

SHUTESBURY

MASSACHUSETTS



OUR TOWN

Spring Greetings from the Select Board

Rita Farrell, *Co-Chair*, Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil, *Co-Chair*, Eric Stocker

Hello Neighbors,

It's been a busy Fall and Winter for the Select Board. We have had very full agendas and multiple meetings in addition to our regular bi-weekly meetings. All of our meetings are "open" and available via Zoom or in-person. We adopted the "hybrid" meeting model last Fall and have chosen to continue that practice. Meetings are also all recorded and available on YouTube.

Here are a few highlights from our recent meetings.

Over the Fall/Winter we accepted the resignations of several residents who have given a lot to the town over the years.

Jeff Lacy, **Miriam DeFant**, and **Gary Bernhard** have resigned and been thanked by the Select Board on behalf of the town for their dedicated work.

JoAnn Bernard has resigned as Co-Chair of the Council on Aging. We thank her for her work also.

We also appointed **Ashleigh Pyecroft** as full member of the Planning Board, **Curtis McGuire** as full-time Police Officer, **Elizabeth Murphy** as a

Library Trustee, and **Sean Genereux** as the new Recycling Coordinator.

We also would like to thank **Jon Thompson** for stepping up to chair the Zoning Board of Appeals.

We are happy to report that the **Locks Pond Culvert** project is finally completed. Severe weather last summer delayed the project's completion. We appreciate everyone's patience with the traffic detours. We are also happy that construction of our **new Library** will, in theory, start soon.

There are several other initiatives that we were tangentially involved with. The **Subduing Knotweed Coalition** met with us to discuss the persistent growth of the invasive species Knotweed in town. We appreciate the work done on this and anticipate a proposal in the future. **Mary Jo Maffei** is leading this effort and can be reached at maryjomaffei22@gmail.com or 413-265-6390.

We also met with the **Historical Commission** to discuss the town common guideboard's needed repairs. As of this writing, using CPA and Historical Commission funds, the guideboard has been transported to Williamstown for restoration.

One of our ongoing issues was the Attorney General's (AG) rejection of our 2023 "**Solar By-**

**2024 Annual Town Meeting
(and in-person voting for
Election of Officers)
Saturday, April 27**

law" and the subsequent lawsuit against the town by Cows and Puresky. The lawsuit is still in court, so we are not at liberty to discuss this in great detail. We have had several Executive Session meetings with our legal team and the **Planning Board**. Suffice it to say this is far from over. Stay tuned.

Perhaps the biggest event in the recent past was the Conservation Commission's adoption of new regulations and the town's adoption of a **new Wetlands Bylaw** (replacing our 1980's vintage bylaw) at our Special Town Meeting on January 23, 2024.

Conservation law and regulation is very complicated. It can be very controversial as well.

To aid in the completion of this project, the Select Board appointed **Gregor MacGregor**, who is a prominent Massachusetts conservation law lawyer. With his assistance, we hope the town has a new Bylaw and related regulations that we can all live with for a long time. Our thanks to the Conservation Commission for all their hard work on this.

Select Board, cont. on page 2

Select Board, cont. from page 1

Gasoline and PFAS contamination at the **Fire Station** are problems that the town will need to deal with in the future. There are also repairs needed at the **Lake Wyola Dam**. There are plenty of ongoing issues facing the town.

As a reminder, the town is always looking for people to work on the committees that keep our town running. Please lend a hand if you can.

Job Opening in Town Hall

If you are interested in local government and have a background in minute taking and administrative support, please give us a call. Job description for Selectboard Administrative Secretary is available on the town website, or upon request from **Becky Torres**, Town Administrator, 413-259-1214, townadmin@shutesbury.org.

School Committee News

Bethany Rose, *Chair*

Fall 2023 and Winter 2024 were a busy six months for the Shutesbury School Committee.

With the pending retirement of Superintendent **Jennifer Culkeen** after nine years of service, the Union 28 Joint Supervisory Committee, of which Shutesbury is member, was tasked with finding a new superintendent.

On February 16, three finalists interviewed for the role of superintendent. The Joint Supervisory Committee unanimously voted to hire **Shannon White-Cleveland**. White-Cleveland is currently the Principal at the Athol Community Elementary School and has 25 years of educational experience in both classroom and school administration.

In addition to taking part in the search for the new superintendent, members of the School

Committee have also been part of many meetings discussing the upcoming elementary school budget, which includes negotiations with the **Shutesbury Elementary Educators** and **Shutesbury Affiliated Workers**.

Budget meetings have also extended to four town meetings with Amherst, Pelham and Leverett to discuss the Amherst Regional School Budget.

The School Committee approved the Elementary School's proposed budget, which continues all the services currently provided. While the negotiations could potentially affect the budget, we are optimistic that there will be no changes needed in the levels of services or offerings.

At the Elementary School, we were pleased to learn in January that some of our students received a Student Achievement Award from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The Department issued these awards to honor high-achieving, high-needs students throughout the state who exceeded expectations on the 2023 MCAS in English Language Arts or Math.

