

**SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes for March 28, 2006**  
**Shutesbury Town Hall**

Members present: Eric Stocker, chairman, Al Beswick, Al Springer, Lori Tuominen and Patrick J. Callahan. Guests: David Dann, town administrator.

The meeting convened at 7:07 p.m.

The minutes of the March 14 meeting were approved unanimously.

Eric reported that the search for a new elementary school principal has begun and that candidates for the new superintendent were to begin touring the member towns during the week.

David Dann says final interviews for the superintendent candidates were set for March 30.

Eric reported that he told the elementary school to keep its budget increase for the next year to 3 percent.

David Dann reviewed the recent meeting of the Emergency Planning Committee and told the finance board about the software program that could be used to call all residences in town in case of an emergency. The program uses voice over internet protocols and can call all residences simultaneously. The cost of the program, if the town decided to purchase it, could come from grants from federal homeland security funding.

Al Springer and Lori reported they had been at the four-town meeting of the regional school officials. David Dann says Leverett and Shutesbury told the group they can support the 5.28 percent increase in the budget as a way of preventing the worst set of possible budget cuts. Pelham says it must approve an override to meet any regional budget and Amherst is struggling financially and probably can't support the 5.28 percent boost. David says the regional school board is likely to back the 5.28 percent budget at its next meeting. If Shutesbury adopts this budget, the shortfall in the town budget proposal would increase to \$105,205.

A motion was made by Patrick and seconded by Al Beswick to approve the 5.28 percent increase in the budget for the regional schools. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion was also made to ask the selectmen to seek state legislation calling for an increase in the state income tax to 6 percent to pay for state services and local aid. It passed unanimously.

David Dann says he estimates that \$114,000 in free cash will be generated by this year's budget, so if free cash is used to balance the budget, the town won't lose ground because that amount is about equal to the current shortfall. It was also noted that the amount of

free cash coming to the town in the next budget cycle is higher than usual and isn't something that should be relied upon in general.

The next meeting was scheduled for April 11, with another set for April 25.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.