

Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes
May 6, 2025 Hybrid Meeting Format

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

Staff present and Guests: Hayley Bolton: Town Administrator, Chief Burgess, Gail Fleischaker, Tom Siefert, Brennan Mailloux, Matt Borowiec, Leslie Bracebridge, Howard Shpetner, Dave Green, Kevin Howe, Matteo Pangallo, Frank McGinn, Jim Hemingway, Penelope Kim, Susie Moser, Ajay Khashu, George Arvanitis, Kathy Salvador, April Stein, Bob Groves.

Farrell calls the meeting to order at 5:04pm

Agenda Review: As posted.

Public Comment: None

General Business:

I. Approve Meeting Minutes for 4.22.25, 4.30.25:

VOTE: Farrell makes a motion to approve the meeting minutes for 4.22.25, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, Farrell: aye; motion carries.

VOTE: Farrell makes a motion to approve the meeting minutes for 4.30.25, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, Farrell: aye; motion carries.

II. Update from the Lake Wyola Boating & Safety Review Committee Chair, Matt Borowiec:

- a. Borowiec shared that there is a proposal and a discussion to do some amended work to the established bylaws. He stated that the committee is still doing their best to find a consensus of ideas and he shared there is a widespread belief among the committee that there needs to be a strong push for education. He shared they can put signs up and hand out laminated education pamphlets to the public.
- b. He shared Environmental Police Department has expressed they will patrol the lake this Summer.
- c. He shared he did a comprehensive search on 47 lakes that allow motorboats in Massachusetts and there's eight of them that have some sorts of restrictions as far as time utilization. The majority of those have a delayed start. He stated in one of the amended bylaws that they would propose, is the idea for motorboats not to go out until 8 a.m.

- d. All together he shared it's a multipurpose lake and that the overall belief is that they (the committee) just want every to be safe.
- e. Borowiec stated having signage on the established bylaws is so important and would be easy to reference. Makepeace-O'Neil thinks this could be a problem if they change overtime, especially the Massachusetts boating laws.
- f. Farrell asked if there was any discussion on lake boats such as degrading the shore or how they can stir up vegetation. Borowiec stated he does not believe this is a problem as they tend to stay in the middle of the lake and having a 150-foot rule from shore and swimmers is very important.
- g. Farrell stated if they come up with an article it should be submitted by the end of this week.

III. Discussion of Using Shutesbury CPA funds for a shared FRCOG housing coordinator.
Matteo Pangallo:

- a. Matteo Pangallo shared his thoughts as he is the Chair of the CPC. Pangallo stated how since 2000, the median sales price for a single-family mortgage rate increased by over 200%. The median household income in town is \$80,327. That equals about 50% of their monthly pay going to housing. Pangallo feels housing is not presently affordable for Shutesbury residents.
- b. Pangallo stated Section 6 of the CPA says that we must set aside 10% of the CPA revenue every year for community housing needs. This year that would be \$7,300. In FY26, he believes there will be about \$65,000 in the Community Housing Account which is not a lot.
- c. He states two options which would be:
 - i. For the Select Board to ask Town Meeting to appropriate CPA funds from the housing account and the undesignated account to create an affordable housing trust fund and they would set up an affordable housing committee to administer that fund. This could help with down payment assistance or rental assistance. It would generate, like all trust funds, it would generate income through interest. It would also be supplemented with CPA money every year or a few years, and then there could be other sources of funding for grants, state funding and such.
 - ii. Utilize a shared FRCOG housing coordinator with Leverett for example, that would manage any affordability programs that the town sets up. Hiring through FRCOG would mean the town would not have to handle all the HR stuff such as maintaining office space or payroll.
- d. Pangallo stated no option is exclusive and the town could even establish a task force if they wanted. He and the Community Preservation Committee just believe the town has a need to start tackling the problem of skyrocketing housing affordability.
- e. Farrell suggested setting up a meeting solely for addressing this issue with the public involved as well as the Community Preservation Committee.

