

Shutesbury Finance Committee
Tuesday, March 4, 2025 Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

Members Present: Ajay Khashu - chair, Kathy Salvador, April Stein, Susie Mosher, and Jim Hemingway Absent: Bob Groves and George Arvanitis

Attending: Gabe Voelker - Interim Town Administrator, Jeremy Mailloux - School Committee, Mary-Anne Antonellis – Library Director

Meeting called to order at 6:31 p.m.

- I. Reviewed 2.18.25 Shutesbury Elementary School request for \$6,000 antifreeze for ventilation system
 - A. If this is going to a re-occurring cost, it should be put in SES operating budget
 - B. The Rural Aid, School Choice and Cafeteria funds balances may indicate the SES budget can handle the antifreeze expense
 - C. School choice spending policy does not cover this type of expense. Rural Aid came in lower than planned for FY25; fund balance needs to be rechecked. Susie will check on that and the cafeteria funds
 - D. The legal budget line expenses are expected to exceed the 41K it started with for FY25 This line will probably require additional funding
 - E. The Building Repairs funding in FY25 received \$ 30K allocations from cash reserves and from the operating budget. Ajay will check in with the Buildings Committee to see what will be needed in FY26
 - F. We agreed to wait to see if/ how we will to manage the \$6K request from SES until May 1st when line to line funding transfers can be made
- II. Capital Requests
 - A. The estimated cost of a new road grader is \$330K - 385K. Repairs on current 40 year-old grader would cost \$16,600. Dave Grenier does not recommend the repairs due to its age.
 - B. Gabe says the state is offering a lease-to-buy program that would deduct lease payments, (about 80K) for 5 years from our Ch. 90 money. At the end of the lease the town would own the machine. Capital Planning will do more research on this option
 - C. Paving the school parking lot proposal needs a more accurate estimate. That is being researched
 - D. A zero-turn mower is on the capital request list for between \$8,986 to \$12,635
 - E. Capital Planning Committee's next meeting is Tuesday, March 11
- III. Personnel Board report
 - A. The COLA number was adjusted upwards to 3.32% for FY26
 - B. There are six positions in Shutesbury whose salaries have fallen behind in the FRCOG salary survey by 5% or more: Town Accountant, Assessor Clerk, Assistant Town Clerk, Collector and Treasurer. The Administrative Assistant salary is being upgraded in the FY26 proposed budget. The Personnel Board will meet on Wednesday, 3/12 to finalize their recommendations

IV. Finance Committee timeline

- A. Tues. March 18 – work on FY26 numbers
- B. Tues. March 25 possibly meet with departments and boards to review the budget issues
- C. Tues. April 1 vote on final budget proposal / start drafting Finance Committee report
- D. Tues. April 8 meet with Select Board to approve warrant articles
- E. Thurs. April 24 Public Information session with Moderator
- F. Sat. April 26 Annual Town meeting

V. FY26 draft budget changes

- A. Change COLA figure from 2.95% to 3.32%
- B. Change Police Chief's salary when finalized by Select Board on Tues. 3/11/25. Holiday pay number needs adjustment
- C. \$300 longevity for Police and Library need to be added
- D. Custodial Wages, line 75, needs \$5,220 for additional 5 hours a week/52 weeks per yr. at new Library. Since COVID there have been no custodian services at current library. Personnel Board will write up a job description. Not a benefitted position
- E. Gas spill costs on line 160 and 161 will likely be combined and reduced to \$5K, to be funded from cash reserves
- F. Required PFAS testing is twice a year. Expecting a \$30-40K warrant article for cash reserves expenditure until we can determine an accurate operating expense for future years. Looking into expiration date of Tighe & Bond's current contract
- G. Levels of our current cash reserves are above the recommended guidelines; less free cash likely to be generated in FY 25 due to expected full expenditure of most lines

VI. Prepare for next meeting 3/18/25

- A. Review latest version of FY26 Budget
- B. Review spreadsheet prepared by George to look at scenarios using different levels of excess levy capacity
- C. Find operating budget items that could be funded from cash reserves
- D. Suggest/explain any proposed budget cuts
- E. Possible meeting with departments and boards for budget review/discussion on 3/25/25

Minutes from 2/18/25 approved as amended. Meeting adjourned at 8:08 pm. Next meeting Tues., March 18, @ 6:30pm