

Shutesbury Finance Committee  
Tuesday, March 7, 2023 Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

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

Members of the Public: Deborah O'Brien, Mike Vinskey, Steve Sullivan

Meeting called to order at 6:32 pm

1. Minutes of 2.21.23 approved as written
2. Transfer requests from Highway and Police
  - A. As noted at the November 15, 2022 meeting, the Highway Dept. had multiple repairs to equipment last summer and fall and as anticipated, the maintenance line is now over budget. Tim requested a transfer of \$10K to cover the \$3,600 deficit and leave the department with about \$6,300 to get through FY23. This line has not been overspent since 2018. Chuck Moore will be able to assess the John Deere tractor problems this summer. Motion to transfer \$10,000 to the Highway department maintenance line passed 6 – 0. This leaves the Fin Com reserve fund at \$23,950.
  - B. The Police department could not attend this meeting so their transfer request will be put on the March 21 agenda.
3. Accountant FY 24 budget discussion
  - A. Since last year's investment in the VADAR system, the annual software maintenance fee is about \$3,250 less for FY 24 and the reduced rate is locked in for four more years. The other lines in the budget stayed the same. There was a discussion of how many licenses per portal the town will need with three departments using VADAR modules.
  - B. The transition to the new system went well in FY23. Gail has experience with VADAR from her work in other towns.
  - C. Gail volunteered to work with Jim Walton, examining possible expense report formats.
4. Collector FY24 budget discussion
  - A. The maintenance fee for new VADAR Collector's module is about \$4,500 lower than the previous provider's fee and this price is locked in for 6 years. Paper stock, office supplies (toner) and postage are all increased for FY24. The net proposed budget is about \$2,000 lower.
  - B. A discussion about the cost of moving to online billing ensued. The Collector said there does not seem to be a benefit. 75% of the tax bills would have to be accepted on-line to break even with the cost of mailing. This does not seem likely at this time.
5. Committee Updates
  - A. Capital Planning will have the proposals reviewed and ready for the March 21 agenda.

- B. We will also have a discussion of the roles of the Capital Planning and Finance Committee concerning the decision-making process. Bob will forward resources such as the MMA/Association of Town Finance Committee Handbook and other informational material.
6. Transfer request from Web Committee
- A. Gail Fleischaker, a member of the Web Communications Committee presented a request for services to update and correct the town website. They recommend moving to Drupal 9 because Drupal 8 is no longer supported. This work will improve the website's security and improve its functioning. This one-time expense would cost an estimated \$802.81 The Finance Committee voted to transfer up to \$900 from the Finance Committee Reserves to the FY23 IT support line for this project. Motion passes 7 – 0. The \$900 amount reflects the fact that the estimated figured from the company that will do the work is in Canada and the exchange rate fluctuates.
  - B. The Web Communications Committee also outlined some of the on-going IT expenses. Google workspace is now charging for its services and the funds needed are not in the FY 23 budget (August 1, 2022– June 30, 2023) The Finance Committee voted to transfer \$1,859 from the Finance Committee Reserves to the FY23 IT line to support for the Google costs. Motion passed 7-0. The Fin Com reserve level is now at \$21,191.
  - C. There is a list of IT expenses such as Zoom, Pantheon, and Mail /chimp that need to be added together and be included in the FY24 IT support budget proposal. Becky will make a list of these on-going IT expenses.
7. Rep. Aaron Saunders March public hour, 3/7/23
- A. Aaron helped Shutesbury's PFAS water problems find funding support in the Clean Water Trust office. We will be able to apply for a 0 % interest loan for the \$136K authorized at our Special Town Meeting on January 19. There may be between 20 – 39% loan forgiveness as well. As the PAS situation unfolds, there may be some other emergency aid support.
  - B. The monthly meetings are likely to be moving from first Tuesday to Mondays or Fridays, depending on Rep. Saunders' coordination with Wendell's public hour.
  - C. Writing or calling our elected officials is another option for those who cannot attend the public meetings. There is a, "How To Contact Elected Officials," tab on our town website.
8. Miscellaneous
- A. The preliminary numbers from the Governor's budget project a net loss for Shutesbury's Cherry sheets. Although there is a boost in school transportation funds, the charter and school choice revenue and expenses continue to be problematic.
  - B. Our next meeting is on March 21 at 6:30 pm. Items on that agenda are:
    - a. Broadband FY24 budget discussion
    - b. Capital Planning FY24 budget discussion
    - c. School budget preparation guidance
    - d. Transfer request from Police Department
    - e. First draft of FY24 budget
    - f. Fin Com calendar revisions based on established date for June 3, 2023 Annual Town Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 8:19 pm.