

**SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes for April 11, 2006**  
**Shutesbury Town Hall**

Members present: Eric Stocker, chairman, Al Beswick, Al Springer, Rus Wilson, Lori Tuominen and Patrick J. Callahan. Guests: David Dann, town administrator, Rebecca Torres and Debra Pichanick, Joseph Jacobs, selectmen. Dan Hayes, Anne Lundberg, school committee, Charlie Paulin, Union 28, Linda Driscoll, Union 28 Superintendent. Leslie Bracebridge, town clerk. David Keilson, town accountant.

The meeting convened at 7:12 p.m.

The minutes of the April 3 and March 28 meetings were approved unanimously.

David Keilson reported that the state budget proposed by the House contains lower Chap. 70 figures than those Gov. Romney included in his budget proposal. For Shutesbury, that means level funding. For the Amherst-Pelham region, it would mean \$292,823 less than the governor proposed.

Eric began the discussion of the elementary school budget by saying that while town funding for the proposed budget is increasing by 3 percent, the overall budget is increasing by 8.49 percent when other sources of revenue are considered. He also says any state circuit-breaker money should revert to the town, not the school committee, if it isn't spent or held in reserve by agreement between the school committee and the town.

When asked to explain the history of the circuit-breaker funds, Charlie Paulin says the state has agreed to pay special education costs, but has reimbursed schools at different rates at different times. He says Union 28 is anticipating it will get \$131,000 for Shutesbury in the next funding cycle. Linda Driscoll says the money is specified for special education costs. She explained her new proposal to return \$87,000 to the town from the reserve fund instead of the \$61,000 previously agreed with the Finance Committee. This is possible, she says, because the school anticipates saving about \$30,000 next year because of retirements.

Becky told the group that the current shortfall in the town budget is about \$156,000. David Dann says the latest figures show that figure closer to \$244,000. Al Beswick noted that current budget figures for both the town and the region make it difficult to come up with credible figures at this time.

Dan Hayes argued for the \$13,000 for a music program to be retained in the elementary budget because it would give children a distinct advantage over what is currently offered and bring them up with other children who attend the regional school system.

Becky responded that over the years the school has chosen to improve teacher salaries and maintain staff and the town has supported that, noting that in recent years the town has had to function with level-funded budgets, not level-service budgets.

Anne Lundberg says the music program has been proposed and subsequently cut from school budget for the past six years and this year the committee wants to retain it if at all possible.

Eric proposed that the school committee find \$13,000 in cuts, whether or not that includes the music program, so that the proposed increase would be 3.7 percent next year. Linda and Anne say they will bring the matter up to the school board at its next meeting.

A discussion on the library needs followed. Joe Jacobs says something has to be done soon to remedy the problems at the building. He noted that one complaint of lack of access for people with disabilities will force the closing of the building so the town must act.

After a general discussion of the budget situation, Patrick moved that the Finance Committee ask selectmen to delay the budget articles until after the May 6 Annual Town Meeting because the situation is currently unsettled. Lori seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

David Dann mentioned that in the latest budget document, there is an adjustment for the salary of the town treasurer.

David also says \$75,000 will be needed to fund repairs and accessibility work at the library and that this amount can be borrowed. The treasurer says the note could be secured at a 6 percent interest rate. There would also be borrowing of \$115,000 for the new highway dump truck.

The next meeting was scheduled for April 25 at 7 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.