

**Shutesbury Finance Committee**  
**Tuesday, February 9, 2021, Virtual (Zoom) Meeting**

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

Members Absent: None

Non-Members present: Becky Torres, Leslie Luchonok, Mike Vinskey, Kathy

7:00 PM Finance Committee Call to Order

**1) Motion to approve 1/26/21 meeting minutes as amended passes unanimously.**

2) Four Town Meeting Debrief

- Leslie Luchonok shares that he was impressed with the strong statement of support for the statutory method made by several of the Shutesbury representatives at the meeting.
- GA shares that he was surprised at how much discussion there was about the general size of the ARPS budget.
- SM shares that Town Councilors are now involved in the process, and they are new to the topic of Regional District Assessment. Turnover in the leadership of committees contributes to a lack of understanding of the statutory method and history of negotiations around the assessment method process.
- According to news reports in the Amherst Bulletin, Amherst revenues remain strong.
- AK recommends that we prepare a 1-page brief explaining the history and arguments that justified the Education Reform Act's passage.
- BG states Andy Steinberg's argument that the Region may need to be dissolved is not practical.
- BT states that she will reach out to Mike Morris to provide some feedback on Saturday's meeting and propose that the District sponsor a presentation by DESE on education reform and the Statutory Method.
- BT reads an email she received from Andy Steinberg, Town Councilor from Amherst (see attached).
- SM suggests that we form a subcommittee to draft a historical document and a plan for communicating this information to the other towns.
- BG says that our team did a very good job of educating the meeting attendees on issues related to the Statutory Method.
- JW asks if the Superintendent can play a role in educating towns on issues related to the Statutory method.
- SM asks when the Town Council will vote on their budget.
- SM suggests that we need to get clarity on what the consequences/process would be if Shutesbury votes down the assessment method at Annual Town Meeting.
- SM makes a motion to create a subcommittee to draft a historical document that discusses issues related to the Statutory Method.
- **Motion to create a subcommittee passes unanimously.**

3) Budget Review – Town Accountant (Gail Weiss)

- New item: Certification fee of \$400 to be split between Pelham and Shutesbury. This fee used to be covered by the Town of Orange where Gail Weiss is retiring from.

- Accounting Software fee increases approx. 7% every year.
  - Toner = \$150
- 4) Budget Review – Collector (Ellen McKay)
- Current year budget = \$22,830. Approximately 8% increase over FY21.
  - Computer maintenance fee has increased by approximately \$500. Current budget amount is \$9,877 (this amount is based on FY21 expenses). Vender is Point Software based out of Longmeadow.
  - Expenses associated with tax takings has increased:
    - i) Filings of tax takings: Increase in registration fees. Amount is \$1,000.
    - ii) Newspaper legal notice for tax takings = \$1,000.
  - There has been an increase in tax takings this year. Not sure what this is due to. Ellen McKay does not think it is COVID-related because these takings came from individuals who have been delinquent for a long time (predating COVID). JH asks if the town ever ends up breaking even on these tax takings. Ellen clarifies that these fees will eventually be redeemed when the property is resolved or sold.
  - SM asks if there has been any update on discussions about bringing on an Assistant Collector. Ellen responds that there is no plan in place until after COVID and the Town Hall reopens.
  - JW asks what the trend in delinquency rate has been since COVID. Ellen responds that last year's delinquency rate was similar to what it was in years past. It is too early to know what it will be for this current year.
  - There will be some savings in the current year due to the fact that there has been no conference travel due to COVID.
- 5) Other Committee Updates
- Capital Planning Update
    - i) Committee met on 2/8. Voted to recommend the annual \$25k allocation for the new library fund. Committee voted against recommending purchase of a new Police Cruiser.
    - ii) Bid documents are going out soon for the Culvert project.
    - iii) We anticipate receiving bids this week for the school roof project.
  - Personnel Committee
    - i) Working on updated policies and procedures
    - ii) Personnel board is meeting this week to review police chief posting.
    - iii) GA is stepping in to fill a vacancy on the committee. Will serve as an At Large member through the end of the year.
  - Select Board is planning to create a citizen's committee to explore best policing models for Shutesbury.
- 6) Future meetings: 2/16 (All Boards Meeting), 2/23 (w/ Broadband), 3/2 (Personnel), 3/9

