

Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes
January 10, 2023 Special Virtual Meeting Format

Selectboard members present: Rita Farrell/Chair, and Eric Stocker

Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator, Geneva Bickford/Administrative Secretary

Volunteers & Other Staff present: Miriam DeFant, Michael DeChiara, Gail Fleischaker

Guests: Elizabeth Fernandez O'Brien, Nate Heard, Mary Lou Conca, Frank McGinn Potter, Graeme Sephton, Mary David

Farrell calls the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.

Agenda Review: As posted.

Discussion Topics:

1. Review MVP Action Grant Ideas: This is a state program which we have the opportunity to apply for again. The MVP Grant makes funding available for municipalities to deal with climate change hazards and vulnerabilities. The Town has already received the MVP Planning Grant to look at a whole host of vulnerabilities the town has. In addition to the MVP Plan the town also developed a Hazard Mitigation Plan. All this has to do with the effect of climate change on the built environment and the community and looking for ways to mitigate climate change. The MVP program has two parts. They provide planning grants and as well as providing implementation. We received a planning grant and we completed the MVP plan which was quite detailed and lays out a whole host of issues for the community. Michael DeChiara played an important role in helping us put together an application last year. We identified storm water and our rural roads, particularly our dirt roads as very vulnerable to climate change. It is the same basic parameters as last year and we have a brief window between now and February 3, 2023 to engage with MVP staff and get feedback. MVP is limiting towns to two projects that can be brought forward. The SB wants to have discussions with town committees and boards before February 3, 2023. The application itself won't be available until sometime in March and will be due in May, and will be awarded for the next fiscal year. We believe a town could apply for up to \$3,000,000 last year. This is an opportunity for Shutesbury to look at things we have in our Hazard Mitigation Plan for our MVP. The SB would like as much engagement from other boards and committees as soon as possible. There will be more opportunities before the application deadline. We would like to have three ideas to preview with the MVP staff. We are not precluded from changing our minds after meeting with MVP staff. Mary Lou Conca suggests the school roof be included over time. Farrell is unsure if that would be eligible but will look at MVP's criteria. Miriam DeFant emailed SB. ConCom looks and thinks a lot about storm water as a commission because one of our tasks is considering erosion controls and the effects of storm water on projects. We end up looking closely at town infrastructure on the roads and near wetlands and we are always talking to residents about their projects, their landscaping and the effects of their landscaping

on storm water on the roads and near wetlands and the way things work. People do not think about water flowing down hill and sooner or later water will hit wetlands and carry with it contaminants and sediments if it is not contained and dissipated. I encourage the SB to look at an attachment of photographs that I collected from the last couple of years of site visits. We often encounter erosion on the roads, or culverts that are broken or damaged. Shutesbury does not have the budget to replace all the culverts and storm water features. Nor do we have a proper inventory of all the culverts. I would like the SB to look over samples of other MVP projects that have been successfully funded in the past, several towns received funding to do a stream crossing technical assessment which included mapping and surveying all the stream crossings and culverts in their town and then doing an assessment of each one to determine if it needs improvements or repairs and whether it was adequate. If we can prioritize the ones that are the most important and maybe bundle them for future grants. ConCom provided the SB with two sample reports from completed projects in Belchertown and Uxbridge. I had a conversation with Julie Busa from Fuss & O'Neill who worked with the town on our MVP Planning Grant and Julie said in the last couple of rounds those kinds of assessments have been a little less competitive. MVP is getting so many shovel ready discrete project applications now that these more vaguer planning grants that aren't going to lead to actual action steps are less competitive. Julie also said it isn't out of the ballpark as it is still a viable option because it meets all of MVP's criteria and there might be ways to sweeten the pot for the MVP reviewers to make it more competitive. Our suggestion would be to try and be creative and come up with a package that includes opportunities for community engagement and community education which scores really high with MVP. Perhaps using the proposal to include a couple of actions steps, maybe identify a couple of culverts that the town already knows what needs to be replaced. We could also look at Lake Wyola and storm water. That would be considered a nature based solution, if there is a way to bundle money into an application to assess critical culverts and develop management strategies that are appropriate. We often are educating residents when we are permitting projects. There is so much opportunity for public education that we could be doing as a town not just as a ConCom and it would be exciting to see that rolled into an MVP Grant. There are a number of things mentioned by Miriam that are within the MVP criteria and are things we addressed in our last application. We heard project based last time around when we went in with storm water and our dirt roads understanding it's a huge problem at the lake as well as a number of other places in town. A technical assessment of culverts is a much more clearly defined end product where as a moramorphis engineering study is not as well defined and is certainly something that could be completed within one year. We do not have a lot of resources for engineering designs on a year to year basis. Having this comprehensive assessment would be a template in the next ten years for planning and our highway department could have action steps coming from it. Michael DeChiara, ECAC, has one initial thing to share. At this stage it is important to see what the additional criteria for the town is. We have a sense of what MVP wants, as an example the two that come to mind are projects we couldn't otherwise afford and how much of town is impacted. Is it a town wide solution vs. a targeted solution. ECAC started a

