

Shutesbury Board of Selectmen Tuesday April 9, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Members present: Chairwoman Elaine Puleo and members Al Springer and April Stein.

Also Present: Town Administrator Rebecca Torres, Administrative Secretary Leslie Bracebridge recording.

Chairman Puleo opened the meeting at 6:30 P.M. at the Shutesbury Town Hall

Appointments

6:35 PM - Police Chief Harding with Auxiliary Officer Candidate Sean Sawicki. Sean:

- Sean is a night supervisor for Ernie's.
- Sean went to part time police officer academy.
- Sean hopes to go to school for criminal justice in the fall at Holyoke Community College. Sean might later transfer to Western New England College.
- Sean picked up a position as a Constable in Pelham. Hopes to make a fulltime career in some aspect of the legal field. So Sean is interested in getting Auxiliary Officer experience.
- Sean's evenings are free. He works nights and sleeps in the morning. Sean can be flexible. "This is what I'm working toward."
- Al: Sean did a real good job at the Fire Department and assumes Sean will do a good job here.
- Sean: Enjoyed helping people and being involved in the community; misses that involvement.
- Sean was certified as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). Sean is moving into a public safety position as an overnight security person at Eagle Brook School in a few weeks. They will send him to an accelerated EMT certification class.
- To the question of where Sean feels he will need the most training: Procedures. The Academy stressed laws and communication but Sean feels that he needs the experience of actually dealing with people.
- How will it feel if you have to deal with people you know? Sean: That's a reason why he put off applying to become an Auxiliary Officer. Then Sean stated, "You have to be professional and do what's right." It's the same scenario as when he was on the Fire Department.
- Sean worked at the Fire Department just short of 5 years.
- Sean feels that Chief Harding has answered most of Sean's questions.
- Chief Harding: Sean will always be working with another officer.

6:50 PM Conservation Commission member Darci Maresca met with the Board of Selectmen regarding the Cooleyville Road Bridge letter:

- Selectmen received a March 22 letter from the Conservation Commission regarding how the Conservation Commission works with the Highway Department. Darci wondered if the Board of Selectmen had any questions about the letter. Darci offered to describe the 2 documents that the Conservation Commission is developing regarding Highway Department activity:
1. The Conservation Commission is developing one standard Notice of Intent (NOI) to cover standard Highway Department activities. The Commission hopes to present their work to a Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) official Thursday and have the document completed very soon.
 - Darci: Use of such a document might have avoided the Cooleyville Bridge situation."
 - Darci will send a copy of the draft to Becky who will in turn send it to the Select Board.
 - Darci: The Conservation Commission still plans to share the NOI with Highway Superintendent Hunting before finalizing it.
 - Becky: The first draft gave an extreme level of responsibility to the Conservation Commission.
 - Darci reported that she and Conservation Commissioner Barry Field met with Highway Superintendent Hunting.

- Darci: Commissioners are supportive of the work the Highway Department has to do, but the Commission's role under wetlands protection is mandatory, "Let's see if we can develop a plan."
 - The Commission is using other towns' standard NOI's for guidance.
 - The Commission is looking for standard steps the Highway Department takes to do projects.
 - Darci offers to come in to talk with the Selectmen once the NOI is completed.

2. The Conservation Commission is also developing a memorandum of understanding. The ultimate goal is to develop regular lines of communication with the Highway Department; they want to work together.

- Highway Superintendent Hunting has requested a map of the wetlands so he will know when to contact the Commission.
- Originally, Highway Superintendent Hunting did not realize he would be working in the (West Branch of the Swift) river (when he started working on the Cooleyville Bridge.)
- Darci: If the town needs the Commission's attention we will try to be responsive. Darci is home during the day and therefore can go out in the daytime if something comes up.
- Darci is not the lead-writer on either document.
- The Commission will be meeting with a DEP official to make sure the Commission is on track from a regulatory perspective. After that meeting the Commission will incorporate the DEP comments into the Commission's standardized NOI.
- Darci wonders how much time the Selectmen will need to review the document.
- Elaine: The next Select Board meetings are April 23 and May 7.
- Darci will circulate the draft in advance of the Select Board meeting at which it will be reviewed.
- Al: What is in it so far? Al requests the terms be in simple words that are easy to understand concerning how to work within the plan.
- Darci: The NOI identifies 7 types of projects. Describes areas of jurisdiction. May include a map. It includes a lot of language. It needs to be usable. Ultimately it will be one usable streamlined document. The Commission welcomes Select Board and Highway Superintendent feedback.
- Darci: The Memorandum of Agreement – States that the Commission will meet with the Highway Superintendent a couple of times per year. In those meetings the Highway Superintendent could identify culverts that might need to be worked on, just to "put it on the books."
- Darci: We are supporting the town and fulfilling our duties as Conservation Commissioners.
- Darci: We're open to modifying nomenclature that you don't like.
- Darci offers to get the plans to the Select Board as soon as possible and plans to be here with the Select Board on May 7.

