

Shutesbury Select Board Meeting Minutes  
March 8, 2022 Virtual Meeting Platform

Select Board members present: Rita Farrell/Chair, Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil, and Eric Stocker  
Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator; Linda Avis Scott/Administrative Secretary  
Finance Committee members present: Susie Mosher, Jim Hemingway, Ajay Khashu, Bob Groves, Melody Chartier, and George Arvanitis  
Personnel Board members present: Peg Ross/Chair, April Stein, Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil, Melody Chartier, and George Arvanitis  
Guests: Mary Lou Conca, Graeme Sephton, and Mike Vinskey

Farrell calls the Select Board meeting to order at 6:17pm.

Agenda Review: As posted.

1. School Building Assistance Statement of Intent: Farrell: the Statement of Interest is to apply for grant funding through the MSBA (Massachusetts School Building Authority) for the remaining asphalt portion of the elementary school roof. Torres confirms that this is the fifth time the Town is applying for funding to repair the school roof. Farrell: in the past, the gym roof was part of the application; the Town has funded this portion to be completed in April 2022. Torres screenshares the Statement of Interest prepared by the Superintendent's office for the accelerated grant program to fund the 30,500 sq. ft asphalt roof. Per Torres, the asphalt roof is popping nails and leaking where ice dams build up; we are hopeful that with help from State legislators the MSBA will look at the building and not only consider the roof's age for the project. Torres to Jim Hemingway's question: contractors must have DCAMM certification whether funding is received or Town funds are used. Torres: the MSBA grant covers 50%-60% of the costs with the Town paying the balance; the cost for the gym roof is \$250,000 plus design; the estimate for the asphalt roof is \$600,00 to \$800,000. Torres to Stocker's question: in the past, the School Committee voted to include the boiler; if funds for boiler repair are received and not needed, they can be declined; including it will not negatively affect the application.
  - Makepeace-O'Neil moves and Stocker seconds a motion for the Select Board Chairperson to execute the Resolution for a Statement of Interest for MSBA grant funding as written by the Union #28 Superintendent's office. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

Joint meeting with Finance Committee and Personnel Board:

1. Wage Market Alignment for the FY23 Budget:

Groves calls the Finance Committee (FinCom) to order and Ross calls Personnel Board to order at 6:34pm.

Groves: the FinCom should have had time to discuss the market alignment proposal before re-meeting with the Select Board and Personnel Board. Arvanitis: the Personnel Board has been working on this for a long time; there will be time for a reasonable process. Farrell suggests the FinCom take 15 mins to discuss the material; it will be useful to hear what the Committee has to say. Makepeace-O'Neil and Stocker agree.

Finance Committee: Groves: how will the market alignment fit into the budget?

Hemingway: are we having trouble retaining employees? Torres: yes, the Town has had trouble hiring an equipment operator and land use clerk; the Tax Collector and

Administrative Assessor are aware their pays are below average; we have struggled to hire. Mosher: the Broadband Committee approved a 79% increase for the Municipal Lighting Plant (MLP) Manager with no questions and the process did not go through the Personnel Board; questions about the market alignment were asked during the 3.1.22 Personnel Board presentation. Mosher asks for empathy and recognition of the need for equitable support for employees who provide services for our Town. Khashu: studying wages is a project the Personnel Board is responsible for; the FinCom was apprised of the project by Chartier and Arvanitis (FinCom members on the Personnel Board); this has been a transparent process; we knew the Personnel Board would be analyzing wages and they have done a rigorous analysis. Groves, noting that he did ask questions 3.1.22, was taken aback by the extent of the increases; there are things missing that may mediate the increases, i.e., the accountant had only four comparisons; what does FRCOG charge; we do not know the total hours for the other towns; he wants to make an equitable judgement with enough information; Leverett increased school staff pay by 26% based on Shutesbury's school; his primary consideration is for the tax payor; he wants more information and a more detailed analysis. Arvanitis: the increase is less than ½% of the budget; the staff will be receiving a COLA regardless; of the \$31,000 increase, \$7,000 is the COLA so only \$24,500 is being added to the budget; it is not bad to use what other towns are paying; the two factors considered were hours and pay rate; there is no other analysis that needs to be done. Hemingway: the reference to the MLP Manager is not relevant; that increase is because the workload doubled and the wages come from broadband subscribers; the market alignment increase comes from tax payers; why cannot positions be negotiated on a case by case basis; evaluations on how people are doing are needed. Khashu: this is a subset of positions whose wages are not in sync with other towns. Mosher: towns have different expectations for getting their jobs done though salary rates are somewhat similar; in her experience as Town Clerk, you do the job until you get it done. Torres: the Town does not negotiate individually; the police union and the four department heads have contracts; finance staff could seek to negotiate contracts; negotiating individually will not make a stronger team; addressing the proposed market realignment is respectful and meaningful. Makepeace-O'Neil: the Personnel Board worked on this for many meetings and voted unanimously to send it forward. Arvanitis: once the Board agreed on a process, consensus came easily. Mosher states she is ready to vote. Groves: will there be a combined collector/treasurer in the future, was this analyzed, isn't that a reason to remove those positions for now, what is the operator? Torres: the job description title is "equipment operator/truck driver" for which some have credentials.

- Mosher moves and Khashu seconds a motion for the Finance Committee to accept the recommendation made by the Personnel Board for the market alignment. Roll call vote: Arvanitis: aye, Chartier: aye, Groves: nay, Hemingway: nay, Khashu: aye, and Mosher: aye; the motion carries by a vote of 4-2.

Farrell confirms the Personnel Board previously approved the market alignment proposal.

- Makepeace-O'Neil moves and Stocker seconds a motion to approve the Personnel Board recommendation for market realignment of the positions listed. Neither Makepeace-O'Neil or Stocker have any questions. Noting that the Town needs to be paying fair wages, Farrell supports the motion. Makepeace-O'N it is important to acknowledge that employers do this process regularly. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

At 7:02pm, Makepeace-O'Neil moves and Stocker seconds a motion to adjourn the Select Board meeting. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

At 7:02pm, Stein moves and Arvanitis seconds a motion to adjourn the Personnel Board. Roll call vote: Ross: aye, Stein: aye, Arvanitis: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, and Chartier: aye; the motion carries.

The Finance Committee remains in session.

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Avis Scott  
Administrative Secretary