

Shutesbury Board of Selectmen Tuesday January 29, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Members present: Chairwoman Elaine Puleo and members Al Springer and April Stein.

Also Present: Town Administrator Rebecca Torres, Administrative Secretary Leslie Bracebridge recording.

Chairman Puleo opened the meeting at 6:30 P.M. at the Shutesbury Town Hall.

Appointments

6:35 PM: Police Chief Harding: was not present.

At 7:00 PM Chairman Puleo opened the Verizon/National Grid Pole Hearing: In the presence of Thomas Blicharz Utility Consultant for Synergetics and representing Verizon and National Grid, and abutter Dale Houle. See Topics #2 below for content of discussion and vote.

Topics

1. Update on Sunderland's letter regarding the Fire Services:

- Becky met with town administrators from Sunderland, Leverett and Hadley because the Sunderland Selectboard had asked their town administrator to talk with other town administrators to talk with their Select Boards to see what could be started regarding shared fire services.
- Both Leverett and Sunderland just bought \$400,000 fire trucks.
- Select Boards will have a group meeting.
- Sunderland has a full time firefighter but not a full time Chief.
- Hadley has just received a consultant report reviewing their whole fire department, 178 items long. They are reviewing the recommendations to see how to move forward.
- When was the last time Shutesbury had an outside review? - Never.
- We are doing fine. If it's not broken, don't fix it.
- It is strange that we can afford it. Chief Tibbetts saves by fixing a lot of things.
- Chief Tibbetts is mindful in bringing on the Deputy Chief. He (Chief Tibbetts) won't be here forever, and is thinking of the long term. That Deputy Chief likely wouldn't go full time.
- We need to analyze all that Chief Tibbetts does.
- Leverett's outside report from many years ago is lost.
- Becky: Recommends having conversations with Leverett as they review their department, as Shutesbury spends a lot of time servicing Leverett. The road is changing and we should be involved in conversations around us.
- Chief Tibbetts couldn't do exactly what he does here for other towns as well; but, what could be shared with other towns?
- Elaine: The emergency management stuff - Shutesbury is so far ahead. Writing a second report is easier once one is written. Becky: A lot of emergency management is easier to do for two towns.
- April: Chief Tibbetts is dedicated; there's is no doubt about it.
- Elaine: We are going to be sorry when the dedicated people decide not to be dedicated.
- April: Regionalization keeps coming up.
- Becky: If Chief Tibbetts' salary could jump a level, he could do the things requiring a higher degree of competence, and let someone else change the light bulbs and vacuum the rugs.
- We need to keep Walter involved in the conversation, need to keep talking with the other towns.
- The conversation amongst Town Administrators was more about equipment; with mutual aide we're already sharing equipment in a sense.

2. Verizon Pole Hearing:

- Selectmen received a request to place (1) jointly owned pole numbered T.251½/E.6½ on the Northwesterly side of West Pelham Road at a point approximately eight hundred eleven (811) feet Southwesterly from the center line of Leverett Road to decrease the length of the span so the new cable will not sag into another cable.
- Notices were mailed to abutters a while back and postcard notices were mailed 10 days ago.
- This effort is making Shutesbury ready for the Massachusetts Broadband Initiative.
- It is not known if there are more spans needing additional poles. This is the only span identified in the engineering review at this point.
- Right now Massachusetts Broadband is only providing the service to the school, fire station, town hall and library, so the lines will only come up Leverett Road and go out to New Salem.
- Verizon is not interested in providing Shutesbury with fiber because it would not be cost effective as the housing density is not here.
- Leslie reported that the filing fee is divided between Verizon and National Grid and while Verizon consistently pays its half, National Grid has for the past 2 pole hearings, neglected to pay its half.
- **Selectmen unanimously voted to approve the joint request of Verizon and National Grid to place (1) jointly owned pole numbered T.251½/E.6½ on the Northwesterly side of West Pelham Road at a point approximately eight hundred eleven (811) feet Southwesterly from the center line of Leverett Road to decrease the length of the span so the new cable will not sag into another cable.**

The pole hearing was closed at 7:15 PM.

