

Shutesbury Finance Committee
Tuesday, August 11, 2020, Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

Members Present: Robert Groves, Jim Hemingway, Ajay Khashu, Jim Walton, Susie Mosher, Melody Chartier, George Arvanitis

Members Absent: None

Non-Members present: Becky Torres, Leslie Luchonok, Rita Farrell, Mike Vinskey, Unknown

- 1) Minutes from July 14, 2020 meeting of Finance Committee approved unanimously (5-0)
- 2) Minutes from July 21, 2020 meeting of Finance Committee discussed. Some requests for clarification requested by Town Administrator and committee member SM. Bob Groves will review recording of the meeting and make any necessary changes. Motion to approve minutes will be revisited at next meeting.
- 3) School opening update:
 - Shutesbury Elementary School will open to students on September 16th. Instruction will be conducted via remote learning until November 11th at the earliest. If School Committee determines that conditions are safe, the school will then transition to a hybrid model.
 - Update on CARES Act education spending. \$147,000 of allocated CARES money is unspent. To date, a total of \$9,000 has been spent. Town Administrator anticipates there will be another round of CARES Act funding.
 - Reopening plan document appended to these minutes.
- 4) State Aid Update
 - Shutesbury had originally projected a 30% cut in Chapter 70 Education and Unrestricted State Aid. The State has announced that local towns will be held harmless and those sources will be level-funded for FY 2021. (See appended announcement for more information).
 - In the budget approved at Town Meeting, a total of \$256,000 of free cash had been allocated to make up the difference for this anticipated revenue loss. Given that that the State has subsequently announced there will be no cut, those funds can be returned to free cash.
 - The Selectboard has scheduled a special town meeting for September 5th. The purpose of this meeting will be to conduct a vote allowing the town to return \$256,000 in funds allocated at town meeting back to the town's free cash account. A warrant article is being drafted.
 - FinCom has the responsibility to formally vote on whether or not to recommend passage of the warrant article. A FinCom meeting has been scheduled for August 18th to review the warrant article language and vote on whether the committee recommends passage.
- 5) Tax Collection Update

- Ellen McKay reports 93% of property taxes have been paid. This represents a 2% shortfall for FY20.
- Over 50% of town's homeowners have their real estate taxes paid through escrow. Those payments have not been affected by the current economic recession.

6) Committee Assignments for FY21

- School Committee: SM volunteers
- Capital Planning: AK, BG will continue to serve
- Personnel: MC will take over for JW
- Broadband: JH will continue to serve
- Municipal Vulnerability Plan Committee (potential new committee): GA volunteers

7) Expense Report Review

- AK raises the question of whether there are any anticipated school transportation savings for the upcoming school year, given that there will be a 2 month delay in in-person schooling. Becky will request additional info from Bruce Turner and/or Doug Slaughter.

8) Future Meetings

- Currently scheduled meetings include August 18 and September 8.
- Will discuss recommendations for improving budget review process at September meeting. Committee members should review FINCOM Municipal Finance Guidelines in advance of the 9/8 meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:36PM.



Shutesbury Elementary School

23 West Pelham Road, Shutesbury, MA 01072 Phone: (413) 259-1212 Fax: (413) 259-1531
Jacqueline Mendonsa, Principal E-mail: mendonsaj@shutesburyschool.org

August 9, 2020

Dear SES Families,

We hope this email finds you all healthy and that you have been able to enjoy the outdoors this summer!

On August 5th, the Shutesbury School Committee approved a plan for our fall return to school. Shutesbury Elementary School students will begin school on Wednesday, September 16th, 2020. They will participate in 8 weeks of remote learning. The School Committee will meet before the week of November 9th, 2020, and determine if it is safe for students to return to school in a hybrid option. If the School Committee determines it is not safe to return to in-person learning, remote learning will continue. However, if it is determined by the Committee that it is safe, students would return to school in an alternating small cohort model. This would not happen before November 11th. If students are returning to school at that point, they would remain in "pods" of no more than 10 students with a physical distance of six (6) feet. Masks will be required for all students. Specifics about the alternating cohorts model can be found within the document located [HERE](#).

Now that we have a sense of what our Fall model will look like, we can finally spend the required time really training and planning for that time. The Leadership Team is in the initial stages of collaborating on a letter and packet of information to families for what they can expect for the next year. Remote learning will be completely different than in the spring. All students will be provided a device from school. Students will attend virtual face-to-face classes with the teacher as well as work in workbooks (provided to you) , projects and notebooks. Students will have specials and get an opportunity to connect daily as a classroom community. The remote learning plan will be highly organized, predictable and accessible. Families and students will receive training on devices and learning platforms. Staff will be available to assist students and families with questions and concerns, extra help and tutoring.

Preschool will be limited to 4 year olds this school year. They will also be remote for the first 8 weeks. If a hybrid plan is then in place they will have a half day program that will dismiss before lunch. More information around preschool will be available soon.

