

Schools, continued from page 1

to and throughout the economic hard times, the school has repeatedly faced 0% budgets – just holding things together while costs rose around us.

While our dedicated staff has found ways to go the extra mile and parents and community members have stepped up with donations of time and money, we knew that eventually this would need to change; making do can only go on for so long before the impact becomes significant enough that action is needed. The action we need to take is in fiscal year 2013 which starts in July.

Most significantly, the school faces the elimination of essential federal stimulus funds – funds specifically intended to keep local education intact, mostly directed at paying and retaining needed staff that otherwise would have been laid off. For the coming year, Shutesbury Elementary School will lose \$43,000 in stimulus funds and will need to fill the hole to keep our programs intact.

Shutesbury is also part of Union #28 – a network of five towns. The shared costs of administration of Union #28 are allocated annually based on the relative enrollment (who has higher percentage of kids enrolled). In the coming year, Shutesbury will pay \$7,000 more simply because our percentage of enrollment went up in relation to the other towns; nothing else changed.

The other drivers which will increase the elementary budget this year include a modest re-investment in professional development and programming; and salaries – both contracted increases and staffing addition that is needed to meet the unique needs of students.

While the school committee continues to be fiscally responsible and works closely with the town leadership, this year we face challenges that leave us with little choice but to seek an increase in the budget; again the first time in four years.

At the Regional Schools, the budget is also going up given increased costs of operation. The increases to the town assessments are being held in check by several



strategies including the expansion of school choice slots, modest programmatic cuts, and one-time internal transfers from the excess and deficiency (E&D) account.

Among the four towns, Shutesbury is seeing the lowest increase in our annual assessment – approximately \$29,000 or 2.07% (as of February). Again, because Shutesbury has the least growth in enrollment in relationship to the other towns in the region, we are assessed a lesser percentage. Comprehensive budget documentation regarding the various elements of the regional budget can be found at the arps.org website.

One significant educational development that has occurred since the winter edition of *Our Town* is **the formal coming together of the towns of Amherst, Pelham, Leverett and Shutesbury to explore ideas about how to reconfigure our local education delivery.**

Since the Regional School District was created in the 1950's, this four-town exploration has occurred every 10-15 years – literally in the 60's, 70's, 90's and a few years ago.

Since all four towns send their 7-12 graders to the same middle and high schools, it begs the question, "Are there ways to change how education is organized on the elementary level to advance our town's educational goals (including expanding capacity and increasing cohesion), finances, or governance?"

Previously, every time the four towns came together, huge volunteer time and effort were expended, yet the status quo remained.

With a changing world and new educational, financial and governance pressures being imposed, it seems responsible to ask the question again and to explore all options. Our ultimate goal is to see if we can better serve Shutesbury's children and Shutesbury's residents.

This time, unlike previous efforts

by the four towns, each town has created three-person Regional School District Planning Committees (RSDPCs) per state law. These committees enable each town to officially "talk" to each other about reconfiguration.

Together all four towns sought a state grant to hire consultants to look at the available data and understand the educational, governance and financial impacts of any possible changes. Unfortunately, we did not get the grant but all four towns remain committed to finding ways to get this information so that informed decisions can be made. **To be clear, these exploratory discussions do not commit Shutesbury to anything.** Right now we are just talking.

The bottom line is that these issues are complex and solutions are not straightforward. If they were, something might have been done in the last 50+ years.

If an agreed-upon solution is identified, no change will happen quickly or without residents knowing. A change in the regional agreement, for example, requires both a Town Meeting vote and approval by the State Commissioner of Education.

So far the process has been transparent, involving two Town Meeting votes, a public forum and a public website.

As official representatives of the town, the RSDPC asks that you continue to follow developments, so that when feedback is sought, residents can engage in informed discussion. (Note: see the town website for links to this information). All meetings of the RSDPC are open to the public and you are welcome.

To find out more about the elementary school, I encourage residents to visit the school website at: www.shutesburyschool.org. For the secondary schools, please visit www.arps.org.

Members of the community are always welcome to attend Shutesbury School Committee meetings, usually on the 3rd Thursday of each month.

On behalf of our teachers and staff, the parents and guardians, and of course the children, thank you for your continued support of quality education for our Shutesbury children.