A Letter from the Town Clerk

Grace Bannasch (she/her/hers), *Town Clerk*

townclerk@shutesbury.org

413-259-1204

Website www.shutesbury.org

Office Hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 10am-3pm.

Wednesday: 10am-1pm, 3-5pm.

Friday: 10am-3pm.

Salutations Shutesburians!

2024 is a very exciting year in the Town Clerk Office. In addition to four elections, several Town Meetings, and adapting to

new state systems for elections and vital statistics, we also have a new team member. Please give a warm hilltown welcome to **Jeannette Kiely**, Shutesbury's new Assistant Town Clerk!

The Local Election & Annual Town Meeting

Saturday, April 27, 2024

Shutesbury Elementary School, 23 West Pelham Rd.

We are **returning to the Elementary School** for Annual Town Meeting at 9am this year. Masks will be available, since the meeting will be held indoors. The Local Election will also happen at the Elementary School, 8am - 2pm.

For many of you, this will be a return to an old familiar. For some of you, this will be a brand new experience. The last time we held Annual Town Meeting at the Elementary School was 2019, before the pandemic began. That same year, at a Special Town Meeting in December, we updated our Town Meeting bylaw to set the date as the last Saturday in April. 2024 is the first year we will be implementing that bylaw. If you have a preference for indoor or outdoor Town Meetings, please share your thoughts with the Moderator, Town Clerk or Select Board.

To read the Town Meeting warrant (aka the agenda), or learn more about Town Meetings in general, visit the town website.

List of Candidates for Local Election

Board of Health (3 years)

Wm Levine, 633 Wendell Rd.
Arleen Read, 18 Old Orchard Rd.

Cemetery Commission (3 years)

Susan Millinger, 135 Wendell Rd.
Dina Stander, 106 Sand Hill Rd.

Library Trustee (2 years)

Elizabeth Murphy, 452 West Pelham Rd.

Library Trustee (3 years)

Kate Cell, 29 Old Orchard Rd.
Pam Ososky, 292 Pelham Hill Rd.

Municipal Light Plant Board (2 years)

Graeme Sephton, 623 Wendell Rd.

Municipal Light Plant Board (3 years)

Stephen Schmidt, 518 West Pelham Rd.

Planning Board (1 year)

Ashleigh Pyecroft, 109 Baker Rd.

Planning Board (3 years)

Nathan Murphy, 452 West Pelham Rd.
Jeff Weston, 13 Kettle Hill Rd.

School Committee (1 year)

No nominee*

*At the time of submitting this list to the newsletter, March 15, 2024, the Town Clerk Office was aware of 1 write-in candidate for the 1 year School Committee seat, Jessica Evans of 175 Wendell Rd.

School Committee (3 years)

Leah Jack, 527 West Pelham Rd.

Selectboard (3 years)

Eric Stocker, 21 New Boston Rd.

Remember to Turn In Your Street Listing!

In January, every household was mailed a "street list" aka the annual municipal census. This year the forms are green. If you have not already returned your green street listing form to the Town Clerk Office, please remember to do so! If you do not

return your street list before June 1, you will be "inactivated" as a voter, which means you may need to show ID next time you vote.

Very important: INACTIVE VOTERS CAN STILL VOTE!

You just need to show ID and sign an affidavit affirming that you have maintained continuous residence in Shutesbury since June.

See you soon, Shutesbury!

Sincerely,
Town Clerk Grace Bannasch

Warning: They're Headed for a Yard Near You!

Catherine Hilton, *Chair, Board of Health*

The Board of Health reminds you that with warm weather comes a greater danger of insect-borne diseases.

Remember to protect yourself, your family, and your pets from mosquitoes and ticks. For more information please visit shutesbury.org/health and click on "Insect-Borne Diseases."

While you're there, go to the Town's home page and **sign up for Town Announcements**, which will allow you to receive timely e-mail notices from the Board of Health and other town entities. And if that's not a possibility for you, please call us at 413-259-2122.

Did you know Shutesbury now has the services of a public health nurse? Her name is **Sarah Fiske** and she can be found at Town Hall on Tuesdays from 12:30 to 4pm, and other times at sarah.fiske@greenfield-ma.org or 413-531-0657.

ECAC Could Be Your Perfect Opportunity!

- **Do you want to see elec-**



Electric vehicle charging in town?

- **How about more solar power at municipal buildings?**
- **Are you interested in helping Shutesbury residents understand how to take advantage of federal and state opportunities regarding climate and energy?**

These are just some of the issues the **Energy and Climate Action Committee (ECAC)** explores. Our job is to do the research and bring options to the Town for consideration.

If helping the Town make progress in energy efficiency 11.5 climate mitigation is important to you, this could be this could be your perfect volunteer opportunity!

Interested? Send an email to ecac@shutesbury.org with a short statement about why you'd like to join ECAC.

