

Shutesbury Board of Selectmen with Finance Committee Tuesday August 7, 2012 Meeting Minutes

Select Board members present: Chairwoman Elaine Puleo and members Al Springer and April Stein.
Finance Committee members present: Co-Chairman F. "Rus" Wilson, George Arvanitis, M. "Weezie" Houle, and Gary Hirschfield.

Also present: Police Chief Thomas Harding, Town Administrator Rebecca Torres, and Administrative Secretary Leslie Bracebridge recording.

Select Board Chairman Puleo opened the meeting at 7:05 P.M. at the Shutesbury Town Hall

Topics:

Police Department staffing needs, financial implications, Quinn Bill status:

Police Chief Harding summarized:

- 2 recent resignations of part time officers (one recent hire, and one long term officer) leaves department short-handed.
- Shutesbury encounters the same response patterns whenever there is a search for more officers:
 - Full time trained officers from other towns don't apply because they will lose longevity benefits such as accumulated vacation time and wage increases of their current employment.
 - Part time officers, with no experience are available, but they cannot work alone. Shutesbury does not have a large enough force to easily provide inexperienced officers with the field experience that would be needed to get them to the point where they could work alone.
- Recently hired part-time Officer Soto has an interest in becoming a full-time officer but would need to attend the statutorily required full time officers' academy.
- For immediate hires, waivers to having the academy training are allowed if the officer goes to one of the next full time officer academies:
 - The next two academies are scheduled for the end of September or the middle of February.
 - Academies are 18 to 20 weeks long.
 - One way for Officer Soto to afford to attend, would be if the town paid him 40/hours/week for the 18 to 20 weeks, the \$2500 tuition and the \$3,000 in other related expenses.
 - It is not recommended that officers attending the academy try to work make-up shifts on the weekends in case they get involved in something requiring court time or otherwise needing them to attend to their work during weekday class time.
- Chief Harding: felt that a previous arrangement which similarly covered Sgt. Justin Wall's academy training with a prorated commitment for him to pay back his expenses if he did not stay and work for Shutesbury for 3 years following training was beneficial both to Sgt. Wall and to Shutesbury. Chief Harding suggested that the town and Officer Soto might benefit from a similar arrangement.
- Becky: Reviewed some financial projections of hiring a full time officer already academy certified versus hiring a part time officer from within and sending to academy training.
- Becky: Town Counsel MacNicol advised the arrangement for repayment can apply to academy related costs only, not pay. Town Counsel recommends negotiating a 5-year commitment similar to that of other towns which require a 100% payback of expenses if the officer leaves during the first 3 years, 2/3 repay if the officer leaves in the 4th year and 1/3 if the officer leaves in the fifth year.
- The opportunity to go to the academy is a big benefit as it is mandatory to become a full time officer.
- In addition to academy training, all officers are required to receive regular in-service training.
- Becky reported on her research concerning the "Quinn Bill": For officers who might make a "lateral transfer" to Shutesbury to work, who were previously qualified for the benefit, Shutesbury

is still liable for the town's 50%, unless we go through the statutory process to rescind the Quinn Bill. No new police officers can ever become eligible for the Quinn Bill as it's no longer available.

- **Prior to the Select Board taking any action, the Finance Committee unanimously voted to support funding a full time police officers' attendance at the full time police academy with the understanding that following attendance at the academy, the officer would make a commitment to full time employment in Shutesbury for 5 years with a contract similar to that which Becky described as being recommended by Town Counsel.**
- Having a full time officer who gets to know the town is an asset.
- Following the Finance Committee recommendation, **Selectmen unanimously voted to instruct Chief Harding to nominate a person from his staff to attend full time police academy with the understanding that there would be a negotiated 5-year commitment for the officer to stay working in Shutesbury following the academy. Further, the chief would appoint that officer to full time employment starting as soon as possible, and apply for a waiver for the officer to start full time academy in February, 2013.**
- Town Administrator Torres will prepare a document to be negotiated.
- Chief Harding, Administrator Torres and Select Board Chairman Puleo planned a 7 AM Monday August 13 meeting with an officer so nominated for the benefit. The entire Select Board will meet with that candidate at their August 14 meeting.

Topics the Chairman Could Not Reasonably Have Anticipated

1. **The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) sent new FY 13 papers to be signed for reimbursement for the October 2011 snowstorm, as the documents the Select Board previously approved for signatures, were not valid after June 30. Selectmen unanimously approved signing the new forms with the same content as were previously signed.**

The Select Board **adjourned at 8:10 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Bracebridge
Administrative Secretary