

Shutesbury Finance Committee
Tuesday, April 18, 2023 Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

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

Members absent: Melody Chartier

Fire Chief Lenny Czerwonka

Members of the Public: Mike Vinskey

Meeting called to order at 6:36 pm

Minutes of 4.12.23 approved as amended.

1. Fire Chief budget format request

- A. The Chief has recruited three new volunteers for the fire department. They will need turn out equipment. Lenny is requesting that the Fire Department budget consolidate Equipment SCBA Air Tanks, Fire Hose Replacement, Turn Out Gear, and Equipment, (lines 96 – 99) into one line titled, “Equipment”. This will allow him to spend the aggregate budget of \$18,600 on equipment as needed instead of being limited to discrete equipment lines. This is not a request for more FY 24 funding. Other departments have the single, “Equipment” line. The motion to move lines 96-99 to one line, “Equipment” passes 3 Yes, 1 No, and 1 abstain.

1. Capital Expense Spreadsheet

- A. The School Safety Committee is requesting \$60K for a security camera system. According to Becky Torres and Susie Mosher, the Finance Committee liaison to the School Committee, after tackling the necessary upgrade for the school phone system, funded through rural aid, they have completed the research and have a recommendation for a security camera system. Given the culture we live in, this is seen as a very high priority. For sake of expediency, this request could be paid for out of School Choice funds, but the School Committee is now bringing this capital request to the Capital Planning Committee.
- B. A member of this committee expressed concern that this request does not comply with the bylaw. Capital Planning requests are supposed to be submitted by February 1 as stated in the town bylaw. This submission is in violation of the bylaw. Having last minute emergency requests to be considered is not good planning. The Capital Planning Committee will convene this week, but some members cannot attend. Next fiscal year we can put something in our budget request letter highlighting the process of getting committee approvals, urging all departments to plan ahead.
- C. We will not put the \$60K security camera request in the capital planning expense plan until we hear from the Capital Planning Committee.
- D. The Capital Expense Plan looks good, utilizing a combination of the debt service capacity, free cash, and capital stabilization funds. The reserve fund balances are in the ball park of our town guidance. Estimated costs for the remaining section of the school roof are in good shape.
- E. There was some clarification of the funding line for town Building repairs. Line 68 “Repairs” is for repairs such as the elevator, lift, toilet, Old Town hall furnace, etc. It is used for all

town building repairs. The Capital Planning Committee recommended a separate \$20K for items listed by the Building Committee on the inventory list with details they are developing and prioritizing. This \$20K will from cash reserves. Any unspent funds in this line can roll forward into the next fiscal year.

2. Review of FY 24 Draft Budget

- A. Line 37- The longevity line for the Collector reflects her 45 years of service and is the ½ time amount.
- B. Line 82- The Police Chief salary increase reflects a contract agreement.
- C. Line 135- The increase for Waste disposal is part of the 5-year contract with Casella.
- D. There will be a new line for Hazardous Waste Reporting for \$5K. The town must hire a Licensed Site Professional (LSP) to file an annual report to DEP on the Fire Station and test the water every 4 years.
- E. Line 19- Our Administrative Assessor job has mostly been done by consultants this year. This line will hopefully support either a consultant or a permanently appointed Assessor.
- F. The Town Clerk is requesting an Assistant Clerk for 10 hours/week. The Personnel Board will meet on Thursday to discuss this position.

3. Revenue Projections

- A. We reviewed the projected revenue for FY24 based on best estimates. New growth, the total town valuation, local receipts, and state aid will not be finalized until after the budgeting process is presented to town meeting. We are using cautious projections. Our current tax rate is \$18.44. The tax rate on this very estimated FY24 picture is \$19.08. We know this will change along with many other numbers.
- B. The House Ways and Means state aid projected about the same aid for Shutesbury as the Governor's proposal. These cherry sheets proposals show yet another year of state aid decline. The Senate proposals will be out within the month.
- C. We will contact our representative, Aaron Saunders, about the expected positive change in the formula for state payments in lieu of taxes for state lands, a figure that has been stagnant for many years.
- D. At the regional school level, the state's transportation aid increase helps to offset some of Shutesbury's anticipated .89% increase in the regional school budget.

4. Coordination with the Select Board on request to replenish the Finance Committee Reserve account

- A. A motion was made to move, with agreement from the Select Board, \$30K from underspent lines into the Finance Committee Reserve fund. Passed with 5 Yes votes.
- B. We will invite the Select Board to meet on May 2 or 9.

5. Miscellaneous

- A. Melody Chartier has resigned from the Finance Committee and the Personnel Board.
- B. A subcommittee will meet on Thursday, April 27 at 10 am on Zoom to draft the Fin Com Annual report presented at Annual Town Meeting. George has started the draft.

Meeting adjourned at 8:34.