

## **Annual Town Meeting 5/2/2015**

### Shutesbury Community Preservation

Good Morning, My name is Donald Fletcher. I am the At-large member and the Chair of Shutesbury's Community Preservation Committee.

Before voting on the five Community Preservation Warrant Articles I will very briefly explain:

- the basics of Community Preservation program,
- why that influences the kind of votes allowed at town meeting,
- the two standard annual CP budget warrant articles #17 and 18, and
- the articles 19, 20 and 21 which are for the three projects that Community Preservation Committee recommends for Town Meeting approval

Background - The Community Preservation Act, in 2001, added a \$20 fee for deed filings in Massachusetts. These fees go into a State Trust fund to 'match' funds raised for Community Preservation in participating cities and towns. When Shutesbury became a Community Preservation member in 2009, Annual Town Meeting approved adding a 1½ % surcharge to property tax bills with exemptions for the first \$100,000 of valuation and for low-income residents. As the number of Massachusetts's municipalities participating in the Community Preservation Program has increased the amount the State's annual "match" has declined for towns, like Shutesbury, with less than a 3 % surcharge. In the next fiscal year, the state match is estimated at 18% of what these municipalities raise through their respective property tax surcharges.

The Massachusetts Community Preservation Act requires that participating municipalities transfer at least 30% of annual Community Preservation revenue: 10% to each three designated accounts for Open Space, Historical Resources, and Community Housing. The balance can fund projects in any of these three areas and a fourth, to create recreation resources.

Community Preservation Committees are comprised of representatives of town boards, commissions and committees with functions that are related to community preservation. Shutesbury's by-law created a Community Preservation Committee with nine members: Leslie Bracebridge represents the Historical Commission, Linda Avis Scott - the Conservation Commission, Sue Essig - Open Space Committee, Rita Farrell was appointed to represent Housing, Jim Aaron represents the Planning Board, Allen Hanson represents the Finance Committee, and Michael Vinsky represents the Select Board. I was appointed as the at-large member. I'm proud to serve with all of them.

This year, with their different perspectives, the CPC reviewed what we have learned during the previous year and revised Shutesbury's CP Plan. Each applicant completed a detailed application and review process that included three open meetings. These

included a Public Hearing in March during which each of three applicants presented its proposal. They heard comments and answered questions from interested citizens.

According to the state statute, Community Preservation funds can only be expended with the approval of Town Meeting, but the statute also limits the role of Town Meeting to “up or down” votes and only of projects that are recommended by the Community Preservation Committee. Having completed that yearlong process, the CPC has recommended that Town Meeting approve five CP warrants today.

Articles #17 and #18 are the standard annual budget articles.

The overall financial status of Shutesbury’s Community Preservation Fund, is outlined on an orchid colored handout. On the top portion of the front page FY 2016 estimated revenue for Shutesbury’s Community Preservation fund. Article 17 appropriates a little more than 10% to each of the three designated funds and about 65% to the general CP Fund. Article 18 appropriates a little less than 5% for the administrative expenses of the CPC. These funds will only be used if necessary, based on the proposals that we receive. In prior years only a small portion administrative expense funds have been used, and whatever is not used will go back into the CP general fund balance.

Are there any questions before voting on Annual Budget Warrant Article 17

**Article 17.** To see if the Town of Shutesbury will vote to act on the recommendation of the Community Preservation Committee on the fiscal year 2016 budget to transfer the following sums of money from the Community Preservation Fund estimated annual revenues: \$5,000 to Open Space (excluding recreational purposes); \$5,000 to Historic Resources; \$5,000 to Community Housing; and \$29,600 to the FY16 Community Preservation Fund budgeted reserve, or take any action relative thereto. *(Sponsor: Community Preservation Committee)*

**Article 18.** To see if the Town will vote to appropriate \$ 2,200 from fiscal year 2016 Community Preservation Fund estimated annual revenues for necessary and proper administrative and operation expenses of the Shutesbury Community Preservation Committee, or take any action relative thereto. *(Sponsor: Community Preservation Committee)*

I welcome a motion.

To understand how today’s community preservation votes will impact the Community Preservation fund, look again at the orchid colored handout – at the bottom of the first page, as of the end of last FY, June 30, 2014 Shutesbury’s Community Preservation fund had \$250,709. That total is the sum of amounts in the individual designated accounts and reserves for Community Preservation projects that have previously been approved by Town Meeting. On the backside is an overview of the Financial History of Shutesbury’s Community Preservation Fund.

When I spoke at Town Meeting last year, I mentioned that one challenge in a Town like Shutesbury, is that Community Preservation projects depend on a small group of dedicated Town residents to get organized and to volunteer significant time and energy. The CPC is very pleased that this year three groups completed an extensive application and multiple step review process.

After completing its review and evaluation, the CPC members voted unanimously on April 2, 2015, to recommend funding the three projects. We determined that each project:

- is financially and administratively feasible,
- has other sources of funding,
- includes significant in-kind volunteer contributions,
- has support from other town boards or committees,
- will provide a positive impact to the community, and
- is a step toward achieving long standing, but unfunded, priority goals for Shutesbury.

The total cost of the three projects being recommended by the CPC this year is \$34,100, which is less than the estimated Community Preservation Fund revenue for next year by more than \$12,000.