Our Town Newsletter Policy

Adopted by the
Shutesbury Select Board
December 23, 2019

Our Town, usually published three times a year in January or February, April, and August or September, is supported by tax dollars. We welcome news from Town of Shutesbury departments, boards, and committees, and from individuals and groups about local community projects, activities, or special events of benefit to our community. Submissions must be strictly secular and nonpartisan and are subject to review, revision, and/or non-acceptance by the editorial board of the newsletter. Submissions promoting the sale of goods and services for private profit cannot be accepted. Appeals to any review decisions can be brought to the Select Board for further discussion.

Janis S. Gray, *Newsletter Editor*

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Statements from candidates for Town Election of Officers

Space in *Our Town* for campaign statements is available to all candidates, including known write-in candidates. Each is invited to submit a statement of no more than 125 words to this newsletter. Below are all statements that were received by this newsletter. The Town of Shutesbury does not endorse any candidate.

Library Board of Trustees (two-year term)

Elizabeth Murphy
452 West Pelham Rd.

My name is Elizabeth Murphy and I am running for a seat on the Board of Library Trustees. I am a lifelong supporter of libraries and have been involved with the MN Spear Memorial Library since moving to Shutesbury in 2020. Most notably, I was on the committee for the first annual Turkey Trot and was appointed to a partial term as a Library Trustee from September 2023 until the present. As a Library Trustee, I will continue to work to support the new library, help with the planning of the 2nd annual Turkey Trot and represent the voice of parents with young children on our board. It would be my honor to continue serving as a member of the Board of Library Trustees. Please consider voting for me.

Planning Board (three-year term)

Nathan Murphy
452 West Pelham Rd.

I am pleased to be running for a second term on the Planning Board. My goal going into a new term is to pursue community engagement. I mean this both in terms of hearing from residents as well as providing opportunities for education and understanding about what the

Planning Board does and the legal framework it operates in. As a resident, I value public services such as our elementary school and library and maintaining the rural character of the town. As a Planning Board member, I value striving to balance the collective concerns of the public with the concerns and rights under the law of any person or entity with business before the Board.

Jeff Weston
13 Kettle Hill Road

My wife and I moved to Shutesbury in 1993 with our two small children. After thirty-seven years as a Science Teacher and Department Head, I am now retired. I majored in biology at Tufts University and spent many years teaching AP Biology which included Ecosystems, Conservation Biology and Restoration Ecology. I have used this background in my work as a member of our Shutesbury Planning Board over the past 2 years. I believe we must plan with a changing climate in mind and an appreciation for fair, thoughtful, and common-sense development. If re-elected I will bring my understanding of the community and use my professional knowledge and skills to help protect our aquifers and natural environment.

School Committee (one-year term)

Jess Evans
175 Wendell Road

I'm running as a write-in candidate for the one-year term on the school committee. I'm a solo parent to a neurodiverse 7th grader and work here in town as an outdoor educator and Assistant Director at Morse Hill Outdoor Center. We've lived in Shutesbury since 2016. My family life, background in early education, and experience teaching a fully outdoor educational program during the pandemic gives me a well-rounded perspective on the challenges that teachers and families face in ensuring that every child is met exactly where they are and given the tools they need for success. I'll advocate for what's best for students, families, and teachers in this role, and look forward to partnering with community members this coming year!

School Committee (three-year term)

Leah Jack
527 West Pelham Rd

I am running for school committee because I am passionate about the importance of education and want to support my town. My husband and I moved to Shutesbury in 2021 but have

School Committee
continued from previous page

been in the Pioneer Valley since 2016. Though I started my career in financial services, I made a conscious effort to transition to education in 2016. I hope that my enthusiasm for and experience in education will prove useful for our community.

Select Board
(three-year term)

Eric Stocker
21 New Boston Rd.

I am running for re-election to the Selectboard.

The town has issues facing us that require practicality, impartiality, and experience. I think that my years in business and our town government, as well as a willingness to strive for consensus, will serve the town well in those regards.

I have served on: Finance Committee, Selectboard, Capital Planning, Personnel Board, Education Study Committee, Regional Assessment Summer Study Committee, and the Broadband Committee.

I will review all the issues that come to the Selectboard with an eye to doing the best thing for the town. I will continue to strive for us come to fair consensus resolutions as much as possible.

I appreciate your support.

Historical Commission
Openings

Are you interested in preserving historical buildings, or cultural stone landscapes such as stone walls, foundations, gravestones, and Indigenous sites in our local area? If so, consider joining the Shutesbury Historical Commission, to help work on these and other projects, including digitizing our records to make them more available to the public.

We need two more members to fill out our Commission and help work on these and other projects. The Commission recognizes and supports the preservation of both Indigenous and Euro-American cultural sites in our community.

Learn more about the history of our town! For more info, check our website at <https://www.shutesbury.org/historical-commission> or email us at Historical@shutesbury.org. We meet once a month, check town meeting calendar for next meeting. Thanks!



Bill Czerwonka, Janice Stone, and Karen Czerwonka at the 2019 Quabbin Park Memorial Day Event. The annual gathering includes a parade of the represented towns' Historical Commission banners.

Report on the Shutesbury Library Building Project
Exciting happenings with the new Shutesbury Public Library!

