

Town of Shutesbury

Town Buildings Committee Meeting

July 15, 2026

Members Present: Frank McGinn, Jeff Quackenbush, Stephen Dallmus & Anna Cook

Absent: Phil Parker

Meeting called to order at 5:32 pm by Frank McGinn

1: Review minutes of 5/13 & 6/10

2: Air exchanger in Town Hall Basement

3: Brief updates, Elementary School light oil tank & sidewalks plus Knox boxes.

4: Discuss :drafting a policy for building-related requests for the Town Administrator to present to the Select Board.

5: Review and go over priorities of the Shutesbury's Building Assessment spreadsheet

6: Any other unanticipated business.

Key Takeaways

- The underground oil tank at the elementary school continues to have unexplained water intrusion (2 inches found again), prompting discussion about replacing it with an above-ground tank.
- Groundwater testing around the elementary school came back clean, confirming no soil contamination.
- A vote was passed to accept Citizen Security's proposal to upgrade the fire protection system at the highway department building.
- The committee reviewed and updated priority levels across all town buildings using a shared facilities assessment spreadsheet.
- A facilities maintenance work order request system is being developed to streamline maintenance requests through the Town Administrator.
- The air exchanger ("octopus") in the meeting room will be placed on a timer to reduce noise during Select Board meetings.
- Knox Box installation is underway; the current building will receive one as part of Citizen Security's contract.
- The next meeting is scheduled for August 19th via Zoom.

Discussed Topics

Air Exchanger (Octopus) Noise Issue

The committee discussed the air exchanger running 24/7 and causing noise disruption during Select Board meetings. A proposal was made to put it on a timer so it can be shut off during meetings and automatically cycle back on the next morning.

- **Details**
 - Frank McGinn: The fan noise prevents people from hearing during LWAC Select Board meetings; proposed putting the unit on a timer or allowing a manual shutoff button.
 - Stephen Dallmus: Suggested stopping by to show Brennan how to identify and turn off the unit; also noted the filter may be the wrong size and the ductwork has issues including a 180-degree turn right out of the unit, which contributes to noise.

- Jeff Quackenbush: Asked whether the unit serves only the meeting room or adjacent spaces as well.
 - **Conclusion**
 - The air exchanger will be placed on a timer.
 - Stephen Dallmus will visit the building in the morning (when Royal Steam comes to change library filters) to identify the unit and show Brennan how to operate it.
 - Ductwork issues are noted as a contributing factor to noise and will be reviewed by a contractor
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Elementary School Oil Tank – Water Intrusion & Replacement

The committee discussed the ongoing mystery of water appearing inside the sealed underground oil tank. Despite two pressure tests confirming the tank is sealed, 2 inches of water were found again, costing approximately \$6,000 to address. The source of water entry remains unknown.

- **Details**
 - Frank McGinn: The tank passed pressure tests twice; water is not entering from the vent (which has a 5-gallon bucket on top); the source is unknown. Insurance company (Mia) is requesting an update.
 - Jeff Quackenbush: Recapped that the tank was proven not to be leaking; the suspected leak is in the second line connected to a backup pump that has not worked in years.
 - Frank McGinn: The seal on the old backup pump is the likely source; the pump needs to be removed and the line capped.
 - Stephen Dallmus: Noted the \$6,000 water removal cost may recur annually; proposed pursuing an above-ground replacement tank and asked whether a 5,000-gallon tank could be installed.
 - iPad (Phil): Noted the situation is "throwing good money after bad" and that options need to be presented; asked how many gallons 2 inches of water represents in a 10,000-gallon tank.
 - Stephen Dallmus: Raised the question of whether any discussion had occurred about abandoning the underground tank in favor of an above-ground tank.
 - Frank McGinn: Confirmed this is a discussion for the Buildings Committee, Capital Planning, and the School Committee.
 - **Conclusion**
 - Frank McGinn will contact the tank polishing/alarm company (Com Tank) to explore options including alarm system repair and above-ground tank installation.
 - The committee agreed to start the process of exploring an above-ground replacement tank.
 - Removing the underground tank is estimated at approximately \$45,000; this could potentially be rolled into a future parking lot project.
 - The backup pump line needs to be capped; Royal Steam has not responded to requests to perform this work.
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Groundwater Testing Results

The committee received an update on groundwater testing conducted around the elementary school by Titan Bomb (Sam).

- **Details**

- Frank McGinn: Described the testing process — hydraulic drilling to the water table, samples taken every foot, tested for hydrocarbons using air suction. All results came back clean.
- iPad (Phil): Acknowledged this as good news.

