

SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes for April 10, 2007
Shutesbury Town Hall

Members present: Eric Stocker, chairman, Lori Tuominen, Rus Wilson, Al Beswick and Patrick J. Callahan. Guests: David Dann, town administrator, Becky Torres, Ralph Armstrong, Debra Pichanick, selectmen, Leslie Bracebridge, Town Clerk, Gabe Voelker, town treasurer.

The joint meeting of the Finance Committee and selectmen convened at 7:06 p.m.

Gabe V. told the two committees she has outlined to borrowing scenarios for the town to pay for the new backhoe and the repairs for the DPW garage. She gave details of a 5-year note and a 7-year note and explained the relative cost of each.

Voelker also told the two panels that the town should consider seeking a debt exclusion override for some expensive items. She says there is a pattern of spending more than the town is collection, and even though this is made up by free cash, at some point the town may seek long-term borrowing and bond markets will observe the spending pattern. She says using free cash is not a bad strategy, but says it creates a pattern that is noticeable to financial officials. Voelker also says she knows town officials are reluctant to suggest overrides, but says at some point it may make sense when viewed from the perspective of borrowing.

Library Trustees Christopher Buck, Karen Traub, Amy Beth and Jane Buchanan, the librarian arrived to discuss the proposed budget. Beth says the director's salary includes a 3 percent increase and there is \$6,349 proposed for an assistant. Currently Buchanan is working about 101 hours per month, but is paid for only 96. The trustees say they want the new position to take up the extra hours and to allow for an increase in the weekly hours by two hours on Saturdays and make more time available for the librarian to do tasks that aren't involved with dealing with the public.

When asked about whether there is any money left from an old planning grant that can be used to offset the cost of the \$20,000 the board is seeking for planning a new library, the trustees agreed to check the exact amount. It is believed to be about \$3,000.

The Finance Committee and selectmen then did a line-by-line review of the proposed budget to be presented at Annual Town Meeting. The overall budget reflects 3 percent increases for salaries and stipends.

The Finance Committee then voted to approve the budget as presented, with a budget gap of \$91,307. Later, another \$12,000 was added to the budget, making the gap \$103,304. This amount would be met by using free cash.

The Finance Committee also voted to support the two articles on the special town meeting warrant that will be taken up just prior to the Annual Town Meeting. It was later decided to merge the two articles into one seeking \$80,000 for permits and dam repairs, with funding to come from stabilization. This will require a two-thirds vote for passage.

The Finance Committee then voted to support articles 4,5,6,7,8 and 9 and 16,17,18,19,20,21,22,24 and 25 on the Annual Town Meeting warrant. It didn't support articles 12 and 13.

The next meetings were scheduled for April 24 and on May 5 at 8:30 a.m., if necessary.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.