

SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes for Dec. 5, 2006
Shutesbury Town Hall

Members present: Eric Stocker, chairman, Russ Greco, Al Beswick, Lori Tuominen, Rus Wilson and Patrick J. Callahan. Guests: Becky Torres, selectwoman; David Dann, town administrator; Tom Harding, police chief; Walter Tibbetts, fire chief.

The meeting convened at 7:07 p.m.

Tom Harding presented his proposed budget for fiscal 2008. The total was \$163,285, up from \$157,743 this year. Increases include a 3 percent boost in the chief's salary, from \$56,000 to \$56,650; a 3 percent increase in police wages from \$79,743 to \$82,135; and a \$1,500 increase in the department's operating budget from \$10,000 to \$11,500. Cruiser fuel remained at \$6,000 and cruiser maintenance stayed at \$7,000.

Tom says staffing is now stable and there is coverage for 130 hours per week, with some overlapping shifts.

Tom says he will seek \$12,000 from the capital planning committee for new computer software. He also reports that the department is scheduled to get a new \$30,000 police cruiser and the old one will be offered to the fire chief.

Becky announced that Gail Weiss, the full-time accountant in Hadley has agreed to be the town's new accountant.

During a review of the expense report, Russ Greco asked if the Finance Committee had voted on whether to approved increasing the fire chief's position to full-time over a period of years as reflected in the amount of salary we are paying. It was agreed that the committee had been aware that the selectmen intended to expand the chief's hours but had not formally voted for the change. It was also agreed that the Finance Committee should play a more active role in such policy decisions because they have financial implications for the town.

Walter Tibbetts presented his proposed budget for the fire department. It includes an overall increase from \$64,330 to \$71,550. The chief's salary would increase from \$31,830 to \$38,250 because of a 3 percent cost-of-living boost and more hours. The department's operation budget would go from \$3,500 to \$4,300, an \$800 increase due to a higher assessment from the FRCOG for the radio system. Department salaries remains at \$7,500, wages stays at \$8,500, maintenance stays at \$6,000, equipment is level-funded at \$6,000 and fuel is the same at \$1,000.

Walter says the department staffing will decrease from eight to seven with the retirement of Harry Masterton.

Walter says he will again ask the Capital Planning Committee for up to \$18,000 for a brush fire skid unit. He says the department current has a used one on loan from the state Department of Conservation and Recreation. A long-range capital item is up to \$5,000 for a 4X4 truck for the department, Walter says.

David Dann suggested that the Finance Committee give him authorization to place bids of up to several thousand dollars to allow the town to take advantage of good deals on used or surplus equipment that may become available and require quick action. The committee generally agreed to this.

David Dann then asked the committee for a transfer of \$1,666.81 to pay the remaining bills for the gasoline tank cleanup at the highway garage. The total cost was \$10,499.81 but only \$8,833 had been allocated. The transfer covers the outstanding cost.

The committee unanimously approved the transfer.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.