

**Shutesbury Finance Committee**  
**Tuesday, February 22, 2022, Virtual (Zoom) Meeting**

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

Members Absent: Jim Walton

Town Administrator: Becky Torres

Non-Members present: Diane Jacoby, Jeff Lacy, Mike Vinskey, Gayle Huntress (Broadband MLP), Steve Schmidt (Broadband MLP)

Meeting called to order at 6:32 PM

**1) Motion to approve 1/25 meeting minutes as amended passes unanimously 6-0.**

**2) Motion to approve 2/8 meeting minutes as amended passes unanimously 6-0.**

**3) Initial FY23 budget review**

a) Revenue budget:

i) Estimated \$10,000 of new growth.

ii) No adjustment to excess levy capacity at this time. Value will carry over from FY22.

iii) Total tax levy = \$5,464,236.

iv) Slight increase of \$3,000 in Chapter 70 state aid.

v) School choice receiving has declined.

vi) Total revenues = \$6,781,432

vii) Diane Jacoby asks where the Wheelock solar PILOT revenue appears in the budget. BT responds that we will have to create a new table to include with the budget that specifies what are solar revenues are.

b) Expense budget

i) BT is working on updating the expense budget to reflect all department budget proposals.

ii) There is no update on the new hauling contract. The request for bids was just released and responses are due in March. This budget line is likely to experience a significant increase.

iii) We currently have an excess of approx. \$90k in revenue. However, there are several expenses that have yet to be reflected in the budget proposal (e.g. hauling contract, COLA increases for town employees).

**4) Broadband Budget Review**

a) The MLP is an enterprise fund that generates its own revenue.

b) None of the expenses outlined in the MLP budget will be raised by Shutesbury taxpayers. All revenue needed to operate the MLP comes from subscriber fees.

- c) Total FY23 budget = \$346,560. This represents a significant decrease in the overall MLP budget (FY22 budget ~ \$473K). This is largely driven by the fact that we paid off a short term BAN last year.
  - d) MLP anticipates putting \$73,459 into retained earnings.
  - e) MLP expects to lower rates this year by an estimated \$10 per month.
  - f) There will be a new ISP Provider. This will result in cost savings and service improvements.
  - g) MLP Manager Salary budget is increasing from \$12,600 to \$24,000. This is because the manager has been undercompensated from the beginning of the project. Her responsibilities will increase as she will be taking on the responsibility for managing the MLP's finances. The personnel board will be discussing this proposal at their next meeting.
  - h) There are currently 760 subscribers to the service.
- 5) Feb 10<sup>th</sup> Four town meeting recap
- a) Several committee members express approval of the regional school committee's plan to implement a 100% modified statutory assessment method for their FY23 budget.
  - b) GA: Our committees will have more time to review the budget now that we won't be investing so much time in negotiating the assessment method.
  - c) BG expressed concern that Fincom member AK communicated Shutesbury's support for the assessment proposal shared by the regional superintendent at the Feb 10<sup>th</sup> Four Town meeting. BG added that town representatives did not have an opportunity to discuss changes to proposal (i.e. it now includes a 4% vs. 5% guard rail) and that it was, hence, not proper for a Shutesbury representative to speak to the town's position on the proposal. AK responded that there are no other Four Town meetings scheduled and that this was the last opportunity for the towns to provide feedback in a public setting. AK also stated that he felt it was important for all four towns to speak in unanimous support for an assessment method that ultimately accomplishes Shutesbury goals.
- 6) OPEB – Actuarial Update
- a) We are still waiting for the report. BT is going to ask Ryan for a status update.
- 7) Expense Report Review
- a) Health insurance line is doing better than BT though it would.
  - b) AK asks if we have started to charge Kristen Burgess' wages to the Police Chief Salary line. BT reports that we have started to do that with the most recent payroll. There should be plenty of funds between the Police Wages and Police Chief Salary lines to cover our expenses for FY22.
- 8) Committee Reports
- a) GA for Personnel Committee: Personnel committee is meeting on Monday. GA ran the COLA calculation model developed last year. The model results in an anticipated COLA increase of 2.42%. GA will be presenting the calculation at their next meeting.

- b) SM for School Committee: SM has met with Kaitlin Sheridan to clarify the elementary school budget.
- c) AK and BG for Capital Planning: The Highway department has submitted a request to replace their 2003 Sterling dump truck. The fire department is also requesting a new SUV to be used by the next fire chief. BG shares that the committee is planning to move forward with a proposal to fund the engineering phase for the next stage of the elementary school roof replacement. He shares that it is critical that we have a plan for advancing this project in the event that the MSBA continues to reject the town's funding requests.
- d) BG for Building Committee: The committee recently toured some of the town buildings to see what the issues are moving forward. The committee will be drafting a report to recommend the best sequence for projects.

## **9) Future Meetings**

- a) Mar 1: Joint meeting w/ Fin Com, Select Board, and Personnel Board.
- b) Mar 8: Fin Com meeting

Meeting adjourned at 8:37 PM