

Shutesbury Select Board Meeting Minutes
September 15, 2020 Virtual Meeting Platform

Select Board members present: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil/Chair, April Stein, and Rita Farrell
Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator; Linda Avis Scott/Administrative Secretary
Planning Board members present: Deacon Bonnar/Chair, Michael DeChiara, Steve Bressler, Jeff Lacy and Robert Raymond

Guests: John Montanari, Arleen Read, Brigid Murphy, Gail Fleischaker, Janis Gray, Joan Hanson, Johanna Hall, Jason Santiago, Kate Fiander, Lilliam DeSilva-Beal, Mary Anne Antonellis, Melanie DeSilva, Nancy Matthews, Nathan Murphy, Penny Kim, Susan Millinger, Susan & Steve Rice, Susie Mosher, Andrea Dallas, Debra Pichanick, Allen Hanson, Lisa Saunders, Ally Brau, and Walter Tibbetts/Fire Chief (some unidentifiable virtual participants were not included in this list).

At 5:39pm, Makepeace-O'Neil calls the meeting to order.

Agenda Review: Torres: the final version of the Memorandum of Agreement between FRCOG and the Town is pending; Historical Commission appointments will be made if a request has been received.

Public Comment: John Montanari/202 Leverett Road: reads a statement into the record expressing his “strong opposition to the Black Lives Matter banner on Shutesbury Town Hall” (see attached). At this time, Select Board Chair Makepeace-O'Neil is having technical difficulty with accessing Zoom. Stein, as Vice-Chair, explains that per a Select Board decision, “Public Comment” is a time for comment and not general conversation. Torres further explains that the public comment period is a time for the Select Board to listen to the public; there is no discussion or interactive conversation during this time. Stein and Farrell agree to hear additional comments. Melanie DeSilva: saying something matters is a simple statement; the Black Lives Matter banner is a statement of decency towards a group of people who have been oppressed and terrorized. DeSilva supports the banner being on Town Hall and asks that it not be removed. Michael DeChiara strongly supports keeping the banner and notes that it was a great, strong, and courageous decision by the Select Board. DeChiara continues: Black Lives Matter is not an organization, it is a movement; the banner is a values-based decision; Shutesbury is a vastly white community; as a former Select Board member, the Board makes decisions with values; the banner expresses the leadership of the Town; this is not a normal time in so many ways; it is a point of reflection for the entire world. Lisa Saunders notes that she is a 20-year resident of Shutesbury and states that the meaning of the words is as important as the gesture and speaks to how it has felt to live in a town as segregated as Shutesbury; the vigil held after George Floyd's death was the first time she felt welcome and that she might be safe; the presence of Black Lives Matter yard signs have helped her feel safer and, that if needed, she could ask for help. Saunders continues: at the celebration for the hanging of the banner, she asked Elaine Puleo how long the banner would be up and the answer of “no determined time” brought her to tears; taking it down has meaning as well; the Select Board needs to think about who the banner represents, to think about what it represents to her; does the Town really have her back or will it go back to the old normal? Susie Mosher recognizes that the Town is a governmental entity inside Massachusetts and inside the United States of America; we are connected to the politics around us and have a

fundamental problem to address; Shutesbury is starting here, with a sign, stating that Black Lives Matter. Makepeace-O'Neil rejoins the meeting and notes the importance of the conversation recognizing those that see the banner as warranted and acknowledging those that do not. Makepeace-O'Neil explains that she did not vote in support of the banner as she did not want to politicize Town Hall and emphasizes the need to ensure that those who oppose the placement of the banner on Town Hall, like John Montanari, feel comfortable in speaking up noting that she received calls from others who do not support the Town Hall banner; we need to respect each other's opinions in meetings and outside of meetings. Susan Millinger/135 Wendell Road: the League of Women Voters, a non-partisan organization, believes systemic racism is a non-partisan issue. Mary Anne Antonellis acknowledges that she is the person who proposed the banner and notes that the banner is needed because violence toward black people is a national emergency and she wanted Shutesbury's government to make a statement; anti-racism needs to be a function of our government. Antonellis continues: we need bold statements that racism and white supremacy will not be tolerated in our town; mayors across the country have painted banners on their city streets; our banner is a small gesture; others said the banner should stay up until black people feel safe in the USA and driving the streets of Shutesbury. Stein states her strong support for the banner and appreciates Makepeace-O'Neil and the Select Board's ability to have and hold their differences and to compromise in order to govern Shutesbury. Stein appreciates Montanari's apology to herself and Torres (as per the statement read into the record at the start of the public comment period). Jason Santiago: he never felt prouder to be a Shutesbury resident than the day when the Black Lives Matter banner went up; as the father of children of color, he felt so moved by the presence of banner. Montanari offers an open invitation to join him to further investigate his views and those of others. Torres and the Board thank all those present. Torres to Antonellis' question: there is no scheduled vote on the presence of the Town Hall banner.