3. Regional School District Planning Board (RSDPB):

- Al and April received copies of the draft RSDPB consultant's report:
- Elaine explained the 2 reasons that only the members of the RSDPB and not the additional people attending the recent RSDPB meeting got copies of the report is because the report is so big to that to make extra copies would have used a lot of paper and because there were errors in the information, which the committee did not want distributed until they were corrected.
- Elaine does not agree with the numbers in the draft:
 - The page 12 analysis of K through 6: The town's debt service costs were wrong.
 - On page 25 – The town's base cost is lower.
- Elaine has been reassured by RSDPB Chairman Andy Steinberg that corrections will be made to the draft by the Saturday, February 2 meeting.
- There will be a call tomorrow, but Elaine will not be available. Becky has offered to make herself available in Elaine's place.
- Chapter 70 for a new district can only be "guesstimated."
- Once it is certain that the financial picture is not going to wildly change, Elaine is OK with putting out the report. It's too long to check for every detail.
- The appendix portion of the report pages are not numbered, which has caused some confusion in communications.
- We need the report condensed and accurate.
- Selectmen will attend the 1 PM meeting on Saturday at the Amherst-Pelham Middle School.
- Becky: Basically a \$600,000 savings is realized at the regional level. Shutesbury pays more in the region's use of the 5-year rolling average alternative assessment method. We need to work on a formula that captures both the per pupil cost and also makes the savings more equitable. The goal is an assessment formula that levels out the \$600,000 amongst the towns. The Ed reform statutory formula says Amherst and Shutesbury are poor and Pelham and Leverett are rich.

4. Flood Plain Bylaw update on notice:

- The Planning Board inadvertently overlooked newspaper publication of the notice of Public Hearing of the second floodplain bylaw public hearing held last fall, causing the passage of the bylaw to be defective.
- Statute allows for correction of the defect by publishing in the newspaper, a notice written by the Attorney General's office, acknowledging the defect and inviting people to notify the Town Clerk if they feel they have been negatively affected by the omission.
- The notice of defect was published on January 24. Voters have until February 14 to bring their concerns to the Town Clerk. If the Clerk receives no notice of complaint, she certifies that information to the Attorney General's office and the Attorney General's approval process resumes.

5. Civic Engagement – MMA (Massachusetts Municipal Association) Select Board meeting: Becky:

- A Town Manager from Arlington has a 10-week course for citizens, during which they focus on different departments and citizens ask all about the departments. In this way, Arlington gets volunteers. Arlington enlists department heads to teach the different courses.
- Wendy Foxmyn also represented at the Massachusetts Municipal Association conference about Northampton's program, but it stopped when the program's coordinator left the position.
- Becky thought it would be interesting to see how it would work in smaller towns.
- People who have a mild interest in town government would find where to fit into their town's government.
- The workshops at which attendance offers credit on MIIA insurance were offered on Friday instead of Saturday. Becky got to as many courses as she could, including one on medical marijuana clinics, and a labor law update.
- Becky attended the economic outlook where the new Secretary of Finance spoke.
- Becky reported that the convention had many more relevant workshops as well as a new format for town officials to talk about municipal issues, throughout the weekend, than the other times that she has gone.
- Becky met with Hadley, Chesterfield, Lanesborough, Sunderland and Amherst folks as well as Representative Steve Kulik (who is not able to come to Saturday's meeting and who is using a cane following knee replacement surgery) and got to talk briefly with Governor Patrick voicing her support of his proposal to raise the income tax. Becky showed a photo of her speaking with the Governor.
- Elaine shared a photo of Governor Deval Patrick with his arm around Elaine and her daughter Jesse which was taken in Washington when Elaine attended the January 21st inauguration and also attended the VIP ball in the evening.
- Becky praised Governor Patrick's increased support of municipal aid. His proposal to raise the income tax to 6.5% and lower the sales tax to fund it will shift the tax burden off of property tax. By Al's calculation, one would need to spend \$33,000 to break even. Becky calculated that with \$20,000 of taxable income and the sales tax reduction of 1.75%, the average person would pretty much break even.
- This coming Thursday night Elaine will go to Senator Kerry's event in Boston and then Friday Senator Kerry goes to Washington to get sworn in. Following the inauguration, Elaine had wanted to go to Kerry's hearings in Washington but she couldn't stay down there that long.