**Article #19** appropriates \$25,000 for the preservation, protection and restoration of the historic gravestones in Shutesbury's West Cemetery. There are three parts to this project:

- the removal of seven large pine trees that have been dropping large dead branches that have damaged the historic gravestones (this project has actually been a multi year effort. Five trees were removed last year. The Town Tree warden supports this plan as being the best approach),
- the repair and restoration by a trained\* conservator of approximately 30 of the most severely damaged gravestones (one who is skilled in the art of restoring important historic gravestones), and
- the training of cemetery personnel and up to thirty volunteers to complete minor repairs and/or cleaning of the stones that have not been extensively damaged.

Proposed by the Cemetery Commission (Walter Tibbets)

Letters of support for this project were submitted by:

- Shutesbury Historical Commission
- Friends of the Shutesbury Historical Commission
- Town Center Committee

A letter from a descendant of the Spears families, who were very active in Shutesbury’s history and are buried in this oldest and most at risk section of the West Cemetery.

I welcome a reading of the warrant and a motion and then will entertain questions

**Article 19.** *To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$25,000 from the Community Preservation Fund; and to meet this appropriation, transfer \$5,000 from the Historic Resources account and transfer the sum of \$20,000 appropriated from the Community Preservation Fund Balance, to preserve, rehabilitate and restore the historic grave stones of Shutesbury’s West Cemetery, as detailed in the Shutesbury Cemetery Commission’s Project proposal, with all the work to comply with the Standards for Rehabilitation stated in the United States Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties, said funds to be expended under the direction of the Shutesbury Cemetery Commission, or take any action thereto. (Sponsor: Community Preservation Committee)*

For many years, Shutesbury has had town goals to increase access to Lake Wyola opportunities, to add passive recreation infrastructure, and to increase recreational opportunities for people of all ages. The CPC recommends funding the next two projects, in part, because each moves us toward accomplishing these goals.

**Article 20** requests \$5,000 to create a small waterfront park for at the old Town Beach. It will provide a quiet, sheltered area for passive recreation for people of all ages who want to enjoy nature and scenery. Although, the primary purpose of the project is to create infrastructure for passive recreation, this Town-owned and currently underused partial of land is between two important areas for active recreation. Creating the waterfront park will enhance access to Lake Wyola and the South Brook Conservation Area.

Expenses will be for minor landscaping, plantings in raised beds, a gazebo, and for refurbishing of the storage shed.

Many Town Boards have expressed support for this project. A new oversight group, the Old Town Beach Improvement Committee has been created to, in part, build on the successful kayak loan program. Volunteers have offered labor and plants.

This project, like the next one, is a step toward achieving all three goals, and it costs only \$5000.

Proposed by The Old Town Beach Improvement Committee  
(Katherine Hilton and Mary Ann Antonellis)

**Article 20.** *To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$5,000 from the Community Preservation Fund; and to meet this appropriation, transfer the sum of \$5,000 from the Community Preservation Fund Balance, to create a waterfront park at the former Town Beach, as detailed in the Old Town Beach Improvement Project proposal, said funds to be expended under the direction of the Old Town Beach Improvement Committee, or to take any action thereto. (Sponsor: Community Preservation Committee)*

**Article 21.** requests \$4,100 to improve another currently underutilized town owned waterfront property to increase passive and active recreation. Level and flat land with shoreline access to lake Wyola, this town-owned land is described as an unknown gem (at the north end of the lake at the beginning of Merrill Drive).The improvements will include creating a kayak/canoe launch site, adding four parking places, a path, a fence on one side, a picnic table, the planting of native shrubs and trees, and a free kayak and canoe launch site. In addition to the increased recreation opportunities, the native plantings will demonstrate good stewardship of a lake front conservation area and will benefit wildlife habitat, prevent runoff, minimize erosion, and improve water quality. The improved site will be a lovely area will improve access to the lake, provide opportunities for passive lake side recreation and will be a destination site for people who borrow one of the library kayaks and launch from the Old Town Beach.

Similar to, and in many ways a compliment to, the earlier plan to improve the Old Town Beach, this project is also a step toward achieving Shutesbury’s goals to increase access to Lake Wyola opportunities, to add passive recreation infrastructure, and to increase recreational opportunities for people of all ages. The request is for \$4,100. This project fulfills long held goals, is available for people of all ages, including those with mobility limitations

Expenses for the project will include picnic table, fence, construction of a parking area, and planting of perennial and shrubs. The project budget includes additional cash and in-kind contributions totaling (\$1,150) and volunteer commitments to plan trees and shrubs, and to install the fence.

Proposed by the Shutesbury Conservation Commission  
Penny Jaques  
Maintenance budget will be \$100/year  
Notice of Intent needed because project is within 100' of the Lake – Janice Stone  
Parking \$2,000  
\$1,000 – 80' long Post and beam fence along the east property boundary  
\$1,000 – plantings  
\$400 – picnic table  
\$600 – signage

Sponsored by the Conservation Committee  
letters of support from the Open Space Committee  
Old Town Beach Improvement Project Committee

**Article 21.** *To see if the Town will vote to appropriate the sum of \$4,100 from the Community Preservation Fund; and to meet this appropriation, transfer \$4,100 from the Community Preservation Fund Balance, to create a recreation area with a canoe/kayak launch on Town owned land with Lake Wyola frontage, as detailed in the Conservation Commission's project proposal, said funds to be expended under the direction of the Conservation Commission, or to take any action thereto.  
(Sponsor: Community Preservation Committee)*

For all the members of Shutesbury's CPC, thank you for your support.

Prepared and presented by  
Donald Fletcher  
Chair, Community Preservation Committee  
May 2, 2015