

Shutesbury Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes
April 29, 2015

Members present: Elaine Puleo/Chair, April Stein, and Michael Vinskey

Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator; L.A. Scott/Admin. Secretary

Meeting opened at the Shutesbury Town Hall by Puleo/Chair at 6:00pm

Guests: See attached list

Appointments:

6:05pm: Chief Harding

Topics:

1. **Town Meeting Parking and Crowd Overflow Plans:** Harding reports that when school is over for the day, the field out back will be available for back-up parking. Torres: after working with school staff, the plan is to use the space where the pre-school playground is located for overflow seating; this is the safest outdoor spot as is protected from the roadway; there is a bench, other seating, and folks can bring chairs and blankets. Torres continues: the meeting will be available in the library via Skype and via speakers in the outdoor area. Harding will tape off the outdoor seating area. Harding: would rather have parking way back on school grounds than on West Pelham Road. Torres will send an “announce” email encouraging folks to carpool, walk, bike, and park with friends. Harding: because only Officer Sawicki will be on duty with him, there is no one to organize parking at the cemetery, therefore, wants to get everyone parked on school property. Torres reports that she went through the building with school staff; the overflow needs to be outside in order to limit the number of folks inside; the first floor maximum capacity of the school is 400 according to the source consulted by Tibbetts/Fire Chief; the school library capacity is seventy-five and it is already set up with electronics. Chief Harding: it is up to Tibbetts how many people can be in the gym, which has a capacity of 275. Bracebridge/Town Clerk notes the need for additional space for up to three ballot boxes for Town Meeting votes. Puleo suggests advising folks to arrive for Town Meeting at 8:30am in order to start the meeting on time. In order to accommodate a large number of people signing in for Town Meeting, Torres and Tibbetts will confer with the Town Clerk and school staff to arrange sign-in tables in the front lobby. Town Meeting sign-in will begin at 8:00am and at 9:00am, will be moved to its usual place in the gym to allow staff to be present for Town Meeting while continuing sign-in. All agree that it is difficult to know how many people will come. Stein notes the need for greeters to direct folks where to sign-in. Bracebridge: Paul Vlach will act as constable, be available from 8am for as long as is needed and will monitor campaigners and the ballot boxes. Harding: Tibbetts will determine when the gym is at capacity and folks need to go to the library. Torres: overflow parking at Town Hall is an option though there would need to be someone to handle this; notes need to reserve seating for ten Broadband committee members. Puleo suggests reserving two

front benches for speakers including Town Counsel and any other presenters. Torres: there will not be any display tables this year; will ask about use of COA chairs. Torres: set-up will begin on Friday after 3:30pm; trash bags will be delivered to the school at 1pm.; Huntress will provide a second public address system for questions. Bracebridge: the school will open at 7am to set up for the Town election. Harding: once paved areas are filled, the field will be used; at 9am, Harding will check with Tibbetts regarding seating and Sawicki will direct parking; condition of field will be assessed on Friday; after the first warrant article, a significant number of folks are expected to leave, at that time, officers will go outside to direct traffic as needed. Puleo: Kim/Moderator is planning to allow one hour for the Broadband presentation and questions; this does not include the time needed for ballot voting. When she joins the meeting, Kim is updated on the above plans.

2. **Review Motions for Town Meeting:** Puleo: each Select Board member is assigned a motion and will read the motion exactly as written. Puleo: Articles 10 and 11 could be a majority or a 2/3 vote. McKay: a majority vote is needed to take money out of free cash; when the Warrant was created, FinCom was not certain what source of revenue they would recommend. Torres: during their presentation prior to the motions, FinCom will recommend use of free cash. Kim confirms that the motion reads, "transfer from free cash."
3. **WiredWest/MBI Update:** Torres: Cummington asked for WiredWest support from Shutesbury on 5.5.15. In light of this request, the Select Board meeting is changed from 5.5.15 to 5.6.15 at 6:30pm.

Issue not reasonable anticipated by the Chair:

1. "Responses to FinCom Concerns" document presented to the Finance Committee during their 4.28.15 meeting by Jeff Lacy: Puleo advises Lacy to have a better overall presentation for Town Meeting including how long the original Master Plan process took to complete, its cost, and how long the Zoning Bylaw took to create and its cost, as well as the Open Space Plan's time and cost. Vinskey asks if Puleo wants to compare those costs to the update. Puleo cites the need for perspective; if the current plan cost \$30,000 to create, she doesn't want folks to think that the \$10,000 for visioning is all the update will cost, as it may be only a third of the cost. Puleo: the demographics for the current plan may not have cost the Town anything, however, may cost this time. Stein: any of these large-scale plans will have a price tag. Torres: cyclically, FRCOG has grants for master plans. Stein notes that the Personnel Bylaws were done in-house with an expense for legal guidance. Bracebridge: the Historic Resources Survey was grant driven. Torres requests Bracebridge to look up the amount of that grant.

