

SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes for Nov. 21, 2006
Shutesbury Town Hall

Members present: Eric Stocker, chairman, Al Springer, Al Beswick, Lori Tuominen, Rus Wilson and Patrick J. Callahan.

The meeting was preceded by a joint meeting with the selectmen, Becky Torres, Ralph Armstrong and Debra Pichanick; members of the School Committee, Matthew Hart, Michael DiChiarra and Dan Hayes; the Capital Planning Committee, Ellen Mckay, Matthew, Eric and Lori; Leslie Bracebridge, Town Clerk; Gabe Voelker, town treasurer; Bob Mahler, school principal, Walter Turati, school custodian; and Greg Steve, citizen.

The joint meeting convened at 7:07 p.m.

There was a discussion of how to fund a \$60,000 shortfall in the budget adopted at Annual Town Meeting and how an accounting error had created the shortfall. There was also a presentation from the school officials about the need for a new telephone and intercom system for the school, especially in light of recent incidents at schools in the region and nation involving threats to children. The Capital Planning Committee debated and approved spending \$26,460.65 for the new system for the elementary school to be approved by voters at a special Town Meeting on Dec. 7. The Finance Committee then unanimously approved the action, as did the selectmen.

The Finance Committee also unanimously approved spending \$60,000, plus an additional \$4,068 that was a shortfall in the estimate for new growth, for a total of \$64,068 to be used to balance the budget. An article for this purpose was also prepared for the Dec, 7 special Town Meeting.

Funding for both articles was to come from free cash. After this expenditure, the free cash was estimated at \$355,589 and stabilization was \$419,657, for a total reserve of \$786,000, or about 15 percent of the total budget.

The joint meeting adjourned at about 8:30 p.m.

The Finance Committee then convened its meeting at 8:35 p.m.

The minutes of the Oct. 24 meeting were unanimously approved.

Eric reported that the elementary school now has a total of 157 children, including the pre-school.

There was a discussion about how to handle the circuit-breaker funds that come from the state. It was decided to allow the School Committee to keep the money and spend it for special education costs and not have the money put into a Finance Committee account.

This was based on recent year's experience that the two panels had been working harmoniously on this issue.

Al Beswick reported that the search for a new town accountant had prompted five applications and that two candidates were to be interviewed. The search committee was scheduled to meet again Nov. 30.

There was also a discussion about possible future uses for the community church as a new site for the town library.

The next meeting was set for Dec. 5 at 7 p.m. in Town Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.