Shutesbury Finance Committee
Monday, September 28, 2026
Virtual Meeting

FinCom Members Present: Ajay Khashu - chair, George Arvanitis, Frank McGinn, Susie Mosher, Molly Moss, Meredith Pustell, and Laura Soito

Staff and Guests Attending: Hayley Bolton – Town Administrator, Meryl Mandell – Recycling Coordinator

Ajay Khashu called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

I. Curbside trash collection
   A. Meryl Mandell, Recycling Coordinator, provided an overview of the Request for Proposals (RFP) for a 5-year contract for curbside trash collection to start in July 2028.
      i. RFP subcommittee developed a set of assumptions and rationale. These were reviewed and approved by the Select Board.
      ii. Has reached out with questions to 5 potential trash hauling vendors. Initial feedback from potential vendors requests that the timeline be moved up to approximately April to provide sufficient lead time for a company to prepare for starting services.
      iii. The new tentative timeline is as follows:
         1. Draft RFP to Town Counsel in February then Select Board and FinCom
         2. Issue the RFP in April or May 2027
         3. Host a preproposal meeting mid-May
         4. Issue response to questions in late May.
         5. Bids due in mid-June.
         6. Contract awarded after approval at Annual Town Meeting and the start of the new Fiscal year.
         7. Selected vendor will order carts and deliver these.
   B. Mandell requested that FinCom review and support basic assumptions as has been done by Select Board and assistance in putting together a warrant article at the appropriate time.
   C. The committee discussed the following areas:

i. Fuel cost contingencies - requested that there be some consideration for currently high fuel prices. Mandell confirmed that example language for a clause to account for fuel costs has been requested – this could lead to increases or decreases.
ii. Cart storage – a new shed will not be needed as the carts will be the responsiblity of the hauler for the duration of the contract.
iii. Warrant language – the purchase of new carts will need to be explicitly contingent on the town successfully entering a new contract.
iv. Funding – the committee discussed potential of using debt exclusion as funding source and indicated that the committee will make a recommendation on how to fund in advance for the warrant article deadline for Annual Town Meeting.

D. Committee did not take formal action on the assumptions document. Mandell requested notification of any future discussion.

II. Review meeting minutes

A. VOTE: Khashu motioned to approve the minutes from Sept 14th as amended. McGinn seconded. Arvanitis: aye, Khashu: aye, McGinn: aye, Mosher: aye, Moss: aye, Pustell: aye, Soito: aye; motion carried.
B. VOTE: Khashu motioned to approve the minutes from Sept 15th as amended. Mosher seconded. Arvanitis: aye, Khashu: aye, McGinn: aye, Mosher: aye, Moss: aye, Pustell: aye, Soito: aye; motion carried.

III. PFAS updates

A. Khashu provided update on estimates of reasonable costs for meeting PFAS mitigation obligations to help us with getting a better understanding of long-term costs.
i. The Licensed Site Professional contract is estimated at $106,000 per year based on previous proposals -this included sample collection, analysis, and reporting. Costs outside the contract, e.g., lab fees, new installations, and replacement of carbon units are estimated at $58,000-$66,000 per year. Total estimated costs range from $164,000 to $172,000 per year.
ii. An extra report is required this year, which added to contracted cost.
iii. New information indicates that radon in well water may impact effectiveness of the filtration systems. Currently awaiting state guidance on how to address.

IV. Four Towns debrief

A. Khashu and Soito reported on the Four Towns meeting.

i. The meeting was limited to issue of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) requirements for revising the regional agreement.
ii. DESE identified that there was need for updating outdated language, providing clarity on how to address specific considerations, and aligning the agreement with current statutory requirements.
iii. The Regional School Committee will establish a subcommittee with representation from each town to work on revisions. Minimally the agreement needs to be brought into compliance and aligned with current operations, but there were some questions about making more substantive changes, such as having 6th grade students join the region.
iv. Chair of the RSC, William Sherr asked for feedback on composition of the subcommittee and scope of work.
v. The process is expected to take at least two to two and half years. It will need state approval by December in order to go into effect at the beginning of the following fiscal year.

B. The committee discussed desire to keep scope as narrow as possible. Exploration could happen, but not as part of editing of regional agreement to bring into statutory compliance and alignment with current practice.

V. <u>Budget update</u>

A. Bolton shared that the budget letter and budget books have been sent to town departments as part of her administrative role. Mosher identified that this action was not expected as it did not align with past practice and that there were still some areas that needed clarification in the forms.
B. Khashu took some responsibility for miscommunication that resulted in confusion about the final status of the budget letter. He requested that the final version letter and sample budget book be shared with the committee.
C. Bolton expressed a desire to take on a more active role in the budget development process and committee members agreed that there were tasks that could be more appropriate for the town administrator than committee members. Mosher noted that the committee's process follows its charge and state guidance and asked that roles be defined jointly.
D. It was noted that transition is challenging and the group agreed to a future agenda item to better define roles and develop a transition plan. Bolton suggested that a representative from the Department of Local Services may be helpful for future discussion.

E. As next steps, Khashu will circulate a preliminary list of the main tasks in the budget process. At the next meeting, the committee will go through the list task by task to decide who is responsible and how information flows between the committee, the Town Administrator, and departments. Members will add to the list and review the committee charge in advance. The Municipal Financial Guidelines and Guide to Financial Management for Town Officials from the Finance Committee webpage were also recommended.

VI. Meet with Treasurer; re: Long-Range Plan

A. The Treasurer was not able to attend tonight's meeting and will attend a future meeting.

VII. Special Town Meeting update

A. The Select Board will approve warrant articles for Special Town Meeting tomorrow night (Sept 29) and some will need a FinCom recommendation.
B. Rather than voting tonight it was decided that the committee would meet to vote on articles requiring recommendation on Thursday at 7:00 pm, so that the warrant can be posted by Friday.

VIII. Next meeting:

A. Oct 12th is a town holiday, so our next regular meeting will be on October 5th.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

VOTE: Khashu motioned to adjourn. Arvanitis seconded. Arvanitis: aye, Khashu: aye, McGinn: aye, Mosher: aye, Moss: aye, Pustell: aye, Soito: aye; motion carried.

Exhibit Summary

1. Email– Fwd:Cart pricing estimate for inclusion in FY28 budget
2. Meeting minutes for September 14, 2026
3. Meeting minutes for September 15, 2026
4. Email - Fwd: Shutesbury projected costs - PFAS project
5. Draft Special Town Meeting Warrant