

Shutesbury Select Board Meeting Minutes  
October 15, 2020 Virtual Platform

Select Board members present: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil/Chair, April Stein, and Rita Farrell  
Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator; Linda Avis Scott/Administrative Secretary

Guests: Michael Vinskey, Susie Mosher, John Montanari, Gail Fleischaker, Elaine Puleo, Penny Kim, Meryl Mandell, Molly Moss, Mary Anne Antonellis, Ella DeSilva-Beal, Michael DeChiara, Kate McConnell, Andy Berg, Chris Rasmussen, Miriam DeFant, Brigid Murphy, Leila Rollins-Cohen, Lori Nichols, James McNaughton, Jessica Carlson-Belanger, Kathleen De Los Santos, Emily Bayard, Linda Seidman, Melanie DeSilva, Gayle Huntress, Ezzell Floranina, and other unidentified participants.

Makepeace-O'Neil calls the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Agenda Review: No changes.

Public Comment:

Elaine Puleo: in the upcoming issue of *Our Town*, the Recreation Committee is announcing a survey to determine interest in establishing a community garden prior to the Committee applying for Community Preservation Act funds. Puleo requests that the survey link be added to the front page of the Town website. Puleo confirms that the Committee is using Survey Monkey, the survey asks about site preference and that the suggested sites are all Town owned properties, i.e., behind town hall, behind the fire station, at the school and Lot O32. Torres will follow-up with Town Clerk Grace Bannasch to determine the best way to provide information about the survey on the Town website.

Miriam DeFant asks to read the "Statement in Support of BLM Banner" from herself and Rob Kibler into the record; she will include additional content and notes that these are her personal views and not those of any town committee. The Select Board affirms that DeFant's request constitutes public comment.

James McNaughton, notes the 5:25pm agenda item ("Select Board letter regarding the Black Lives Matter banner") and suggests DeFant's comment be offered at that point in the meeting. Select Board members affirm that DeFant's statement is public comment.

DeFant reads her statement (see attached) and adds her concern that local, state and federal governments have a responsibility to speak up on behalf of civil rights; this is not a partisan issue and when governments speak up it should not be reduced to the lowest common denominator.

Ella DeSilva-Beal reads a statement in support of the banner into the record (see attached).

John Montanari refers to the Black Lives Matter website and their defund the police campaign; they mean to abolish the police and are promulgating a false narrative that folks are in danger of the police when they leave their houses; there have been regrettable deaths however the number of these deaths is small. Montanari refers to his blog post "My Statement to the Shutesbury Select Board regarding the Black Lives Matter banner on Town Hall" and notes that residents of inner cities want more policing and cites the Minneapolis principal speaking to her students and affirming support for the police.

Per his request, Makepeace-O'Neil acknowledges receipt by the Select Board of an email letter, "Statement in Support of BLM Banner" dated 10.6.20, from Michael DeChiara. DeChiara states

that he is massively in support of keeping banner up and appreciates DeSilva-Beal's comment as elegant and forceful; if one agrees that there is systemic racism and historic bias, something proactive has to happen. Per DeChiara, the banner is an act of courage; we need to be proactive to change the status quo; why are people objecting to Black Lives Matter; to take the banner down would be caving into keeping the status quo.

Ezzell Floranina agrees with the statements made by DeFant, DeSilva-Beal, and DeChiara, and clarifies that defunding the police does not mean to "x" out the police, it means moving funds to social services that could better serve communities. Floranina cites the work of Reverend William Barber and Senator Cory Booker who make it clear that defunding is about increasing social services.

McNaughton: the way banner went up was not transparent and townspeople were not included in the process which is a problem; communication needs to be proactive and now we are reacting to something that has already happened; putting the banner up suggests the entirety of the town is in support of the banner; we have a diversity of opinions therefore it does not seem like a democratic decision. McNaughton continues: the banner does not represent his opinion; everyone can get behind three words "black lives mattering"; we have seen cities across the country burning; he cannot get behind the Black Lives Matter banner. Per McNaughton, regarding freedom of speech, anyone can put up a lawn sign; putting a banner on town hall without feedback is not the appropriate approach and does not represent the entirety of the populace.

Melanie DeSilva: to clarify the basic misunderstanding perpetuated by right wing propaganda, Black Lives Matter is a decentralized movement and is not trademarked; the organization has a broad diverse base and is the largest social movement in history; the principals of the Black Lives Matter Foundation are not the movement. DeSilva continues: from a study of violent protests, there is clear evidence that the majority of the protests are peaceful; the propaganda cites one outlier study showing that African Americans are not more likely to be killed than white Americans; this study does not validate their position as there are many studies concluding that blacks are more likely to be killed over whites.

Mary Anne Antonellis identifies herself as the person who asked for the banner to be installed; the idea for the banner came from a vigil held on the common and attended by 80-90 individuals; the Select Board agreed to install the banner and the installation event was well publicized using all her resources and was attended by 100 people; the installation was a public process.

