

SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE
Minutes for April 13, 2004
Shutesbury Town Hall

Members present: Chairman Eric Stocker, Al Beswick, Russ Wilson, Russ Greco, Patrick J. Callahan. Guest, David Ames, town administrator, Selectman Becky Torres.

The meeting convened at 7:07 p.m.

The minutes of the April 6, 2004 meeting were unanimously approved.

Al reported on the regional school meeting. Pelham faces an override and a \$2.13 increase in their tax rate. Leverett faces a \$1.60 increase in the tax rate, but no override. Overall, the regional school budget is up 7.17 percent. For Shutesbury and the other small towns the increase is just more than 12 percent.

Becky says the Personnel Committee is revising the job description for the fire chief to reflect the proposed new 20-hour per week position. The job will be posted for seven days. She says Ralph Armstrong has talked to Walter Tibbetts. Becky says there is a need for a new fire chief's contract and a review of the police chief's contract because Charlie Bray may be leaving soon. The selectmen are planning a review of the police department "from the ground up," says Becky.

Eric and David reviewed the capital plan. Money for the proposed items will be taken from stabilization. A motion to take \$49,500 from stabilization was unanimously approved.

Warrant article 11 calls for paving the dirt part of Pelham Hill Road. Information from Tim Hunting about the plan was reviewed. There was a general discussion of the merit of "chip sealing" the road. Eric asked for more information and more financial data. A motion to support the article passed 3-2. Eric and Russ Wilson voted no; Patrick, Al and Russ Greco voted yes.

After more discussion, the \$15,000 request from the Conservation Commission was stricken because of the budget situation.

The committee and David Ames talked about adjusting the tax levy figure in the budget to get the tax rate for next year under \$23 per \$1,000. The new tax levy figure is \$141,220,000, which yields a tax rate of \$22.99.

It was moved and approved to increase the salary for the fire chief to \$25,000.

The Annual Town Meeting is set for May 1 and the override vote is set for June 6, with a possible special Town Meeting set for June 15 or 22.

There was a discussion of how to present the override at Annual Town Meeting and to explain that if it fails, most cuts will be made to personnel. Eric suggested a joint letter from the selectmen, finance committee and school committee to urge support for the override.

A meeting was set for April 20 to write the letter.

The Finance Committee voted unanimously to support the \$4,564,764 budget contingent on an override.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Submitted by Patrick J. Callahan.