

September 17, 2026 Board of Assessors APPROVED Meeting Minutes

Board Members Present: Chairperson Howard Shpetner and Member: George Arvanitis.

Board Member Absent: J. April Stein

Also present: Administrative Assessor John Whelihan, and Assessors' Clerk Leslie Bracebridge.

Guests: None

1. Chairperson Howard Shpetner opened the meeting at 5:35 PM and identified all people present.

2. There were no public comments.

3. A motion was made and seconded to approve the July 30, 2026 meeting minutes: The "Vice-Chair" role was clarified. No changes were offered. Approved as written: Arvanitis - aye, Shpetner - aye.

4. A motion was made and seconded to approve the following Accountant report:

- **Motor Vehicle Abatements:**

<u>Commit. Year</u>	<u>Report Date</u>	<u>Total Amount Abated</u>
2026	August (2026)	\$ 274.41

5. A motion was made and seconded to approve the FY 2026 Annual Assessors' Department Report, as prepared by the Administrative Assessor: No changes were offered to the report presented at this meeting. Approved as written: Arvanitis - aye, Shpetner - aye.

6. A motion was made and seconded to recommend to the Select Board (if the Select Board requests a recommendation) for the FY27 Means-Tested Circuit-Breaker exemptions to be provided to eligible tax-payers, to be at a rate of 50% of the Circuit Breaker (CB) amounts on their Massachusetts state income tax returns for calendar year 2025:

- Assessors reviewed:
 - a. Rates recommended (by Assessors) and voted by the Select Board in previous years,
 - b. Department of Revenue (DOR) Technical Information Release (TIR) CB annual ceiling amounts,
 - c. Tax increase (\$8) on the average tax bills due to this exemption.
- Assessors favored keeping the rate consistent with previous years at 50%.
- George volunteered to represent the Board of Assessors at the September 29, 2026 Select Board meeting at which the FY27 rate setting will be on the Select Board agenda.
- Howard instructed Leslie to update the chart created in previous years for the Select Board.
- Howard also requested a note be prepared for the Select Board to send to Temenos, to be mailed at the time that the third quarter bills go out, reminding Temenos of their Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) contribution. John offered to compose the Temenos letter.

The motion was approved at the recommendation of 50% of the state income tax Circuit Breaker Credit be applied to Shutesbury's Means-tested Circuit Breaker exemptions: Arvanitis - aye, Shpetner - aye.

7. A motion was made and seconded to approve a request from Kestrel Land Trust, Inc. (Kestrel) to amend the 3(ABC) exemption application for FY 2027 to include Parcel E-2, purchased on July 17, 2026 (BK 8673 PG 302) from the Jean Footit estate. Assessors' review included:

- Lot E-2, containing over 200 acres of forest land has been in Chapter 61 Forestry for decades, and development rights to the 200+ acre eastern segment were sold to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) in 2005 (BK 4889 PG 258).
- The total town tax on both segments of Parcel E-2 for FY26 was less than \$300.
- The Town of Shutesbury May 2026 Annual Town Meeting voted to purchase the western nine-acre +/- segment of the parcel from Kestrel for a future two-acre affordable housing lot and an additional seven-

acres of conservation land abutting the town's South Brook Conservation Land. The sale from Kestrel to the Town of Shutesbury is anticipated to occur this fall.

- Kestrel purchased Parcel E-2 for the larger eastern segment, because it abuts their "Bright Water Bog."
- Parcel E-2 is currently being surveyed as the deed areas and boundary measurements are from deeds created in previous centuries with estimated acreages and "piles of stones", "ledges" and trees marking cornerstones.

Therefore, Assessors favored approving the amendment to the FY 27 3(ABC) application for Kestrel, rather than tax Kestrel for its segment of land in Chapter 61 classification: Arvanitis - aye, Shpetner - aye.

8. Administrative Assessor's Report:

a. Using a preliminary interim year adjustment report prepared with assistance from Mayflower valuations, John reported:

- i. Growth will likely come in between \$70,000 and \$72,000
- ii. Assessments are at 95% of market value
- iii. Land values are going up by 5%; water-front land somewhat more

The numbers are not yet finalized.

b. The DOR did not grant Shutesbury an extension of time to update cyclical inspections of the approximately 400 properties outside of the ten-year re-visit window. This will require outside consultants to get the work done for the FY28 revaluation process.

c. Assessors received the annual request letter from the Finance Committee to prepare a budget request for FY28, including a request that departments identify opportunities for efficiencies and cost savings. The collaborative effort with the Finance Committee is aimed at sustaining essential services while recognizing the financial capacity of Shutesbury tax-payers.

- i. The Finance Committee plans an October budget summit with department representatives.
- ii. Budget requests are due to the Town Administrator by November 13.
- iii. Capital budget requests are due to the Capital Plan Committee by December 15.

d. From the September 8 Department Head meeting:

- i. The October 17 Special Town Meeting will be at 9 AM, not at 10 AM as originally planned.
- ii. The Personnel Board is updating job descriptions. John re-worked Belchertown's Assessors' job descriptions before his retirement. He will review and update Shutesbury's and serve as the Assessors' department liaison to the Personnel Board.

- iii. The FY28 budget was discussed at the Department Head meeting. Assessors' office expenses are going up. Vendors' (Vision for CAMA – Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal, and CAI-Tech for mapping services) costs go up annually. Training to maintain accreditation, mileage expenses, postage, and supplies, are all increasing. A more powerful computer is needed in the Assessors' Department. The forthcoming DOR Financial Review will likely be recommending more paid hours in the Assessing Department.

9. Schedule Next Meeting: Thursday, October 15, 2026 at 5:30 PM.

10. At 6:40 PM a motion was made and seconded to enter into executive session for reason number 7: To comply with or act under the authority of any general law (MGL Ch 59 §60) which keeps applicant information confidential: Exemptions, and to reconvene in open session at the end of Executive Session. At 6:46 PM the Board re-entered open meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 6:55 PM: Arvanitis - aye, Stein - aye, Shpetner - aye.

Respectfully submitted, as approved on October 15, 2026,


Leslie Bracebridge
Assessors' Clerk

List of Documents used at the meeting:

1. September 17, 2026 meeting agenda.
2. July 30, 2026 draft meeting minutes.
3. FY 2026 DRAFT Annual Report
4. DOR TIR 25-7: Annual Update of Real Estate Tax Credit for Certain Persons Age 65 and Older.
5. Draft FY 27 Interim Year Adjustment Report
6. August 14, 2026 Greenfield Recorder article about Greenfield Assessors' office.
7. FY 28 Finance Committee Budget Request Letter