Forum:

1. McKay asks for an explanation of Article 17. Torres: this is the standard article recommending the distribution of Community Preservation Fund allocations; #18-21 are also Community Preservation Fund articles.
2. Presentation by Gail Huntress/Co-chair of the Broadband Committee using the handout “Financial Questions and Answers for the Broadband Project” as reference: high-speed fiber optic cable will have the capacity to handle much more; highlights benefits of high-speed fiber optic Internet including maintenance of home values; notes plight of regular DSL and its inability to keep up with advancing uses of the Internet; Verizon plans to stop offering DSL at some point in the future. WiredWest (WW) is a cooperative volunteer organization; the public utility is owned by member towns and is not a corporation. Shutesbury was the first town to reach the 40% subscriber rate; the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) built the “middle mile” network to schools, libraries, and town halls; MBI is partnering with WW to build the “last mile.” The highest estimate, “not to exceed” number is used in the tax burden calculation; the average monthly tax impact is estimated to be \$12.71 for \$243,000 value home. WW is revenue generating, such that, if subscriber rates are sufficient, the cooperative will reimburse towns for their share of the debt. The downside is that we would need to repay the entire bond; the bond will be paid incrementally during the construction phase. The revenue benefit is expected by year three. The Broadband Committees goal is to drive subscription rates higher and be the first town to build out.

Huntress continues: why a cooperative vs. the Leverett model? The Broadband Committee has done thorough research and believes WW is a better option for Shutesbury. It is less expensive, and offers more options. WW is a cooperative; members have a say in how it is run and operated. The Warrant article endorses a cooperative solution. If the cooperative WW does not work for some reason, the town would have the option to choose again.

Puleo: those who own homes of lesser value may have lower incomes, therefore, if all property owners pay the same amount, those with lower incomes will be penalized; renters will probably pay via rent increases. McKay: when we start paying, during the first three years, the Town will only be paying interest.

Huntress: during this period, interest will be a budget appropriation. McKay: we have budgeted an annual fee for WW; why is this not being paid in 2016? Torres: the annual fee was paid in 2012 and 2015; it is called an annual fee, however, it is only requested from towns as needed. Huntress: in year six, the long-term loan will have a fixed rate; the short-term rate may fluctuate. Errante: referring to the chart on the handout, asks about the average current subscription costs vs. anticipated monthly fees. Huntress: chart is average for various services models, i.e. satellite and business lines. Errante asks if current costs are being exaggerated and recommends the Broadband Committee verify the actual costs folks are paying. Errante recognizes the hassle of dealing with Verizon, however, it is a company that is able to handle emergencies and asks if WW will be able to handle emergencies and if the Committee is confident it will handle our needs. Huntress:

MBI has years of experience in building out the “middle mile”, they will be in charge of building the network; fiber optic cable is proven to handle needs. Once built, the system will be handed over to WW who will be our ISP and will handle billing, repairs, etc. WW is in transition from grassroots to professional. WW will own two trucks and, in addition, will use contracted professionals. Every member town will have a seat at the WW table and will have control over how the network is owned and operated. Fox asks, once installed, when will service be “on.”

Huntress: service will be on when it is installed; if construction starts in 2016, by 2019 all the towns will be built out. Per Huntress: it is not known, when we will start; we are in the lead for number of subscribers; we are one of the towns with the most subscribers/mile. Lyons asks how reimbursement will work. Huntress: 40% pre-subscriber rate must be met to be part of WW and considered for build out; 40% is the profit point of paying subscribers in WW towns.

Schmidt/Broadband Committee: the 40% take rate is very conservative; Leverett, now that system is live, has an 80% sign up rate. Huntress: not all 32 towns will be part of the initial build-out; how many towns will be first is an unknown at this time. Torres: the towns with higher take rates and are in a cluster will have the opportunity to be built-out sooner; WW is a municipal light plant business model not just a non-profit or municipality. Huntress: a smooth transition between Verizon and WW Internet is expected. Schmidt: Verizon is required to provide basic phone service. Kim asks for reasons the FinCom supports this plan.