Discussion Topics:

1. Open Space Committee and Historical Commission Appointments:

Stein moves and Farrell seconds a motion to appoint Gail Fleischaker to the Open Space Committee. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; the motion carries.

Per Torres, appointments to the Historical Commission are pending recommendations from the Board and an appointment to the Conservation Commission is pending.

Farrell moves and Stein seconds a motion to appoint Elaine Puleo to the Recreation Committee. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; the motion carries. Stein moves and Farrell seconds a motion to appoint Barbara Bigelow to the Recreation Committee. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; the motion carries.

2. 9.5.20 Special Town Meeting Review: Makepeace-O'Neil: the meeting was interesting and well attended. Stein acknowledges that the meeting was well attended, appreciates Town Moderator Paul Lyon's facilitation and notes that it did take a while. Makepeace-O'Neil suggests that for special town meetings, the Town Clerk be prepared for a paper ballot. Torres: in order to maintain COVID-19 precautions, the Board of Health did not allow paper ballots for the 7.27.20 annual town meeting; the special town meeting decision was based on that guidance. Makepeace-O'Neil recommends figuring out a plan

for paper ballots. Penny Kim makes the point that a request for a secret ballot requires a 2/3rds vote to do so. Torres asks the Board if they received any feedback from anyone who did not feel comfortable during the special town meeting. Stein heard comments about how long it took to decide on the process for a vote. Torres notes that there were more cars for the special town meeting than the annual meeting and the need to remember to encourage bike riding.

3. Review Draft “Illness Advisory COVID-19 Pandemic”: Makepeace-O’Neil: the draft is well done. Farrell suggests using “household” instead of “living unit”. Torres explains the choice of “living unit” to address groups of college students living together. Farrell suggests “living unit/household” and including a reference to the Town sick leave policy in the first paragraph and submitting the draft for review by the Board of Health. Farrell recommends incorporating places to be tested in a section titled “How to locate a testing site”. Torres explains that the Mass.Gov website provides updates on testing sites and those with health insurance can receive guidance from their local provider. Torres will include some testing site locations and include the date for the list of “lower risk states” along with a link for updates. Farrell to Makepeace-O’Neil’s question about policies for other illnesses, i.e. flu: in general, employees need to not come to work when they are sick. Torres: most employees have the ability to work from home. Stein: this is a pandemic and folks need to take care and stay home. Torres will bring the policy back to the Select Board after the Board of Health review.
4. Select Board “Our Town” Article: Stein is willing to write a draft and receive individual comments from the Board for the Select Board article due 9.25.20.
5. Appointment for Planning Board Vacancy: DeChiara recommends Makepeace-O’Neil and Bonnar decide on a process for the vote to fill the vacancy. Torres: Stein, and Farrell attended the 9.14.20 Planning Board meeting and “met” four of the candidates. Makepeace-O’Neil reports reading the email statements provided by Nathan Murphy, Allen Hanson, Veronica Richter and Henry Geddes. Stein acknowledges the provision of the Zoom video for the 8.3.20 Planning Board meeting when candidates Hanson and Mary David were present. Noting that Mary David was unable to attend the 9.14.20 Planning Board meeting or this evening, DeChiara reads David’s 9.15.20 statement of interest into the record. It is noted that a majority vote will fill the vacancy to 6.30.2021 after which it becomes an elected position.
6. Status of Reopening Plans: Torres: the new air exchange unit being considered for the Town Hall will ensure air is turned over as it needs to be and the downstairs space will be comfortable for election workers and voters; the Library has ordered an air exchange unit with a HEPA filter; a maximum of 2-3 people will be allowed in the Library building at a time. Per Torres, elementary school staff are distributing devices and packets for remote learning; they are cautiously moving forward with reopening. Torres acknowledges the immense amount of work required for elections and notes that the Police Department will allow use of their garage for early voting; an electric heater will be used.

7. Town Administrator Updates:

- a. CoMIRS Memorandum of Agreement (MOA): Per Walter Tibbetts/Fire Chief, there will be two new MOAs. The new MOA between FRCOG, the Franklin County Emergency Communication System (FCECS) Oversight Committee and user towns explains responsibilities regarding the current radio system and the new Commonwealth of MA Interoperable Radio System (CoMIRS); the 9.10.20 forum explained why the MOAs are being redone. The MOA between the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS) and FRCOG spells out each parties' responsibilities for governance and operation of CoMIRS. Tibbetts continues: the aging system is being phased out as it is no longer supported; a 911 Grant will purchase new radios for all cities and towns; FRCOG will be the sole point of contact. A final draft of the MOA with the Towns will be ready for Select Board review during the 9.29.20 meeting. Per Tibbetts, the MOA needs to be signed and returned to FRCOG by 10.15.20.

