

SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes for April 7, 2009
Shutesbury Town Hall

Members present: Eric Stocker, chairman, Patrick J. Callahan, Lori Tuominen, Bill Wells and Elaine Puleo. Guests: David Dann, town administrator.

The meeting convened at 7:10 p.m.

The minutes of the March 24 meeting were approved unanimously as amended.

The committee reviewed the letter drafted by Eric for the *Our Town* newsletter explaining the town's financial situation and the current proposed budget for next year. Several small revisions were suggested. The newsletter will be the final one prior to Annual Town Meeting and offers an opportunity for Eric and the committee to explain the budget process and the thinking behind it.

Elaine says the contract negotiations with the teachers at the elementary school are going slowly and aren't likely to be finished before sometime in June.

She also says the regional school budget is likely to be based on so-called Tier 1 reductions. Under the current scenario, the regional school committee has drafted three levels of cuts to meet the requirements of different levels of funding that may or may not become available. The Shutesbury Finance Committee is on record supporting the Tier 1 budget scheme.

There was a brief discussion about the possible need for another four-town meeting on the regional budget.

Eric brought up the need to recruit new members for the committee. As of July 1, Elaine will be leaving because she is running unopposed for the open seat on the Board of Selectmen, and Eric has reached the limit of three consecutive terms on the board. He is running the one-year term as selectman created when Becky Torres resigned. In addition, Mark Pocsik has resigned. These changes will create three opening on the Finance Committee on July 1, assuming no other members leave, and the committee informally discussed people who might be approached to serve as well as those who have expressed an interest.

There was then a general discussion about whether the current budget as drafted is low enough. As it stands, the budget for next year contains no raises for town employees and is \$3,000 lower than last year's total. It remains unclear, however, what level of state funding will be available. Eric, Patrick and Elaine, who attended the recent annual municipal conference in Northampton sponsored by Sen. Stanley C. Rosenberg, reported that Therese Murray, president of the Senate, told the group that current revenue projections for the year suggest that there is a shortfall of up to \$4 billion for the next

budget cycle. She also told the group that there is the possibility of another round of state budget cuts in the current year. David Dann also expressed some anxiety that the current draft budget may not be low enough and says there are places where some reductions can be found. It was decided to wait until the House Ways and Means Committee released its proposed budget for next year on April 15 before making changes. The House budget numbers will give some indication what the state revenue situation is and how it is going to have an effect on local budgets.

At this point, the committee once again reviewed the budget plan for fiscal 2010 and voted to support the document.

The committee also voted its approval of articles 3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,14 and 15 on the warrant for the May 2 Annual Town Meeting.

The committee reviewed the expense report.

David reported that that the fuel and snow wages budget lines in the current year's budget have been overspent.

Bill Wells says he will contact the Bell & Hudson insurance agency to see if the town can save some money on its coverage.

The next meeting was set for April 21.

The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.