

Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes
March 3, 2026 Virtual Meeting

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

Staff present and Guests: Hayley Bolton: Town Administrator, Brennan Mailloux, Gail Fleischaker, Tom Siefert, Michael DeChiara, Matteo Pangallo, Chief Devon Pelletier, Curtis McGuire, Amanda Alix, Jon Lawless, Susie Mosher, Grace Bannasch, Penelope Kim, Mark Rivers, Beth Willson, Nathan Murphy, Diane Jacoby, Dave Grenier

Makepeace-O'Neil calls the meeting to order at 5:01pm

Agenda Review: As posted.

Public Comment: Amanda Alix wanted to discuss the February 3rd Open Meeting Law determination agenda item. She suggested that the Select Board establish a policy to prevent similar occurrences in the future. Alix suggested that future complaints should be directed to the Town Administrator rather than the Select Board to maintain objectivity. The Town Administrator could simply acknowledge such emails and invite the complainant to attend the meeting in question to voice their opinion.

General Business:

1. Approve Meeting Minutes for 2.17.26 and 2.23.26 Fiscal Summit:

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for 2.17.26 as posted, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for 2.23.26 Fiscal Summit as posted, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

2. Approve the appointment of Curtis McGuire as Sergeant of the Shutesbury Police Department:

- a. Chief Pelletier shared McGuire has been on the force for 3 years and has been a great asset to the team. Pelletier believes he will be a perfect fit for the role.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the appointment of Curtis McGuire as Sergeant of the Shutesbury Police Department, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

3. Sign First Amendment to Municipal Solid Waste and Recycling Services Agreement:

- a. Revised to read (4%) increase instead of (5%) to the applicable service rates for the extension term.

- b. Revised the Year 6 total amount to read (\$153,240)
- c. Amendment to the agreement signed.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to sign the First Amendment to the Municipal Solid Waste and Recycling Services Agreement with Casella, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

- 4. Discussion to allow Susie Mosher to put a banner on the Town Common and West Pelham Rd. to raise awareness on the need of Rural Aid Funding:
 - a. The 48 by 26-inch banner would say "HELP! Shutesbury NEEDS rural aid funding" and the second line of it would say "ruralschoolsma.org."
 - b. The request is to leave it up from Monday, March 2 to Sunday, March 15.
 - c. The week of March 9th to March 13th is being designated as a week to raise awareness of rural aid funding for rural towns.
 - d. The Government budget has proposed only 1/3 of the recommended funding. Small towns are unable to make up this funding deficit.
 - e. Mosher would like to see standout pictures with the sign happen at the Town Hall, Fire Department, and Highway Department. March 10th at 2 pm at the school a standout picture will occur and also March 12th at 6 pm at the fire Station.
 - f. Makepeace-O'Neil shared a policy from the town website that regards flags, banners, and signs on town property. The Board felt that the request aligns with Section 2.4 of the policy.
 - g. Mosher asked that this also be made into a Town Announce. The Board agreed that it was a great idea.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve Susie Mosher displaying a banner on the Town Common and at the school on West Pelham Rd. to raise awareness on the need of Rural Aid Funding, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

- 5. Discussion of Mail in Voting:
 - a. Bannasch said that the Select Board has the option to opt out of vote by mail but that from a resident and voter perspective she would not be supportive of it.
 - b. Absentee voting would be unaffected and would remain in place.
 - c. Bolton shared that Lisa Stratford may be able to assist as needed but she is not currently in the Interim Town Clerk role anymore. Bolton shared she had an Interim Town Clerk lined up, but that fell through as the individual had medical conditions come up.
 - d. Gail Fleischaker asked if the Board of Registrars could assist. In response, Bannasch stated she believes offering it is certainly doable and the difference could be simply mailing out 50 ballots versus mailing out 100 ballots. She does not see it as a huge ask and believes individuals can be brought in and trained to do it. She does not think it will be easy, but it is absolutely doable.

