

DRAFT 3: Policing in Shutesbury, February 2021

The resignation of Shutesbury's police chief Dan Fernandes gives us an opportunity while exploring the options of a new chief to lead our department, and also look at the policing operations in town, and if possible, are there ways to save money.

As stated at a public meeting about this subject on Feb 2, 2021, the Selectboard wants to take some time reviewing options for a chief while providing sufficient police coverage and stability in the police department. After this listening session, the Selectboard has decided to hold off on hiring a new chief until such time as the Selectboard has undertaken a review of what the townwide policing needs are in Shutesbury. The police department will be partners in this review. Shutesbury has embraced community policing practices for many years. An initial report will be written up explaining what community policing practices are and how they differ from traditional policing. Other alternatives to traditional policing will be explored as well as what is currently working in Shutesbury and whether alternative arrangements make sense for our community.

To undertake this review, the Selectboard is proposing appointing a seven-person working group composed of town officials, including a police department member, and townspeople who will explore the following:

1. What are the town of Shutesbury's public safety and policing needs? What are the expectations of our residents? To answer this the committee will research how we define "public safety and policing" in a small New England. A listing of issues the community reaches out to the police department for will be compiled. The committee may develop a survey to get community wide input.
2. Are the current functions of the police department working for Shutesbury? The Committee will identify the police functions. Do the current functions meet the needs and expectations of the full community?
3. Our current department structure is police chief, full and part-time officers. Does this current administrative structure –work provide the level of services needed and expected for Shutesbury?
4. Should we explore alternative structures such as a shared chief or contracting for police services? What are the benefits and detriments of a shared chief? What are the benefits and detriments of contracting police services?
5. If an alternative structure(s) are recommended, what are they? What are legal, administrative, or other actions needed for implementation? What is the financial impact of any proposed alternative structure(s)?
6. What have we learned from previous attempts to explore working with other towns using a shared police chief model?
7. If no alternative structures make sense for our community, are there different approaches to public safety and policing that makes sense for the full community? Could any current police services be safely delivered by someone other than police officers? What services? What additional costs are associated with the non-police delivery of police services?

We see this working group taking no more than a few months to complete its work. The Committee will report findings and recommendations back to the Selectboard. The Selectboard would determine how to proceed.