

Shutesbury Finance Committee
Monday, May 8, 2023 Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

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

Member absent: George Arvanitis

Grace Bannasch, Town Clerk

Members of the Public: Leslie Luchonok

Meeting called to order at 6:31 pm

1. Minutes of 4.18.23 were approved as amended. All proposed minutes changes should be written up before the meeting.

2. Our committee reviewed the proposed FY24 budget. The following lines were discussed.
 - A. Line 41, Legal, \$40K: The significant increase is in recognition of the increased legal spending in FY23 and the anticipation of increased costs for the lawsuit from Cowles concerning the Zoning bylaw passed at the January 2023 special town meeting. It is likely the town will need more than the \$40K recommended in the FY24 budget; will assess funding options if this is the case.
 - B. Line 45, Assistant Town Clerk, \$10K: The town clerk work load has increased due to state mail in and early voting requirements and managing Zoom meetings and recordings. The legislature voted to allow Zoom meetings to continue into 2025 and are likely to remain even longer. The Personnel Board reviewed this request and has recommended the position be funded.
 - C. Line 56, Conservation Committee Consultant, \$5K: This unspent line has been carried forward from FY22 to FY23. It looks like the Conservation Commission has hired someone, but the cost has not been deducted yet. It will probably not be allowed to roll forward into FY24 because it would not qualify as an emergency.
 - D. Line 69, Fuel, \$40K: This is diesel fuel for town vehicles as fuel costs are up.
 - E. Line 88, Community Policing, \$1K: This is "seed" money for activities that will generate further community support and participation for community policing. This is a new service, not a level services expense.
 - F. Line 92, Call Wages, \$24,964: The Fire Chief worked with the Personnel Board to establish a minimum of three hours to be paid to each firefighter who respond to a call. The Police department has a four-hour minimum pay in their contract.
 - G. Lines 96 – 99 Combined Fire Equipment, \$18,600: Combining equipment funds was requested by the Fire Chief and approved at the 4/18/23 Finance Committee meeting.
 - H. Line 110, Elementary School, \$2,334,670: The increases are mainly due to heat and electricity costs and contracted salary increases. The school choice expenditures are not reflected in this budget line in keeping with the past budgeting format.
 - I. Line 111, Regional School, \$1,560,473: One of the labor contracts has not been settled yet.
 - J. Line 135, Waste Disposal – Lot O32, \$5K: Budgeting for final permitting, clean up, and disposal.

- K. Line 142, County Health District, \$40K: This is a shared, benefitted staff person who handles septic permitting and inspections, etc.
3. Total proposed FY24 budget = \$6, 911,640
 - A. It was agreed that not every member supports every line of the budget. Committee members may speak to their disagreements at town meeting.
 - B. A motion was made and seconded to approve the total proposed FY24 budget, \$6,911,640.
 - a. An amendment was made and seconded to remove the Assistant Town Clerk line of \$10K. Motion failed 3 No, 2 Yes.
 - b. An amendment was made and seconded to remove the Community Policing line of \$1K. Motion failed 3 No, 2 Yes.
 - c. The original motion to approve the total proposed FY24 budget, \$6,911,640 was approved unanimously, 5 Yes.
 4. Review of remaining warrant articles
 - A. Article 11. Budget: Finance Committee recommends unanimously.
 - B. Article 17. \$45,900 (revised amount) for Security Camera System at the Elementary School from Capital Stabilization: Finance Committee recommends, 3 Yes, 2 No.
 - C. Article 18. \$20K for Building Repairs for a fund 30 account from Free Cash reserves: Finance Committee recommends 3 Yes, 2 No.
 - D. Article 23. Rescind CPC funds for North Cove at Lake Wyola project: Finance Committee recommends unanimously.
 - E. Article 24. \$10K CPC funds for restoration of historic gravestones at West Cemetery: Finance Committee recommends unanimously.
 - F. Article 31. \$218.40 Bill of prior years for Citizen Security invoices: Finance Committee recommends unanimously.
 - G. Article 32. No action taken by Finance Committee on this citizen petition.
 5. A discussion considered whether to add an article that would transfer funds from the Free Cash reserves into Capital Stabilization fund.
 - A. Capital Stabilization fund has been reduced to \$46k in our FY24 plan.
 - B. The Capital Expenditure plan has already been approved for FY24.
 - C. Increasing the Capital Stabilization fund could be done as an operating budget expense using line 177
 - D. We need clarification about the town meeting process of appropriating money into Capital Stabilization on one article and then expending from that fund in another warrant article at the same meeting.
 - E. We could wait until a fall special town meeting to increase Capital Stabilization from Free Cash reserves once we know the certified amount. Others suggested that is too long to wait.
 6. Miscellaneous
 - A. The information on the bid for security camera system is not to be shared.
 - B. Our next meeting is Tuesday, May 9 at 7 pm with the Select Board.

Meeting adjourned at 8:28 pm.