Through the fall and winter, we have been getting deep into the details of our building design making both small and large changes always keeping in mind our goal; to provide a library that meets our residents' needs while being mindful of the budget. We have now completed the Design Development phase. Our architects are preparing Construction Documents which will be sent out for contractor bids in April. We're very excited about the final design. You can find the link for the latest Power Point presentation titled Updated Building Plans 2/2024 at the bottom of Library Building Committee webpage at <https://www.shutesbury.org/library-building>

In the meantime, we have held meetings with town boards and department heads to review the current plan. The Board of Health has permitted our septic system, and the Conservation Commission has approved the Order of Conditions for our construction work. The Police Chief, Fire Chief, Highway Superintendent and Town Administrator have all given feedback that has helped us refine our plan.

The new Library's well will be a public water supply, permitted by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. We have hired a well driller and are working with our well engineer from Fuss & O'Neil to complete the required testing and permitting. If all goes as planned, you will be seeing signs of the well drilling by the end of March. Thanks to our Highway Superintendent for helping with this process.

Construction, cont. on page 6

for construction bids in April with a plan to be breaking ground in June.

Thank you for all your support!

From the Recycling and Solid Waste Committee

Welcome Sean Genereux, Shutesbury's new Recycling Coordinator!

Sean is excited to bring his passion for sustainability and community involvement to his new

role as Recycling Coordinator. He is dedicated to educating and engaging residents in proper recycling practices to help

reduce waste and protect the environment.

In his free time, Sean enjoys spending time with his family, hiking, and volunteering in the community. Please join us in welcoming Sean to the Town of Shutesbury and supporting him in his efforts to make our town a greener, more sustainable place for generations to come.



Hard-to-Deal-With Stuff

Although there is a lot of information about recycling and trash disposal on the RSWC website (www.shutesbury.org/recycling), we've recently had questions and issues come up about hazardous waste, sharps (needles), and nuclear medicine.

On the RSWC Website

If you're not sure what to do with an item, the first stop is the

RSWC website.

The **Recyclopeda** is maintained by the Mass. Department of Environmental Protection, and has information about what's recyclable, what goes in the trash, and what is hazardous waste. Just type in your item, and you'll get an answer.

Beyond the Bin is another DEP website that focuses on what to do with larger items such as textiles, furniture, mattresses, etc. Also on our website, at the top of the page, is "**How do I get rid of...**" a list of what to do with many items.

Hazardous Waste

Every year in September, Amherst offers a Household Hazardous Waste disposal day. Shutesbury residents can get rid of hazardous waste at this event, and someone from the RSWC volunteers, saving Shutesbury a few hundred dollars. Registration for the event is mandatory, and information about the registration process and what you can and can't bring to the event will be available here: [Recycling - Solid Waste | Amherst, MA - Official website \(amherstma.gov\)](http://www.amherstma.gov/recycling-solid-waste).

If you need to get rid of hazardous waste right away, there's a disposal location in Westfield, NEDT. Information about NEDT is at this website: [NEDT Household Hazardous Products Collection Centers & Pick-Up](http://www.nedt.org). NEDT is open Mondays and Wednesdays 9am - 4pm and Saturdays 9am - 1pm.

Sharps

If you use medical injections at home, the "sharps" — needles, syringes and lancets — can't be put in the trash. They must be disposed of at a special site. Amherst has a **Safe Needle Disposal** program. Residents of Amherst, Pelham, and Shutesbury may purchase "sharps"

containers at the Amherst Transfer Station.

The fee is \$5 per 2.5-quart container that includes the disposal of the filled container with a licensed medical waste hauler. Simply return your filled container to the Transfer Station.

Nuclear Medicine

Last year we had a couple of incidents involving nuclear medicine. Every truck carrying trash for disposal in Massachusetts must pass through a nuclear waste detector before the trash can be unloaded. If radioactive material is identified, the Department of Environmental Protection is contacted, and someone from the DEP is sent out to investigate. The trash can't be unloaded until the nuclear material is located and removed.

It costs the Town \$1000 each time the DEP is called in, and, since the truck involved can't be used while this process is going on, the hauler charges the Town \$300 for each day the truck is out of commission. Whew!

Nuclear medicine is used in several situations, mostly as a cancer treatment. Standard procedure is to isolate the material for 90 days, then put it in the trash. However, in one of the Shutesbury situations last year, the patient waited the 90 days as directed by the physician, but because it was a new form of nuclear medication, it apparently had to be sequestered for more than 90 days and triggered the detector. So, if you're using nuclear medication, make sure you get all the facts from your physician about its disposal.

The Recycling and Solid Waste Committee: Meryl Mandell, Chair; Sean Genereux, Recycling Coordinator; Gary Bernhard, Barbara Bigelow, Gail Fleischaker, Mary Glavin, Marla Killough, Tim Logan, Steve Rice, Peg Ross.

What is Digital Equity?

by the Shutesbury Broadband Committee

In short, digital equity is ensuring that every person has the information technology resources to fully participate in society, democracy, education, healthcare, and the economy.

