

Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes  
January 14, 2025 Hybrid Meeting Format

Selectboard members present: Rita Farrell/Co-Chair, Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil/Co-Chair and Eric Stocker

Staff present: Gabe Voelker/Interim Town Administrator

Volunteers & Other Staff present: Grace Bannasch

Guests: Tom Siefert, Susie Mosher, Penelope Kim

Farrell calls the meeting to order at 5:05 pm.

Agenda Review: As posted.

Public Comment: None

Review of Minutes: Minutes of November 6, 2024 and November 12, 2024 were approved.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a Motion to approve the November 6, 2024 minutes; Makepeace-O'Neil moves, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a Motion to approve the November 12, 2024 minutes; Makepeace-O'Neil moves, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

**Discussion Topics:**

1. Discussion of Senator Comerford's request for support of the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority to create a Quabbin Community Host Fund: The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority ("MWRA") did a study of the Quabbin to extend water service to Quabbin Reservoir Watershed Communities and issued a report at the end of November 2024. MWRA also looked at possibly extending water service to the North Shore and a group of South Shore communities as well. It is quite expensive and in Shutesbury's case it talked about water for the center of town only and that was priced at \$212,000,000. Senator Comerford submitted a bill at the last legislative session and Representative Saunders submitted it to the house trying to find a way to compensate the Quabbin Watershed communities for being the host of the Quabbin. Comerford's bill died in the committee last year and she is planning to resubmit. Some highlights in the bill are it would establish as Community Host Development Trust Fund to be credited with \$35,000,000 annually from the MWRA, find and support local municipal needs and non-profits serving the health, welfare, safety, and transit needs of these communities, additionally the bill requires the MWRA to make payments in lieu of taxes for lands under the reservoir; and the bill also creates two additional seats on the MWRA Board for representatives from Hampshire, Franklin and Worcester counties. Farrell feels it would make sense if the SB wait until their next meeting and Farrell will draft a letter and review at the next meeting. Makepeace-O'Neil and Stocker are in agreement.
2. Discussion of Senator Comerford's request for support on school funding issues: The SB received a request from Senator Comerford's office about support for school funding. They are asking for municipalities to write letters of support for the increased Chapter 70 funding. Farrell wrote a letter herself and encourages everyone to send a letter of support as well. It is to make sure that money is in the Governor's budget. The SB agrees to authorize Voelker to send a letter for the SB. Susie Mosher discusses the letter she has sent to Maura Healey and discusses the Federal Rural Education Aid was left out of the American Relief Budget that was passed in December and that represents a \$16,000

plus cut to our elementary school funding. Saunders has indicated that the State cannot backfill the whole thing and where there is holes there is holes. Mosher requested to support the Rural Aid boost from \$16,000,000 to \$60,000,000 and we have lost some of that already and it is not only the Ch. 70 it is also the Rural Aid at the State level is an established platform and if we can get that to be boosted. Our state rural aid was a little less than \$80,000 and that is a place if they boost it we will definitely benefit and that should be in the request. That is already possible but the whole Ch. 70 thing a long haul and won't happen this year. Farrell believes she included Rural Aid.

3. Discussion of proposed by-law to make Shutesbury a Sanctuary Community: Penelope Kim ("Kim") discusses and asks the SB for their support on adding a bylaw to the ATM warrant reaffirming Shutesbury's status as a sanctuary community and a safe city. Kim has spoken with Comerford and Comerford will be refiling a bill called "Safer Communities" and referred Kim to Amherst's bylaw. The SB and Kim discuss the process of adding a bylaw to the ATM warrant, the SB can vote to put a bylaw on the warrant or it can be added via a Citizen's Petition. The SB asks Kim to draft the bylaw and have it back to the SB by the beginning of March. There was a brief discussion about creating an ad hoc committee the SB decided against creating another committee and advised Kim to draft the bylaw and bring it back to the SB for review. Chief Burgess did share with the SB legal guidance from the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association and will share that with Kim.
4. Setting Town Meeting Date: April 26, 2025 or May 10, 2025: The Town Clerk, Grace Bannasch ("Bannasch") and the SB discuss moving ATM to May 10, 2025 or keeping it per the bylaw which would be April 26, 2025. Bannasch shares concerns over confusion with residents as she has already sent out a mailer with the annual town census to all households indicating ATM will be scheduled on April 26, 2025. Bannasch also discussed with the SB some challenges that might arise from rescheduling. The SB agreed to leave ATM scheduled for April 26, 2025 at the Shutesbury Elementary School and bylaws must be submitted no later than March 12, 2025.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a Motion to open the warrant for the Shutesbury Annual Town Meeting which will be held Saturday, April 26, 2025 starting at 9 am at the Shutesbury Elementary School; Makepeace-O'Neil moves, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

5. Update on Administrative Assistant Job Posting: The posting has not been placed yet and will be discussed at a further meeting.
6. Town Administrator Report, PFAS Update: Voelker advises the SB they have received more resumes and will add them to the packet for Thursday's upcoming meeting. The next group of letters have to be sent out for PFAS and Voelker was able to get everything into Bond Council and they have approved Shutesbury's submissions. There is a possibility for additional funding as well. Voelker is working on the budget and getting numbers to FinCom. Zoom is being launched at the department head meeting. The SB discusses the newsletter and moving it to electronic with some mailings for those who do not have email.

Farrell Motions to Adjourn (6:14 pm); Makepeace-O'Neil moves, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

#### Administrative Actions:

1. Farrell to draft letter to MWRA;

#### Documents and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. November 6, 2024 Draft SB Meeting Minutes;
2. November 12, 2024 Draft SB Meeting Minutes;

3. An Act Relative to the Quabbin Watershed and Regional Equity;
4. Massachusetts Water Resources Authority “Quabbin Reservoir Watershed Communities: Alternatives Evaluation Summary;
5. Massachusetts Chief of Police Association Legal Advisory “Refresher on Lunn v. Commonwealth”.

Respectfully submitted,  
Geneva Bickford,  
Administrative Secretary

\*\* A full version of the 12/31/24 SB meeting is available to view on the Town of Shutesbury’s YouTube page at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4ajoOcJsNzf5DBgMTZgcJA>