

**SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes for Dec. 19, 2006**  
**Shutesbury Town Hall**

Members present: Eric Stocker, chairman, Russ Greco, Lori Tuominen, Rus Wilson, Al Beswick, Al Springer and Patrick J. Callahan. Guests: Tim Hunting, highway superintendent.

The meeting convened at 7:03 p.m.

The minutes of the Nov. 21 and Dec. 5 meetings were approved unanimously.

Tim Hunting presented his budget proposal for the next fiscal year. He is requesting \$2,200 for highway uniforms, an increase of \$200; level funding for tools and equipment and highway expenses, at \$3,600 and \$2,700, respectively; level funding for highway materials at \$25,000 and level funding for machinery maintenance at \$23,000. Tim is asking for \$7,500 for road marking, a decrease of \$900 from the current year; and \$3,500 for summer help, an increase of \$500. Tim says the boost for summer help will allow him to hire someone for 14 weeks, freeing up one of his regular staff during the summer.

Tim also reported that the gravel road account, a capital account, began the year with \$51,640.98 and has \$39,100.22 remaining. He estimated that at the current rate of spending on this account, there will be \$25,000 left on July 1, an amount he says is sufficient for two projects he has planned. He told the committee it may want to add funding to this account during the budget cycle.

Tim also says state highway officials are urging local governments to spend Chap. 90 funds rather than stockpiling them, something he has been doing this year.

At 8:10 p.m., the committee met jointly with the selectmen, Becky Torres, chairwoman, Debra Pichanick and Ralph Armstrong, David Dann, town administrator, Leslie Bracebridge, town clerk, and Dan Hayes and Marianne Jorgensen from the School Committee.

Marianne, who is also a member of the regional school committee, says finance officials in Amherst are asking all departments to hold budget increases in the coming year to 1 percent. She says that would require cuts to the regional budget of \$1.4 million and that a level-service budget would require a 6 percent increase. The Amherst Finance Committee will likely be asked to consider asking voters in that town for a tax override to reduce pressures on the overall budget, she says.

Becky says there is likely to be an increase in local aid this coming year, but it's unclear how much it might be because of budget pressure at the state level.

Marianne says Jere Hochman, the regional school superintendent, will formulate a budget in January that will show the impact of a 1- percent increase.

Eric says the budget goal in Shutesbury this year is a 3 percent overall increase, and remarked that budget problems for Amherst appear to mirror what happened last year.

Marianne says Hochman is open to coming to Shutesbury to discuss the budget if that can be arranged.

Marianne also says she is a member of the panel negotiating with teachers this year, but won't be able to comment about that process until an agreement is drafted.

Becky also noted that in Shutesbury, the town is now facing the need for funding to repair the dam at Lake Wyola. Estimates are that it will cost the town about \$125,000 to accomplish this. She says the town has the capacity to borrow money, and may opt to bundle several projects, including repair of the highway garage and fixing the church on the Town Common, together in a long-term borrowing package.

Al Beswick noted that voters at the last Annual Town Meeting approved an article calling for the state to boost the income tax back up to 6 percent, and the town should push officials to do that.

The Finance Committee returned to its meeting and discussed upcoming meetings.

The next meeting is set for Jan. 9, 2007 with a possible meeting the Hochman on Jan. 16 and a possible meeting with the library trustees.

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.