % of the state's economy, a \$21,000,000,000 economy in 2008 Massachusetts, reduced to \$19,000,000,000 for 2011. Some say we have hit bottom, minus 15,000 jobs out of 3 million. Some say "normal" is 3 years away, or not coming back. Stimulus funds have offset and saved local government to a large degree for fiscal years, 09, 10, and 11. Will the shoe drop in FY12 or 14? The big story for Shutesbury is we are not laying off or cutting hours of services. The ship is steady with 0% department increases and 1 ½% salary increases. Our shrinking school population is creating problems for us for the long term, but for this year has eased the cost of the regional assessment even with Amherst passing their override. In the midst of the worst down turn since the depression, things could be worse. The Massachusetts sales tax could be reduced to 3 per cent and \$2,500,000,000 would be lost in state revenue and state education aid, chapter 70, would be cut 10 to 15%.

Rep. Kaufman raised the issue of tax revenue, and the question, what is it based on? He sees a disconnect between public policy and income a flat tax, capital gains as well as exemptions and credits. The Governor followed with a call for a review of the tax code.

Panel members for the discussion on education were Secretary of Education Paul Reville, Commissioner of the Dept. of Education Mitchell Chester, and Representative Martha Walz, Chair of the Education Committee. The executive branch is saying no to new regionalization legislation but the legislature is planning a new bill this spring. One element in the bill will not allow the formation of new superintendency unions. The state education conversation is still about consolidation. The focus continues on streamlining districts into groups of 6000 to 7000 students with fewer administrators. They encourage regionalization. The department of education will wait until they have funded the promises from the 90s before making new promises. They use phrases like "local control," but are convinced costs would be lowered with larger districts. Partial districts are problematic. Partial districts, like we are in, create funding surprises when chapter 70 calculations are made. Large inequities occur and it is difficult for Dept. of Education to explain why. It would be easier for the state to deal with 50 districts instead of 500 individual towns plus district hybrids.

Governor Deval Patrick was the closing speaker. He outlined the tools used to bring jobs and money into our economy through life sciences, IT, cleantech, road and bridge, wind and solar projects, and his commitment to stabilize local government through education funding, chapter 70. He is pushing back on healthcare companies flagrant abuse of premium increases. Citing the medical rate of inflation of 4.5% he will demand accounting of any increases above that. He is proposing new legislation that will force health insurers to get approval for increased costs that continue to go unexplained. He said healthcare is the biggest problem for the 85% of our businesses, which are small businesses and our economy cannot come back without them. The new federal healthcare plan will bring financial relief by offsetting costs Massachusetts is currently paying for healthcare, bring in new federal dollars to balance the state budget.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE/SELECTBOARD Created an Education Study Committee. Motions were made simultaneously and language agreed to jointly on the charge, composition and the name of the committee. The charge of this special purpose committee is "to engage in the reflection of educational goals and to explore options for the school aged children of our town." There will be 9 members. 3 members will be drawn from the community, one a parent of preK-12th grade children and 2 nonschool parent Shutesbury residents. Letters of interest for these 3 positions should be sent to the School Committee and Selectboard. The Selectboard and School Committee will agree on these appointments jointly 5/4/10.

SHUTESBURY/FARMERS MARKET will begin May 22, 2010. The hours are, **Saturdays, 8:30am until noon.** If you would like to participate in the market as a craft person or farmer/grower, please contact market manager, Becky Torres, 259-1214. The market welcomes musicians and entertainers who would like to get public exposure, without compensation. Please let me if you are interested. **MORE EGGS WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE MARKET THIS SEASON!!**

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