IV. Chief Burgess addresses a letter of compliment received by an officer. Public thank you:

- a. Chief Burgess read a letter from March 24, 2025, where a couple from New Hampshire was coming through the area and had to use the restroom. Shutesbury's Officer McGuire offered to allow the couple to follow him to the Town Hall and allowed them to use the town's facilities as none were closely accessible nearby, ultimately making the couple's day. They wanted Officer McGuire to be recognized for his kind act and for being so helpful.

V. Discussion of Security Cameras:

- a. Farrell mentioned how when you add cameras inside of buildings it can raise many questions and alarms. She mentioned how she had found a policy and a template for questions such as "what is public?" "Who has access to the tapes?" "Is there audio recording?" Farrell then added that Burgess stated there would be no audio recording, only video recording. Bolton stated the consensus from a department head meeting earlier in the day, proved overall support of them. Farrell stated she would like to revisit this topic with questions at a coming meeting such as May 20th or the following one. She wants to make sure the questions are asked before installation.

VI. Review (2) Assessor's Articles for Town Meeting Warrant. Vote on percentage for Article 2:

- a. Leslie Bracebridge stated that in 2021 the town voted to give cost of living increases to the seniors and blind individuals. At the time there was no statute to include veterans in this. Eventually the Hero Act came about now they have veteran exemptions. The Assessors voted at their meeting on April 16th, to recommend upping the percentage of veteran exemption to a percentage of 100%.
- b. Farrell asked how much on average 100% is and Bracebridge stated on average it is \$400 for the basic one and does goes up.
- c. Bracebridge shared 22I and 22J are local options, so there will be no additional state reimbursement options.

VOTE: Farrell makes a motion to approve the first article as presented by the Assessors for the Town Warrant, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, Farrell: aye; motion carries.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve 100% for Article 2 presented by the Assessors, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, Farrell: aye; motion carries.

VII. Discussion of Administrative Assessor position. Approve Job Description and appoint a search committee:

- a. Howard Shpetner stated he does not believe they need to advertise the position at this point. He stated we have an individual (Roy Bishop) who has been working as a consultant that is willing to continue working for the Town and has close ties with David Burgess who is done June 30th. He has experience and Shpetner believes he can handle the job.
- b. Bracebridge stated that the Assessors have not had a meeting to discuss this plan that Shpetner mentioned. She stated she really believes they should push forward with the advertising and approval of the Job Description.
- c. Bracebridge shared she would love to lower her workload and hours and would be willing to cross train an individual.
- d. It was decided that a search committee and advertising will be determined at a later date.

VOTE: Farrell makes a motion to approve the job description of the Administrative Assessor position, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, Farrell: aye; motion carries.

VIII. Review of Town Meeting Warrant Draft:

- a. The Board reviewed the draft of the Warrant with Finance Committee and made note of Article 16 needing more accurate wording.
- b. The Finance Committee voted to approve the recommendation of Article 20, to pay prior bills 7-0.

IX. Discuss Emergency Management Director's Request to engage Phil Gilmore for The Massachusetts Firewise Program.

VOTE: Farrell makes a motion to authorize the Emergency Management Director's request to engage Phil Gilmore for the Massachusetts Firewise Program, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, Farrell: aye; motion carries.

X. Meet with the Finance Committee to review the budget for Town Meeting.

- a. Ajay Khashu shared they have developed a budget and voted on it at their previous meeting. There is a total operating budget of \$7,678,806, an increase of \$425,000 or 5.9%. The drivers for this increase would be a 7.7% increase in their assessment to the regional school district. For the first time in the history of the region, he shared that the modified statutory method is being fully implemented this year. This means that 3 out of the 4 communities that are part of the region are experiencing very significant increases in their assessment. He said this 7.7% increases can be compared to Leverett who will be at 14%. One of the problems that the regional school has is a decrease in enrollment and lack of revenue from the state. Chapter 70 money has not been increasing, and teacher salary expenses continue to increase.
- b. The Elementary School budget is increasing by 5%.
- c. The health insurance is increasing by 19%.