Stocker/Fin Com and Broadband Committee: overall, it is a good thing for the town; if we go out to bond, our good financial shape will be in our favor; hopes, however, is not assuming, that revenue will reduce debt. During Town Meeting, the FinCom will answer questions on Broadband as they are asked. Vinskey: subscriptions will not cover cost unless more towns get on board; asks about cost overruns. Huntress: MBI did the financial models with WW; the consulting firms used were asked to be conservative. Per Huntress, “make ready” costs are expensive because every pole needs to be evaluated for what it needs to be ready. Due to the “middle mile” project, MBI already has the rights to string additional wire on the poles running through the center of town. Huntress, refers to the handout, WW has a contingency cap on installation. Vinskey asks for verification that the chance of a cost over run is low. Torres: there could be cost overruns.

Huntress: four separate firms and WW looked at model; we’ve done our best to ensure cost estimates are right. Vinskey: is there a trigger point when overruns are too much. Huntress: plans can be made, as we go along, if overruns become a problem. Schmidt: MBI wants to work with WW and directly with town representatives as the project proceeds; work will be put out to bid; WW and our own committee will be involved in watching what happens as we go along.

Schmidt: \$1.693 million covers connecting all homes in Shutesbury; this money is for all installation although homeowners with driveways beyond 750 feet will pay some of this cost. Schmidt continues: the first step will be an engineering design and assessing each house to determine which ones will need to pay more for installation.

Huntress: there may be a motion, from the floor, to change how the warrant article –is presented; everything that has been proposed is based upon the cooperative

model. Vinskey asks what happens if the article is changed. Huntress: article, as written, allows the town to work with another cooperative if WW doesn't work out. Vinskey: if WW doesn't work, he would want the Broadband Committee to come back to Town. Torres: WW would have to be specifically identified in the warrant article. Torres explains: WW is the relationship of Shutesbury's Municipal Light Plant (MLP) with other MLPs; the Select Board is the Board of Directors for Shutesbury's MLP; the Select Board signed papers agreeing to be part of WW; in the future, our MLP/Select Board could vote to become part of another cooperative. Torres, referring to slide, the blue wording was written by MBI to allow the creation of a regional network; blue language is specific to cooperatives; blue wording is consistent with what WW is proposing to/with towns. Huntress: WW will be an ISP and Crocker is an ISP; WW could contract out to an ISP such as Crocker; the cooperative model makes up the business. Levine asks how long WW will be given to see if it works out. Huntress: the viable business plan has been checked for accuracy; there is not a timeline, however, the Broadband Committee will be watching closely. Torres: at least 17 towns have warrant articles between now and the fall; MBI extended the deadline for town meeting votes to 6.30.16; towns are dealing with a number of different issues. Huntress: Shutesbury has been a leader in subscription rates and informed citizens; once we have our vote, the Committee will be pushing WW to move forward. Martin/Broadband Committee has been working with the WW governance committee.

Puleo asks if there are questions about other warrant articles. McKay verifies the plan for her to give a Capital Planning Committee presentation.

Lacy asks if there will there be any mention of the regional assessment in Article #2. Mosher/FinCom will speak to this at Town Meeting.

Vinskey, referring to the FinCom info sheet, asks about item #4. Mosher: item #4B, is a free cash transfer into stabilization Vinskey asks for an explanation of cash reserves. Torres: encompasses free cash, capital stabilization and stabilization. Mosher explains that item #3 breaks out "free cash." Vinskey: potentially large things could happen, therefore, intent to keep funds in "free cash" account; notes need for Building Committee to do an inventory to see what needs to be done. McKay: Capital Planning likes to have a fall back in case of an emergency, i.e. boiler repair; as buildings are surveyed, capital stabilization, is used on priorities. McKay explains that different boards come to Capital Planning who makes recommendations to the FinCom who then recommends to the Select Board before becoming Town Meeting Warrant articles. Torres: the goal is to have the financial stability to address needs as situations arise and to have flexibility in the tools used. Puleo: the FinCom has an emergency fund.

As the forum ends, Puleo reminds folks to walk, bike, carpool, and arrive by 8:30 am to check-in for Town Meeting at the front door until 9:00 am when check-in moves back to the usual place; police will be directing parking; back-up parking at Town Hall; there will be a drop off spot for those with limited mobility. Puleo continues: overflow seating in the school library and outside in pre-school area

with audio only; use Town Hall for back up parking. Torres: the Friends of the Library will provide food.

List of Documents and Other Exhibits used at the meeting:

1. 2015 Annual Town Meeting Warrant
2. Motions for 2015 Annual Town Meeting Warrant 5.2.15
3. FY16 Budget
4. Shutesbury Finance Committee Reserve Funds Analysis 5.2.15
5. Shutesbury Finance Committee Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Report
6. Financial Questions and Answers for the Broadband Project
7. Responses to FinCom Concerns

Next Select Board meeting: 5.6.15 at 6:30pm; time for an Executive Session will be planned for this meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Avis Scott

Administrative Secretary