7:40 PM Selectmen met with the Finance Committee:

- We have \$1million in Free Cash. Is it better to finance the \$142,000 front end loader?
- The Personnel Board took time to put in their request to make sure that enough state aid would come through to support it.
 - The Personnel Board has been talking about updating the old grades and steps chart.
 - A year ago we signed a new police department contract. Though it kept within 3% increments, there was an elevation in their grade point system.
 - Municipal employee grades were a problem a few years ago and the Personnel Board elevated a few steps by decimal points.
 - This year when the Personnel Board looked at the chart, the financial employees were "falling off" the chart. (Are above step 8.) Market value to replace them could in some cases be double the current rates.
 - Many municipalities are hiring people through FRCOG for 8 hours of work/week. Our current financial people couldn't be more ideal. All are top notch and have a lot of

experience that would be hard to replace. The Personnel Board concluded that the major pieces of the current wage chart are not working any more.

- Personnel Board Chairman April Stein: “The thinking is not the person but the positions.”
- Finance Committee Representative to the Personnel Board George Arvanitis adds: “and the replacement value.”
- April: We have a wonderfully exceptional Financial Team.
- Becky: Other towns are desperate for financial people. Leverett pays \$60/hour for FRCOG staff. We have something very valuable. So, the Personnel Board tried to look at the chart and develop changes. We discovered that we have movement in different grades, so you cannot separate people out from the different grades. We are in a position where we have to make an across the grade application. It became important that we not “cherry-pick” people.
- We ended up with a new chart, when we looked at the individual increases: The highest increase was 13%.
- The cost comes out to about \$15,000. We can accommodate the proposed increases in the budget.
- Equipment operators will line up with patrol officers.
- April: We’ve been giving some employees “miniscule” raises for years.
- George: We are concerned at losing quality people and replacing quality people. In private industry they can go out and make a lot more.
- April: You do it for all or nobody. It’s not a lot of people.
- The new sheet shows all the salary lines with the changes in red.
- Becky: When you use percents year after year after year, the people on the bottom lose the most and the people on the top gain the most. About 40% of the annual increase goes to 4 people at the highest pay who will receive the largest dollar amount total. After a decade or 2 it causes the need for a correction.
- April: It looks like we’re giving huge raises; we’re not still giving the 3% on top of it (the 3% is incorporated into it.)
- The total 2013 budgeted salary amount will increase by 6%.
- The contracted people and stipend people are getting 3%; the non-contracted people are getting closer to 10%.
- Some are getting 13%. They happen to be people who have worked here a long time.
- George if you look at the Town Accountant, she’s going up 13.6%. The Admin Sec is going up 11%. The Personnel Board is particularly interested in the Finance people. They would be hard to replace.
- April: From here forward we would be going back to the 3%. It equalizes the steps and grades and brings us more into the fair market value.
- Elaine: Notes confusion with the colors and lines on the pages and requests, “Frame it in a simple way at town meeting.”
- Finance Committee member Weezie Houle: Just show that you are bringing people into the current market value. The last update was in 2005.
- Elaine: Most people have fallen off of the chart. Becky: Some people have been off the chart for a while. Becky: The focus will be on police and financial people.
- George: If people don’t get it, they won’t vote for it.
- Elaine: We really have only put a Band-aid on this. Do we have many people in the new chart on step one? Answer: A few.
- Elaine: This really does have to be revisited every 5 years instead of 9 years.
- Eric: You haven’t fallen off the chart, you just get 3%.
- Elaine: If you were at step 10 and it’s a 1% raise, the people behind you are gaining on you.

