

**SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes for Jan. 10, 2006**  
**Shutesbury Town Hall**

Members present: Eric Stocker, chairman, Al Beswick, Al Springer, Russ Greco; Russ Wilson and Patrick J. Callahan. Guests: Tom Harding, police chief.

The meeting convened at 7:10 p.m.

The minutes of the Nov. 22, 2005 meeting were approved unanimously as amended.

Eric says the Finance Committee is scheduled to meet with the elementary School Committee on Feb. 14.

Al Beswick reported that Union 28 Supt. Linda Driscoll is proposing to have the elementary school keep \$70,000 for unexpected special needs spending, according to the long-standing agreement with the Finance Committee to have \$30,000 per year set aside, and to return \$61,000 in unspent funds to the town. He says school officials say the cost of a single special needs student could run as high as \$280,000 per year, but at this time there is no indication that such an expense is likely.

Eric says the Capital Planning Committee has made an initial estimate of this year's proposals but many details are unknown. To date, about \$350,000 in long-term needs have been identified. The list, however, has not been prioritized for this year.

Police Chief Tom Harding met with the committee and began by explaining the requirements of the so-called Quinn bill incentive funding mechanism between the state and local communities. Tom says the resignation of Tom Burger means that the town needs to hire another full-time officer. Interviews for candidates were scheduled for later in the week and the selectmen will decide on hiring a new officer.

Tom presented a budget proposal for next year that calls for level funding of the operating budget at \$10,000; level funding of cruiser maintenance at \$7,000; a 9 percent increase in funding for cruiser fuel from \$5,500 to \$6,000; a 20 percent increase in the chief's salary from \$50,000 to \$60,000 based on adding the 20 percent incentive from the Quinn bill for the bachelor's degree he has earned from UMass, and if that incentive isn't allowed by the state, the increase would be to \$55,000 as specified in his contract with the town; total police wages would increase 6 percent from \$71,850 to \$76,763 including a 3 percent contracted increase and the expectation that a new officer will be hired who will qualify for the 20 percent Quinn bill incentive, half of which is paid by the town. Overall, the budget would increase by 10.5 percent from \$144,350 to \$159,763. Non-salary items would go from \$22,500 to \$23,000, an increase of 2 percent while salaries would increase from \$121,850 to \$136,763, an increase of 12 percent.

He also says that most of the part-time police payroll is currently paid for from Community Policing funds, although some strings are attached to that money. Right now

about \$11,900 is available for and some of the money can be used to purchase defibrulators.

Tom says the department is planning to get rid of the four-wheel-drive Explorer and move up to a used Expedition 4X4 that is available from New Salem for \$10,000.

In terms of capital expenses, Tom says the department needs to upgrade its computer software to bring it into line with almost all the other departments in Franklin County.

Tom also says he is very comfortable using part-time officers, and could run the department with one less full-time officers if that is what the selectmen decided to do. He also says he wants to promote Ken Hartright to sergeant to give him more supervisory duties. Currently, the department has daily coverage from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. or midnight, he says.

The Finance Committee informally agreed that it will support Tom's request for part-time officers rather than hire a full-time officer if that is agreeable with the selectmen and will communicate this sentiment to the selectmen.

The committee then voted unanimously to transfer \$2,500 from the Finance Committee reserve to pay for police and accountant computer upgrades.

In a preliminary review of the fiscal 2007 budget, Eric says there may be a request to hire a part-time person to help various town boards, including the Planning Board and Conservation Commission.

An all-boards meeting was scheduled for Jan. 17 and the Finance Committee plans to meet with Tim Hunting on Jan. 31. There is a special Town Meeting scheduled for Feb. 7.

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.