- **Conclusion**

- Groundwater around the elementary school is clean; no contamination detected.

Ground Source Heat Pump / HVAC Upgrade Feasibility

The committee discussed the feasibility of installing a ground source heat pump system at the elementary school, referencing a consultation with Michael DiCiera and an expert (Mr. Weil) associated with the Northampton High School ground source project.

- **Details**

- Stephen Dallmus: Mr. Weil's first question was whether the building is air-conditioned in summer; since it largely is not, he indicated ground source is unlikely to work well because heat is not being returned to the ground to recharge it.
- Stephen Dallmus: Regardless of whether ground source or air-to-air heat pumps are chosen, a fossil fuel backup will always be required.
- Frank McGinn: Mentioned a potential large grant decision expected soon; Speaker 4 noted it would not be decided this week.
- Stephen Dallmus: Recommended pursuing the above-ground tank now, as any HVAC upgrade will take considerable time.

- **Conclusion**

- Ground source heat pump is considered unlikely for this building due to lack of summer cooling load.
- The committee agreed to pursue the above-ground tank as a near-term priority regardless of future HVAC decisions.

Elementary School Sidewalks / Concrete Walks

The School Committee raised concerns about broken sidewalks, particularly near the kitchen entrance used by preschool and young children, and near handicap ramps.

- **Details**

- Frank McGinn: An original bid came in well above the \$24,000 allotted; Melissa May Peace O'Neill suggested the highway department could do the work for under \$24,000 by digging and prepping the area.
- Frank McGinn: If ground source or other major work is planned, asphalt would be a cheaper, temporary solution that is easy to remove later.
- Anna: Asked whether ADA compliance (variance tolerances, nosings) was a concern; Frank McGinn noted there is at least one ADA grant and that the small brick pavers are also an issue.

- **Conclusion**

- Asphalt is the preferred near-term solution for the sidewalk areas.
- Priority level for concrete walks (item 3.1) was raised to high given the School Committee's concerns.
- The highway department is expected to perform the work.

Facilities Maintenance Work Order Request System

The committee discussed implementing a formal maintenance request system to ensure all building maintenance requests flow through the Town Administrator and the Buildings Committee.

- **Details**

- Frank McGinn: Haley requested the committee develop a form so all maintenance requests — including emergencies — are tracked and routed properly.
- iPad (Phil): Described a homegrown electronic work order system from a previous employer; emphasized the importance of a feedback loop so requesters know the status of their submissions.
- Jeff Quackenbush: Suggested an electronic system would be faster and more efficient than a manual one.
- Frank McGinn: Noted some people may prefer a manual option; the form will likely flow through the Town Administrator and could be posted on the town website.

- **Conclusion**

- A facilities maintenance work order request form will be developed, likely in both manual and electronic formats.
- The form will route through the Town Administrator (Haley/Brennan).
- A feedback mechanism is considered essential to avoid requests stalling without acknowledgment.

Knox Box Installation

The committee discussed the status of Knox Box installations across town buildings.

- **Details**

- Frank McGinn: Lenny (Fire Chief) had delayed ordering Knox Boxes, waiting for the new budget year; Frank McGinn clarified that Knox Boxes fall under the Buildings Committee budget.
- Frank McGinn: Citizen Security is installing a Knox Box on the current building as part of their contract — at no additional cost.
- Frank McGinn: Ordering Knox Boxes online requires a town credit card; Frank McGinn does not yet have one and will coordinate with Haley.
- Jeff Quackenbush: Noted Lenny should be consulted on placement (e.g., where he wants the main panel).

- **Conclusion**

- Knox Box for the current building will be installed by Citizen Security as part of their contract.
- Remaining Knox Box orders will be coordinated with Haley and Lenny.

Building Assessment Spreadsheet Review – Town Hall

The committee reviewed and updated priority levels for Town Hall items on the shared assessment spreadsheet.