Antonellis, recognizing the need for conversation about racism and antiracism work, suggests a community study group about issues of racism; Elaine Puleo will facilitate a discussion group using the book titled *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Race* by Robin DiAngelo; because of community donations, copies of the book will be available at the library; more details about an initial Zoom meeting will be forthcoming.

Torres, due to time constraints, speaks to the need for the Select to attend to the agenda. There being no other guests requesting comment, Makepeace-O'Neil allows a last comment from DeFant. DeFant, referring to her letter, notes that it is not enough to say we are not racist; we need to think about our language and biases with a goal to becoming anti-racist; to seek inside ourselves and be proactive and for government to act. DeFant appreciates DeSilva's clarification about the Black Lives Matter movement; and notes the need to avoid "them" and presuming we may know what others want; suggest Googling "continuum of bias"; this is something we all need to work at it.

## Discussion Topics:

1. Halloween: Antonellis/Library Director reports that the CDC has determined that trick or treating is a dangerous activity in the time of COVID-19, the Board of Health agrees with this determination about Halloween and the Fire Department will not hold their traditional cider and donuts event. Per Antonellis, the Shutesbury PTO, Fire Department, Police Department and Library are planning a socially distanced parade around the track at the elementary school; all participants will need to wear masks, not Halloween costume masks; the Board of Health has approved masked and gloved volunteers creating bags of donated commercially wrapped candy to be placed on a table for each child to take when leaving the parade. Antonellis is willing to announce the event and asks for Select Board support. Antonellis confirms that the event will be held on Halloween and will start as it begins to get dark and be done by a certain time; there will be lights. Farrell moves the Select Board support the Halloween parade on the school track and that there will be no traditional trick or treating activities this year; Stein seconds the motion. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; the motion carries.
2. Letter Regarding "Black Lives Matter" Banner: Makepeace-O'Neil explains that the Select Board is reviewing a formal letter regarding a resident's concerns; the letter being reviewed was compiled by Torres from drafts written by all three members. Torres screen shares the document. McNaughton asks for background. Makepeace-O'Neil: the Select Board is responding, in a formal way, to questions raised by Montanari; the Board members need to review the draft letter in an open meeting. Makepeace-O'Neil will correct formatting issues. Montanari thanks the Select Board for addressing his concerns; he feels heard and answered for these concerns, however, in every other way does not feel heard and asks for a better explanation even if it does not satisfy him in the end.
3. FRCOG Request for Quote (RFQ)/School Roof: Torres: the school roof has been leaking for a number of years; the size of the project will require a decomp company; in order to procure design and engineering services, a RFQ with FRCOG is needed. At this point in the discussion, McNaughton interrupts, refers to the previous agenda item, and states that he heard no wrap up for Montanari's comments and is confused about what is going on. Makepeace-O'Neil: the topic was a discussion and review of the Select Board letter to Montanari. McNaughton: the public has not seen the letter. It is noted that McNaughton is attending the meeting via phone so did not see the screen share of the letter. Makepeace-O'Neil: the letter will be available once the minutes are approved. Torres to McNaughton's question: the minutes are usually approved at the next meeting; due to a change in position, there was a delay in posting the minutes to the Board's webpage; the minutes are now current and will usually be posted within a day or two after they are approved. DeChiara: regarding McNaughton's concern about bureaucratic delays, once the individual receives the letter, they can make it public. McNaughton states he is okay with the explanation. Torres: requesting a FRQ is a new process therefore she suggests asking for assistance from FRCOG; she will be working on the project with Bruce Turner/Union 28 Director of Finance and Operations. Torres explains that she will do the construction bid; the \$720 fee for FRCOG's assistance will come from the Building Repair fund; the goal is to

obtain a bid in advance of annual town meeting; the first step is to select a designer/engineer for this critical project; in conversation with school personnel, this is the best way to move forward. Stein moves the Select Board support Torres in moving forward in obtaining a Request for Quote with FRCOG for a fee of \$720 to come from the Building Repair funds; Farrell seconds the motion. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; the motion carries.

