

SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes for Jan. 30, 2007
Shutesbury Town Hall

Members present: Eric Stocker, chairman, Lori Tuominen, Rus Wilson, Russ Greco, Al Springer, Al Beswick and Patrick J. Callahan. Guests: David Dann, town administrator, Becky Torres, selectwoman and Gail Weiss, town accountant.

The meeting convened at 7:05 p.m.

The minutes of the Jan. 16, 2007 meeting were approved unanimously.

Al Beswick reported that at the elementary school, teachers are receiving pay raises totaling 8 percent this year based on the existing contract. He says the raises are out of step with what is affordable and urged that people be put on the next negotiating committee who will restrain this level of spending. "This has to stop. The town can't afford it," he says.

David Dann says he believes the negotiating committee is made up of two members chosen by the school board and one by the town. He will check this.

Becky says it is important to also weigh the job market for teachers when making these decisions. Russ Wilson says we should pay as much as we can afford, but not too much. Russ Greco questioned whether the current economy can support raises at this level.

David Dann then began a discussion of the proposed budget for next year. He says in its current form, but budget is in deficit by \$303,812. David says free cash is \$360,000 and stabilization is \$424,000. David did a comparison and says over the past three years the town budget has increased by 5.33 percent annually, or an average of \$260,000. During the same period, new revenues have averaged \$120,000 per year. David says the likelihood of getting more money from state aid is slim and that revenue from the state lottery could decrease this year.

Gail says there will be some very modest savings this year in the snow removal accounts, but also noted this could change.

Patrick asked what would happen to the shortfall if increases in departmental budgets were reduced to 2.5 percent, or 2 percent and wondered if such a change would bring the budgets closer to known revenue. David says he will recalculate the budget using those numbers to see what happens and will report back.

Eric says the capital planning committee is planning to meet before the next Finance Committee meeting and asked what the board is suggesting as a spending limit for the coming year. The committee agreed that \$60,000 was a reasonable number.

There was discussion of the Lake Wyola dam repair plan and what impact such a major expenditure might have on our deliberations for this year's budget.

The committee also agreed to get information from the emergency planning committee at the next meeting to be used in calculating the budget.

The next meeting was set for Feb. 13, 2007.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.