

**Shutesbury Planning Board**  
**Minutes – May 12, 2025**  
**Approved – July 14, 2025**  
*Virtual Meeting*

**Board Members Present:** Jeff Weston, Michael DeChiara, Tom Siefert (Associate Member), Keith Hastie, Ashleigh Pyecroft, Nathan Murphy (Chair)

**Board Members Absent:** Stephen Bressler, Deacon Bonnar

**Other Staff Present:** None

**Others Present:** Carole Avonti, Lisa Lesure, George

**Call to Order:** 5:00pm

The meeting is being recorded.

**Executive Session**

DeChiara explains that the Board will return to Open Session following Executive Session and that Siefert is being activated as a full member for the meeting in order to reach quorum.

Motion to enter into Executive Session for Reason No. 3, to discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the government's litigating position. Litigation specific to Complaint received from Cows regarding the Shutesbury Solar Bylaw: DeChiara; second: Pyecroft. Motion approved unanimously.

The Board went into Executive Session at 5:04pm.

The Board went into recess at 6:35pm.

The Board returned from Executive Session at 7:00pm.

Murphy designates Siefert to serve as a full Board member.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Landowner Education and Guidance**

None.

**Approval Not Required for Lot A-31**

DeChiara shares the ANR application for Lot A-31. Murphy reviews the applicant's intention to divide the lot, creating multiple new parcels that are not buildable lots. The property is an estate

that the applicant is looking to convey to several different people. The plan does not constitute a subdivision because the remaining buildable lot has adequate frontage on Wendell Road.

Murphy asks if there is a residential structure on Lot 1 of the plan. Lisa Lesure answers that there is no structure on any of the land. Murphy asks if there are any access points to the land from Wendell Road and Lesure answers that there are none. Murphy asks if the frontage could be accessible for a driveway or if there is a rock ledge or wetland in the way and Lesure answers that it could be made accessible.

DeChiara asks if the non-buildable lots might someday be combined into buildable lots and Lesure explains that the small parcels are being conveyed to various neighbors across North Laurel Drive so they can have control of the property directly across the street from them and so several of them can have more space for purposes related to septic and well development. Murphy notes that there is a technical process that would make it possible to combine the lots to become buildable in the future, but there is not sufficient space, in terms of setbacks, to make doing so possible in this location.

Siefert asks if parcels B and C already have septic on them and Lesure indicates that they both have them.

Motion to endorse the Approval Not Required application for Lot A-31: DeChiara; second: Hastie. Vote: Siefert - Aye; DeChiara - Aye; Pyecroft - Aye; Hastie - Aye; Murphy - Aye.  
Motion approved unanimously.

Murphy will come to Town Hall on Thursday to sign the mylar original of the plan for Lesure to take to the Registry of Deeds.

### **Report to Annual Town Meeting and Town Meeting Preparations**

Murphy congratulates Pyecroft and Hastie on their election to three-year terms on the Planning Board. He also thanks DeChiara for writing the report to Town Meeting on the Zoning Bylaw amendments public hearing.

Hastie asks if these amendments will be on the warrant and if they will be subject to discussion at Town Meeting. DeChiara answers that there will be three warrant articles but the report from the Planning Board is to inform the Town about what happened at the public hearing. Once the Board approves this, the Town Administrator and Town Clerk can post it on the website and have copies available for people to read at Town Meeting.

Murphy asks if article numbers have been assigned yet and DeChiara indicates that he does not know but that it will be a long meeting. Murphy suggests adding some clear language at the start to indicate that the Board is recommending these three amendments. DeChiara will add a header that states the Board's recommendation. Murphy notes that he will also talk about them on the floor during the Meeting.

Motion to approve the Planning Board report to Town Meeting on the Zoning Bylaw amendments hearing as revised: Siefert; second: Pyecroft. Vote: Hastie - Aye; Pyecroft - Aye; Siefert - Aye; DeChiara - Aye; Murphy - Aye. *Motion approved unanimously.*

Murphy states that he will be attending Town Meeting on May 31 and DeChiara states that he will be as well. Siefert reports that the Select Board has mostly only ordered the Finance Committee's articles so far but that it will be a long meeting. DeChiara notes that he is aware of articles from other Committees as well three Citizens' Petitions. Murphy offers to present on behalf of the Planning Board. Siefert suspects that there may be some discussion on the floor of Town Meeting regarding regulating the short-term rental of accessory dwelling units. Murphy reviews some of the arguments against allowing such rentals in terms of their impact on home affordability and increasing density of development but notes also that they can generate revenue that could make it easier for certain homeowners to afford to live in town. He describes it as a complicated issue, particularly for a floor amendment, and he is concerned that it might create legal problems for the Town if it were done without further careful research. DeChiara adds that the idea could be revisited by the Board next year based on whether it becomes an issue or not.

