

Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes  
October 8, 2024 Hybrid Meeting Format

Selectboard members present: Rita Farrell/Co-Chair, Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil/Co-Chair and Eric Stocker

Staff present: Becky Torres/Town Administrator, Abigail Hernandez /Administrative Secretary

Volunteers & Other Staff present: David Burgess, Administrative Assessor and Leslie Bracebridge, April Stein

Guests: Frank McGinn, III, Select Board Meeting Room, Kathy Salvador, Amanda Alix, Jon Lawless, Grace Bannasch, Paul Lyons, Diane Jacoby, Stephen Dallmus, Henry Geddes, Mike S, George Arvanitis, Michael DeChiara, Gail Fleischaker, Mary Anne Antonellis, Susie Mosher, Tom Siefert

Farrell calls the meeting to order at 5:33 pm.

Agenda Review: As posted.

Public Comment: Susie Mosher comments on the news that the Town Administrator will be accepting the Town Administrator position in Sunderland. Mosher would like the Selectboard ("SB") to work with the Personnel Board and the Town Administrator to review the job description and the tasks that are on the plate of the town administrator. Mosher would like to see the town have a greater chance of success for the next person filling the Town Administrator position.

Review of Minutes: Minutes of September 10, 2024 and September 24, 2024 were approved.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a Motion to approve the September 10, 2024 minutes; Stocker moves, Makepeace-O'Neil seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a Motion to approve the September 24, 2024 minutes; Makepeace-O'Neil moves, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

**Discussion Topics:**

1. Assessors Meet with Selectboard to Determine Means Tested Senior Exemption Percentage: David Burgess, Leslie Bracebridge and April Stein discuss Shutesbury's Means-Tested (Circuit Breaker) low-income senior tax exemption and its impact on the FY 25 Residential tax rate. It is expected the FY25 tax rate will be \$15.99/\$1000. The means-tested exemption is calculated on value and the exemptions do not hit the overlay. This will adjust valuation in the residential class which will then increase the tax rate for all residential properties. Burgess and the SB discuss the rates and the SB agrees to use the 50% Circuit Breaker Allowance making the residential tax rate \$16.04. The Tax Classification Hearing was scheduled for October 30, 2024, Torres will check with Burgess and advise the SB if he's able to attend.

**VOTE:** Stocker makes a Motion to set the Circuit Breaker allowance at 50%; Makepeace-O'Neil seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

2. Selectboard Meeting Room Discussion: Eric Stocker and Stephen Dallmus have been working together on this. Discussion surrounded changes to the room that would make it look better and allow for better sound as well as making the room more functional. Farrell has concerns with lead being present and asks that a test be done before any painting or sanding happen. There was also discussion regarding file storage and possibly acquiring more filing cabinets. Makepeace-O'Neil would like to

add furnishings to the list of possible items to look at. The SB does have small budget of \$2,000 that could be used for some items.

3. Selectboard Guideboard Update: Farrell has been in contact with Steven Smolskey who is a resident in town and a wood scientist with a very extensive resume. Smolskey has offered his time and is willing to visit Williamstown and examine the guideboard and make recommendations on how else we could best protect the guideboard. The SB agrees to allow Smolskey to volunteer his time and report back with his recommendations.
4. Set Special Town Meeting for November 19, 2024 at 6 pm: Special Town Meeting is set for November 19, 2024. The warrant closes on October 30, 2024. The agenda consists of several items, a home rule petition, the track, the library, the police fund for private duty detail and possibly another citizens petition. There may need to be another item added regarding funding for the TA line item to account for possibly hiring an interim TA and permanent TA, more discussion will be had another time if necessary.
5. Northern Rail Trail Request for Selectboard Support: The SB has a been asked by Senator Commerford to sign the Letter of Support for the Northern Rail Trail. The SB agrees to sign the letter of support for the legislators.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a Motion for the Selectboard to sign the Letter of Support for the Northern Rail Trail; Stocker moves, Makepeace-O'Neil seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

6. Right of Entry for the Army Corps of Engineers to gain access to Lot O-32: The Army Corp of Engineers has taken responsibility for the contamination at Lot O-32 and is requesting the SB sign a Right of Entry for the Army Corp of Engineers to gain access to Lot O-32. Antonellis has provided the SB with slides from the Army Corps showing their plans and scope of work. They will provide 7 days' notice before doing any field work and once the initial field work is done it will only require seasonal testing. The town will have the right to withdraw from the Right of Entry with 30 days' notice. There was discussion about accessing the site using a pathway off Pelham Hill Road that will be further explored but may not be an option as it is owned by UMass. SDC Tidewater is the contractor and Kathleen Murphy is the LSP.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a Motion to execute the Right of Entry for the Army Corp of Engineers to gain access to Lot O-32; Makepeace-O'Neil moves, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

7. SB Review November 5 Election Warrant: SB approves the November 5, 2024 State Election Warrant.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a Motion to approve the Election Warrant for the November 5, 2024 State Election; Stocker moves, Makepeace-O'Neil seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

8. Town Administrator Transition Plans and TA Updates – Regional Fire Service Study by Collins Center, Knotweed, MVP Grant: Town Administrator, Rebecca Torres advises she has interviewed and been offered the position of Town Administrator in Sunderland. Torres last day will be November 8, 2024. Torres and Farrell have spoken and will meet to discuss job description as well as a timeline for advertising. The SB and Personnel Board will work together with the TA to make a smooth transition. Farrell thinks it would be best to bring in an Interim Town Administrator for a short amount of time to give time to iron out the job description and get it advertised. A search

committee will be selected and involved in the hiring process and will make recommendations to the SB. The SB signs the Turkey Trot Request. TA provides an update on Knotweed and has spoken with Beth Wilson, it does not appear the group will be moving ahead with the work. The Board of Health feels it is outside of their jurisdiction to comment on this. The SB wants this to be discussed at ATM. Torres discusses the MVP Grant, Shutesbury has received a grant for \$223,000 and is exploring how to best utilize the grant. They ran into some problems with the truck they were planning to use and are exploring two other options and will bring those options back to MVP to hopefully get them to allow a change. The Regional Fire Study will begin Phase 2. Shutesbury received a Compact Grant for \$30,000. The Collins Center will handle the next step of Phase 2 which will include public meetings and the first kick off meeting for the four communities will be October 23, 2024. Farrell congratulates Torres on her new job. Mosher asks if the clickers will be piloted at STM? The Clerk will need to think about it and get back to the SB. Miriam DeFant asks what the procedure would be if a group of neighbors wanted to tackle a patch of knotweed in a right of way, what does the SB want? Farrell says notification would be sufficient. Frank McGinn, III asks if the survey on the clickers can be published online.

Farrell Motions to Adjourn (7:15 pm); Stocker moves, Makepeace-O'Neil seconds. Roll call vote: Makepeace-O'Neil: aye, Stocker: aye, and Farrell: aye; the motion carries.

Administrative Actions:

1. TA will talk to David Burgess regarding tax classification hearing date;
2. TA and Rita Farrell will meet to go over transition plans and job description update;

Documents and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. Shutesbury Board of Assessors Means Tested (Circuit Breaker) Exemption Impact on Tax Rate;
2. Department of the Army Right of Entry For Formerly Used Defense Sites Program; and
3. We Support Route 2 Rail Letter of Support.

Respectfully submitted,  
Geneva Bickford,  
Administrative Secretary

\*\* A full version of the 10/8/24 SB meeting is available to view on the Town of Shutesbury's YouTube page at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4ajoOcJsNzf5DBgMTZgcJA>