

Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes  
March 31, 2026 In-Person Meeting Format

Selectboard members present: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil/Chair, Eric Stocker/ Vice-Chair, Rita Farrell/ Board Member (Virtually).

Finance Committee members present: Ajay Khashu, Susie Mosher, George Arvanitis, Laura Soito, Molly Moss, April Stein, Jim Walton

Staff present and Guests: Hayley Bolton: Town Administrator, Brennan Mailloux, Gail Fleischaker, Donna MacNicol, Nettie Harrington-Pangallo, Matteo Pangallo, Leslie Bracebridge, Paul Lyons

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

Agenda Review: As posted.

Public Comment: No public comments.

General Business:

1. Approve Meeting Minutes for 3.17.26:
  - a. No amendments made.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for 3.17.26 as posted, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

2. Approve the appointment of Gail Fleischaker to the Board of Registrars:

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a motion to approve the appointment of Gail Fleischaker to the Board of Registrars, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

3. Approve the appointment of Jay Whelihan as Administrative Assessor:
  - a. Whelihan will start in April after his retirement cooling off period.
  - b. The total hours will be 16 hours per week.
  - c. The Administrative Assessor will provide technical expertise to the Board of Assessors and oversee the valuation process of all real and personal properties within the town. Whelihan will also be responsible for coordinating annual tax assessments and filings, complying with MGL Chapters 59,61,61A, and 61B, as well as statutory exemptions, and also providing guidance and oversight to the Assessor's Clerk.
  - d. It was expressed that Whelihan has years of experience, most recently in Belchertown, and will be a great asset to Shutesbury.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a motion to approve the appointment of Jay Whelihan as Administrative Assessor, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

4. Sign Town of Amherst and Town of Shutesbury Agreement for the Provision of Ambulance Service:
  - a. The Town of Amherst shall provide ambulance service to the Town of Shutesbury beginning July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2029.
  - b. FY2027 will cost \$38,784, FY2028 will be \$39,947, and FY2029 will be \$41,146. All payments will be due September 1<sup>st</sup>.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a motion to sign the mutual agreement between Amherst and Shutesbury for the Provision of Ambulance Service, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

5. Vote to sign a Lifepath grant contract for a lockbox program in Shutesbury:
  - a. The Council on Aging received the Lifepath grant for a lockbox program in Shutesbury. They were awarded almost \$3,000 to start the program up. This was a retroactive vote as it needed to be signed last Tuesday.
  - b. The Police Chief and Fire Chief were in support of this lockbox program.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a motion to sign the Lifepath grant contract, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

6. Review and Sign May 9<sup>th</sup> Local Election Warrant:
  - a. Matteo Pangallo said the poll hours will be 8:30 am to 3:30 pm. He added that the language for the Town Clerk position ballot question comes directly from Mass General Law. If someone gets elected as Town Clerk, they serve in that position until the Select Board makes an appointment and then their term ends.
  - b. Nomination papers have not been taken out for Town Clerk, Constable, one of the Planning Board seats, and one of the School Committee seats.
  - c. The town has the option to appoint a Deputy Constable if someone does not run for the elected Constable position.
  - d. Pangallo stated so far he has received 13 vote by mail applications. He anticipates more to come in.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a motion to approve and sign the May 9<sup>th</sup> Local Election Warrant. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

7. Town Administrator Report:

Bolton shared a series of Town Administrator Updates:

- a. Shutesbury Elementary School Oil Tank Remediation

- i. The Town is currently in the active cleanup phase following an emergency coordination meeting with MassDEP, Western MA Environmental, and engineering consultants.
  - ii. Bolton stated she has been in direct contact with MIIA (insurance provider); their Licensed Site Professional (LSP) is scheduled to conduct an on-site inspection and oversee recovery efforts.
  - iii. The claim is subject to a \$10,000 deductible.
  - iv. Coordination with MassDEP is ongoing to ensure full regulatory compliance and environmental protection.
  - v. The Town's priority is the safe and timely completion of remediation with appropriate oversight.
  - vi. Frank McGinn is looking into an above ground tank or alternative tank.
  - vii. As of right now, Bolton stated we do not know the full extent of the costs of the project.
- b. Stormwater Erosion Committee
- i. Committee membership reduced to five (5) seats, with a hopeful composition of:
    - 1. One Conservation Commission member
    - 2. One Lake Wyola Advisory Committee member
    - 3. One Energy and Climate Action Committee member
    - 4. Highway Superintendent or designee
    - 5. One member with relevant professional expertise (civil engineering, environmental science, or project management)
  - ii. Bolton stated we just put in a grant application that has to do with stormwater.