- d. Police Wages are increasing by 18.8%
- e. Town Building Repairs/Maintenance Fund decreased by \$40,000.
- f. The Administrative Assistant Hours Increase has resulted in a \$15,000 (49.7%) increase.
- g. They are utilizing their full 2.5% Tax Levy and have exhausted their ability to utilize cash reserves for the operating budget.
- h. They have estimated \$45,000 new growth as well as \$57,000 in estimated State Aid increase.
- i. Capital Budget (Free Cash) total of \$55,000
 - i. (Highway grader repairs, Zero Turn Mower, Town Hall repairs, Town Hall Fire Alarm System, Rural Development Grant match-L Wyola)
- j. Operating Budget (Free Cash) total of \$126,000
 - i. (Health Insurance, Elementary School, AMH Regional Public School, Veteran's Benefits)
- k. Establish a PFAS Mitigation Fund total of \$150,000
 - i. \$50,000 from Free Cash, \$100,000 from Stabilization. Saves us from potentially a second borrowing and saving on interest accrual.
- l. Legal Line-Defend Town through Solar Bylaw litigation (Free Cash) total of \$30,000
- m. If all Warrant articles pass, Total cash reserves of \$1,151,000.
- n. The Library Custodian Expense (~\$5,000) will be pulled out of the Library Budget and built into the Buildings Custodian Line.
- o. They expect a tax rate of \$16.60 for every \$1,000 of assessed value. An increase from FY25 rate of \$15.80.

XI. Town Administrator Report:

a. Town Administrator Goals

- i. Bolton shared the department head meeting held in the morning was a success and very helpful in discussing goals and potential repair projects. That will be something she hopes to continue moving forward.
- ii. She met with FRCOG and talked about an ADA Accessibility Grant. She would like to see the town pursue it. This would be quoted at about \$11,000.

VOTE: Farrell makes a motion to make Town Administrator Hayley Bolton the ADA Coordinator, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, Farrell: aye; motion carries.

- iii. Bolton discussed that she is waiting to hear more about PFAS. She is optimistic it will work out.
- iv. Bolton stated she would love to meet with the Personnel Board Chair to discuss the Personnel Policy Handbook.

- v. She also stated she has mailed the Home Rule petition.
- vi. Bolton shared her goals include modernization such as accounts and security. She does not want to change a whole lot but just wants a better understanding of how things have been happening. She values technology and grants as goals of hers.
- vii. Bolton and the Board plan to schedule May 13th as a strategy session meeting and review the Warrant again. 5pm.

XII. Meeting adjourned at 7:34pm

VOTE: Farrell makes a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:34pm, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, Farrell: aye; motion carries.

Administrative Actions:

1. Figure out our obligations with PFAS and our annual cost overview of PFAS testing.
2. Schedule a special May 13th meeting for 5pm.
3. Rita to circulate the security camera policy and template.
4. Select Board to revisit the plan for security camera installation at a future meeting.
5. Chief Burgess to add the letter of commendation to Officer McGuire's personnel file.
6. Leslie Bracebridge to create a Q&A document explaining the two assessor articles for the town meeting.
7. Matt Borowiec to submit proposed Lake Wyola boating bylaw language to the Select Board.
8. Haley Bolton to get on the Personnel Board's agenda to discuss personnel policies and handbook updates.
9. Finance Committee to make minor tweaks to the budget presentation, including updating information on the library custodian expense.
10. Select Board to review and finalize the town meeting warrant at the May 13th meeting.
11. Select Board to schedule executive sessions to address outstanding complaints.

Document and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. 4.22.25 and 4.30.25 Meeting Minute Drafts
2. Letter of Compliment to Police Officer
3. 2 Proposed Assessor's Articles
4. Administrative Assessor Job Description
5. Town Meeting Warrant Draft
6. FY26 Budget Presentation provided by Finance Committee

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

** A full version of the 5/6/25 SB meeting is available to view on the Town of Shutesbury's
YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tU5FKTwenxM>

