

SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes for Jan. 15, 2008
Shutesbury Town Hall

Members present: Eric Stocker, chairman, Rus Wilson, Elaine Puleo, Al Springer, Lori Tuominen, Mark Pocsik and Patrick J. Callahan. Guests: David Dann, town administrator, Leslie Bracebridge, town clerk, Cliff Read, Jane Urban, library trustees and Mary Anne Antonellis, town librarian.

The meeting convened at 7:08 p.m.

The minutes of the Dec. 18, 2007 meeting were approved unanimously as amended.

Cliff Read introduced Mary Anne Antonellis, the newly hired town librarian and presented the budget proposal from the library trustees. Overall, it calls for spending \$48,562, with a town appropriation of \$36,900. He says the budget includes funds for an increase in the director's hours from 24 to 30 per week and a 3 percent increase in pay for library assistants and aides. There is also \$4,000 to pay for the C/W MARS electronic card catalog membership for the town library. Cliff says about 20 percent of the overall budget comes from sources other than the town. For example, he says the Friends of the Library pay for the summer reading program. In addition, volunteers work about 330 hours per year helping to keep the paid staff budget down.

Cliff also distributed a handout showing the budgets, usage and other financial and demographic data on libraries in other communities in western Massachusetts. The chart shows that Shutesbury is spending less per capital on library services than many towns and it is the third most active collection of those towns surveyed.

Cliff and David Dann told the committee the budget plan they presented is more complete than it has been in the past, showing all outside revenue as well as town appropriations. The plan, however, was not clear about those outside sources of money for last year, and the committee asked David and Cliff to come back on Jan. 22 with the updated and expanded figures for last year, something they agreed to do.

Elaine reported that the elementary school has received a \$5,000 grant from the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) to pay for a locking, card access front door for the building. Any remaining cost will be picked up by the school. She says the committee is still drafting its budget and it currently contains an increase of 4.2 percent. That may increase further because the school is considering hiring another teacher to meet increased enrollment needs.

Eric reported that the regional agreement subcommittee on which he serves is expecting that Shutesbury will have to assume payment of \$10,000-\$12,000 for busing elementary school kids because the state is requiring a new regional transportation payment plan. This would be a new cost to the town.

Lori reported that Bob Mahler, school principal, came to the Cultural Council and requested \$1,000 to help defray the cost of the \$10,000 artist-in-residence cost the school incurred last fall. She says the council gave him \$200.

Eric says the issue of the audit of the school construction costs remains confused, but of the total of \$500,000 in costs disallowed by state education officials, the town has lowered that number to about \$323,000. Efforts are underway to further reduce this number, he says. If the town is held liable for some costs, it will be paid to the state by annual reductions in cherry sheet allocations over 10 years.

David Dann reported that Amherst Town Manager Larry Shaffer has agreed to a new ambulance payment schedule for the next five years that includes just a 3-percent annual increase. Shaffer was more interested in getting a long-term agreement than with arguing about his proposed formula, David says.

The committee reviewed the most recent version of the budget and David reported it is \$195,947 out of balance. This budget document assumes that debt service is up 13.12 percent and school spending is held at 3 percent, he says. He also assumed level funding from state aid.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.