- e. Tom Siefert commented that he is hoping we can stay optimistic and get it accomplished.
 - f. Farrell made the proposal that Hayley Bolton go back to Lisa Stratford, have a discussion, and then come back to the Select Board with a recommendation after a little bit more research is conducted. Bolton agreed to do so and then would also fill Gail Fleischaker in.
 - g. Penelope Kim stated the Registrars are duly elected and officers of the community. She hopes the Select Board will consider using them for help.
 - h. Tom Siefert asked if the Board of Registrars receive a stipend and Fleischaker stated no, but if they perform their service in the working of an election, than they get paid for those hours.
6. Discussion of Warrant due date and usage of Article place holders:
- a. Bolton stated Warrant Articles are due March 25th and that we can accept placeholders. She stated it is trickier with the financial articles, but as long as the language is in, it should be okay. The Warrant is planned to be posted on April 23rd.
 - b. Bolton stated at some point we will need to explore appointing someone as Constable to post the Warrant.
 - c. The first review of the Warrant will be on March 31st with the Finance Committee hopefully joining the Select Board.
7. Discussion of hosting a Candidates Night:
- a. Farrell proposed a Candidates Night for Saturday, April 18th at the Shutesbury Public Library. She stated she would coordinate this with Town Moderator Nettie Harrington Pangallo. She would also include Penny Kim in the process, as she has experience with candidate nights.
 - b. This would offer candidates the opportunity to introduce themselves to the residents of Shutesbury and express their thoughts and ideas.
 - c. The goal is to draw in as many residents as possible, including those that have children.
8. Discussion of Town wide light pollution:
- a. There were concerns raised that the Shutesbury Elementary School remains brightly lit even at night.
 - b. DeChiara stated in talks with concerned resident Diane Jacoby, he told her to reach out to the Select Board as they would be the best ones to deal with the problem. He compared this issue to the Select Board hosting dog hearings.
 - c. Stocker agreed it is an issue and he sees it not as just a light issue, but an issue of using electricity during hours when it is not needed. Stocker stated in the early morning it is lit up like Fenway Park. Diane Jacoby shared a similar observation.
 - d. DeChiara explained that the town could apply for a Climate Leader Community Grant up to \$1 million, with results expected in the spring, and suggested bundling lighting improvements with other projects.

- e. There is agreement that there will be a joint meeting held between a member of the Select Board, members of the Energy and Climate Action Committee, members from School Committee, members from the Buildings Committee, as well as the Town Administrator.
9. Discussion on actions/info regarding clean energy regulations and project applications. (Michael DeChiara)
- a. DeChiara stated the clean energy regulations will go into effect July 1st. He stated DOER is introducing a whole new procedure that would require municipalities to start accepting consolidated permits.
 - b. DeChiara stated the town needs to publicize this information through an avenue such as the town website. He believes the Select Board should make the decision to wait on accepting consolidated permits until October 1st to avoid procedural complications.
 - c. DeChiara stated the town needs to designate one person as the Town's local government representative. DeChiara does not think you can go the consultant route but could add extra hours to another individual's role like the Land Use Clerk to deal with the handling the permit applications.
 - d. DeChiara thinks this role could require a lot of hours and additional pay. He stated Bolton should talk with Finance Committee about budgeting for this work, although the exact amount is hard to estimate.
 - e. The Select Board stated they will discuss who will be their local representative and will also talk with Finance Committee about the budget line request.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to not accept a consolidated application until October 1st, 2026, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

10. Acknowledge receipt of the Zoning Bylaw amendment regarding Data Centers, and vote to send the amendment to the Planning Board for a public hearing:
- a. Nathan Murphy stated they have a draft of the Zoning Bylaw amendment regarding Data Centers. The Planning Board will be having a hearing on March 9th. DeChiara stated they have presented the draft already to Town Counsel and she stated it looks good.

VOTE: Farrell makes a motion to acknowledge receipt of the Zoning Bylaw Amendment regarding Data Centers, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to send the Zoning Bylaw amendment regarding Data Centers to the Planning Board for a public hearing, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

11. Town Administrator Report:
- a. Bolton stated that on the May 9th Ballot there will be a question regarding making the Town Clerk position appointed. She stated if this passes, she hopes this will draw a larger pool of candidates for the position.
 - b. Bolton stated she has found a contractor who can come in and start the work on Lake Wyola Dam. They could be ready to go within 10 business days, and the work itself could take about 14 days. She is in close contact with Town Counsel. She also stated GZA will be on board as the engineers. Bolton will follow up with the deed examiner regarding access to the dam across private property and update the Select Board on the status of property access and any required agreements.
 - c. Bolton stated she has been working with the Personnel Board on editing and revising the Personnel Handbook and Personnel Bylaw. She stated some changes are being made regarding bereavement leave, probationary period extensions, and remote work policies.
 - d. Bolton stated that our health insurance rates are lower than anticipated. This should help with the budget, but the tradeoff is increased premiums and there will be deductibles.

12. Meeting Adjourned at 6:24 pm

VOTE: Farrell makes a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:24 pm, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Farrell: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

Document and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. Meeting Minutes for 2.17.26 and 2.23.26 Fiscal Summit.
2. Appointment Letter for Curtis McGuire
3. First Amendment to Municipal Solid Waste and Recycling Services Agreement
4. Letter of Indemnification and Release Agreement
5. Zoning Bylaw Amendment re. Data Centers

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

** A full version of the 3/3/26 SB meeting will be available to view on the Town of Shutesbury's YouTube page: <https://youtu.be/XMvoRU3XgC4>