### **Associate Members**

Murphy returns Siefert to the status of Associate Member for the purpose of this agenda item.

Murphy reports that Siefert has indicated his desire to serve as Associate Member for another year.

Motion to recommend to the Select Board the appointment of Tom Siefert as Associate Member of the Planning Board: DeChiara; second: Hastie. Vote: Hastie - Aye; Pyecroft - Aye; DeChiara - Aye; Murphy - Aye. *Motion approved unanimously.*

Murphy will report this vote to the Select Board and about the Planning Board's intention to fill the second Associate Member position.

Murphy reactivates Siefert as a full member for the remainder of the meeting.

Murphy asks the Board for suggestions of people the Board might contact about serving as the second Associate Member. DeChiara reports that the Land Use Clerk will be sending out a Town Announce email bundling the call for people to fill the open seats on the Planning Board, ECAC, and ZBA.

### **Review and Vote on Past Minutes**

Motion to approve the minutes of January 8, 2025: DeChiara; second: Siefert. Vote: Hastie - Aye; Pyecroft - Aye; Siefert - Aye; DeChiara - Aye; Murphy - Aye. *Motion approved unanimously.*

Motion to approve the minutes of January 13, 2025: DeChiara; second: Siefert. Vote: Hastie - Abstain; Pyecroft - Aye; Siefert - Aye; DeChiara - Aye; Murphy - Aye. Motion approved unanimously with one abstention (Hastie).

Motion to approve the minutes of March 10, 2025: DeChiara; second: Siefert. Vote: Hastie - Abstain; Pyecroft - Aye; Siefert - Aye; DeChiara - Aye; Murphy - Aye. Motion approved unanimously with one abstention (Hastie).

Motion to approve the minutes of April 7, 2025: DeChiara; second: Siefert. Vote: Hastie - Aye; Pyecroft - Aye; Siefert - Aye; DeChiara - Aye; Murphy - Aye. Motion approved unanimously.

Motion to approve the minutes of April 9, 2025: DeChiara; second: Siefert. Vote: Hastie - Aye; Pyecroft - Aye; Siefert - Aye; DeChiara - Aye; Murphy - Aye. Motion approved unanimously.

### **Lake Wyola Advisory Committee Appointment**

Siefert reported to Murphy that the Planning Board's seat on the Lake Wyola Advisory Committee has been vacant and he is interested in representing the Board on the Committee.

Motion to recommend to the Select Board that Siefert be appointed as the Planning Board's representative on the Lake Wyola Advisory Committee: DeChiara; second: Pyecroft. Discussion: DeChiara notes that because this seat is a representative of the Planning Board, the Select Board's approval should be merely *pro forma* and Murphy agrees, noting the parallel with the appointment of the Board's representative to the Community preservation Committee. DeChiara moves to amend the motion so that the appointment will be for the remainder of the current fiscal year and also for the next fiscal year; second: Pyecroft. Vote: Hastie - Aye; Pyecroft - Aye; Siefert - Aye; DeChiara - Aye; Murphy - Aye. Motion approved unanimously.

Murphy will report the recommendation to the Select Board.

### **Community Preservation Committee Update**

Murphy reports that Clif Read, the Planning Board representative to the Community Preservation Committee, sent him a written update about the CPC's current activities. He will review that update and inform the Board of its contents at a future meeting.

### **Member Updates**

Murphy encourages Board members to speak to people they know in town about volunteering for town service, either on the Planning Board or elsewhere, because there have been a number of openings in various roles across the town's government.

DeChiara remarks that the Board had a very productive Executive Session meeting earlier and he extends his appreciation to all of the Board members who participated.

Murphy notes that the Board received a legal notice from Amherst about a solar project permit application being withdrawn. DeChiara confirms that it was on Shutesbury Road.

### **Unanticipated Business**

None.

### **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn: DeChiara; second: Pyecroft. Discussion: Murphy indicates that he would like to start having more hybrid meetings, perhaps starting next month. DeChiara notes that the new Town Administrator is technically skilled and would be a good person to connect with about setting up the technology. Siefert adds that there will be a funding request in the Town Meeting warrant for updating and improving the Town Hall meeting room. Vote: Pyecroft - Aye; Siefert - Aye; Hastie - Aye; DeChiara - Aye; Murphy - Aye. Motion approved unanimously.

**Adjourned:** 7:57pm.

### **List of Documents Used:**

- Approval Not Required application for Lot A-31
- Planning Board report to Annual Town Meeting regarding Zoning Bylaw amendments public hearing