

Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes  
January 28, 2025 Hybrid Meeting Format

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

Staff present: Gabriele Voelker: Interim Town Administrator, Chief Burgess, Henry Geddes, Michael DeChiara, Nathan Heard, Gail Fleischaker, Elaine Puleo, Allen Hanson, Penelope Kim

Guests: Jennifer Wallace

Farrell calls the meeting to order at 5:03pm

Agenda Review: As posted.

Public Comment: Jennifer Wallace states her concerns and hopes that the board will have wider public hearing with more back and forth discussion, rather than sharing just comments. This is pertaining to the Voting and Safety Committee.

General Business:

- I. District Local Technical Assistance Application to FRCOG for TA to Lake Wyola Stormwater Erosion Task Force:
  - a. Jennifer Wallace presented the task force's needs for technical assistance from FROGS, particularly for hydraulic and hydrology studies, identifying funding sources, creating a scope of work, and writing grant proposals. The Council of Governments representatives suggested listing this assistance as the town's top priority on the application, which is due by January 31<sup>st</sup>. The Board considered how to categorize this request within the application's framework.
  - b. Shutesbury and Jennifer discussed the possibility of applying for technical assistance from a task force to address flood waters and increasing flooding. They decided to categorize their request under "comprehensive plans" and attach a detailed description of their needs. They also considered applying for assistance under the "outdoor recreation and open space planning" category due to recent discussions about recreation. Jennifer mentioned that she had been working with Tamsin Flanders and Kimberly McPhee, who had provided suggestions for other towns facing similar issues. Shutesbury suggested that Jennifer send a detailed scope of services to the select board for inclusion in their application. They also discussed the potential for a pollinator habitat plan and the issue of invasive species, which they agreed could be addressed under the pollinator habitat plan.
    - i. Farrell explains the DLTA is assistance that the Council of Governments staff provides to communities and every year the town is asked for what they might need for assistance. They must fill out a form and be signed by the board.

**VOTE:** Farrell Motions to apply for the DLTA money for the highest priority being for technical assistance for the Lake Wyola Task Force; Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace O’Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

II. Discuss response to the MA Water Resources Authority's November 2024 study regarding the extension of Quabbin water to host communities:

- a. The board discussed the MWRA's November 2024 study regarding Quabbin water extension to host communities. The Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA) conducted a study on this, but the participants felt that the study didn't adequately consider the unique needs of the communities. They also discussed the possibility of a trust fund being established to support these communities, as proposed in legislation filed by Senator Commerford. The participants agreed to send a letter to the MWRA expressing their concerns about the study and the trust fund proposal.
  - i. Farrell wants to express to the MWRA that they did not give the board a lot of time to engage and review.

**VOTE:** Farrell Motions to send a letter to Executive Director Laski and members of the MWRA Board of Directors outlining concerns about the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed evaluation; Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace O’Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

III. Update on the Administrative Assistant job posting:

- a. The board discussed the need to hire an administrative assistant for 32 hours a week, with the expectation that the person would be in the office 4 days a week from 8:30-4:30. They agreed to proceed with the hiring process.
  - i. Farrell asked the board who the Administrative Assistant will work for. Voelker acknowledged in the description it will say for the “Selectboard/Town Administrator.”

IV. Appointment of Erin McGuirl and Mariah Shore to the Historical Commission:

- a. The board discussed the appointments of Mariah Shore and Erin McGuirl to the Historical Commission, with Mariah expressing her interest in digitizing family archives and the archival project. The discussion also revolved around the Community Choice Aggregation Plan, with Nate explaining the process and the importance of public awareness. The plan involves a 30-day review period, during which the select board will review feedback and decide whether to approve the aggregation plan. The team also discussed the need for clear communication to avoid confusion among residents. The conversation ended with the understanding

that the plan is not yet ready for public announcement but will be available for public comment once it is.

- i. Henry Geddes commented that he may be worried historical documents are being thrown away. Farrell confirmed that it can be discussed at a different time.