Meeting adjourned at 9:33 PM

Attachment: Public Comments sent to FinCom mailbox

**From:** <[ruralplanningassociates@crocker.com](mailto:ruralplanningassociates@crocker.com)>

**Subject: RE: Thank you, one and all, for standing up and speaking out at this morning's four town meeting**

**Date:** February 6, 2021 at 2:04:30 PM EST

**To:** " 'Leslie Luchonok'" <[leslieluchonok@gmail.com](mailto:leslieluchonok@gmail.com)>, <[selectboard@shutesbury.org](mailto:selectboard@shutesbury.org)>, " 'Finance Committee'" <[fincom@shutesbury.org](mailto:fincom@shutesbury.org)>, <[thomaspaquinl@shutesburyschool.org](mailto:thomaspaquinl@shutesburyschool.org)>, "'Shutesbury Town Administrator'" <[townadmin@shutesbury.org](mailto:townadmin@shutesbury.org)>

Dear Shutesbury town officials:

I was going to write something, but Leslie said it best. Thanks for staying the course toward 100% Statutory.

Best regards,

Jeff Lacy

**From:** Leslie Luchonok <[leslieluchonok@gmail.com](mailto:leslieluchonok@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Saturday, February 6, 2021 12:20 PM

**To:** [selectboard@shutesbury.org](mailto:selectboard@shutesbury.org); Finance Committee <[fincom@shutesbury.org](mailto:fincom@shutesbury.org)>; [thomaspaquinl@shutesburyschool.org](mailto:thomaspaquinl@shutesburyschool.org); Shutesbury Town Administrator <[townadmin@shutesbury.org](mailto:townadmin@shutesbury.org)>

**Subject:** Thank you, one and all, for standing up and speaking out at this morning's four town meeting

Hello All,

I could almost feel the drum roll when it was Jim's turn to report on Shutesbury's position, after hearing the other three towns' positions.

Jim, Bob, George, Melody, Becky - thank you for speaking out!

Becky, you were especially brilliant!

And thank you all for developing our consensus position during the breakout session that I think enabled our folks to speak out so well.

With respect,

Leslie

Leslie Luchonok  
61 West Pelham Road

Attachment: Email from Amherst Town Councilor, Andy Steinberg

From: **Steinberg, Andrew** <[SteinbergA@amherstma.gov](mailto:SteinbergA@amherstma.gov)>

Date: Sat, February 6, 2021 at 11:15 AM

Subject: Four Town Meeting

To: Becky Torres ([townadmin@shutesbury.org](mailto:townadmin@shutesbury.org)) <[townadmin@shutesbury.org](mailto:townadmin@shutesbury.org)>

Hi Becky,

I want to quickly respond to your final comment at the Four Town Meeting. Some of the reason why Amherst and Leverett reminded people that the Regional Agreement was what we agreed to when we formed the District was a reaction to the Shutesbury demand that the end must be the statutory method. These are probably two methods that are extremes when what is needed is a healthy four town dialogue about a method that works best for all towns together. We reached agreement in recent years by finding a midpoint and that may be the reasonable solution going forward.

Give me a call sometime because it would be good to have this as a real conversation and not an email exchange.

Andy



Attachment: Town Collector Proposed Budget

**SHUTESBURY FINANCE COMMITTEE  
FY-2022 BUDGET REQUEST FORM**

<b>Department :</b> <u>Town Collector</u> <b>Contact Person:</b> <u>Ellen McKay</u> <b>Contact Phone #:</b> <u>259-1615</u>
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<b><u>FY-2022 Budget Request:</u></b>		
<b>A. Operating Categories:</b>	<b>Requested Amt:</b>	<b>Explanation:</b>
Banking Fees	\$ 4,320.00	Charges for lockbox and banking services (1)
Computer Maintenance	9,877.00	Fee for Collector's specialized software (2)
Paper Stock	1,700.00	Paper stock for tax bills and enclosure envelopes (3)
Office Supplies	900.00	Office Supplies (4)
Postage	4,300.00	Postage and envelopes for mailings (5)
Travel	500.00	Registrations for meetings and mileage
Association Memberships	60.00	Membership in MCTA and Hampshire/Franklin C/T Association
Filings of tax takings	1,000.00	Registry of Deeds filings of tax liens (6)
Newspaper legal notice for tax takings	1,000.00	Must have legal notice published in local newspaper (7)
Binding Commitment Books	1,000.00	Required by MGL
<b>Total Operating:</b>		
<b>\$ 24,657.00</b>		
(1) Based on actual FY 2020 expenditures (2) Based on actual FY2021 expenditures ACTUAL AMOUNT UNKNOWN UNTIL AFTER 1/1/21 (3) Based on actual FY 2020 expenditures (4) Based on actual FY 2020 expenditures (5) Based on actual FY 2020 expenditures (6) Based on actual FY 2021 expenditures (7) Based on actual FY 2021 expenditures		
<b>CAPITAL NEEDS:</b>		