

## Shutesbury Finance Committee

Tuesday, January 10, 2023 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: Mike Vinskey, Mary Lou Conca

Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm

1. Minutes from 12/17/2022 and 12/21/2022 meetings approved as amended.
2. Certified Free Cash
  - a. Free Cash Balance is \$1,062,240. If the town votes \$155,551 for warrant articles 4 and 5 at the Special Town meeting on Thursday, 1/19/2024, as recommended, the Free Cash balance will be about \$906,690.
  - b. George has made a current year capital funds and spending sheet for us to study.
  - c. Mary Lou Conca asked for an explanation concerning the capital plan for the school roof. Working within the constraints of the school schedule, Gale Engineering will hopefully be evaluating the school roof on Wednesday, 1/11/2023.
3. OPEB review
  - a. We reviewed the minutes from March 22, 2022. At that time, the conclusion was to wait to see if the annual \$50K OPEB allocation is appropriate.
  - b. Investment practices for municipalities are regulated differently than private investors. The current estimated annual return on investments is 5.65%. When our Treasurer, Ryan Mailloux, comes in on February 7, we can ask him about it.
  - c. George will update and simplify the funding and liability numbers for a future OPEB discussion.
4. Role of Finance Committee in decisions about spending special State or Federal funds
  - a. The Town of Shutesbury received CARES Act and ARPA funds in the last couple years. The Select Board has the administrative responsibility for these funds.
  - b. Should the Finance Committee have a role in the discussion/guidance for spending these funds? These funds affect spending in other budget areas and priorities of the town.
  - c. The Select Board put out a memo to all boards, committees, and departments for spending requests and suggestions for ARPA funds. Finance Committee members received the memo. The Select Board discussed the possible use of funds at their meetings. The Finance Committee incorporated the possibility of spending \$300K from ARPA in the capital plan it presented at ATM in May 2022.
  - d. It would be helpful for the Finance Committee to receive the ARPA spending spreadsheet.
  - e. One option is for the Finance Committee to put this kind of funding on our own agenda and request time for joint discussions with the Select Board in the future.

5. Committee Updates

- a. Not pertaining to a specific committee, a letter to our legislators emphasizing our current needs and priorities would be important to send out at this stage of the budget season. Susie will send Ajay her email communication to Aaron Saunders, our new state representative. Together they will draft something for the next Finance Committee meeting. Topics will include the MSBA/Middle School Roof, the increase in out-of-district SPED costs, advocating for the revenue anticipated from passage of ballot question one last November, and PFAS problems.
  - b. Capital Planning
    - 1. The Elementary School had two requests from the Elementary School – replacing the phone system and replacing the kitchen and conference room flooring. This will complete the floor replacement for the entire school.
    - 2. The highway department is working on a proposal to deal with the backhoe and tractor equipment problems.
  - c. After many prior notices, the Shutesbury MLP and SHELd have warned those Shutesbury Broadband subscribers who have not set up an account with SHELd, our ISP (Internet Service Provider), or paid their bill since September 1, 2022, will have their broadband service terminated on January 15, 2023.
  - d. SES officials have provided answers to questions and requested data regarding their FY24 draft budget. The School Committee will meet to approve their budget on January 19 and the Finance Committee will meet with them at our next meeting on January 24.
  - e. Shutesbury received a Green Communities Grant for \$178k. \$99K will be used to install LED lighting at the elementary school which will save on the annual electricity costs. \$40K of the grant will go toward weatherization of other town buildings.
  - f. The Energy & Climate Action Committee (ECAC) has a couple of Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant proposals they hope to submit. Shutesbury's last MVP application was not targeted enough to get a grant. There is a short turn around on the initial proposal time.
6. Hopefully members will attend the Special Town Meeting at 6:00 pm on Thursday, 1/19/23. Our next regularly scheduled meeting is Tuesday, 1/24/23 at 6:30. Meeting adjourned at 8:25pm.