

Shutesbury Board of Selectmen Tuesday July 9, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Members present: Chairwoman Elaine Puleo and members and Al Springer. Absent: 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

Police Chief Harding:

- There were no fireworks on the 4th.
 - Occasionally summer visitors set fireworks off late on Friday and Saturday nights.
 - Chief Harding has told the Lake Wyola Association (LWA) how they can run a legal fireworks display. There has been LWA talk of asking the town to donate toward a legal fireworks display.
 - Jeffrey Soto graduated from the Academy and is back on the schedule. (Chief Harding and Tree Warden Houston went to the graduation ceremony.
 - Chief Harding is receiving positive feedback on Sgt. Masiuk.
- Review of July schedule.
- Chief Harding will be back in touch with Benjamin Peters about a possible Auxiliary position.

Shutesbury Garden Club/Knot Weed: Meryl Mandell, “Penny” Jaques, and “Liz” Lacy:

- The berm is wonderful; it makes people think people care about their town.
- The Garden Club Tour was a lot of work; it raised a lot of funds for continued gardening.
- Selectmen received a preliminary list of Shutesbury’s “knotweed colonies”; not all roads were covered. Meryl, Penny and Liz plan to inspect the roads in every area of the town.
- Selectman Springer spoke with Highway Superintendent Hunting who favors removal of knotweed.
- Little patches removed now, won’t turn into a wall of knotweed later.
- Last year’s volunteer manual pulling program enthusiasm has faded.
- Meryl, Penny and Liz feel the town needs to hire a professional company to come in and properly apply a chemical spray. Wetland areas will need to be permitted.
 - We need to focus on knotweed on the public right of ways.
 - Chemical treatment in wetland areas would require special permitting processes and notifications.
- Elaine asked for guidance on where to go from here:
 - Meryl, Penny and Liz hope the town might put together an RFP to get a professional company to eradicate the knotweed.
 - While the first choice of removal is burning, even sensitive organizations are using chemical treatment because knotweed is “too darn aggressive.”
 - Treatment needs to be targeted right at the plant.
- No funds are currently allocated for the project. Legal procurement procedures must be followed:
 - Town meeting could vote it.
 - Use of Finance Committee reserves is for emergencies.
 - The Conservation Committee has a few thousand dollars, but would not want to deplete their entire budget this early in the year.
- An education component would be a part of the process:
 - Let people know what is going on ahead of time and why.
- Outline of steps to be taken:

- Finish the roadside survey.
- Ask a company for a ball park estimate.
- Notify the Finance Committee that this will be coming to them, and schedule a meeting with them. It's up to the Finance Committee to say whether or not this is a crisis.
 - It probably will not be considered a crisis because we have seen and thought about it before.
 - If free cash is sought, a special town meeting needs to be scheduled.
 - They would come to the Select Board to request a special town meeting.
- Meryl, Penny and Liz want to get to the knotweed before it spreads more and before it flowers.
- Meryl will get an estimate of the cost to treat the roadside colonies that they identify.
- Public education could include a posting on the town web page and a request to report known roadway patches.
- One treatment may not be enough.

Meryl, Penny and Liz presented a separate request regarding the Highway Department berm:

- The berm is a significant on-going maintenance project.
- The Garden Club requests the Select Board ask the Highway Department to place rocks on the back of the berm for steps to help volunteers to climb up the berm to weed and maintain the berm and the stones would also hold back the mulch in driving rain.
- Meryl, Penny and Liz are looking for the Select Board to sanction this as a Highway Department project.
- The Garden Club requested that Highway Superintendent Tim Hunting do this last year. Tim recently told Meryl he is trying to get to it.

Selectmen met with Finance Committee members: Co-Chairs F. Rus Wilson and Lori Tuominen, and members Weezie Houle, F. Rus Wilson, Gary Hirshfield, and Allen Hanson:

- Select Board Chairman Elaine Puleo notified the Finance Committee that volunteer Garden Club members will be coming to them with a recommendation for professional treatment of the knotweed colonies on Shutesbury's public ways. Discussion included a description of an unsuccessful personal experience with chemicals:
 - *Round-up* won't kill it. The only way is mechanical. You mow or hack it forever. The roots just keep coming back. If you disturb the roots, it spreads more. The only place his knotweed doesn't keep coming back up is where he regularly mows. In a neighboring town they spray it heavily with a chemical. It goes down and after a year and a half, it comes right back up and they spray again. Mowing is the only solution. *Round-up* kills through the flowers and goes back down into the plant, but the roots survive and the knotweed eventually comes back.

Schedule of Proposed Budget Transfers – Fiscal 2013:

- Finance Committee reserves were used for certain expenses in order to cover salary changes to Conservation Commission and Highway Superintendent as well as overages in heating, fuel, snow removal, interest for the Verizon poles abatement settlement, propane for the new emergency generator at the school and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments assessment. There were 6 interdepartmental transfers made.
- Snow removal is kept low on purpose.
- This year the Highway, Police and Fire fuels were all brought into one account, which will be renamed "Highway Fuel" next year. We did not make an adjustment to the Highway Fuel account for next year because we still have very significant electricity savings.