**VOTE:** Farrell Motions to appoint Mariah Shore to the Historical Commission; Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

**VOTE:** Farrell Motions to appoint Erin McGuirl to the Historical Commission; Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

V. Energy Committee - discussion of the plan to be submitted for Community Choice Aggregation:

- a. The Select Board approved moving forward with a 30-day review period for the town's Community Choice Power Supply Program Aggregation Plan.
  - i. Heard stated the aggregation plan would need to be posted to the public for a minimum of 30 days. If the SB approves moving ahead, they will post it to the ECAC website and make some hard copies available. After the 30-day review period the Select Board would have another chance to review that feedback and then vote to approve the aggregation plan or not at a future Select Board meeting. At that point the 120-day DPU review period would commence.

**VOTE:** Farrell Motions to move forward with the 30-day review period for the Shutesbury's Community Choice Power Supply Program Aggregation Plan; Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

VI. Review of Environmental Notification Form for the National Grid Transmission Line Corridor Expansion Project:

- a. The board discussed a 600-page environmental notification form from National Grid regarding a transmission line corridor expansion project affecting multiple towns including Shutesbury. DeChiara agrees to draft a response highlighting the town's concerns about impacts on wetlands, pesticide use, forest cutting, and road usage for the February 11th meeting to be approved. The deadline is February 13<sup>th</sup>. The Board then approves an amendment to the Municipal Vulnerability Program grant to include a battery backup system for the library solar panels

instead of an electric truck. They also approve National Grid's request for a pole hearing to install poles and wiring at the library site, with clarification that wiring will go overhead across Leverett Road then underground on the library property.

- b. Shutesbury and Elaine discussed the process of scheduling a hearing, which includes publishing an ad and notifying abutters at least 7 days before the hearing. They also discussed the cost of legal ads, which can be expensive. Shutesbury suggested setting a fee of \$200 for permits and adjusting it if the ad cost exceeds this amount. They agreed to schedule a board meeting on the 18th to hold the pole hearing. Shutesbury also committed to notifying National Grid of the hearing date and time.

**VOTE:** Farrell Motions to charge \$200 for the cost of advertising and adjusting it if the cost exceeds that amount; Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

VII. Granting of Easement for National Grid for poles and wiring at 66 Leverett Road:

- a. The board and Elaine discussed the granting of an easement for a highway department project. It was clarified that the easement was part of the pole hearing and needed to be granted at a town meeting. They also discussed the language of the easement, which was initially unclear but was eventually found within the pole hearing documents. It suggested that the easement was part of the pole hearing vote, but they decided to double-check with Donna and possibly read the documents again. They also discussed the need to reserve space for a cross arm and the possibility of changing the last paragraph to include "Internet" in the communication section.

VIII. Scheduling of Library Pole Hearing:

- a. The Library Pole Hearing was scheduled for the next Select Board Meeting: February 18, 2025 at 5:30 pm.
  - i. The Select Board will notify National Grid

IX. Town Administrator Report:

- a. Voelker advised they will add December meeting minutes to the next SB meeting agenda.
- b. Voelker updated the board about creating a TA folder for public requests sent to her in emails, that are building up.
- c. Voelker also expressed her concern about the meeting agendas getting posted.
- d. Voelker stated she is bringing in an individual to help build the Annual Town Report.

X. Meeting adjourned at 6:44pm

**VOTE:** Farrell Motions to include DeChiara in the Executive Session. Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

**VOTE:** Farrell Motions to Adjourn (6:44pm) and go into Executive Session for Reason #3, To discuss strategy with respect to litigation, namely the solar bylaw lawsuit brought against the Town of Shutesbury by Puresky and Cows if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the town and the chair so declares; They will not be returning to public session. Farrell moves, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

Administrative Actions:

1. Jennifer Wallace to send detailed scope of work for DLTA application to select board
2. board to draft response to MWRA study and trust fund legislation
3. Schedule pole hearing for Eastman International Grid at 66 Leverett Road
4. Gabe Voelker to prepare administrative assistant job posting
5. Select board to review and approve comments on National Grid transmission line project by February 11
6. Michael DeChiara to join executive session regarding solar bylaw lawsuit

Document and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. Copy of the plan to be submitted for Community Choice Aggregation

Respectfully submitted,  
Brennan Mailloux  
Administrative Assistant  
Town Administrator/Select Board

\*\* A full version of the 1/28/25 SB meeting is available to view on the Town of Shutesbury's YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmQF4LI2-Uo>

