

Shutesbury Finance Committee  
Tuesday, November 14, 2023 Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

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

Absent Member: Jim Hemingway  
Members of the Public: Leslie Luchonok, Mike Vinskey  
Finance Committee meeting called to order at 6:35 pm

Minutes from November 1, 2023 were approved as amended.

The Police Chief could not attend so her FY25 budget review meeting was rescheduled for 12/12/23 at 7:45

With our new liaison roles, it was clarified that the budget requests need to go to the Town Administrator and the Finance Committee members.

A. Highway Department FY25 budget request reviewed with Steve Sullivan, Highway Supervisor

1. Most budget lines have stayed the same with changes noted on lines:
  - a. Highway expenses + \$500. For safety trainings
  - b. Road Markings + \$2K – last year \$1K came from Highway expenses which is now moved to this line along with an additional \$1K including hand painted areas
  - c. Gravel has increased in cost but likely will need less material for FY25 – no change
  - d. The subtotal of expenses \$104,250 does not include the snow removal costs which are projected as the same as FY24 @ \$50,875
2. Tractor will be repaired in May; depending on the outcome it may need to be replaced. In the meanwhile, Leverett and Shutesbury have a mutual sharing arrangement and Leverett is loaning use of their tractor when needed.
3. Steve is interviewing for an equipment operator
4. The tree warden position is now in the Highway department and the wages for this were negotiated. Currently Steve has a deal worked out with Hazard Tree Service
5. The over the rail mower has been fixed and is working well

B. Tax Rate Recapitulation sheet

1. With eight approved Senior exemption in place, FY24 tax rate came to \$17.83. This is lower than the Fin Com June projected rate of \$19.16, a rate change due to increased property values, slightly higher new growth, and a little unanticipated revenue. It was not necessary to tap into excess levy capacity; the tax rate increase was 2.2%. The average single family home tax bill increased about \$43.
2. As other towns set their tax rates, we 'll see how the four towns in our region are doing and do a comparison of tax rates and average single family home tax bills.

C. Certified Free Cash

1. With FY24 approved spending we projected our Free Cash balance @ \$768K. Our certified free cash is \$1,094 with some reserved free cash coming to the town once some of the account receivables are cleared up

D. Project/Committee Updates

1. The Locks Pond Culvert project is almost finished – weather delays have postponed the road milling and paving repeatedly. Week of November 20 looks probable.
2. The Capital Planning committee sent out the FY25 request forms and reviewed the long-range capital plan. A police vehicle, paving the school parking lot and painting the school building are on the list
3. Discussion about possible ventilation system for the school was raised. Funding source would probably be from grants.

E. Expense Report Review

1. Tabled again. We will work towards putting the expense report earlier on the agenda
2. The final FY23 expense report will be discussed

The next meeting is scheduled for Nov. 28 at 6:30. We will review the Fire Department FY25 request, go over expense reports, and discuss the Elementary school draft budget to make a list of questions.

Meeting adjourned at 8:23