prioritization process last month where we looked at all the recommendations from both the MVP report and the Hazard Mitigation Report and went through a process of identifying what our top three thematic things were. Our three themes were solar, invasive species and storm water. We subsequently have had work groups that have met. Each of those groups looked at the full list of recommendations and said what are the priorities and what are the recommendations we are making. MVP is a singular funding opportunity that is good but limited in time and scope. As a committee we have a broader charge than that. My expectation is that sometime later this week I can send the SB a manageable number of projects within these three themes and we can discuss next week. There is definitely overlap and it wasn't by design. Some of the storm water ones for example overlap with what Miriam just talked about such as the culverts for example and nature based solutions. Solar was the idea of having solar at all municipal buildings and how do we get there. It is very tangible and project oriented. This is different from saying let's create municipal solar to supply the town but really to make sure the energy sources the town is using are solar based. With invasives that is more education oriented but again there is the possibility of coming up with an invasive species management plan. Lastly, this is a SB meeting my hope is coming out of the process beyond MVP that there might be some things we can go forward to FinCom with SB support to actually fund out of the budget. I think whatever information we propose and discuss could actually help in terms of the budgetary process. The SB is not making any decisions tonight and we have two more meetings before February 3. ECAC has scheduled a meeting next week to coincide with the SB meeting and will be available next week to go into details. Farrell, Torres & DeChiara had a conversation last week to discuss a little about why we didn't get funding and approval last year. One thing we are doing differently is starting the process earlier. In terms of some criteria, we can add having whatever projects we come up with align with our two plans so that we went through this whole MVP planning process and we don't just want to pick things that are not even seen as high priority, discrete and achievable, project focused and urgency and impact on the town and maybe we can say lack of other available funds or other town funds limited or not available for the project. There was no formal vote on the part of the SB but Farrell will present these to the SB and see if they are acceptable criteria. Then as we discuss the projects at the next meeting or the following meeting we would use those criteria to sort through all the ideas. Mary Lou Conca proposes solar on all municipal buildings and she believes the elementary school falls under municipal buildings. Perhaps the roof could be repaired as well as putting up solar at the same time. The grant application from last year is located on the town website, Shutesbury.org. DeFant shares two thoughts. In thinking about developing this application I think it would be really good to try and leverage as much grant writing expertise as we have available. I know Beth Wilson is on our commission and works for the Town of Amherst. She has worked on MVP Grants and other environmental DEP Grants and has volunteered to help. Bob Douglas is the Conservation Director for Andover. Bob has successfully managed a couple of MVP Grant Applications and is interested in volunteering with the town. Miriam questions if we have an understanding from Tim in the Highway Department about his priorities are? Torres indicates he has a sense of what his priorities are in town

for the roads. He does not view it through the MVP lense. He does have a clear understanding where all the issues are that he might think are important to look at. Torres and Tim have discussed one area but are still in discussion for the best approach. There is one culvert Miriam is concerned about and discussed in other meeting with the SB. There are efforts in place to potentially over time remove the dam on Brown's Pond. Tim and I spoke about the possibility of getting some engineering done to evaluate that culvert given the scenario that the dam is removed. That is a very important issue especially if it comes together and Lois is able to move forward. She will need a massive amount of funding. There is some engineering funding that some people working with her have but they will need quite a bit more. At this point it is going to be a very important issue. The timing of it could become an urgent need if the dam is removed. Torres may come back with Tim and this proposal. Farrell asks ECAC to limit their suggestions. This has been an ongoing topic and ConCom is not interested in one particular culvert or area, we are looking broadly at the whole community and seeing a lot of challenges where we need more funding for improving infrastructure. ConCom is looking at stream crossings and culvert replacements that will be really important for the town and they are things that MVP does fund. There are ways to bundle it to make it a more robust application by including some of these other values that are part of the MVP program. Lake Wyola District is an ongoing issue for the community. LWAC and FRCOG are in the process of developing a watershed based plan that would then lead to the ability to apply for DEP grants but that is a multi-year process. The watershed assessment will be completed sometime this year and then there would be a possibility to apply for a DEP Action Grant maybe the following year. Then the work would get done even later than that. There is no guarantee one particular grant resource is going to come through. MVP supports funding of private parts of town. Stocker believes it might make some sense to do something at the lake because other grants won't cover the lake. The FRCOG representative is Tamsin Flanders. FRCOG started an engineering study last year and decided it wasn't sufficient so they are scrapping it and waiting for this new funding cycle to come through so they can hire a new engineering firm to do a new assessment. DeChiara will send a summary to the SB as to what they want to propose at the next meeting. Farrell indicates if next week is not sufficient or we feel like there are other people who still haven't weighed in then we might defer to the 31st. The gross match is normally 25% and it can be done with time. Last year we used the Highway Departments time as we tried to address many of the issues Miriam has been talking about as well as Town Administrator time, as well as, some materials. Last year we were designated as a community that only had to raise a 10% match. We don't know if we are in that status again this year. Torres will email and ask what the criteria is for the matching that allowed us to match only 10% last year.

MOTION TO ADJOURN (6:19 pm)

- Stocker moves and Farrell seconds roll call vote: Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

Administrative Actions:

- 1) TA to add dates to MVP Criteria

Documents and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

- 1) MVP Criteria

Respectfully submitted,
Geneva Bickford
Administrative Secretary

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