

SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes for May 3, 2005
Shutesbury Town Hall

Members present: Eric Stocker, chairman, Al Beswick, Russ Wilson, Al Springer, Lori Tuominen, Patrick J. Callahan, and Russ Greco. .

The meeting convened at 7:07 p.m.

The minutes of the April 12 meeting were approved unanimously.

The committee reviewed the latest expense report and noted that the line item for police cruiser fuel had increased 165 percent. This increase had been noticed at the last meeting. It was decided to ask David Dann, town administrator, for an explanation.

Eric reported that at the Personnel Committee it was learned that Gabe Volker, the town treasurer, was implementing a change in the pay stubs for town employees. This change mainly involves accruing vacation and other benefits as they are earned, not in a lump sum as is the current policy.

Eric says he also wants to get a better explanation of the police detail procedures sometime in the next budget year.

Russ Wilson raised the question of whether the town needs to hire a new police chief now that Leverett voters have vetoed the idea of having a shared chief. He says there is some sentiment against spending the money for a full-time chief.

At 8:10 p.m., the committee moved downstairs to meet with the Board of Selectmen. There was a general discussion about the budget proposal that was to be presented to voters at the Annual Town Meeting on May 7. Eric agreed to give a presentation of the spending plan and the use of free cash.

Al Beswick announced that he planned to make a statement, as a member of the Finance Committee, declaring that the regional school budget should be trimmed back to a 4-percent increase to bring it into line with other town budgets. He says the current regional school is too expensive for the member towns and wants that opinion to be heard on the floor of Town Meeting.

Also also opined that the main problem at the state level is the vote-mandated income-tax rollback that the governor is pushing to expand now that revenue collections are beginning to improve.

There was also a general discussion about whether additional state aide might become available to reduce the use of free cash to balance the budget. It was agreed that the

Senate might provide more state aid, but that at this time we should not rely on that assumption.

The Finance Committee asked the proposed tax exemption for older residents and the selectmen replied that very few residents will meet the income requirements. Board Chairwoman Becky Torres says it isn't anticipated to be a large expenditure in the near future.

The meeting adjourned at about 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.