

SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes for March 30, 2004
Shutesbury Town Hall

Members present: Chairman Eric Stocker, Al Beswick, Russ Wilson, Russ Greco, Patrick J. Callahan.

The meeting convened at 7:44 p.m.

The minutes of the March 2, 2004 and the March 16, 2004 meetings were unanimously approved.

There was a brief discussion of the status of Walter Tibbetts, the fire chief. Members had heard that Walter was considering stepping down.

There was also a discussion of the Personnel Board's request to move back to the normal compensation plan for town workers because last year it was interrupted. Instead of granting 3 percent raises, the town gave out 2 percent. To bring the plan back into line with its original schedule, raises of 4 percent are currently in the proposed town budget.

Discussion focused on the need to grant raises to town employees versus the need to maintain fiscal restraint in difficult financial times. Russ Greco argued that in tough times it might not be wise to grant any raises. Patrick responded that there was also the issue of morale for town workers.

The next issue was Tim Hunting's request for 20 hours per week of part-time help for the Highway Department this summer. He has asked the selectmen for \$2,100 for summer help. The Finance Committee suggested that if this expenditure is granted, Tim should come to the committee in the fall and show how the plan had saved at least \$2,100.

The committee then unanimously approved changes to the Finance Committee bylaw. It will appear as an article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant.

The committee reviewed the expense report. Questions were raised about the landfill expenses and the line item for rubbish hauling. Eric said he will ask David Ames about these two items.

Next for review was the revenue report. There was a question raised about the MDC PILOT payment.

Walter Tibbetts arrived from a chimney fire on Montague Road. Walter said he could accept a cut of \$315 in his expense line item, but would like to retain an additional \$750 for equipment.

On the issue of his job status, Walter told the committee he needs either to move up to a 40-hour job as chief, or make a pay level compatible with his day job. He said he can't

continue in his current situation, and has informed the selectmen that he can't keep working the equivalent of two 40-hour jobs. He may leave by Aug. 1 if no solution is found. Walter says he has been the fire chief for 10 years and has been a member of the department for 25 years, and he wants to find a way to continue serving the community. To be a full-time chief, he would need to be paid between \$40-\$45,000 and perhaps have a town vehicle.

Walter also asked if the \$3,000 that was voted last year as a contingency for getting a federal grant was still available. The committee said no, and that new money would have to be appropriated for any new grant application.

The committee set more meetings for April 6, 13, 20. There is also a meeting April 7 in Amherst with the finance committees and selectmen of the four regional towns.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.