Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes
July 21, 2026 Hybrid Meeting Format

<u>Selectboard members present</u>: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil/Chair, Eric Stocker/ Vice-Chair, James Walton/ Board Member.
<u>Staff present and Guests</u>: Hayley Bolton: Town Administrator, Brennan Mailloux, Gail Fleischaker, Tom Siefert, Amanda Alix, Jon Lawless, Mary David, Penelope Kim, Frank McGinn

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

<u>Agenda Review:</u> As posted.

<u>Public Comment:</u> Amanda Alix discussed her disappointment in how the Fire Department's purchase was presented at the previous Annual Town Meeting. Alix stated it was disingenuous of town officials to respond inaccurately to questions posed at town meeting in an effort to sway the vote, which their answers may have done. Alix stated soon we'll see another big tax hike when this million-dollar truck is financed. Alix worries that when the next recession hits and values drop, the extra levy capacity will vanish, and officials will be forced to use overrides to fund ordinary town expenses. (Please see attachment for her full set of comments)

<u>General Business:</u>

1. <u>Approve Meeting Minutes for 7/7/26:</u>

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for 6/9/26 as posted, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

2. <u>Appointments:</u>

   a. <u>Nicolao Jacobs to the Recreation Committee</u>

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to approve the appointment of Nicolao Jacobs to the Recreation Committee, Walton seconds. Roll call vote Stocker: aye, Walton: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

   b. <u>Frank McGinn as Finance Committee Representative on the Capital Improvement Planning Committee.</u>

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the appointment of Frank McGinn to the Capital Improvement Planning Committee as a Finance Committee Representative, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

c. Tom Siefert as Planning Board Representative on the Community Preservation Committee.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the appointment of Tom Siefert to the Community Preservation Committee as the Planning Board Representative, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

3. Sign Letter of Support for a three-town land protection earmark in the Environmental Bond Bill:
   a. Bolton shared that she was emailed by Belchertown's Town Planner to sign a letter of support for the Environmental Bond Bill, with the hopes of trying to get a regional partnership for land conservation efforts.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to sign the Letter of Support for a three-town land protection earmark in the Environmental Bond Bill, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

4. Special Event Permit Application- Town Wide Birthday Party, Town Common, Sunday October 4, 2026:
   a. The application was submitted on June 25, 2026 by Susie Mosher. The event is a Town-Wide Birthday Party on the Town Common on Sunday, October 4th, 2026. The event will begin at 3 pm and end at 5 pm. The event will be outdoors only, but it is requested that the bathrooms of the Town Hall be made available. Ice cream, cake, cider, and water will be available.
   b. The application was signed by the Board of Health, Fire Chief, and Police Chief.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the Special Event Permit Application for a Town-Wide Birthday Party on the Town Common on Sunday, October 4th, 2026, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

5. Discuss options/next steps for 56 Wendell Rd H-127 and Wendell Rd H-26:
   a. 56 Wendell Rd Lot H-127 is a burned house lot. Wendell Rd H-26 is a vacant lot. The property has been consistently in and out of tax title many times.
   b. On July 29, 2025, the Court was asked for a default judgment of foreclosure. At the one-year point (July 29, 2026) the Court can grant judgment for the Town of Shutesbury, as they become the absolute owner of the properties. (This process may take longer than one year.) After the judgment of foreclosure, the new law requires the Town to decide within 60 days of the judgment whether they intend to sell or retain the property.

6. Sign Dry Hydrant License Agreement with McAvoy Pond LLC:
   a. The agreement is to allow the Town of Shutesbury, Licensee, to draw water from McAvoy Pond for the purposes of firefighting, fire suppression, and public safety and fire protection purposes. The Licensor reserves the right to use the above-

described land and pond. The license does not create a public right to access the pond or enter onto the premises owned by the Licensor.

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to sign the Dry Hydrant License Agreement with McAvoy Pond LLC, Walton seconds. Roll call vote Stocker: aye, Walton: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

7. Review and vote on two proposed policies:
   a. Policy on Hybrid Public Meetings
      i. A policy for hybrid meetings which states that the town expects meetings to be held in a hybrid fashion as default format. A hybrid meeting requires a designated physical location open to the public alongside a reliable, functional remote access platform (such as Zoom, Teams, or Google Meet) that allows real-time public participation and monitoring, in compliance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law (OML).
      ii. There was discussion about amending the policy to clean up the language regarding having the Chair of the committee physically present in the designated meeting room.
      iii. There was discussion about audio issues in the Downstairs Meeting Room and hosting hybrid meetings.
      iv. A survey regarding the proposed policy, as well as the proposed policy will be sent to board and committee Chairs for review.
      v. The vote was tabled and will be revisited at an upcoming meeting after survey results and feedback are compiled.
   b. Policy on Employee Membership and Committee Voting
      i. This policy covers when it is appropriate for town staff to be voting members on a committee.
      ii. Assigned to be Policy #260721

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to approve the Policy on Employee Membership and Committee Voting, Walton seconds. Roll call vote Stocker: aye, Walton: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

8. Town Administrator Report:
   a. Bright Arrow Emergency Communication Platform
      i. Bolton shared the town is currently working with an account technician to set up the platform. There will be promotional flyers and mailings going out soon to let residents know what is going on. The goal is to tie in the launch of the new platform to house numbers and lock boxes.
   b. Quabbin Equity
      i. Bolton discussed the Environmental Bond Bill, including the Quabbin Equity Act. Bolton stated legislators are working on the final version to submit to the Governor. Bolton also stated she received a request from Senator Comerford’s office to submit the town’s Annual Town Meeting-

voted Quabbin Resolution and a copy of the town's MWRA board meeting speech so that they can be considered during their discussion.

c. Warming and Cooling Centers
    i. Bolton shared that the town received a couple inquiries into the operation of a cooling center. The topic was discussed with the Emergency Management Team, and a consensus was reached that more data is needed before we can begin to allocate resources. The town is asking residents to complete an anonymous survey on the town website to help us understand our community's needs regarding extreme weather events, heating/cooling, and power outages. Bolton shared the town to date has received 53 responses (3% of population, 8% of households), but the survey will be live for about two more weeks. Bolton provided some statistics she has compiled:
        1. 66% capable of holding safe indoor temperatures for 48+ hours during a winter outage, and 91% having had no need to evacuate over the past three years.
        2. 68% of respondents stated they are unlikely to use a daylight town cooling/warming center (preferring to shelter in place), and the remaining 32% would only consider it as a last resort if personal backup plans fail.
        3. The biggest obstacles residents face during severe storms are road conditions and driveway blockages.

d. Succession Planning
    i. Bolton shared that during her first year as Town Administrator, it became clear to her that the town needs to start documenting key components of essential positions. Without succession planning, Bolton feels valuable institutional knowledge will be lost. Bolton distributed a survey to all department heads and will be developing action plans based on the results she receives, with the goal of creating a "guidebook" next year.

9. <u>Meeting Adjourned at 5:51 pm</u>

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

Document and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. Meeting Minutes for 7/7/26
2. (3) Appointment Letters
3. Policy on Hybrid Public Meetings
4. Policy on Employee Membership and Committee Voting
5. Dry Hydrant License Agreement

6. Special Event Permit Application
7. Letter of Support for Environmental Bond Bill

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

** A full version of the 7/21/26 SB meeting will be available to view on the Town of Shutesbury's YouTube page: https://youtu.be/_ecqt4kANUY