#5 Continued: Planning Board Appointment: At 6:54 pm, Bonnar calls the Planning Board to order. Bonnar suggests that before voting there be a short discussion about what the Planning Board is looking for in a candidate. Makepeace-O'Neil agrees with this suggestion and asks how the voting will proceed. DeChiara: eight individuals will vote. Bonnar notes that there are five candidates and suggests ranked choice voting. Torres: the first vote will determine where the candidates stand. The five candidates are Mary David, Nathan Murphy, Henry Geddes, Veronica Richter, and Allen Hanson. Makepeace-O'Neil is impressed by the number of candidates. Bonnar: the most important criteria is attendance especially with special permit situations; the Planning Board has been assured by all the candidates that they will maintain attendance; experience is not as important because there is plenty of knowledge among the current members; the new member will need to welcome the opportunity to gain experience. DeChiara appreciates Bonnar's statement about membership; because policy looks forward, the new member needs to understand issues, policy, and Town history, maintain attendance and have a willingness to participate. Lacy: this is a one-year appointment then it becomes an elected position; this will be a busy year for the Planning Board with potential solar special permits and Article V proposals; help with special projects and drafting decisions is needed; the new member will need a work ethic, i.e. to attend meetings and to do Planning Board work outside of meetings. Raymond notes that Nathan Murphy is young and new to town. From his review of the Selectmen handbook, Raymond identifies the need to consider the diversity of membership. Bressler agrees with Raymond; diversity among the members is important to the Planning Board. Roll call vote: Bressler: Murphy; DeChiara: Geddes; Raymond: Murphy; Lacy: Hanson; Makepeace-O'Neil: Murphy; Stein: Richter; Farrell: Richter; and Bonnar: David. Result: Murphy: 3, Richter: 2, with the other candidates each receiving one vote. The relevant statute, MGL Chapter 41A Section 11, is reviewed; the candidate with a majority of the votes will be appointed. Bonnar and Makepeace-O'Neil agree to do another round of voting with all five candidates. Hanson supports having person new to town appointed to the Board. Bressler: Murphy; DeChiara: Murphy; Raymond: Murphy; Lacy: Murphy; Bonnar: Murphy; Makepeace-O'Neil: Murphy; Stein: Richter and Farrell: Richter. Vote tally: Nathan Murphy: 6; Veronica Richter: 2; Nathan Murphy will fill the vacant Planning Board seat until 6.30.2021.

8. Prior & Future Action Items: For the 9.29.20 meeting – Memorandums of Agreement, Historical Commission appointments, reopening plans, and an executive session.

#7 Continued: Town Administrator Updates:

- b. New Land Use Clerk, Tessa Dowling, has started work and is being oriented by Scott; currently, there are no pc laptops available to purchase so sourcing one for Dowling is in process.
- c. The second round of CARES Act funding documentation is due in October. Torres is working to ensure needs are met; ventilation projects are the biggest issue including working with vendors on pricing; CDC specs are used for standards. Torres to Farrell's question: the Building Committee has not met for some time and has not provided input on the ventilation projects.
- d. An engineering proposal for the school roof project is being sought.
- e. Tibbetts is working on scheduling an Emergency Management Team meeting. Tibbetts reports that one of the Fire Department site solar panels is tripping the breaker and it is not known how long this has been happening. Torres will be able to review the timing of the breaker trips and will arrange for a repair crew; the Fire Department site panels are ~8 years old; those at Town Hall are ~12 years old.
- f. Four new couples have attended recent Farmers Market mornings. Tibbetts notes that the Fire Department has done a number of inspections for new sales. Farrell, responding to Torres' comment about new residents' interest in volunteering, suggests including a list of volunteer opportunities in the newsletter. The need for an assistant tax collector and additional firefighters is noted.
- g. Per Torres, the elementary school staff are dealing with many issues including insurance coverage related to contagious diseases.

Administrative Actions:

1. Select Board members will sign vendor warrants totaling \$154,375.72.
2. Select Board members will sign payroll warrants totaling \$98,404.77.
3. Stein moves and Farrell seconds a motion to approve the 9.2.20 meeting minutes. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; the 9.2.20 minutes are approved as presented.

At 7:32pm, Farrell moves and Stein seconds a motion to adjourn the meeting. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; the motion carries.

Documents and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. 9.15.20 comments read into the record by John Montanari
2. Draft "Shutesbury Selectboard Illness Advisory COVID-19 Pandemic"
3. 9.15.20 email from Mary David
4. 9.3.20 email from Fire Chief Walter Tibbetts "Important forthcoming notice from FRCOG"

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Avis Scott
Administrative Secretary