

SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes for April 6, 2004
Shutesbury Town Hall

Members present: Chairman Eric Stocker, Al Beswick, Russ Wilson, Russ Greco, Patrick J. Callahan. Guest, David Ames, town administrator, Selectmen Becky Torres, Ralph Armstrong, Joe Jacobs.

The meeting convened at 7:05 p.m.

Two questions from the last meeting were addressed to David Ames. Why was the MDC PILOT payment line so low on the recent budget sheet? David replied that payments are made in May. Also, what about the rubbish hauling line item? David says we underpay the contract to keep a reserve available to assure performance.

The minutes of the March 30, 2004 meeting were unanimously approved.

David Ames says Bill Elliot recently attended a meeting about the Footprint Road Program and came way impressed and enthusiastic about Shutesbury's participation.

David says the current budget deficit is \$154,876. That figure was later revised to \$168,867.

The current increase in the regional school budget is 10.5 percent, according to David Ames.

There was a need for a Fincomm transfer of \$8243.38 to cover our portion of the contributory retirement for Union 28. New Salem now does the billing and had forgotten to send the bill. It was approved unanimously. David says at the next meeting we will consider another transfer to meet the Town Hall electric bill, which has gone up because of the renovations.

Warrant articles were reviewed. The Fincomm approved articles 1,4,6,7,8,10,11,13,14,15,16 (with language revisions), 19 and 22. The committee skipped articles 5,9,20.

Becky Torres says the selectmen were presented with a petition signed by 102 residents to pave the dirt section of Pelham Hill Road. She also says it is on a list of three projects Tim Hunting wants to do. It will cost between \$90,000 and \$100,000 to complete. Money to come from Chap. 90. Currently the town gets about \$70,000 annually from Chap. 90 and there is enough for this project. There was a discussion of whether to proceed with this project. Becky says the Planning Board discussed it and raised some questions about removing some ledge by blasting and issues related to the base and drainage. A letter on the matter is being drafted by Jim Aaron.

At 8:10 p.m. the meeting with the selectmen began. There was a discussion of Walter Tibbetts proposal for a new Fire Chief position. It was generally decided that was needed to do the minimum to keep Walter and that was to offer him the half-time job at \$25,000 per year.

There was a discussion of the proposed Proposition 2 ½ override. Ralph says he doesn't want to use free cash to close the deficit, Joe agrees. Some use of stabilization is discussed and there is support for this on both committees.

Next was a discussion of why we need an override and whether to focus on school funding as the main cause. Eric argues against putting the full burden on the schools in our explanation to the town.

David Ames agrees to run new figures showing the need for an override or for cuts in all town departments.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.