

Shutesbury Finance Committee
Tuesday, September 8, 2020, Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

Members Present: Jim Hemingway, Ajay Khashu, Jim Walton, Susie Mosher, Melody Chartier, George Arvanitis

Members Absent: Bob Groves

Non-Members present: Becky Torres, Mike Vinskey, Leslie Luchonok

7:01pm Call to Order.

- 1) Motion to approve 8/18/2020 minutes approved unanimously.
- 2) Special Town Meeting recap: Article 1 was approved (82 votes for, 56 against).
- 3) Approved minutes should be sent to townclerk@shutesbury.org.
- 4) Budget Request Planning.
 - SM shares recommendation for a joint meeting w/ FinCom, Selectboard and other relevant parties to discuss fiscal policy/guidelines. Given revenue projection, it might be helpful to set some clear goals. Examples of which might be that departments should level fund, support town employees, etc.
 - It will be a significant challenge this year to have a clear revenue projection given the uncertainty in funding, tax collection, etc.
 - There is some agreement that there is value in setting fiscal goals for the year.
 - Budgeting process begins with a Budget Request Form sent to Department Heads and Committee Chairpersons.
 - Suggestion to make changes to budget request form: a) change from portrait to landscape orientation, b) add columns to indicate FY20 budget and FY21 requested budget.
 - It is the Select Board's role to work with Department Heads to establish service goals for specific departments.
 - Budget request letter bullet points
 - i) Level service budgets.
 - ii) Uncertainty of state aid.
 - iii) Remove reference to \$25 property tax limit. Replace it with language that acknowledges the difficulties many taxpayers are facing and the uncertainty the town faces in funding the budget.
 - iv) Include explanation of how we were able to decrease tax rate by using free cash. That was a one-year, special circumstance and should not be a regular feature of our budgets.
 - v) Prepare for potential budget reductions.

- Select Board is considering a bylaw proposal to bring to town meeting. This proposal would bring changes to the assessment process for the purpose of creating more equity across income groups.
- Department budget meetings typically begin in November. Prioritize highway department so that we can get them in before snow removal season. School budget typically happens in January.
- For FY21, department heads will be asked to submit their budget request form 2 weeks in advance of their scheduled meeting w/ FinCom.
- Becky volunteered to draft budget request letter for committee to discuss at next meeting. Goal is to have final letter shared with departments in early October.
- Becky and JW will review last year's calendar and propose dates for this year.
- SM would like to have a FinCom meeting to discuss long term capital planning. We should review the town's capital plan at this meeting.

5) School Plans/Costs Update

- BT spoke with Bruce Turner. They are just now closing FY20 budget.
- The elementary school has underspent \$20K.
- The school has some issues with Chromebooks, but Becky is hoping that a CARES act request will take care of that.
- Schools have purchased tents to set up outside for individual meetings with students/families.
- Union 28 contract is close to completion. Will cover a 3-year period beginning July 2021.
- School is projecting a loss of 11 students for home schooling. Typically, there is a count of students in October that is used to set state aid funding for the next year.

6) Broadband revenue stream is averaging around \$39K a month.

7) Future Meetings

- September 22

Meeting adjourned at 9:02PM