

**Shutesbury Finance Committee**  
**Tuesday, December 29, 2020, Virtual (Zoom) Meeting**

Members Present: , Jim Walton, chair, Jim Hemingway, Susie Mosher, Bob Groves, George Arvanitis

Members Absent: Melody Chartier, Ajay Khashu

Non-Members present: Becky Torres, Diane Jacoby, Leslie Luchonok, Jeff Lacy, Mike Vinskey

1. Review of draft 12/15/20 minutes. In the section concerning the Fire Dept. budget review.

- SM proposed amending statement, “The Department has submitted a level-services budget.” She proposed this should say “level funding” budget since all the FY2022 amounts requested were the same as FY2021. Discussion of the meaning of level services and level funding ensued.
- BG said because the salaries are not in the FY22 request, the appropriate term is not level funded.
- BT said that department requests should reflect any changes in staff levels. The Budget Request letter to departments requested a “level services” budget. The Personnel Board deliberates on raises and makes their recommendation, with Personnel Board, Fin Com, and Select board voting on their proposal in February or March.
- BG requested the Fin Com clarify the language of what constitutes a level funded or level services budget request at a future meeting.
- SM withdrew her amendment. The minutes of 12/15/21 were passed with other amendments.

2. BT emailed the members the DLS Cherry Sheet Manual, a good reference for understanding state aid and assessments. We reviewed the Shutesbury FY2021 cherry sheets and trends for all four towns in our region. Ch. 70 and UGGA aid held steady. Charter Tuition Reimbursement varied a lot from town to town and is reimbursed at a diminishing rate over three years. School Choice Receiving Tuition is up in Shutesbury and ARPS, but down in the other towns. Overall, Shutesbury’s FY 21 numbers put us right about where we projected in May. Amherst cherry sheet also ended up favorably due to lower ‘charter school sending tuition’ charge. Other towns have not done so well. This may shape their perspective on possible percent increase for the continuing shift to statutory formula.

3. FY 22 proposed state aid numbers may be lower for some or all of our four towns in the region. How the state will figure enrollment numbers for school aid is under examination by our legislators. Amherst’s projected 30% drop in town revenue has caused their Fin Com to request level funded FY22 budgets from all depts. ARPS has drafted two proposals: -1.m and -1.4 m cut from a level services budget. Both proposals will cut into programs that help ARPS remain competitive in the school choice and charter school arena.

- SM said program cuts sending the school system into a downward enrollment spiral is a concern.

- BG suggests that a wage freeze, reduction in staff, and shared employee sacrifices may offset school program cuts. Looking for a balance.

The state budget process lags behind our town's need to prepare and pass a budget in time for the beginning FY22. This has always been true and the late completion of FY21 state budget (Dec.!) was extreme. Our proposed budget projections will be built on information as it becomes available, and reasoned estimates. The committee's track record of state aid has been good so far.

4. Information on the adjustment to the regional bus contract is being finalized, but it looks like a 25% reduction will come in due to the decreased need for services in this school year.

5. The Capital Planning Committee received FY22 requests to review and evaluate: \$25K for the New Library Building fund, funding for a police cruiser and \$5,000 funding for installation of the school sliding doors.

- JH said the Fin Com should be able to review the specific items recommended by the Cap Plan committee as it has done in the past.
- BT said the process had gone awry in the past and the FinCom is following the Cap Plan guidelines developed in 2018 and approved by the Select Board.

6. The Building Committee will meet soon. New leaks and damage from the school roof, their conference room slider installation and other items are on the agenda.

7. The next Fin Com meeting will be at 7 pm on January 12 with the school committee, Select Board and U28 staff. There will be an All Boards meeting on Tuesday, January 19. We are waiting to hear when the next 4-Town meeting will be held.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Susie Mosher