Waste, continued from page 1

Here's how to recycle mercury-bearing waste at Town Hall:

Fluorescent lamps of all kinds – **do not tape long fluorescent lamps together. Please no packaging, bubble wrap, cardboard, etc.**

Thermostats, thermometers barometers – **again, no packaging, please.**

Elemental mercury – if you break a thermometer or have some other kind of mercury spill, here's what to do:

1. Ventilate the room and put tape around the area so no one will walk through the spill.
2. Get some disposable gloves, then use a note card or other stiff cardboard to push the mercury globules together.
3. Place the mercury in a Zip-lock bag along with the card and the disposable gloves, place the bag in a glass jar with a tight lid, label the jar "elemental mercury," and bring it to Town Hall.

Some batteries are hazardous waste. Cell phones are also classified as hazardous waste because of the lead, copper, nickel, and antimony in them. There are a number of mail-back programs that are free for recycling batteries, cell phones and other items. A list of these programs is at this web site:

<http://earth911.com/recycling/mail-back-programs-recycling-from-home/#>. **Again, you can save the Town money if you participate in one of these programs.**

Do not bring items with rechargeable batteries in them (such as electric toothbrushes, beard trimmers, etc.) to Town Hall. Take the rechargeable batteries out of these items (hitting them with a hammer does the trick) first, then bring the batteries to Town Hall.

Here's how to recycle batteries and cell phones at Town Hall:

Rechargeable batteries and button batteries. Place each battery *separately in a baggie* and place the baggie(s) in the box under the table in the copy room. They need to be in separate baggies so that they don't touch one another. Truckloads of



apparently "dead" batteries have ignited, causing serious fires.

Do not bring items with rechargeable batteries in them (such as electric toothbrushes, beard trimmers, etc.) to Town Hall.

Take the rechargeable batteries out of these items (hitting them with a hammer does the trick) first, then bring the batteries to Town Hall.

Do not bring non-rechargeable (alkaline) batteries to Town Hall. They are not hazardous waste and can be thrown out with the trash.

Cell phones. Take the batteries out, put the batteries in baggies and then in the battery box. Put the cell phone in the cell phone box, also under the table in the copy room.

Speeding Our Town on its way to you

Each time she hears that the printer has finished running off the latest issue of this newsletter, Administrative Secretary **Leslie Bracebridge** reaches for a valuable document: her list of "folding party" volunteers.

"**Johanna Hall** gets the blue ribbon this time!" she wrote last month, when asked who'd helped fold, seal and stuff the 875 copies of the Winter 2012 edition for mailing. Leslie noted that Joanna arrived at Town Hall within 20 minutes of receiving her call, and the two of them worked together for four hours.

"Then **Marilyn and Walter Tibbetts** walked in from an evening event," Leslie added, "rolled up their sleeves and got to work. **Becky Torres** came in after a meeting. And we were done and out the door."

If you would like to join a "folding party" for *Our Town* or special municipal mailings in the future, please call Leslie at 259-1204. (You will be under no obligation if a given date or time does not work for you.)

Town Democratic Committee honors longtime members

Bruce Parkin, *Secretary, Democratic Town Committee*

The Presidential Primary ballot provided for the election of members to the Shutesbury Town Democratic Committee. Nine members were elected. At a subsequent meeting, the committee added six associate members.

Three members were honored for serving over 20 years, which earns them the status of emeritus (lifelong): **Jonathan Tuttle, Bruce Parkin, Georgianna Parkin. Linda Lawton-Jacobson's** long participation was also acknowledged.

The Democratic Town Committee invites town residents to view information about local activities and links to state-wide campaigns at its website (www.shutesburydems.info).

Public Auction Corner: Town-owned equipment



Please submit your bid in a sealed envelope if you are interested in the following item to Becky Torres, Town Administrator, 1 Cooleyville Rd., Shutesbury, MA 01072. Bids will be opened at noon on May 11, 2012. Equipment will go to highest bidder. Thank you for your interest.

Dell Optiplex PC tower good condition. Purchased in 2005.

Pentium 4 processor 2.26 GHz
1.5 gigs RAM, 40 GB HD + 80 GGB HD, CDRW

Windows XP PRO clean install w restore CD

17" CRT monitor w/ speakers
Keyboard and mouse

The town reserves the right not to award an item.