

Shutesbury Finance Committee  
Tuesday, November 12, 2024 Virtual (Zoom) Meeting

Members Present: Ajay Khashu - chair, Bob Groves, April Stein, Susie Mosher, Jim Hemingway, Kathy Salvador and George Arvanitis Absent: None Attending: Highway Superintendent David Grenier, Interim Town Administrator Gabe Voelker and the Selectboard: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil, Eric Stocker & Rita Farrell, Tom Siefert, Mike Vinskey and Matteo Pangallo

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

- I. Approved the minutes of the 10/29/24 meeting, as amended
- II. Amherst Regional Public Schools update
  - A. The next four town meeting has not been scheduled
  - B. Ajay will forward our questions (see October 29 minutes) to the regional superintendent and request a meet with her and Ajay and Susie
  - C. Distributed a letter from the Amherst Regional School District to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, requesting the state to increase state aid to the Regional School by changing the funding formula for school choice tuition and charter school tuition.
- III. Highway Department budget review
  - A. Requesting an increase of \$5,250 (3.2%) from FY25
  - B. Level funding for snow removal, it was under the FY24 budget
  - C. Uniform was under budget in FY24, so decreased request by \$250. We now have a full crew so should be under budget in FY25
  - D. David noted that he's new to the position so he's gaining experience on costs, so isn't ready to determine the proper amount of funding needed for the uniform line
  - E. There is some concern about the maintenance line, especially for the grader. The department is using the newest truck for most work to keep wear and tear down on others
  - F. David met with the state Department of Transportation who mentioned that they may allow us to use Chapter 90 funds to lease a new grader. Once these types of leases are complete, we will own it. Graders are expensive because most towns don't use them and the demand for them is low. Shutesbury needs a grader because of the many dirt roads
  - G. Gravel road maintenance of \$28,000 may not be enough and David will make an additional \$12,000 request from capital planning. The Finance Committee would like more details about how the additional \$12,000 appropriated for FY25 was used. David is looking to use more crush gravel to replace hard packed stone because it works better, but may need a roller to compact it properly
  - H. Request for an increase of \$5,000 to the Road Marking line for adding white lines on the edges of some roads that currently don't have them for improved safety. It's helpful for drivers and for the highway department when plowing
  - I. Request a \$500 increase for Catch Basin Cleaning based on FY25 activity. Not all catch basins were cleaned in FY25

- IV. Special town meeting update and final warrant review
  - A. STM is scheduled for December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6:00 at the Shutesbury Elementary School
  - B. Reviewed article 5: request to increase of \$2,541 to the Librarian Assistant\Aides line in the FY25 budget
    - i. The amount entered in the operating budget for library assistant\ aides was incorrect due to a transcription error and did not reflect the increased hours and cost-of-living increase for FY25, \$1,117
    - ii. Not enough time in the line to cover Library Director vacation and sick time, \$1,424
    - iii. Discussed the need for increased hours for these employees that was presented during the FY25 budgeting process
    - iv. Voted to recommend this article, 5-2
  - C. Reviewed article 6: to pay FY24 outstanding bills from Free Cash
    - i. Berkshire Springs water bill, six months of unpaid bills totaling \$756
    - ii. Fire testing on the library by Encor Fire Protection in May for \$120
    - iii. Voted to recommend this article, 7-0
  - D. Free cash has been certified. Ajay asked that all funding articles in the warrant be funded by free cash. This will be specified in the motions on town floor
  - E. The Selectboard approved the December 3, 2024 special town meeting warrant
- V. The FY25 Tax Rate has been completed and approved
  - A. The rate decreased to \$15.80, residential portion will be \$15.82
  - B. Locale revenues and new growth were greater than estimated for the FY25 budget and the amount of excess levy capacity increased
- VI. Committee updates – None

Our next meetings are November 26, 6:30 p.m. and December 3 at 6:00 at a special town meeting

Meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.