We are fully aware that this is hard and complicated for everyone. These decisions were not easy and were truly made putting the health and safety of the students and staff at SES first. We understand that this is a hardship for some families and that there are still many concerns and unanswered questions. We promise to communicate and offer more Town Hall sessions in the weeks to come to ensure a stellar remote experience in the first 8 weeks.

More communication will follow soon.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Culkeen, Superintendent

Jackie Mendonsa, Principal

Fwd: Rita, State Leaders Announce Level Funding For Major Local Aid Accounts

1 message

Shutesbury Town Administrator <townadmin@shutesbury.org>

Thu, Jul 30, 2020 at 5:38 PM

To: Shutesbury <selectboard@shutesbury.org>, Ajay Khashu <ajay@youthstudiesinc.com>, "Arvanitis, George" <m.g.arvans@gmail.com>, Bob Groves <rlgroves1@gmail.com>, James Walton <jpwalton1211@gmail.com>, Jim Hemingway <jchaudio@usermail.com>, Melody Chartier <melodychartier@gmail.com>, Susie Mosher <sndmoes@verizon.net>

FYI-
State level funds c. 70 aid and UGGA for fy21.

Becky
Becky Torres
Shutesbury Town Administrator
413-259-1214

Please be advised that the Secretary of the Commonwealth has determined that all email messages and attached content sent from and to this email address are public records unless qualified as an exemption under the Massachusetts Public Records Law (MGL c.4 § 7(26))

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Massachusetts Municipal Association** <alerts@mma.org>

Date: Thu, Jul 30, 2020 at 5:22 PM

Subject: Rita, State Leaders Announce Level Funding For Major Local Aid Accounts

To: <selectboard@shutesbury.org>

**STATE LEADERS ANNOUNCE LEVEL FUNDING FOR MAJOR LOCAL AID
ACCOUNTS**

**FY21 UGGA TO BE LEVEL FUNDED AT FY20 AMOUNTS
FY21 CHAPTER 70 SCHOOL AID AT LEAST LEVEL FUNDED FOR ALL**

July 30, 2020

After months of uncertainty regarding the size of the state's fiscal crisis, state leaders today announced a framework for protecting the two main sources of local aid in the state's fiscal 2021 state budget. According to a statement issued by A&F Secretary Michael Heffernan, the Governor and Legislature are committing to no less than level funding of Unrestricted General Government Aid and Chapter 70 education aid as the baseline amount for fiscal 2021 funding for each community.

Because of the difficulty in projecting tax collections, unanswered questions about whether the federal government will provide fiscal relief, and the unknown impact that the coronavirus will have this fall, the Legislature has enacted a bill to continue with a temporary budget through October 31. The state had previously adopted a one-twelfth budget through July, and has added a 3-month extension. This will give lawmakers and the Administration more time to gather information and shape their budget plans.

Knowing that local officials need firm information on local aid and school funding in order to finalize their municipal budgets, the state's top leaders have joined together to provide guidance to cities and towns, and the news is good for communities.

In an alert issued via the Division of Local Services, the Baker-Polito Administration announced that House and Senate leaders and the Governor would be protecting the two major local aid accounts, UGGA and Chapter 70, from cuts as they set the state's fiscal 2021 budget later this fall.

They announced that the \$1.13 billion Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) program will be level funded at fiscal 2020 amounts for all communities, and that all cities and towns will receive at least level funding of their Chapter 70 education aid. Some school districts will receive school aid increases due to inflation and enrollment under the current formula. In total, Chapter 70 school aid will increase by \$107 million, bringing that account up to \$5.28 billion.

[Click here to download the topline local aid UGGA and Chapter 70 numbers for each community and school district, as released by DLS this afternoon.](#)

Local officials with questions about the numbers can email DLS at databank@state.ma.us.

The Governor-House-Senate framework closely matches the MMA's request to state leaders, which the association delivered earlier this week. MMA has asked state leaders to protect local aid from cuts by preserving aid at fiscal 2020 levels at a minimum.

[Please click here to read MMA's July 27 letter to state leaders.](#)

MMA immediately applauded the local aid framework, issuing the following statement:

“This is very welcome news for cities and towns in every corner of Massachusetts. With the state facing a budget shortfall of between \$6 billion to \$8 billion due to the COVID-19 recession, local leaders have been very concerned about the potential impact on local aid. Today, the Governor, House and Senate have demonstrated that the state-local relationship is a true partnership.

“By protecting local aid during this crisis, the state will maintain vital financial support for cities and towns. With this key financial guidance, communities can finalize their fiscal 2021 budgets, allowing them to continue their work fighting the coronavirus pandemic and delivering the essential quality-of-life services that drive our economy. This framework will benefit every resident and business in the Commonwealth, and we are deeply grateful to Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito, Speaker DeLeo, President Spilka, House and Senate Budget Chairs Michlewitz and Rodrigues, and their colleagues in the Legislature.”



Massachusetts Municipal Association

1 Winthrop Square

Boston, MA 02110

(617) 426-7272 | [Email Us](#) | [View our website](#)

[Unsubscribe](#) from MMA Emails

