

Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes  
July 17, 2025 Hybrid Meeting Format

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

Staff present and Guests: Hayley Bolton: Town Administrator, Brennan Mailloux, Mary Lou Conca, James Fitzgerald, Devon Pelletier, Michael Hootstein, Amanda Alix, Kathy Salvador, April Stein, Veronica Richter, Tom Siefert, Penelope Kim, Gail Fleischaker.

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

Agenda Review: As posted.

Public Comment: Mary Lou Conca asked the Board the status of the POST investigation she believes is in the Select Board's hands. Makepeace-O'Neil stated the Board does not typically respond in public comment but did acknowledge that the Board has received her email. Bolton stated she would respond to her email.

General Business:

I. Approve Meeting Minutes for 7.1.25:

- a. Stocker proposed agenda item number six, section "a" be amended to read "forth," not "fourth."

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for 7.1.25 as amended, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

II. Review and sign VADAR Systems Financial Management Software Contract Renewal:

**VOTE:** Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve and sign the VADAR Systems Financial Management Software Contract Renewal, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

III. Review and Sign FY25 Year End Transfers:

- a. Bolton shared updates as to where accounts will be drawn from and where they will be put. The total would be \$11,070.22. Bolton shared there will be another line-item transfer for legal expenses. This will be brought upon the board at a coming meeting.

**VOTE:** Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve and sign the FY25 Year End Transfers, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

IV. Acting Chief and Police Department Update:

- a. Pelletier shared that it is extremely important to have an active Chief, because an Officer in Charge cannot attend Chief meetings. He shared there are legal obligations to have a Chief in town. Bolton shared she believes it is important to have an established person so there is a clear chain of command.
- b. Bolton shared she believes it would be reasonable to do a Police Chief Search Committee. She thinks it would be important to put it out there and allow candidates to apply. She also gave recognition to the previous Police Chief Study Group.
- c. The Board acknowledged the need to update the Police Chief job description, which was last updated in 2018, before they post the position.
- d. Bolton shared that they could go the Leverett route and regionalize but isn't sure that's how it should go. Farrell shared her thoughts and stated she believes keeping a Chief in place for our town solely instead of regionalizing would be her personal preference. Makepeace-O'Neil and Stocker agreed as well.
- e. Pelletier shared operationally the Police Department is going strong and scheduling is running smoothly. He stated it is a little difficult for his officers to take time off. He shared that the department's FY25 training was completed and submitted. Body camera on board training has been completed, and he hopes for those to be deployed in the very near future. He also shared that he is hoping to get the speed board signs fixed and operational with new configurations. His concern is that they are costly and shipping them out for repair could be costly.
- f. Tom Siefert stated on the town's website there could be a section added for police logs potentially.

**Two votes were taken during this agenda item:**

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a motion to appoint Devon Pelletier as the town's acting Police Chief, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

**VOTE:** Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to engage a Police Chief Search Committee, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

V. M.N. Spear Library Reuse Committee:

- a. Farrell shared that she drafted a charge for the M.N. Spear Library Reuse Committee. It would have a seven-member committee appointed by the Select Board. Preference would be given to citizens with real estate, architecture, structural engineering, and municipal services knowledge. There will be representation from the Finance Committee and the Historical Commission. The charge would be to look at potential reuses for the building, including leases by

the municipality. She stated this would most likely have to correspond with a Town Meeting vote as it will cost money. She shared she hopes the charge to be completed by December 1<sup>st</sup>, although this could be changed to January 2, 2026. She stated that Bolton will have a PDF form for interested parties in joining the committee to fill out and submit.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a motion to accept the M.N. Spear Library Building Reuse Committee charge, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

VI. Personnel Board Joint Meeting:

- a. A quorum was filled, and April Stein called the Personnel Meeting to order at 5:38pm.
- b. Veronica Richter introduced herself as a new member and shared how she has had previous involvement with the town government. She was Town Clerk for a while, and she was on the Space Needs Committee when the new school was built. She also shared she was on the Open Space Committee and a teacher in East Longmeadow for 34 years.
- c. Makepeace-O'Neil shared that she is the Select Board Representative on the Personnel Board.
- d. Kathy Salvador introduced herself and shared how she was on the Finance Committee in the past, and she looks forward to her 3-year term serving on the Personnel Board.
- e. Election of Chair:
  - i. April Stein stated she would offer to fill the position of Chair.

**VOTE:** Kathy Salvador makes a motion to appoint April Stein as Chair of the Personnel Committee, Richter seconds. Roll call vote Stein: aye, Salvador: aye, Richter: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

- f. Election of Secretary:
  - i. April Stein proposed Kathy Salvador to be the Secretary responsible for Minutes.

**VOTE:** Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to appoint Kathy Salvador as the Secretary of the Personnel Committee for the responsibility of minutes taking, Stein seconds. Roll call vote Salvador: aye, Richter: aye, Stein: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

- g. Discussion of tasks of the committee:
  - i. Stein shared that some of the top tasks of the committee she believes are the establishment and passing of the new Personnel Policies Handbook, discussing contract negotiations, and employee evaluations. She also shared the completion of job classifications and making sure our town's

employees are getting paid adequately and equal to the surrounding job market. Stein added she would like to see job descriptions get posted online. She would also like to see the Personnel Committee meet in person.