**VOTE:** Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to alter the Stormwater Mitigation and Implementation Committee down to five members that Hayley Bolton listed, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

- c. "Friday Five" Update with a recap of (3/27/26)
- i. Important Local Dates
    - 1. April 29: Voter registration deadline for May 9 Annual Town Meeting and Town Election
    - 2. May 4: Deadline to submit Vote-by-Mail applications
  - ii. Energy and Climate Updates
    - 1. Community Choice Aggregation (CCA):
      - a. 602 households enrolled in the program saved a combined \$7,196 in December compared to basic National Grid service. Fleischaker stated there are a handful of people using Eversource which is lower in cost. If those rates change, they are always free to sign on to the Community Choice Aggregation program.
    - 2. Climate Leader Designation:

- a. Shutesbury has been certified as a Massachusetts Climate Leader Community (1 of 28 statewide)
    - iii. Grant Updates
      - 1. Stormwater Advocacy Grant:
        - a. Focus on public outreach, education, and erosion prevention
        - b. Includes community-based activities such as road assessments and watershed modeling
      - 2. Lake Wyola Dam and Seawall Repair Grant:
        - a. Funding sought to address unsafe dam conditions
        - b. Temporary stabilization planned for spring; grant supports long-term repair design and analysis
        - c. Bolton stated once they do the repair work, they will still need to assess the conditions of the dam. The water level may not be raised immediately.
    - iv. Lake Wyola Safety Advisory
      - 1. Residents advised to:
        - a. Stay on firm ground due to soft sediment areas
        - b. Avoid restricted areas near the dam inlet due to strong currents
        - c. Wear sturdy, closed-toe footwear when near the shoreline
    - v. Upcoming Event
      - 1. National Grid Customer Advocate Session:
        - a. Date: April 13, 2026 | 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM. Location: Town Hall, 1 Cooleyville Road.
        - b. Walk-in assistance available; no appointment required
        - c. Attendees encouraged to bring benefit documentation (SNAP, MassHealth, SSI, WIC) if applicable
    - vi. Nextdoor Engagement
      - 1. It says in the Town's bio that they will not respond to comments.
      - 2. Bolton shared the first post received 820 views. The second post received 486 views.
      - 3. Positive outcomes:
        - a. Assisted residents with mail-in voting
        - b. Generated one new subscription request for Town announcements
8. Meet with the Finance Committee to review the Budget and Annual Town Meeting Warrant:
- a. The Finance Committee joined the Select Board at 6:02 pm.
  - b. Ajay started the meeting by presenting the FY27 proposed budget (\$8,338,475/7.45% increase) and the FY27 tax rate. He discussed some of the increases such as cost-of-living adjustments to employee lines and the health insurance situation. The Shutesbury Elementary School is getting a large increase

due to the function of out of district placement. A 10.2% increase to the Highway Department was mentioned. This increase considers the rising costs of machine maintenance and cost of materials. Snow and Ice was also increased among others.

- c. Regarding the Warrant, Ajay Khashu shared that the Finance Committee voted prior to the meeting on the MLP Warrant Articles. They recommended 7-0 to all three articles.
- d. MacNicol reviewed Articles 17, 22, 23, and 24. She said she will have to look more into the individual questions being asked, to give more definitive Legal advice. She requested that the Warrant be sent to her.
  - i. She changed Article 17 to read 2/3rds vote instead of a majority vote requirement. The bill will need to be paid after July 1<sup>st</sup>. She also stated that the Data Centers Article wording is not adequate, but needs more information added to it to make it more clear to the readers as to what it entails.

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a motion to add Warrant Article 31 for the Quabbin Watershed Resolution to the May 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Town Meeting Warrant, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries. in favor. Finance Committee voted

**VOTE:** Farrell makes a motion to add Warrant Article 32, Amend the Agreement Establishing a Regional School District, to the May 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Town Meeting Warrant, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries. in favor. Finance Committee voted

\*\*\*A meeting will be scheduled for Wednesday April 8<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm for the Select Board to review and vote on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant.\*\*\*

9. Other Discussion:

- a. There was discussion of snow plowing at the Shutesbury Public Library and the budget line for the work. Moving and restructuring budget lines was discussed by the committee.
- b. Harrington-Pangallo stated that the room divider in the gym and cafeteria of the Shutesbury Elementary School may not open for the Annual Town Meeting.

10. Meeting Adjourned at 7:12 pm

**VOTE:** Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:12 pm, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

Document and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. Meeting Minutes for 3.17.26
2. Draft of the Annual Town Meeting Warrant

3. Local Election Warrant
4. Amherst and Town of Shutesbury Agreement for the Provision of Ambulance Service
5. Lifepath Lockbox Grant
6. Drafted FY27 Budget

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

\*\* A full version of the 3/31/26 SB meeting will be available to view on the Town of Shutesbury's YouTube page: <https://youtu.be/DFB5WkWs5LY>

