

Shutesbury Finance Committee  
Wednesday, December 21, 2022 Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

Members Present: Ajay Khashu, Bob Groves, Jim Hemingway, Susie Mosher, Jim Walton, George Arvanitis, Melody Chartier and ex-officio member, Town Administrator Becky Torres

Members of the Public: Fire Chief Lenny Czerwotka, Mike Vinskey

Meeting called to order at 6:36 pm

1. Minutes from 12/14/2022 meeting approved as amended.
2. Chief Czerwotka explained the failing emergency generator at the fire station. For about a month and a half he has been trying to get the generator fixed so it won't run in Overspeed mode. In consultation with manuals, tech support from the manufacturer, and Tim Paciorek, the electrician who installed and maintains the Broadband hut generator, Lenny replaced three parts so far, but the problem still remains. The next part, Electrical Control Monitor, (ECM) costs \$3k from the manufacturer and is out of stock. Paciorek has a new generator in stock that he would sell to the town - the same generator he sold to Broadband a few years ago. By reusing the cables and pad, the cost will be about \$19.7k installed. He could possibly install it on Friday, 12/23. Bad winter weather that could produce problems is expected soon.
  - A. Issues to consider are: How soon does this situation need to be resolved? What are the risk factors and how much risk is acceptable to the Chief and the Emergency Management Director, Chief Burgess? Without electricity the firefighter pagers don't work properly, the garage doors would have to be opened manually, the lights and heat would be off, the water in the trucks might freeze depending on how long the outage is, and the fire station could not be used as an emergency shelter or command center. Because this is an emergency situation, it would allow the town to accept purchasing the generator from Paciorek with Finance Reserve Funds.
  - B. Questions were raised about the life expectancy of a generator with electrical parts that are 23 years old but it only has 1,000 hours on it. The repair bill so far is around \$650 and significant time on the part of the Fire Chief. Is this generator worth fixing? If a small part can fix it, should we try to repair or replace it? How much longer will the repair take?
  - C. As a stop gap measure to give more time to fix the generator, buying a smaller, portable generator that would have other uses in the future could be bought. That would require an electrician to hook it up to the station electronics. It is not known if a portable generator could support all that is needed at the fire station.
  - D. During our discussion, people searched on line for replacement parts on EBay and Amazon. Possible matches for the part were found for the price of \$300, one tenth of the price of the manufacturer's part that is out of stock. The committee debated and an amended motion was voted on: *To authorize the transfer of \$19.7k from the Finance Committee reserve fund for the purchase and installation of a new generator, contingent on the failure of a new ECM replacement part to solve the problem.* Motion passes: 5 Yes, 2 No. We discussed a possible

transfer to the reserve fund later in FY23 if our Finance Committee Reserve fund becomes too low.

3. Free Cash is not certified yet.
4. Preliminary discussion of the elementary school budget
  - a. We have the first draft of the SES FY24 budget the School Committee saw at their November 17 meeting. They will review and approve the budget at their next meeting on January 19, 2023. The draft has a net 4.65% or \$104,740 increase. Shutesbury population rose more than the other U28 towns so Shutesbury's share of the U28 budget increased by .66%. They asked us to send in any requests for information and questions we may need answered before our joint meeting on January 24.
  - b. That list is:
    1. I was not able to answer questions about lines 25 and 84 clearly. Please explain what services we had and what services we will get.
    2. For the phone system on line 77 – Will any of that cost be equipment? One-time costs for the equipment can go to capital planning instead of the operating budget.
    3. Since we are somewhat early in FY23 spending - is it possible that some of the upgrading phone costs could be handled in the FY23 budget?
    4. We'd like to receive the Year-To-Date spending for FY23
    5. Further discussion about the FY24 chart of school choice and ESSER funds will be appreciated. Please describe the positions being funded. If any of that spending is for ongoing budget items, building those costs into the main budget will give a more realistic picture of the annual school budget.
    6. Did you use the # of gallons of fuel projected for use in FY24 to estimate line 76? We should discuss the price per gallon of oil that was used. Oil prices are volatile, so estimating a cost per gallon the school anticipates using will affect this line item.
    7. Where is SES in terms of the teacher and paraprofessional contract cycles? Please walk us through the teaching salary lines since contracts, changing personnel, and changing student needs are all incorporated into these budget lines.
    8. Please send a chart of pupil enrollment numbers by grade for the last 10 years.

5. Debrief 12/17 Four Towns Meeting

- a. We achieved our goal of having the 100% statutory method with a 5-year rolling average. Pelham and Leverett's apportionment went over the 4% guardrails. One of the possibilities in the draft budget is to increase the possible budget cuts by \$37k to keep those towns from experiencing more than a 4% increase.
- b. The Regional draft budget showed two areas where political action is needed: Addressing the 14% increase for SPED costs – lobby for increased circuit breaker support? And the Fair Share tax increase is meant to meet education and transportation needs. There will be competition pressing for those funds. It would be important to draft letters to our legislators.
- c. The middle school roof repairs being considered are a short-term fix for a limited portion because the MSBA is “pausing” its funding for roof repairs. Bob Groves sent information to the Superintendent's office about the steps Shutesbury took and the resources we used to get our elementary school roof fixed without MSBA support.
- d. We would like the region to include detailed enrollment numbers with their next information packet as they have done in the past. Ajay will request this. Updates are expected at the next Four Town meeting, late January or early February.

6. Next meeting schedule

- a. We are out in synch with alternate weeks with the Select Board. Susie will adjust the schedule for January forward. The departments will need to be notified of their new meeting dates.
- b. Our next meeting will be January 10 at 6:30. On the agenda will be OPEB, Free Cash and Reserves balances, and the ARPA balance sheet. We will meet with SES at the following January 24 meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.