h. Discussion of draft Personnel Policies

- i. Stein shared that Bolton drafted a wonderful, comprehensive Personnel Policies Handbook. Bolton shared she drew from numerous towns, large and small, to help create it. She based primarily off what she believed needed to be included, such as the social media policy and more details around hiring practices.
- ii. Bolton shared there are still some alterations that she believes could be made, as we are a small town and all the information in the draft may not be necessary to include. She stated it's very important to set expectations for people, and the Personnel book she believes is the first step for that.
- iii. She wanted to reflect new HR law in the new Personnel Policies Handbook, as well as other new stuff such as technology use, vehicle use, and employee conduct and disciplinary action.
- iv. Bolton shared she believes the Contract Negotiation Policy should be done away with as she believes it is not time efficient for oncoming employees and can be off-putting. She would prefer that a new employee just negotiates with the people who sign their contract, eliminating the middleman. Salvador shared she believes having a variety of viewpoints in the interview process is important, but by the time you are at that contract state, the hiring body should be the ones doing the negotiating. Richter shared she believes the interviewing should have multiple perspectives. Stein asked Bolton to draft up her suggestions of changes, as she finds it would be helpful for the Personnel Board to review.
- v. Makepeace-O'Neil shared that it is important that we standardize and get up to date with the 21<sup>st</sup> century, because things have changed and evolved. New things like electronic and social media use are important to include now.
- vi. Bolton shared the draft of the Personnel Policy Handbook will be a living document and amendments will be important, as things will change.
- vii. The Personnel Board hopes to review and complete the Personnel Handbook by September 1<sup>st</sup>.

i. Discussion of Employee Evaluation Process

- i. Bolton believes departments heads need a clear performance evaluation procedure. There needs to be something in the handbook that articulates how we are going to be judged, when it's going to happen, who is going to be doing it, just for examples. This could be either every six months or yearly and should reflect both the good and the bad of the employee.

- ii. Bolton shared at minimum she should sit down with each department head and discuss how they are progressing towards their goals.
- iii. In the case of the Town Administrator, the Select Board could be the ones who sit down with them and reflect.
- iv. Salvador said in her experience, these have been dreaded by both parties, so it may be helpful to make the process clear and as simple as possible. She suggested bi-annually as she believes it's important the feedback comes at a regular basis. Makepeace-O'Neil shared in her experiences with evaluations, nothing in the evaluations should be surprises.
- v. Farrell stated this is not a punitive thing, but a way for us to help each other do our jobs better. We can help one another and have positive dialogue. Bolton agreed and said you should want your employees to feel like they are contributing, and she wants that positive communication.
- vi. Bolton shared when it comes to department heads, some people she does regular meetings with, and others come to her when they have issues arise or need help with something. She shared that there is a calmer atmosphere at Town Hall and employees are receptive of her approach.
- vii. There was discussion about maybe changing the name and not calling them Employee Evaluations as that can be intimidating.

**VOTE:** Stein makes a motion that the Personnel Board supports moving forward in contract negotiations, done by the contracting authority which will be the Select Board, for the Fire Chief, Richter seconds. Roll call vote Richter: aye, Salvador: aye, Stein: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil aye; motion carries.

- j. The next Personnel Board meeting will be scheduled for July 31<sup>st</sup> at 5pm.
- k. The Personnel Board will have the Personnel Handbook completed by September 1<sup>st</sup>.

**VOTE:** Stein makes a motion to adjourn their meeting at 6:39pm, Richter seconds. Roll call vote Richter: aye, Salvador: aye, Stein: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

## VII. Town Administrator Goals

- a. Bolton shared her goals, which include continuing to get her department head meetings up and running, which so far have been a success. Bolton suggested maybe the Select Board will sit in for one of them in the future. She shared she has fiscal management goals and would like to maintain good financial practices while also looking into the future. She would like to continue to look at five-year projections and how we are going to prioritize capital needs. She wants to make sure she is in close collaboration with our state Senator and our state Representatives. She would like to look at how the town operates and if there are things that could be automated or made easier for someone to do the task

online versus having to come in person. She would like to see technological upgrades such as in the town's software and cyber training for employees. Farrell made the point that she should add Grace Bannasch's suggested Open Meeting Law training for employees to her list of goals. She also mentioned our records and how we can better sort them and get rid of the duplications that we do not need to hold onto legally.

- b. The Board gave Bolton praise for the work she has done since her hire, and how she has walked into a lot, but she has been handling it with grace and poise.

#### VIII. Meeting adjourned at 7:04pm

**VOTE:** Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:04pm, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

#### Administrative Actions:

1. Select Board: Proceed with Fire Chief contract negotiations
2. Select Board & Personnel Board: Review and update Police Chief job description for upcoming search
3. Personnel Board: Review and complete the personnel handbook by September 1st
4. Bolton: Make Personnel Handbook draft revisions
5. Bolton: Draft a proposal for Police Chief search committee structure, including potential external police chief member
6. Personnel Board: Complete the job classification system update
7. Personnel Board: Review town personnel bylaws for necessary updates
8. Bolton: Develop training program for supervisors on conducting performance evaluations
9. Bolton: Update the personnel handbook with suggested changes for social media policy and employee conduct
10. Upload current job descriptions to the town website
11. Bolton: Follow up on Clean Water Trust funding for PFAS remediation
12. Department Heads: Update capital planning projects list
13. B. Mailloux: Conduct inventory of record storage and identify documents for retention/disposal, coordinating with Bannasch on state retention guidelines
14. Bolton: Check with Grace regarding Open Meeting Law training schedule
15. Bolton: Follow up with acoustic companies regarding audio quality improvements in meeting room
16. Bolton: Update the administrative goals tracking document to reflect current progress status

#### Document and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. Draft of 7.1.25 Meeting Minutes
2. FY25 Year End Transfers Excel Sheet

3. VADAR Systems Financial Management Software Contract Renewal
4. Library Reuse Draft Committee Charge

Respectfully submitted,  
Brennan Mailloux  
Administrative Assistant  
Town Administrator/Select Board

\*\* A full version of the 7/17/25 SB meeting will be available to view on the Town of Shutesbury's YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNOKKM8N8xU>