4. CARES Act Funds: Torres: some of the funds have been spent on school needs; it is disappointing that use of the funds by a town to subsidize broadband subscriptions was denied by the State even though funds are being given to Comcast and Zoom; the use by towns is still being argued; in a few weeks, the list for how the funds have been used will need to be specified; there are still funds in the account and there have been no requests from the Region. Gayle Huntress/Municipal Light Plant Manager reports that she has not heard of any creative ways to use CARES Act funds for broadband costs; it is possible they could be used for an installation with the \$200 deal offered in the original signup period; perhaps the funds could be used for other broadband/MLP expenses rather than to benefit individuals. Torres: the funds cannot be used for installations. Huntress: the funds have used for buildouts; almost all the households with school-age children have been installed; currently, there are two households looking for installations. Torres and Huntress will confer on the outstanding installs. Torres: the recent speech by Governor Baker indicated that the economic situation is very positive; the budget maintains everything we hoped it would which is amazing news and is the result of CARES funds being used appropriately all over the State.
5. Status of Reopening Plans/Early Election Update: Torres: because the new air circulation system has been installed, Library Director Mary Anne Antonellis is planning to open the library, on a limited basis, to the public in about 2-3 weeks; Jamrog will install the new Town Hall air exchange system, twice/hour, before the 11.3.20 election; early election hours, two hours/day, will be held in the Police Department carport.
6. Town Administrator Updates:
  - a. The power outage lasted for two days; six downed trees cut off the center of town except for Locks Pond Road and Route 202; the return of power could have been faster so Emergency Management Director Walter Tibbetts is following up on the communication breakdown with National Grid.
  - b. Renovation of the Town Administrator's office is in process; a contractor is needed; Sirius Community has offered to help.  
Deputy Constable Appointment: Christine Robinson has volunteered to serve in the role of the appointed Constable and act as a backup for elected Constable Marilyn Tibbetts. Farrell moves and Stein seconds a motion to appoint Christine Robinson as Constable. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; the motion carries.
  - c. The Highway Department moved the recycling shed to the far end of shed row and the Board of Health immediately moved their supplies in. The funds from the sale of the other recycling shed will be used to pay for a new recycling shed.

- d. Richard Gallo, the representative of a local solar company and an electrician, noticed a splice in the line on the Town Hall solar panels and offered to do the repair for only the cost of parts; Gallo will also repair the inverter for the Fire Department solar panels.
  - e. 2020 State Election Warrant: Stein moves the Select Board sign the “2020 State Election Warrant”; Farrell seconds the motion. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O’Neil: aye; the motion carries.
7. Prior/Future Agenda Items: For 10.27.20: reopening and Halloween plans. Torres suggest the Board consider a Tax Policy Committee to think about how to share tax information with the public; this is an important conversation for residents to have that can be held by Zoom. The Board briefly discusses the representative membership for such a committee and agree to consider the Committee’s charge, timeline and expectations during the 10.27.20 meeting.
  8. Illness Advisory COVID-19 Pandemic: Torres: the Illness Advisory was reviewed by the Board of Health who made some changes that were not substantive. Stein moves the Select Board accept the “10.15.20 Shutesbury Select Board Illness Advisory COVID-19 Pandemic”; Farrell seconds the motion. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O’Neil: aye; the motion carries. Makepeace-O’Neil recommends the Board of Health review the Policy once a year.

Administrative Actions:

1. Select Board members sign vendor warrants totaling \$81,210.22.
2. Select Board members sign payroll warrants totaling \$97,155.83.
3. Stein moves and Farrell seconds a motion to approve the 9.29.20 meeting minutes. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O’Neil: aye; the minutes are approved as presented.

Unanticipated Item:

Huntress and Torres explain that the purpose of the letter to Shonda Green/Deputy Secretary Department of Telecommunications and Cable regarding the “Petition to Remove Surety Bond Requirement for Utility License Agreements for Municipalities”. Huntress: releasing the surety bond will save Shutesbury \$6,750/year; we are working to remove the surety bond for all broadband municipal entities and to do so with a petition through DCTE rather than through the utilities. Huntress requests Select Board support by signing the letter and notes that State Representative Natalie Blais will be sending a letter of support. Farrell moves the Select Board sign the letter to Shonda Green, “Petition to Remove Surety Bond Requirement for Utility License Agreements for Municipalities”; Stein seconds the motion. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O’Neil: aye; the motion carries

At 6:25pm, Stein moves and Farrell seconds a motion to adjourn the meeting. Roll call vote: Farrell: aye, Stein: aye, and Makepeace-O’Neil: aye; the motion carries.

Documents and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. “Statement in Support of BLM Banner” from Miriam DeFant and Rob Kibler
2. “My statement” from Ella DeSilva-Beal

3. Blog post “My Statement to the Shutesbury Select Board regarding the Black Lives Matter banner on Town Hall” by John Montanari
4. “Statement in Support of BLM Banner” by Michael DeChiara
5. Letter to the Select Board from Christopher Rasmussen, Melanie DeSilva, Lillian DeSilva-Beal, and Ellan DeSilva-Beal
6. 10.15.20 Select Board letter to John Montanari
7. “Professional Services Agreement by and between the Franklin County Regional Council of Governments and the Town of Shutesbury for Elementary School Roof”
8. 2020 State Election Warrant
9. 10.15.20 “Shutesbury Select Board Illness Advisory COVID-19 Pandemic”
10. 11.1.20 “Petition to Remove Surety Bond Requirement for Utility License Agreements for Municipalities”

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Avis Scott  
Administrative Secretary