6. Snow, Roads and People – Jeff Lacy:

- Old Orchard Road resident Jeff Lacy emailed a list of questions to the Select Board relative to the amount of time the Highway Department works on the winter roads outside of their regular 40 weekly hours, and the amount of sand used on the roads.

- Highway Superintendent Timothy Hunting offered to respond to the letter, but since it will take some time, he first asks the Select Board to give him guidance, if writing the letter is a good use of his time in their opinion. Does the Board want him to spend his time this way:
 - We have a budget and a job for Tim to do as Highway Department Superintendent. He is not doing outrageous over budget work. He's not doing no work.
 - It's borderline: Answer the letter and you cave-in to a person's minor concern. Or, don't answer, and the people say, "It's my money."
 - Some of the letter's questions are easily answered.
 - The Highway Superintendent is special: On salary and with overtime, by contract.
- Jeff asks the same questions year after year and we give the same answers.
- Selectmen backed the Highway Superintendent up the last time, responding that he's doing a great job and suggested that Jeff ride around with Tim during a storm to get a better understanding of the job. And then, Jeff didn't write a letter last year.
- Jeff complains about the fact that they're out salting and sanding and Selectmen also get the opposite complaints from others, that they're not out salting and sanding enough.
- Selectmen consider inviting Jeff to a meeting to try to come to a better understanding with him instead of getting the same letter every year. Perhaps they could convey that it's not worth Jeff's time or the time of the Selectmen.
 - Would it be helpful to have Tim's answers?
 - Let's ask Tim if he would want to be at the meeting. Tell Tim we are trying to stop this yearly harassment. We would like quick answers.
 - You just need one person to call Dispatch and they will send Tim out.
 - If you wait until there is an accident, you are taking a further risk.
 - We're trying to be productive. So what is going on?
- We have a Highway Superintendent who is doing his job to the satisfaction of the overall community.

7. Support Vote of the Historical Commission to open a donation account for Hearse House repairs and renovations:

- The Select Board unanimously voted to support the Historical Commission's vote to open a donation account for Hearse House repairs and renovations.

8. MMA (Massachusetts Municipal Association) report from T.A. (Town Administrator Torres):

- There was a new format to the convention: The workshops were all on Friday instead of Friday and Saturday, and then on Saturday afternoon there were 3 presentation topics to choose from.
- Becky attended the OPEB (Other Post Employment Benefits) forum:
 - The speakers were: Mark Widmer, Mass Taxpayers Association, the Mayor of Salem, and someone on the Commission for OPEB.
 - Proposed regulation does not include the state setting requirements for towns' payments.
 - Some officials protested, "How are we going to fund it unless you make us do it?"
 - Shutesbury is putting money aside. Why not; it's not going anywhere until it's asked for.
 - A neighboring town hasn't done anything.
 - This legislation could change the numbers.
 - Right now, what to set aside is a moving target, the regulation will change things.
 - There could be changes to 20 years for the eligibility requirement. The lowest eligibility is 10 years. They're not grandfathering for less than 10 years.
 - The goal of the regulation is to eliminate people from the pool.
 - It is predicted that 30% could be saved by making these changes; but what then? What will those people do? Will they go into MassHealth? So are you just shifting costs? Some could go to Social Security and get Medicare at age 65.

Select Board Action Items

1. **Maintenance contracts for Generator:** Not covered during the meeting.
2. **Selectmen signed Payroll Warrants totaling \$84,557.90.**
3. **Selectmen signed Vendor Warrants totaling \$108,570.22.**
4. **Selectmen unanimously voted to approve the January 15, 2013 minutes as written.**
5. **Selectmen signed Personnel Action Forms (PAF's) for the resignation of Justin Richard from the Fire Department and the hiring of Thomas Herzig as a part time Police officer.**

Topics the Chairman Could Not Reasonably Have Anticipated

1. February 4 is the next RSDPB meeting, in Amherst at the Middle School professional development room at 6 PM. Will some meetings be in Shutesbury if they regionalize?
2. Discussion: 2% more Social Security was taken out of paychecks with the new year. (This did not impact town employees.)
3. Selectmen will meet with the Finance Committee on ~~February~~ March 5th at 7 PM.
4. Selectmen will meet from 7:00 AM to 8:30 AM on Tuesday February 12th instead of in the evening.

The Select Board **adjourned at 8:30 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Bracebridge
Administrative Secretary