Shutesbury has already done the hardest part of ensuring digital equity in a community by making high-speed broadband service available to every household and business. If you live in Shutesbury, the network is available to you!

The next part of digital equity is making sure that service is affordable and people have the devices they need to access the internet. Digital equity will also help ensure people understand how to optimize the use of their electronic devices for healthcare, education, and remote work, while at the same time staying safe on the internet.

Over the next several months we'll be reviewing regional data and gathering information from a townwide survey as part of a Digital Equity Planning process. Shutesbury has been awarded a grant to partner with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) and the Town of Leverett to design and distribute the survey. The results of the information we gather will help identify the digital equity gaps in Shutesbury and put us in the eligibility pool for \$147 million in state

grant funds. If awarded, these funds could be used for network equipment upgrades, router upgrades, and educational programs.

Stay tuned as we continue to work to make ShutesburyNET affordable and useful for all townspeople who want to use the internet.

Enjoying Spring Together!

On March 10, the Recreation and Open Space Committees co-sponsored their first of two walks at Ames Pond. This land, bequeathed to the Kestrel Land Trust by **Julian Janowitz**, is an extraordinary landscape of wetlands and forest. Although rain threatened throughout the week, sun broke through periodically, and most important, no rain. The walk was led by **Graeme Sephton**, whose good cheer eclipsed any concerns about the mud and slush along parts of the trail.

Graeme frequents the area and shared his knowledge about the trails and the history and flora and fauna of the area. The walk also provided a great opportunity to get to know new people.

Our committees' next co-sponsored walk will be in May or June. For those interested in hiking there, please be aware that construction and reconstruction of the boardwalk is ongoing and avoid areas where the old boardwalk is submerged and/or where construction is occurring.

Our next event was co-sponsored with the Library for April 7. Library Director **Mary Anne Antonellis** planned an eclipse craft program on the day before the upcoming solar eclipse, with supplies and instructions to make eclipse

viewers. In keeping with our eye on the sky, we invited people to come fly a kite with us! If they didn't have kites, we would have some. We hope that you were able to attend!

We also have events in the works to be co-sponsored with the Library, but with no firm date as of this writing.

First, we plan to offer a **mushroom growing workshop** that will give participants the information they need to decide if mushroom growing is for them. This event will likely be held **end of April or early May**. Second, we will have two evenings for star gazing led by **Tom Schieding**. Third, we will be sponsoring a **bird-watching event in mid May** to correspond with peak bird migration. Please look for emails from the Recreation Committee or Library for additional information on date, time, and location.

The Recreation Committee is pleased to be a sponsor of an **Artist Studio Tour** to be held on Sunday, June 30. Organized by **Joan Green**, there will be many studios participating. It will give visitors an opportunity to visit local studios, talk to the artists, and become familiar with their work. It will be a wonderful celebration of our local artists.

The Recreation Committee is looking for a new chair. **Barbara Bigelow** plans to step down at the end of June. If interested, email her at Recreation@shutesbury.org. As you can see from this submission, the Recreation Committee sponsors diverse, interesting, and fun activities. The total time commitment is 6-8 hours a month, including a monthly meeting.

Did you know *Our Town* is available online?

A digital version with clickable hyperlinks and color photos can be accessed on the home page of www.shutesbury.org.

Community Preservation Committee Update

This year the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) welcomed two new members: **Beth Willson**, as representative for the Conservation Commission, and **Clif Read**, as designee for the Planning Board.

As a Community Preservation Act (CPA) community, Shutesbury receives a match of additional funding from the state Community Preservation Trust Fund each year based on the previous year's local surcharge revenue. Shutesbury raised \$53,599 from last year's CPA surcharge, so the town's FY24 distribution from the state Trust Fund was \$11,269.

This past fall the CPC began a process of evaluating community housing project ideas beyond only the construction of affordable housing. Some of the avenues being researched have included the creation of an affordable housing trust fund to administer programs for rental assistance or down-payment assistance. The Committee has also looked into the possibility of partnering with a neighboring community, such as Leverett, to develop a more regional program. No action has been taken on either of these ideas, but the Committee is interested in exploring and considering as many options as possible to better meet the statute's community housing goals.

In December 2023, the CPC received Determinations of Eligibility for two potential projects considering seeking Community Preservation Act funding, both of which were determined by the Committee to be eligible. Neither project, however, subsequently submitted a full application for funding and so there will be no new CPA projects presented to Annual Town Meeting in 2024. The CPC will, however, be presenting its two usual warrant articles relative to the management of the Town's CPA accounts and

the Committee's annual administrative costs.

Since 2011, CPA funds have been used to support 14 projects around Shutesbury, amounting to over \$294,000 of direct investment—and hundreds of thousands of dollars more in matching funding—for historic preservation, open space, recreation, and affordable housing needs in the community. These projects are proposed by members of our community and our neighbors and represent key partnerships between town and regional committees, boards, and commissions, groups organized by Shutesbury residents, and area nonprofit organizations.

For more information about the CPC and the Town's Community Preservation Plan, how to apply for grants from the Committee, and past CPA-funded projects in Shutesbury, please visit https://www.shutesbury.org/community_preservation.