- **Details**

- Item 1.4 (Clogged underground leader/drain by back door): No complaints about water intrusion; downgraded to priority low, monitor.
- Item 1.5 (Chimney brick/flue): Stephen Dallmus theorized that the newer, more efficient boiler produces less exhaust, causing condensation in an oversized flue — likely the source of past water leaks in the former town administrator's office. No complaints this past winter. Downgraded to priority low; a chimney sweep with fiber optic camera inspection recommended if issues recur.
- Item 2.1 (Front cladding rot): Frank McGinn observed possible rot on the cladding to the right of the front door. Keep the priority high.
- Item 2.2 / Porches: Gutters were installed; date noted as 5/2026. Kept at priority high due to rot.
- Items 3.7 / 3.8 (Foundation grading): Downgraded to monitor; regrading along retaining walls would require removing everything and is not feasible.
- Boiler (item related): Boiler does not modulate based on outside temperature as it should. Stephen Dallmus educated Brennan on turning it off in summer. Western Mass Heating recommended for service.
- Item 6.2 (Ductwork noise): Upgraded from priority low to priority high; Western Mass Heating to be asked for a quote to properly redo the ductwork, which may require relocating the unit.
- Item 8.1 (Seepage/leak in utility room): Kept at priority high; to be included on plumber's punch list.
- Electrical/Lighting: Not all lighting has been converted to LED. An energy group proposal estimated ~\$18,000 total with a ~\$1,200 rebate; lighting was noted as having a reasonable payback period. Keep the priority high.
- Smoke detectors: Wireless monitored system installed throughout building; updated to monitor status.
- Acoustic panels: Panels are not yet installed; large meetings continue to have hearing difficulties. Handheld microphones suggested as an interim solution.

- **Conclusion**

- Multiple priority levels updated across Town Hall items.
- Western Mass Heating to be engaged for boiler, ductwork, and HVAC punch list items.
- Lighting upgrade to remain priority high pending further discussion with Haley.

Building Assessment Spreadsheet Review – Elementary School

The committee reviewed assessment items specific to the elementary school.

- **Details**

- Items 4.3 and 4.9 (steel monitoring system): Will be addressed together.
- Item 3.1 (Concrete walks): Raised to priority high based on School Committee concerns.

- Wood trusses / firewall: The issue is with the sheetrock firewall, not the trusses themselves; noted as an easy fix.
- Gutters and downspouts: Item 1.5 raised to priority high as it must be addressed before gutter work can proceed. Anna noted she spoke with the new highway superintendent (Dave) who confirmed the damage was likely caused by a bucket truck — consistent with the committee's theory.
- TV antenna: Should be removed before a lightning strike; kept on list.
- **Conclusion**
 - Concrete walks raised to priority high.

Building Assessment Spreadsheet Review – Highway Department

The committee reviewed assessment items for the highway department building.

- **Details**
 - Salt shed doors (item 2.5): Raised to priority high.
 - Items 2.1 and 2.2 (walls): Downgraded to priority low.
 - Smoke/fire alarm system: A vote was held to accept Citizen Security's proposal to upgrade the fire protection system (estimated \$2,000–\$3,000).
 - Item 9.3: Updated to monitor; code issues corrected.
- **Conclusion**
 - Motion passed to accept Citizen Security's fire protection upgrade proposal for the highway department.
 - Propane tank relocation decision deferred to fire chief Lenny.
 - Mini split repair to be included on HVAC contractor punch list.

Gutter prerequisite work (item 1.5) raised to priority high.

TV antenna removal to remain on the list.

Building Assessment Spreadsheet Review – Fire Department

The committee briefly reviewed fire department building items.

- **Details**
 - Item 13.4 and related items: Reviewed; no major changes noted in the transcript.
 - Garage door openers: Kept at priority high.
- **Conclusion**
 - Items carried forward; focus remains on Town Hall and highway department as primary buildings.
 - Garage door openers (Brush 1 and Brush 2 bays): Kept at priority high.
 - Propane tank / fencing: Tank is approximately 8 feet from the building (code requires 10 feet) and may also be too close to the generator. Options include moving the tank 10 feet away or relocating it to the other side of the parking lot with the highway department digging a new line trench. Awaiting a decision from the fire chief (Lenny).
 - Mini splits: One unit not working; temperature differential was high during inspection. Kept at priority high; to be included on HVAC contractor punch list.

- Fan coil unit (item related): Dust and dirt buildup on fan coil can cause sweating and mold growth in summer; to be addressed by HVAC contractors.

Building Assessment Spreadsheet Review – Old Town Hall

The committee discussed the condition and future of the Old Town Hall building.

- **Details**

- Frank McGinn: Suggested the Historical Commission should apply for CPC (Community Preservation Committee) grants to address exterior issues, particularly the roof.
- Stephen Dallmus: Recommended starting by having the Historic Commission develop a grant request, potentially hiring someone to prepare it.
- Item 3.7: Highway department regraded around the building; updated to monitor. The depression that was a likely water source has been addressed.
- Electrical was upgraded previously.