- Becky: Our steps really are COLA (Cost of living allowances.) In Unions you get the COLA's and step increases.
- The school gives a bonus for longevity.
- George: We're going to have to keep going back to this chart.
- Elaine: Revisit it more often to keep the people that you want.
- April: It may cost pennies or dollars per household...
- Elaine: ...if you look at the \$15,000 spread out
- Becky: People will either support it or not. It's not a \$200,000 fire truck. It makes a significant difference for the people receiving it.
- George feels people will be very receptive.
- Selectmen hope to sign the warrant on the 19th and are hoping the Finance Committee will finish up on the 16th.
- Becky: The reason we can contemplate the increase is because of her recent conversation with Representative Kulik's aide Paul Dunphy who indicated that the House will be releasing as much or more than the Governor's budget. This information allowed Becky to add the Library request, the Fire Department tires, the Buildings Committee's request for \$20,000, and the salary increases.
- We're maintaining our debt capacity by taking all the debt dropping off (\$116,000) and putting it into stabilization. If we use the free cash for the loader, we're building capital for future needs.
- With anticipated new Free Cash it will still be between \$900,000 and a million.
- George: Debt exclusion is basically done. We're done with the school.
- Becky: One more year on the land.
- The Governor's office created a new line item for towns and it has \$9,028 for Shutesbury.
- George agrees to look everything in the proposed budget over with a fine-toothed comb.
- The loader is warrant article #14 for \$142,000.
- Becky: We have a \$30,000 article to fund for Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) with Free Cash: Each year we will ramp up \$10,000 in the OPEB line and use free cash to supplement it to \$50,000. After that, we keep setting aside the \$50,000 each year that is in the budget. If we need to we can add \$10,000 per year to the fund. This will leave us in a good position.
- Becky will give the Finance Committee a full accounting of reserve balances next week.

Selectmen unanimously voted to support the salary adjustments for town employees proposed for FY 2014. The Finance Committee unanimously voted to support the salary adjustments for town employees proposed for FY 2014.

- Becky: For the last couple of years, the Governor has gotten his numbers.
- There was a general discussion following the votes concerning: a potential increase in the gas tax, the removal of tolls at the western end of the Turnpike, and other miscellaneous financial topics.
- Becky described how the Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program assessment collections have changed.
- George: The school is getting everything they asked for and the region; we have no say in that.
- Weezie requests a review of Saturday's WiredWest meeting.
- Becky: At Senator Rosenberg's annual regional meeting there was a closed door meeting with WiredWest and the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI):
 - MBI got \$40 million (in state capital funding for broadband-related infrastructure and improvement projects through the Broadband Act) to create "the last mile" and MBI never contacted WiredWest. There was concern that WiredWest was being treated as a step child, so the meeting was set up.
 - After the workshop the Wired West Executive Council went into a closed meeting with MBI. Becky read the email of MBI Director Judy Dumont asking Wired West men to "play nice."

- The MBI plan is not set in stone.
- The idea of working together, but as two separate entities was brought up. Participants in the meeting didn't know what that would look like.
 - Towns could contribute Co-locations rather than money.
 - Towns could contribute voluntarily in return for dividends when the venture becomes profitable.
- We have a WiredWest meeting on Saturday. There is a little more hope this weekend that perhaps we can get some of the \$40 million in the state technology bond.
- Eric: That won't pay for the whole thing. \$110 million is needed for that.
- Becky: WiredWest is already working on an RDA loan for \$100 million as well as looking for investors. There are a number of different possibilities. That's the piece we've been working on. We've been open and honest. Their estimates are identical to those we came up with a year and ½ ago.
- Eric: The bottom line is \$110 million is needed to do the whole project.
- It seems like they're trying to put a number of the most affordable things together; not universal fiber. If MBI went forward on the Wired West plan it would be ideal.
- Becky: If Wired West could raise the \$100 million, Wired West would be in control; we'd pay off the bond.
- Weezie: Matt Crocker is in line to make money off Leverett.
- Becky there was a closed executive session meeting. There's a lot more financial information being worked on.
- The coop would be able to secure the funding and subcontract.
- George: Coops have been around since there has been electricity.
- Becky: Revenue bonds have a higher interest rate.
- DSL can go 3 miles. It doesn't go in every direction.
- About half of the households in Shutesbury don't have DSL. The Lake, Atkins Reservoir, pieces of Montague Road, the South end of West Pelham Road.
- Becky: I get phone calls from people who can't sell their homes.