From the Assessors' Office

Personal Property Values: If you own a home other than your primary domicile, operate a small business, or raise farm animals in Shutesbury, and did not receive a *Form of List* to complete and return, please contact the Assessors' office. When personal property owners do not self-report the values of their personal property, Assessors must estimate values. A *Form of List* completed by the personal property owner provides Assessors with accurate value information.

New Growth: As Spring approaches, Assessors are tasked with identifying and valuing Shutesbury's "New Growth" since July 1 of the previous year. This means that any new construction such as new homes, additions, renovations and secondary structures, as well as demolition activities will be valued by means of "drive-by" or physical inspections, and property records

will be updated for the coming fiscal year. If an interior inspection is desirable, Assessors will request a voluntary appointment. Though property owners are never required to let Assessors onto their properties, it is the best way to achieve accurate valuations.

Exemptions: The various corresponding exemption application forms available to the citizens of Shutesbury will be mailed out, during the summer, to low-income seniors, blind citizens, and Veterans with 10% or more disability, as are known to the Assessors' office. The applications can be completed and submitted at any time before their varying submission deadlines. Anyone seeking more information concerning eligibility, or wishing to request a particular application to be mailed, should contact the Assessors' office by phone: 413.259.3790, email: assessor@shutesbury.org, or pick-up in person, by stopping in during office hours.

Chapter 61, 61A and 61B: Reminder notices for the 10-year Ch 61 renewals, and the annual applications to continue Ch 61A and Ch 61B land classification status for FY 2026 will be mailed out during the summer. The applications are due in the Assessors' office no later than December 1. Owners of classified land, who no longer wish to continue their classification should notify the Assessors' office of that decision, for instruction for release of their liens. Early submission of Chapter 61 applications is always welcomed.

Motor Vehicle Excise: In conformity with Massachusetts state law, cities and towns receive their excise data from the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV). Therefore, it is very important for motor vehicle owners to contact the Registry of Motor Vehicles within 30 days of moving, to update their mailing address, and the place of garaging

Assessors, cont. on page 9

of their vehicles. These updates can be made at the RMV website.

Many owners are surprised to see the high amounts of their new car excise tax bills. An excise at the rate of \$25 per \$1,000 of valuation is levied on each motor vehicle in Massachusetts regardless of the town. Value figures for the vehicles are based on the manufacturers' list prices for vehicles in their year of manufacture. The excise tax law (M.G.L. c.60A, s.1) establishes that only the manufacturer's list price and the age of the vehicle are considered. In the first model year vehicles are valued at 90% of the manufacturer's list price. By the 5th year, the value of the vehicle drops to 10% of the manufacturer's list price and remains there in succeeding years. Because of the ever-increasing values of new cars, the amount of excise tax is becoming an increasingly important consideration for new car buyers.

Please feel welcome to email, call, or stop into the Assessors' office with your questions: 413-259-3790 or assessor@shutesbury.org, Mondays and Tuesdays 11am to 3pm, Wednesdays 10am to Noon, and by appointment.

Note from the Town Collector

Dear Shutesbury taxpayers,

Happy spring! Now that the warmer weather is approaching, we are nearly at the end of fiscal 2024 and the Town Meeting for fiscal 2025.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: With the new computer system, the TOP section of the

bill is to be returned with your payment, and the middle and bottom sections are the copies for you to keep. Sending the incorrect portion of the bill to the lockbox (Woburn address) results in a delay of recording your payment because the coding is missing and they can't handle your payment. If you want a receipt, please send the entire bill (or the top and bottom sections) with a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

My office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 9am - Noon and Thursday from 8am - 11:00am. If you call during these hours and I don't answer, please leave a message. I'm either on the telephone or have stepped out of the office.

Always open all envelopes you receive from this office immediately upon receipt. The bill you think is a real estate bill (and paid by your bank) may be an excise tax bill for which you are responsible.

If you use on-line banking from your bank (not the Town's system), please change the mailing address to Town Collector, PO Box 175, Shutesbury, MA 01072-0175. Please make sure the memo information is correct and does not reflect information from previous payments (i.e., listing real estate or excise bill numbers from previous years or an incorrect type of bill). Since your bill payment is NOT an automatic transfer into the Town's bank account, you must plan accordingly when authorizing the payment. DO NOT set up the payment on the due date as it won't get to the Town until almost a week later which will result in fees and interest.

If you are having financial difficulty paying your real estate bills, please contact me to arrange a payment plan.

Don't forget to contact the Board of Assessors if you no longer have a vehicle on which you have received a motor vehicle excise tax bill. All bills should

be paid in full before you apply for the abatement. If this is not done and the bill becomes overdue with additional fees and interest before abatement, these must be paid along with any outstanding balance due on the bill after abatement.

Be sure to notify this office if you permanently change your mailing address to avoid a delay in delivery of your mail which is returned to me for forwarding. This can take as much as three weeks, which reduces the time you have to pay the bill on time. I am glad to forward bills if you are temporarily away. However, I must know this is the situation before you leave to avoid the bills being returned as "temporarily away" by the post office, which delays delivery to you.