- **Conclusion**

- Historic Commission to be engaged about CPC grant applications for Old Town Hall exterior work.
- Item 3.7 updated to monitor following highway department regrading.

Building Assessment Spreadsheet Review – Spare Building, Pump House, Elliot Park, Fiber Optic Building

The committee briefly reviewed the remaining buildings.

- **Details**

- Spare Building: Committee agreed to leave all items as-is pending a decision on future reuse; items 2.1 and 2.2 noted as priority high due to rot and decay in wood cladding and trim.
- Pump House: Temporary leak repair (fabric) in place; a permanent fix is required within a regulatory timeframe. The Dam Committee will conduct an environmental study and develop a permanent solution. All items left as-is.
- Elliot Park (changing room/powerhouse): Catherine Hilton received town meeting funding; committee agreed to leave items as-is until funds are formally requested, similar to Old Town Hall approach.
- Fiber Optic Building: One of two exterior mini split units is not working; the building owner (Graham) refuses to allow Jamrog back to repair it. The single working unit is currently sufficient for cooling. Raised to priority high; to be included on future HVAC contractor punch list.

- **Conclusion**

- Spare building items 2.1 and 2.2 kept at priority high.
 - Pump house and Elliot Park items deferred pending future decisions.
 - Fiber optic building mini split repair added to HVAC punch list at priority high.
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Finance Committee Appointment

Frank announced their appointment to the Finance Committee and explained the rationale.

- **Details**

- Frank McGinn: Informed Nettie that a Buildings Committee member should serve on the Finance Committee to advocate for building-related budget needs; provided all committee members' names. Frank McGinn was subsequently appointed.
- Frank McGinn: Cited a background in financial management, general ledger systems, and navigating recessions as relevant experience.

- **Conclusion**

- Frank McGinn is now serving on the Finance Committee as a liaison for buildings-related budget advocacy.

Next Meeting Date

The committee discussed scheduling the next meeting.

- **Details**

- Frank McGinn: Proposed August 12th or 19th.
- Anna: Unavailable August 12th; available August 19th.
- iPad (Phil) and Speaker 4: Confirmed August 19th works.

- **Conclusion**

- The next meeting is scheduled for August 19th via Zoom.

Action Items

- **Frank McGinn**

- Place the air exchanger (octopus) on a timer; coordinate with Brennan on manual shutoff capability.
- Contact Com Tank (tank polishing/alarm company) to explore oil tank alarm system repair and above-ground replacement tank options, including installation costs.
- Contact Royal Steam to follow up on removing the old backup pump and sealing/capping the second oil line at the elementary school.
- Coordinate with Haley on the Knox Box purchase (requires town credit card).
- Contact Western Mass Heating to schedule a walkthrough of Town Hall and highway department for HVAC, boiler, and ductwork assessment and quotes.
- Replace the air exchanger filter at Town Hall this week.
- Follow up with Haley regarding the LED lighting upgrade process and next steps.
- Inform Haley of the Citizen Security fire protection upgrade vote so the contract can be processed.
- Ask the propane gas company about moving the tank at the highway department to meet the 10-foot code requirement from both the building and the generator.
- Consult with Lenny (Fire Chief) regarding smoke detector placement at the Old Town Hall vault/pump house and propane tank relocation decision at the highway department.
- Engage the Historic Commission about applying for CPC grants for Old Town Hall exterior work.

- Update the shared building assessment spreadsheet with all priority changes discussed in this meeting.
- Coordinate with Haley and Brennan on developing the facilities maintenance work order request form (electronic and/or manual).
- Look into oil tank removal/replacement contractors (e.g., Roberts in Springfield, Orange Oil) for the elementary school underground tank.
- **Stephen Dallmus**
 - Visit Town Hall the morning Royal Steam comes to the library to identify the air exchanger unit and show Brennan how to operate it.
 - Conduct a cursory exterior reinspection of Town Hall and other buildings to update the assessment spreadsheet.
 - Follow up on the corrugated pipe leak at the highway department (item noted as still dripping into the salt area).
- **Frank McGinn / Haley**
 - Finalize and publish the facilities maintenance work order request form on the town website.
 - Confirm whether the Knox Box order for remaining buildings can be processed with a town credit card.
- **Anna**
 - Note next meeting: August 19th via Zoom.

Stephen Dallmus makes a motion to end the meeting

Anna Cook seconds

Roll call to vote to end the meeting Yeas: Frank McGinn, Phil Parker, Anna Cook, Stephen Dallmus & Jeff Quackenbush

Meeting adjourned at 6:40pm