

Shutesbury Finance Committee
Tuesday, September 17, 2024 Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

Members Present: Ajay Khashu - chair, April Stein, Susie Mosher, Jim Hemingway, Kathy Salvador and George Arvanitis Absent: Bob Groves Attending: Town Administrator Becky Torres

Meeting called to order at 6:32 p.m.

- I. Approved the minutes of the 9/5/24 meeting, as amended
- II. Reviewed, edited and agreed to publish a Finance Committee article in the town newsletter
- III. FY26 Budget request letter follow-up:
 - A. Agreed to ask that the Fire Chief to include the call wage and training wage expense lines in the Fire Department's budget request
 - B. Modified the budget request form to specify that it should be returned to the Town Administrator
- IV. Prepared for the September 28 (9:00 a.m.) Amherst Pelham Regional School Four Town Meeting
 - A. The Superintendent has reported that four separate budget scenarios will be presented, highlighting the amount of the deficit for each
 - B. The committee agreed not to provide feedback on the scenarios presented at this meeting, but we will address our expectation to use only the Modified Statutory assessment method if any scenarios differ from this method
 - C. The points we will make regarding using any other assessment method are as follows:
 - i. Commonwealth created the statutory method as the fairest, most equitable method of allocating assessments for member towns
 - ii. This method has several advantages:
 1. It achieves a reasonable balance of per-pupil and wealth-based factors
 2. It is more stable than other models because it is built on 5-year rolling averages
 3. Over 70 percent of Mass regional districts utilize the statutory method
 4. Our region arrived at this method over years of collaborative work and multiple working groups dating back to 2013
- V. Reviewed the latest FY25 expense report dated 9/17/2024
 - A. Emergency Phone over spent by \$80.71 but there will be no other charges
 - B. Report shows that the balance for Fire Station Mitigation is overspent, but the carryforward balance from FY24 has not been added to the FY25 budget yet, so this is not overspent
 - C. Gravel Road Upgrades – Noted the need to discuss this line with the Highway Superintendent regarding long range planning for road maintenance

- D. Veterans Benefits is 77% spent and more expenses are expected. Someone living in town became eligible for veteran benefits causing an increase from prior years. The town receives a 75% reimbursement, but it is paid after the fiscal year is closed
- E. Contributory Retirement payments are all made for the year, so it appears that the unspent balance will be \$15,979, at year end
- F. Discussed the OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) fund: it's purpose and how it will be used

VI. Other Business

- A. Two members will stop by town hall to sign Finance Reserve fund Transfers and a letter to the state regarding an open meeting violation
- B. Brief discussion regarding state Chapter 70 funding.
 - a. Rural aid is not included in the municipal revenue growth factor for the Chap 70 minimum contribution.
 - b. The school budgets have always been more than the required minimum contribution, but as our growth factor has increased, our required contribution is getting closer to our budget amounts. We need to be aware of the required amount for future budgets
- C. There are candidates for the Assistant Administrative Secretary and the Land Use Clerk. Both will be interviewed in the next week

Our next meeting is October 1, 6:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.