Should a demand bill be issued on a motor vehicle excise tax, the law provides 14 days for receipt of payment before a warrant for collection is issued to the Deputy Collector. This results in at least \$22.00 in additional fees. Upon mailing of the demand bills, payment of the original bill will NOT be accepted and checks made out in the incorrect amount WILL be returned to the sender.

Some of you have been unable to pay your bills on-line. If the bill is on warrant, it cannot be paid on-line except through the Deputy Collector's office, which can be reached during business hours at 413-527-2388.

Have a good spring and stay healthy.

Ellen McKay, Town Collector

Early Childhood Program

The Shutesbury Elementary School (SES) Community believes that opportunities for early childhood education are essential com-

ponents of a good education system. Early experiences in an environment rich in hands-on materials and activities provide children various opportunities to grow emotionally, physically, socially and cognitively.

We believe that a trans-disciplinary team approach, in which all adults working with children are responsible for a child's learning, is the most effective way of teaching, and we also believe that parents are the most important teachers of their children and that their involvement in their child's education is essential.

Your child must be 3 years old on or before September 1, 2024, for pre-school enrollment, or 5 years old on or before September 1, 2024, for kindergarten enrollment.

For more information on Fall/2024 enrollment, please call **Laura Feltman**, Main Office SES, 413-259-1212 x100 feltmanl@shutesburyschool.org (main office) or **Grace Griecci**, 413-259-1212 x140 griecci@shutesburyschool.org (preschool)

Developmental Screenings for 3, 4 & 5 Year Olds

In Shutesbury, developmental screening is available through the school as a first step in a process intended to find children in need of special services and to plan for meeting those needs. Screening focuses on a child's growth in a number of areas, such as large and small muscle control, speech/language development and concept development.

This activity takes about 40 minutes and consists of a number of games that children typically enjoy playing. The screening gives an indication of whether or not a child's skills are developing within the typical range.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's development, would like more information, or wish to set up an appointment, please call **Nicole Sutka**, Shutesbury Elementary Student Support Teacher, at 413-259-1212 sutkan@shutesburyschool.org

This service is available to all families in town, including those with a child not already enrolled in the school's pre-school program.

Where Did the Town Guideboard Go?



Jan. 30, 2024 photo by Clif Read

Many of you may have noticed the disappearance of the Town Guideboard off the Common this winter. The good news is that it has been moved to the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, to begin restoration of the historic structure. The MA Historical Commission lists the date of the original Guideboard as 1837, making it almost 200 years old.

The Shutesbury Historical Commission has been working on finding an affordable option for the restoration, and after considerable research by former member **Miriam Defant**, the Williamstown Center was determined by the Commission to be the best choice.

On a cold day in January, Historical Commission member **Matteo Pangallo**, with the help from local volunteers **Daniel Lass, Paul Lyons, Clif Read** and **Al Werner**, worked to get the

fragile structure wrapped and protected for the trip. Matteo drove the Guideboard to the restoration center. It will be a few months before the Guideboard will be stabilized, inspected and the next steps in rehabilitation treatment determined.

Funding for this project is from a CPA (Community Preservation Act) grant, the Historical Commission, and the Friends of the Historical Commission.

Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small & Rural Communities

The M. N Spear Library is honored to have been chosen as one of the 310 libraries for the second round of Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities, an initiative by the American Library Association (ALA). This initiative aims to provide small and rural libraries with the necessary resources for community engagement and accessibility, particularly for individuals with disabilities.

Through this competitive selection, the Library has been awarded a \$10,000 grant, which will contribute to creating an inclusive environment for community members experiencing neurodiversity, particularly children. This funding will play a crucial role in furnishing and equipping the new Shutesbury Public Library, ensuring that its spaces, collections, and ongoing programs consider the needs of neurodiverse individuals.

The engagement of neurodiverse community members and their families is important to the success of this project. Later this spring, we will be planning a community conversation with people whose lives are touched by neurodiversity to gain insights into how the grant can best enhance the resources and environment of

the new library. Collaboratively, library staff and neurodiverse library users will explore various furnishings, equipment, and resources to optimize the library's design, making it inviting and comfortable for all visitors.

Our Library Catalog has been upgraded!

Have you noticed the new and improved catalog? The updated catalog has a host of new features and functionality, such as:

- The ability to view, manage, and check out digital material from OverDrive/Libby along with physical material right from the catalog!
- Browse and place holds on titles by format! Titles will be grouped, allowing straightforward access to every available format of the title in one place, including e-formats.
- Search suggestions and spell check! Predictive text will offer suggestions when searching for material. Misspelled words in your search will also be corrected.
- Accessibility improvements, including additional languages and high contrast and dark themes.

From Tales to Tunes: Building Community Through Library Programs

The Library hosts a diverse array of programs catering to individuals of all ages. Through partnerships with community organizations such as the Community Network for Children, the Council on Aging, and the Recreation Committee, we continually expand our offerings to enrich the lives of our patrons.