- Interest-S/T Notes refers to the interest paid for abatement to Verizon for the poles identified in a previous year.

In separate votes the Finance Committee first and then the Board of Selectmen moved, seconded and unanimously voted to approve all the budget line transfers as written without changes.

- **Finance Committee Minutes on the Internet:**

- In response to a request for easier public access for finance information, the Finance Committee will both give their minutes to the Town Clerk and they will post them online.
- Different committees have different needs and public expectations for posting meeting minutes online. No town committees are required to post minutes online. This is done by volunteers.
- Finance Committee topics start and grow throughout the year. To make changes to the budget in April is way too late.
- Some people pop in at the end of the budget planning wanting to know why things are happening the way they are.
- Elaine is contemplating a letter to work together with people who wrote a letter in April.
 - Elaine likes the Finance Committee plan to have major budget information sessions in October, December, and the end of January.
 - Her letter will tell recipients that we don't know what will be needed right now; but we will know along the way.
 - Some people won't attend, but some will.
 - Why we assume a 2.5% increase is a given will be discussed early, on looking at what would happen with less.
 - This will give people an opportunity to discuss things before they become concrete.
- Having information available in the newsletter will also be helpful.
- The Finance Committee could come up with key points in the evolution of the budget that are important for a presentation.
- A historical perspective would also be helpful: Look at 1990, 2000, 2010:
 - Look at what went up every year; what positions became full time. The sitting committee now has no control over past decisions.
 - What do we want to be as a town? What are our town priorities?
 - Where are we heading? What will the next 10 years look like?
 - We can have an idea of what is coming along; probably increased health insurance and personnel costs.
- Why do we need savings? Some people prefer to see us use free cash reserves. Why is it important to have the money in the bank?
- Where we should be in 10 years will be a difference of many positions. Some past issues had to do with a lack of understanding of municipal finance terminology.
 - The Fall meeting could be a municipal finance workshop.
 - Also have the information distributed in the Fall town-wide newsletter.
- The All Boards meeting could be much more informative. It could be held at the school and invite people to come. The work of each board and department is public.
- Elaine: Wants the budget as easy and clear as possible. She wants no surprises at next year's town meeting. We can still have disagreement, but it should be a civil discussion.
- Will people who need education come? Elaine will send invitations.
- Some people come but only observe without feeling able to speak. Questions will be invited.
- The Finance Committee could invite the Finance Department heads to come in to tell the town citizens and committees what is done and how we do it.

- Also explain to the public what the Finance Committee decides and the way they decide.
- Sessions could be recorded onto CDs to take out of the library.
- Presenting municipal documents and methods is important. It is also important to present Department of Revenue (DOR) definitions, booklets and website summaries. Municipal presentations should show how DOR principles apply to our town.
- Explain why comparisons of tax rates from town to town is not accurate.
- People will always disagree on the goals, but we need to give a little here and there and come to a middle of the road.
- The new library grant round was discussed for a couple hours at a recent Friends of the Library meeting. Some, not all said we want a new library. If you begin, there has to be an agreement that there will be a new library. The first step is to exclude all town buildings. Some say the previous grant is out-dated. A new survey is needed. We have to get past the hump of needing a new library. All opinions were voiced. One who invested her retirement in her home wants to see real estate appreciate so she can move someday. If Leverett and Pelham have libraries and Wi-Fi she wants those improvements in our town to keep up Shutesbury's property values.
- Eric offered to create links to the DOR website from the Finance Committee webpage.
- Elaine offered to plan a different All Boards meeting.

Topics

1. **Review letter from LWAC:** No new information.
2. **Knotweed:** See above appointments with the Garden Club and the Finance Committee.
3. **Dam update:** No new information.
4. **Announcement Policy:** Not discussed.
5. **Town Land Issue:** Selectmen received copies of letters written by Assessors to abutters of Wendell Road in the area South of Plaza Road clarifying property ownerships. Administrative Assessor Kenneth Holmberg will come to a future Select Board meeting to review the information.

Select Board Action Items

1. **Select men unanimously voted to accept the June 18 and 28, 2013 Select Board Meeting Minutes as written.**
2. **See Select Board unanimous vote to sign the year end transfer schedule as presented in the record of their Appointment with the Finance Committee above.**
3. **Selectmen had already signed vendor warrants totaling \$236,832.41.**
4. **Select men already signed payroll warrants totaling \$ _____ .**
5. Select Board Chairman Puleo signed a Massachusetts Department of Public Safety form certifying that James Cerone is Shutesbury's Local Inspector for the Franklin County Cooperative Inspection Program.
6. Selectmen unanimously voted to sign a Chapter 90 Project Reimbursement Request form in the total amount of \$160,000 for milling of 4 key ways, tack coating, leveling courses and top coats on Locks Pond and Wendell Roads and removal of asphalt and grading of Pratt Corner Road.
7. **Sign year-end transfers:** See #2 above and meeting with Finance Committee under appointments for Select Board vote to sign year-end transfers.

Topics the Chairman Could Not Reasonably Have Anticipated

None.

The Select Board **adjourned at 8:15 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Bracebridge
Administrative Secretary

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