Topics

1. **Discuss Annual Town Meeting:**

- The Community Preservation Committee meets on Thursday and their numbers might be slightly different.
- The Capital Planning Committee voted to recommend purchase of the front end loader.
 - Jim Aaron recommended asking a mechanic to review the list of concerns. The list of concerns from Jim's mechanic Ronnie was the same as Tim's list.
 - The Capital Planning Committee is looking at \$142,000 for a new loader with a trade-in of \$18 -19,000 on the old loader. Estimates for repairs needed to keep the old loader going for 5 to 10 more years came out to \$21,000. The thinking of Capital Planning was: If you don't replace it now you run the risk of lower trade-in value and if you push it to its limits you run the risk of it breaking down during a snowstorm. New equipment (loaders) takes time to order. It takes months to pick up. The Capital Planning Committee decision was made to go with a new loader. If the old loader is traded in the money will go into free cash.
 - The loader is on the state contract list. The best deal is on the state contract list.
 - State surplus equipment can be a life saver for items that aren't main items that the town depends upon. Surplus is not for items that highway department depends on for daily use. Those should be bought new.
- We have not received any requests for a special warrant article.

- There could be adjustments to the final budget numbers.
 - There could be salary corrections from the Personnel Board.
 - April is leaving April 21st. Selectmen will meet at 7:30 AM on April 19 to sign the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.
2. **Wired West/MBI, last mile (at Select Board meeting before they met with the Finance Committee:**
- Becky described the presentation at Senator Stan Rosenberg’s annual April gathering.
 - MBI was the recipient of \$40 million.
 - MBI hasn’t been working with Wired West.
 - It sounds like MBI will hire a private firm to partner with, and get a USDA loan and the towns would be required to provide a set sum of money to participate.
 - At the workshop they added a bullet to the presentation about Wired West.
 - Leverett was not mentioned.
 - The room was 50% Wired West delegates.
 - They only talked guardedly about the last mile.
 - Two WiredWest speakers: One asked what about the last mile? And then said, “MBI put a bullet through the heart of Wired West.” Judy (Dumont) had no answer. The second man argued about what they would do. Becky said that they had the same goal with the same objective. Wired West is attempting to finance fiber to the home in ways that towns could afford, unlike Leverett and compared the last mile funding to the library funding which failed.
 - Elaine added: Judy said they didn’t expect to see another town like Leverett.
 - Becky: Three weeks ago, MBI’s goal was to get all towns do what Leverett did.
 - MBI is abandoning universal access and fiber optic to the home. And they would cut Wired West out of the funds. MBI’s only goal was to get one individual provider into the towns. Every element of their plan is loose.
 - Verizon and Comcast are out of the picture. Verizon is trying to get out of Massachusetts. Crocker Communications is doing Leverett.
 - Elaine: At 1 PM there was a closed door session of MBI with the Wired West Executive Board:
 - They were joined by Ben Swartz. He’s a Board member of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative – the parent agency to MBI. He was very upset with the speaker who felt that MBI put a bullet through Wired West.
 - Reva’s (second in charge at Wired West) email concerning the closed door meeting:
 - Apology for 2 gentlemen and a request to “please play nice with MBI.”
 - Judy Dumont, Executive Director of MBI:
 - Judy’s plan is not set in stone.
 - Is receptive to two entities working together.
 - Talked about Co-locations rather than money.
 - Judy is fine if the numbers work.
 - Towns could contribute voluntarily for dividends when profits are profitable.
 - Reva is looking into MBI working with Wired West.
 - Becky will attend a Wired West meeting on Saturday.
 - The \$40 million bond will come within the next 6 months if they get the state bond.
3. **Personnel Board Recommendations:**
- See meeting minutes above with the Finance Committee.
4. **Final Budget Review:**
- See meeting minutes above with the Finance Committee.

Select Board Action Items

1. **The Select Board unanimously voted to approve the March 26, 2013 minutes as written.**
 - Becky will complete a letter to Highway Superintendent Hunting for Select Board signatures.
2. **Elaine signed the Rivet Roofing proposal approved at the March 26 meeting.**
3. **Selectmen unanimously voted to sign an amendment to the Green Communities contract that extends the end date to June 30, 2014.**
4. **Selectmen unanimously voted to sign the Warrant for the April 30, 2013 Special State Primary.**
5. **Selectmen signed payroll warrants totaling \$84,978.19.**
6. **Selectmen signed vendor warrants totaling \$74,303.56.**

Topics the Chairman Could Not Reasonably Have Anticipated

1. Selectmen unanimously signed a Special Event notification form for the Shutesbury Education Foundation to use the Town Common for September 21, 2013 for Celebrate Shutesbury.
2. There was a Market Meeting: The Library proposed a simple white storage locker to be paid for by the Friends of the library and to contain books to sell at the Market.
3. There was a tree hearing at the West Cemetery and 5 trees will be removed due to limbs falling and damage to stones. There are 7 more trees to be removed.

The Select Board **adjourned at 9:05 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Bracebridge
Administrative Secretary