

Shutesbury Finance Committee
Tuesday, April 7, 2026, Town Hall

Members Present: Ajay Khashu - chair, Susie Mosher, April Stein, Laura Soito, Jim Walton and George Arvanitis; Absent: Molly Moss and Hayley Bolton – Town Administrator; Non-Members Attending: None

Meeting called to order at 6:35 p.m.

- I. Reviewed and approved the minutes of the 3/31/26 meeting as amended

- II. Developed the FinCom Communications for the FY27 Budget
 - A. Decreased the Police Holiday Pay to \$2,957
 - B. Eliminated the \$367 for an Assistant Treasurer
 - C. Discussed budget expense line notes:
 - i. Department liaisons will review the notes for their assigned departments
 - ii. Added a note for the Town Administrator line regarding the mid-year salary adjustment and current contract negotiations
 - iii. Administrative Assessor salary may change and a note is needed for the new hire. We will check the hiring status with the Town Administrator
 - iv. Collector hours increased 4 hrs./wk
 - v. Personnel Expenses for thank you cards, etc.
 - vi. Equipment Maintenance line under Town Buildings note stating that the increase is mostly being due to the new library
 - vii. Board of Registrars note explaining that the increase is because there will be three elections during FY27
 - viii. FRCOG negotiating vehicle fuel contract
 - ix. Police Expense increase is for subscription fees for new body cameras
 - x. Building inspector increase due to change in funding of plumbing inspections
 - xi. High School Loan increase for the middle school roof and track and field
 - xii. Clothing stipend reduces cost per employee
 - xiii. Snow Removal note stating that this was consistently underfunded in recent years and salt prices increased
 - xiv. Fire Station Mitigation line is being researched to determine the appropriate note
 - xv. ZBA Expense note added stating that the increase is due to rising advertising fees
 - xvi. Other Professional Health Services note
 - xvii. The full budgeted amount of the Veterans Benefits line was recovered from the state in FY26. Typically, 75% is recovered. Therefore, 75% of this line will be funded with Free Cash (\$8,250)
 - xviii. The final budget for the FRCOG inspections line has not been determined

- III. Developed the Annual Report
 - A. Added a new section to the report to highlight potential operational cost increases such as the Personnel Board employee salary and job description project and the new trash collection contract

- B. Changed the estimate of the FY27 average tax bill to show an estimated range of amounts
- C. Made text edits
- D. Many amounts and the graphs will change to reflect the budget updates
- E. Added a section to provide info regarding the school budgets such as out of district placements, rural aid and many others
- F. Discussion on how best to use supplemental amounts from rural aid. More discussion with the school will be needed
- G. Ajay recommended a narrative at the start of the report. We will review sample text and determine which could be added to the annual report
- H. Discussed the need to keep the report concise
- I. Discussed calculating and reporting the non-discretionary costs that we can't control
- J. Three opportunities for public communication: the annual report, town meeting budget presentation and budget hearing prior to town meeting
- K. Discussion regarding the need for towns to work together to lower costs
- L. Reviewed talking point documents prepared by Ajay and Susie

IV. Other Business

- A. Discussed meeting schedule through to the annual town meeting
- B. Discussed possible strategies for future budgets
 - i. regionalization of equipment use
 - ii. shared Building Manager
 - iii. trash service options
- C. Discussed the projects we need to address after annual town meeting:
 - i. Long term forecast
 - ii. Analysis of funding debt service
 - iii. Research options for funding the stabilization accounts given the high level of debt service in the budget for FY27 and the coming years
 - iv. Special Education Stabilization fund

Next meeting is Thursday, April 23 at 6:30 p.m. at town hall

Meeting adjourned at 9:16 p.m.