

Shutesbury Select Board Meeting Minutes  
November 19, 2019 Shutesbury Town Hall

Select Board members present: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil/Chair, Elaine Puleo, and April Stein

Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator; Linda Avis Scott/Administrative Secretary

Police Department members present: Chief Dan Fernandes

Personnel Board members present: Anna Aaron, Peg Ross and Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil

Finance Committee members present: Weezie Houle, Bob Groves, Rita Farrell, Ajay Khashu, and Eric Stocker

Guests: Pastor Mark Ellis/Shutesbury Community Church, Jeff Lacy, William Wells, and Fire Chief Walter Tibbetts

Makepeace-O'Neil calls the meeting to order at 6:19pm.

Unanticipated Topic:

Pastor Mark Ellis/Shutesbury Community Church: the Church has continued to be in conversation with the “flippers” who increased their offer to \$90,000; the Church Council has decided to accept their offer and intends to sign a purchase and sales agreement; the American Baptist Society will sell the property, however, the Community Church will receive the bulk of the sales funds; the buyers' intention is to restore and sell the property. Ellis thanks the Select Board for considering the purchase and taking the sale seriously. Torres confirms that the 12.3.19 special town meeting will be held as scheduled. The Select Board supports a Town Announce informing residents that the Church has accepted an offer.

**Discussion Topic:**

1. Police Department Staffing: Police Chief Dan Fernandes reviews the “Police Department Retention Plan 2019” document and explains shift coverage for an average week noting that Officer Shanley fills in sporadically. Per Fernandes: the goal is to have 16 hours of coverage each day; hiring a 24-hour part-time officer would leave one 8-hour shift uncovered. Fernandes to Groves' question: yes, there are generally more incidents on the weekends, especially during the summer months, when there is more police coverage; most activity occurs during the 10am-6pm shift. Fernandes to Groves' question: yes, some nights Leverett has officers on duty until 1am, however, there is little activity after 10pm; in Shutesbury, based on a recent traffic survey, there is little activity after 8-9pm; if there is a need, the shifts will be adjusted; most calls for assistance come in when people are awake. Fernandes: the goal is to use the \$8,344.96 in excess budgeted funds to maintain continuity of staff by increasing hourly wages (see chart); it is especially important to have familiar staff at the school where we aim to have an officer present during morning arrival and afternoon dismissal.

Fernandes explains the Western Mass mutual aid agreement and State police backup. Aaron asks Fernandes to compare Shutesbury's coverage to that of other towns. Fernandes: like Shutesbury, Leverett has three full time officers, however they have a different philosophy of coverage, i.e. no overlapping shifts; Fernandes supports overlapping shifts. Fernandes to Houle's question: the hourly increases will be funded by using the monies from the 8 hours/week that are not covered. Torres: because the Department's budget is underspent, no additional funds are being asked for in FY20. Fernandes: because the current officers have yet to join the union, a memorandum of agreement may be appropriate; the current union steward is a part-time officer who only works detail and one shift/month. Fernandes to Grove's question: rather than hiring someone to work the 8-hour shift, the additional wages

will help keep good officers here. Fernandes emphasizes the integrity of the current staff; Sergeant Hudock brings a wealth of experience and it is well worth the additional cost to keep staff that treat the Town with respect. To Groves' question, the Select Board confirms their vote to send Officer Johannsson to the academy. Fernandes emphasizes the need for quality staff and to avoid hiring someone who will not be an asset; Officer Johannsson will have worked here for a year before attending the academy. Houle confirms that the process Fernandes is recommending is a reallocation of the current budget. Torres to Khashu's question: during union contract negotiations, the increase to the sergeant's salary was not finalized, however, the officers' increase was.

Fernandes notes the importance of the sergeant's role in acting for the Chief in his absence. Houle confirms that the sergeant's hourly rate will change to \$26.08 and the patrol officer's rate to \$20.29/hour. Fernandes to Jeff Lacy's question: the staffing level will remain the same. Puleo to Lacy's question: the Select Board has an agreement with the officer attending the academy to repay his academy costs by working for the Department for a period of five years. Torres: previously, the agreement was for three years. Fernandes: his goal is to find activities that are of interest to his officers in order to maintain their happiness with the work environment. Puleo appreciates the training Fernandes finds for his staff. Stein: these increases will make Shutesbury more competitive. Fernandes: the increases will provide officers with something to compare and contrast with other positions; Sergeant Hudock and Officer Johannsson really enjoy community policing; a revolving door of officers does not allow this; with the blessing of everyone here, these increases will support the department. Stein: with the increases, we are headed in the direction begun during the last contract negotiations.

Fernandes to Stocker's question: Pelham's department is underpaid and Amherst's is steps head of Shutesbury. Puleo moves the Select Board accept the "Police Department Retention Plan 2019" to increase salaries as proposed; Stein seconds the motion. Torres will research whether it will be necessary to reopen the police union contract. The motion passes unanimously. Houle moves the FinCom approve the proposed changes to the Police Department shifts and wages as put forward in the "Police Department Retention Plan 2019"; the motion is seconded by Stocker and passes unanimously. Aaron: based on the Personnel Board's procedure to study other towns' relative departments and that the "Police Department Retention Plan 2019" chart does not have enough information, the Personnel Board will not vote on the matter. Peg Ross states her support for Aaron's decision. Torres to Stein's question: the Personnel Board is not objecting, so their decision not to vote does not impact approval of the proposal.

At 7:05pm, Puleo moves and Stein seconds a motion to adjourn the meeting; the motion passes unanimously.

Documents and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. Police Department Retention Plan 2019

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Avis Scott  
Administrative Secretary