

Shutesbury Finance Committee
Tuesday, March 21, 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
Police Chief, Kristin Burgess, MLP manger, Gayle Huntress

Meeting called to order at 6:33

1. Transfer request from Police Department
 - A. Repairs to fix an exhaust leak totaling \$1,793. have been completed on the 2016 cruiser. This was paid from the maintenance line in the FY 23 budget. That budget line is now depleted.
 - B. The Chief received an estimate for tires and further work on the same car. The car has 107k police work miles on it. Some work may be done at a shop other than the dealer for less money. She is requesting a \$9,350 transfer from the FY23 Finance Committee Reserves
 - C. The replacement rotation of vehicles has an important maintenance component. Some work was delayed and the department is playing catch-up. The cost of parts and labor is rising with inflation. Future maintenance budget lines may need to be recalibrated for departments.
 - D. There is a concern about how low the Finance Committee reserve balance is: \$21,191.
 - E. A motion was made and seconded to transfer \$8,000 from the Finance Committee to the Police maintenance line. Motion passed 5 yes, 2 no. Fin Com reserve balance now \$13, 191.
 - F. At Annual Town Meeting the Finance Committee could request the cost of the fire station generator (\$19K) to be transferred from free cash to the Finance Committee reserve to get through the month of June if needed.
2. Broadband FY24 budget discussion
 - A. Gayle Huntress proposed a balanced FY24 budget for \$348,840, the revenue comes from the \$38/MLP monthly fee from 765 Shutesbury subscribers which is part of the SHEL monthly bill of \$75.
 - B. The short-term debt has been paid off. The long-term debt service cost dropped by \$1,100. There will be a COLA increase in the manager's salary line. All other lines stayed the same as the FY23 budget.
 - C. The budget plan includes the MLP capital stabilization funds for the replacement of electronics in seven to ten years.
 - D. The MLP expects the FY24 budget will yield about \$70K – \$90K in retained earnings that will go into the maintenance reserves.
 - E. This winter there were two significant storms. The MLP has applied for \$20K from their insurance policy for damage done in the December storm. They will put in a claim on the March storm.
3. Transfer request from the Board of Health
 - A. The Board of Health was informed that the Mosquito Control District annual membership fee of \$5,000 has not been paid for FY22 or FY23.
 - B. The initial membership fee for FY21 was paid from free cash following approval on Article 22 at the 2020 Annual Town Meeting. Following that transaction, the budget line did not appear on subsequent budgets.

- C. The FY 22 fee must appear on the 2023 Annual Town Meeting warrant as a request to pay a bill of prior years. The FY 2023 bill would require a Fin Com reserve transfer because this item was not included in the FY23 approved budget.
 - D. There was a discussion about what services the town receives for its membership, whether those services are necessary and whether the Town Meeting meant to continue beyond FY21. The question was raised if there is a Municipal Vulnerability grant available to cover the annual membership fee.
 - E. The Board of Health will have a member attend out next Fin Com meeting on April 4th to discuss this matter.
4. School Budget preparation guidance
- A. The committee discussed the which format SES committee should follow when presenting a proposed budget. The options boiled down to whether the costs paid from school choice funds and ESSER grants should be listed separately, as is done now, or if those costs and funding should be included in the operating budget, not identified separately.
 - B. It was requested that the separated costs should be shown with the past years' spending levels, just as the main budget does now. A historical report on school choice balances and what is anticipated for the coming fiscal year should also be included.
 - C. Seeing all the costs in the budget would show a bottom-line cost for the school budget. Seeing a separate box of school choice and ESSER expenses would show positions that are anticipated to meet relatively short term needs in keeping with the school choice spending guidelines adopted by the school committee.
 - D. A motion was made and seconded to ask the School Committee and Caitlin Sheridan, school business manager, to include all expense items and revenues in the operating budget and give a full accounting of the school choice balance. Motion failed: 4 No, 2 Yes.
 - E. A motion was made to give guidance to Caitlin Sheridan to stay with reporting the ESSER and School Choice expenses separately from the operating budget, with the historical data from previous years, and include the annual school choice fund balance and projected level for the coming fiscal year. Motion passed: 4 Yes, 1 No, and 1 Abstained
5. Other items
- A. April 4th agenda items:
 - 1. Jim Walton and Gail Weiss will have the expenses report format
 - 2. Capital Planning will have the proposals ready
 - 3. Draft Budget will be reviewed for first time
 - 4. Board of Health transfer request
 - 5. Calendar for the remaining year will be worked out
 - B. The Regional school budget numbers have changed some; so far, our bottom line is okay
 - C. The labor negotiations are still underway at the regional school
 - D. Letters to legislators need to reflect the school funding problems. Our reps are advocating for us
 - E. The monthly meeting with Rep. Aaron Saunders might be rescheduled to a different day

Meeting adjourned at 8:29