

SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes for Dec. 2, 2008
Shutesbury Town Hall

Members present: Eric Stocker, chairman, Elaine Puleo, Lori Tuominen, Bill Wells, Rus Wilson, Mark Pocsik and Patrick J. Callahan. Guests: David Dann, town administrator; Tom Harding, police chief; Walter Tibbetts, fire chief.

The meeting convened at 7:05 p.m.

Tom Harding presented his proposed budget for next year. He asked for \$12,000 for operations, a \$500 increase from the current year; \$5,500 for cruiser maintenance, a \$500 decrease from the current year; \$7,000 for fuel, level funding, and \$89,025 for officers' salaries. He included a detailed listing of each officer's salary and shift differential and noted the salaries reflect a 3 percent increase (subject to negotiations with the union) with non-benefitted, part-time officers working an average of 12 hours per week, benefitted officers working 20 hours per week and full-time officers working 40 hours weekly. Tom also noted that the chief's salary is set by his contract.

Tom says the town's share of state community policing grant money has decreased from \$11,299 last year to \$8,029.84 in this year. He uses the grant money for RAD training and other events, Tom says, so there will be less activity because of the decrease in funding.

On vehicle use, Tom says they only use the 4-wheel-drive SUV when it's needed because of inclement weather or off-road duty. The department currently has two cruisers and the SUV. He has requested a replacement for the 2004 sedan he drives with a new cruiser through the capital planning process. Estimated cost is \$32,000.

Tom says to save money he no longer attends meetings of the chief's association. He will also ask the officers to forgo increases for uniforms and equipment during their contract talks to save money.

At this time, the department has officers on duty Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.; two officers on duty on Fridays, plus 16 hours on Saturdays and 10 on Sunday for a weekly total of 114 hours with some overlap on the weekends.

There was a discussion about the Quinn Bill the impact it has on the police salaries. It was generally agreed that this is a confusing subject but does have two impacts – it is an incentive for officers to expand their education but comes at a cost to the town. Tom left at 8 p.m.

The committee then reviewed and approved the minutes of the Sept. 9 and Sept. 23 meetings.

At 8:05 Walter Tibbetts arrived and outlined the fire department budget. He says the budget is exactly the same as last year and told the committee he expects this will be a very difficult budget years for the town. He asked for \$5,800 for expenses; \$8,000 for maintenance, and \$6,180 for equipment.

Walter says the department now has seven firefighters and one more is in the process of getting hired.

He says he was able to get money for new pagers using \$8,000 in federal homeland security grants and received \$1,250 in rebates for the old pagers. This money was available because the town is NIMS compliant. Walter also says the ambulance contract with Amherst has four years to go and calls for a 3-percent increase in cost to the town each year. Walter left at 8:25 p.m.

Lori reported that the LFNAC (library future planning committee) is preparing to send a letter to an architect in early 2009 to begin the process of planning for a new library building.

David Dann reported he is reviewing the town's contract with Union 28.

David also updated the committee on the gasoline spill at the fire station. He says phase II of the cleanup will show the perimeter of the contamination begin the drafting of a remediation plan. As of Dec. 2, the total cost was \$47,210.82 and that was covered by \$48,300 in available funding that includes \$23,300 from the Finance Committee reserve and \$25,000 voted at the special Town Meeting in the fall. David also agreed to see if the state has any liability for the original cleanup of the site when the town followed state instructions at the time but it has since been found to have been inadequate to remove the gasoline contamination.

David reported that the work on the Lake Wyola dam should be done in two-to-three weeks.

David asked the committee to transfer \$3,000 for the purchase of new software for the town collection to implement the Community Preservation Act into the upcoming tax billing cycle. The board balked at this request and did not approve it. Instead the board asked that Ellen McKay, the town collector, come to the Dec. 16 meeting and explain the request, or to reply to the town administrator by that time.

The committee also asked David to set up a meeting for Jan. 27 to discuss the overall issue of software and hardware needs and expenses. David agreed. It was also suggested to have a meeting in the future to review the town's insurance needs and policies.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.