In collaboration with the Community Network for Children, we present a weekly **Tales and Tunes Storytime** every Friday morning

10am, held at Shutesbury Elementary School.

We are committed to promoting fitness with **four weekly fitness classes** offered on Zoom. These complimentary sessions are made possible through generous funding from the Friends of the M.N. Spear Memorial Library, the Council on Aging, and the Recreation Committee, along with support from a grant from the New Salem Academy.

Book enthusiasts will find a welcoming community in our **two monthly book clubs**. The Roadtown Reads Book Club delves into both fiction and non-fiction titles, offering hybrid meetings for flexibility. Meanwhile, the Science Fiction Book Club meets on Zoom, typically on the first Wednesday of each month.

Music lovers can join our monthly **Ukulele Strum Along** via Zoom, held on the fourth Monday of every month at 7pm.

For those seeking furry companionship, drop by on the second Wednesday of each month between 4:45 - 5:45pm to spend time with **Freddie, a certified Bright Spot Therapy Dog**.

Beyond these ongoing programs, our library hosts an abundance of other enriching experiences. To explore our full range of offerings, visit our website at mnspear.org.

Art Workshops!

Please register by emailing library.director@shutesbury.org

These programs are supported in part by a grant from the Shutesbury Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. Additional support is provided by the Friends of the M.N. Spear Memorial Library.

Cyanotype - Sun Printed Fabric with Rory Valentine Sunday, April 21, 2pm Town Hall – for teens and adults

Cyanotype is an antique photographic printing process well known for its deep blue color and where the term “blueprint” originated. In this class we will use pretreated cotton and everyday objects to block sunlight from the photosensitive fabric to make beautiful surface patterns. You will take home several cyanotype fabric image samples that can be made into bags, placemats, pillows, napkins, mending patches, quilt squares and more.

Blackout Poetry and Art with Jeannette Stockton Wednesday, May 15 at 6:30pm, Town Hall – for teens and adults

Working directly on pages of text from found books, participants will highlight words, and blackout others using collage and other art materials. With these acts of observation and deletion, works of art and serendipitous poetry occur from the text that is left behind. Reference will be made to *A Humument* by Tom Phillip, an artistically transfigured Victorian novel.

Let's Make Fairy Villages with Samantha Spisiak Sunday, May 19, 2pm at Town Hall – for children ages 4 and up

Bring some magic to your garden by making your very own fairy house. We will be using air dry clay and natural materials to create a wonderful home for our neighborhood fairies. Recommended for ages 5+.

This immersive and hands-on experience encourages kids to express themselves through art while embracing the joy of getting delightfully messy as they bring their fairy world to life.



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Go to www.shutesbury.org to find email addresses, or call the appropriate number below.

ACCOUNTANT Gail Weiss 413-259-1108	EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR Kristin Burgess 413-259-1279	POLICE DEPARTMENT Kristin Burgess, Chief 413-259-1279 Dispatch 413-625-8200
ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY TBD 413-259-6550	ENERGY & CLIMATE ACTION COMM. Michael DeChiara, Chair 413-259-1059	PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE Sarah Fiske 413-531-0657
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR Rebecca Torres 413-259-1214	FINANCE COMMITTEE Ajay Khashu, Chair 917-582-4256	RECREATION COMMITTEE Barbara Bigelow, Chair 413-801-9714
ANIMAL INSPECTOR Nancy Long 413-259-1279	FIRE DEPARTMENT Leonard Czerwonka, Chief 413-259-1211	RECYCLING COORDINATOR Sean Genereux 413-415-0657
ASSESSORS Leave inquiries at 413-259-3790	HEALTH AGENT Claudia Lucas 413-549-3710	REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE Anna Heard 413-406-2757
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BUILDING INSPECTOR Jim Hawkins 413-774-3167 x. 113	LAKE WYOLA ADVISORY COMMITTEE Mark Rivers, Chair 508-259-0972	SELECT BOARD Rita Farrell, Chair 413-259-1297 Melissa Makepeace- O'Neil 413-256-0312
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COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMM. Matteo Pangallo, Chair 413-687-0402	SPEAR LIBRARY TRUSTEES Kate Cell, Co-Chair 413-259-9129	SHUTESBURY BROADBAND COMMITTEE Gayle Huntress, Chair 413-345-2855
COUNCIL ON AGING For general inquires and details on Foot Clinic, leave message 413-259-3796	MICHELE REGAN-LADD, Co-Chair 413-259-1149	TAX COLLECTOR Ellen McKay 413-259-1615
CONSERVATION COMMISSION Beth Wilson 413-259-3792	OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE Leave inquires at 413-259-1214	TOWN CLERK Grace Bannasch 413-259-1204
CULTURAL COUNCIL Cara Brostrom 413-256-6871	PERSONNEL BOARD Leave inquiries at 413-259-1214	TOWN MODERATOR Paul Lyons 413-259-1556
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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Jackie Mendonsa, Princ. 413-259-1212		ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS Jon Thompson, Chair 413-259-3792