Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes
July 7, 2026 In-Person Meeting Format

Selectboard members present: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil/Chair, Eric Stocker/ Vice-Chair, James Walton/ Board Member.
Staff present and Guests: Hayley Bolton: Town Administrator, Brennan Mailloux, Gail Fleischaker, Tom Siefert, Mark Rivers, William Wells, Judith Wells, Jim Moore, Judy Remmel, Sally Fairfield, Nicholas Yarmac, Sandra Yarmac, John Gorey, Catherine Hilton, Art Keene, Terry Smith, Walter Tibbetts, Howard Kinder, Jean Perkins, Lee Halasz, Anna Mancebo, Mary David, Mike Stotz, Frank McGinn, Diane, Riordan Hoffman, Kathleen Timpson, Gary West, Suzanne Lyon, Leslie Bracebridge, Matteo Pangallo, Michael DeChiara, Tracy McNaughton, Susie Mosher, Jennifer Wallace, Marie Rivers, Mary Lou Conca, Mary Glavin, Mike Perry, Steve Soucy, Matt Borowiec, Stephen Dallmus, Miriam DeFant, Kathy Salvador, Zachary Harrison, Grace Bannasch, Susan Millinger, George Abdow, Norene Pease, Shelly (no Zoom last name), tjbernar (Zoom name), Kate Pfordresher, Ed Galenski, Charlene Galenski.

Agenda Review: As posted.

Public Comment:

DeChiara raised a public comment about pole hearings. He described how the lack of communication from National Grid's contractor caused road blockages, preventing mail delivery and leaving residents unsure of alternate routes. He suggested the Select Board ask for written commitments from National Grid in terms of how they implement the work with their vendor.

McNaughton asked if a future Select Board agenda could discuss alternatives to traditional fireworks in town. Perhaps drone shows or laser shows. Perhaps a committee could be created to look at this issue. McNaughton stated that over 50% of the lake community is now year-round residents.

General Business:

1. Approve Meeting Minutes for 7/1/26:
    a. No corrections or edits were noted by any board member.

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for 7/1/26 as posted, Walton seconds. Roll call vote Stocker: aye, Walton: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

2. 5:05 pm - (2) National Grid Pole Hearings. One for Pelham Hill Rd, and one for Pratt Corner Rd. (Both for JO Pole installations.):
    a. The first pole hearing marked #31326133 was removed from the agenda and discussion.
    b. The second pole hearing marked #31326138 was stated that it is to install 1 JO pole on Pelham Hill Rd beginning at a point approximately 2,500 feet south of

the centerline of the intersection of Pelham Hill Rd and Leverett Rd. Locate pole #9-75 Pelham Hill Rd approximately 12 feet to the edge of the road. The pole will carry radio equipment to support new automated AMR (smart) meters being rolled out statewide, enabling remote meter reading and improved outage detection.

c. Soucy does not anticipate any needs for a full road closure. It is just one pole to be installed, so he anticipates the project only taking approximately one day and requiring a short police detail.
d. Bolton asked whether the project had been coordinated with the town's Broadband Committee; Steve Soucy was unaware but confirmed standard pole transfer processes would be followed.
e. Conca about the type of meters and their relationship to 5G/6G frequencies; Steve Soucy confirmed they are smart meters but could not specify the exact frequency band used.

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to approve Pole Hearing #31326138, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

3. <u>Appointment of Town Clerk position:</u>
   a. Two candidates were interviewed, Damon Herring and Calvin Elison. Reference checks were conducted by Town Administrator Bolton, and she had drafted an offer letter for the Select Board to fill in and provide to the chosen candidate.
   b. The Select Board ultimately chose Calvin Elison. They were impressed by his resume, interview performance, and his enthusiasm for records management.
   c. Walton would like to see Herring get involved with the Town of Shutesbury in another role, as he has great energy, and would be beneficial to the town.

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to nominate Calvin Elison as Town Clerk, Walton seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.
VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to appoint Calvin Elison as Town Clerk, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

4. <u>Vote to lift state of emergency and restore public access to the Lake Wyola Dam:</u>
   a. Bolton explained the emergency was declared last Thanksgiving after Walter Tibbetts discovered sinkholes around the dam. The emergency declaration allowed deficit spending and expedited repairs. She confirmed the lake has reached full summer pool level and the engineering team and state have verified the emergency repairs were successful. Bolton noted a second phase, a more in-depth structural integrity assessment by the State Office of Dam Safety, is anticipated but not yet required.
   b. Makepeace-O'Neil proposed holding off on restoring public access to the Lake Wyola Dam area pending review of prior decisions about access over private land. This decision will be addressed at an upcoming meeting.

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to lift the state of emergency for the dam, Walton seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

5. <u>Review/sign Dry Hydrant License Agreement outlining usage of McAvoy Pond by Shutesbury specifically for water for firefighting:</u>
   a. This agenda item was tabled as the town is waiting for legal review.

6. <u>Review and sign (2) Kestrel Land Trust conservation restrictions. (1) for Brown (Montague Rd), and (2) for former Cowls land on Poverty Mountain:</u>
   a. A Kestrel representative described the first property as approximately 200 acres formerly owned by the Brown family on Montague Road, purchased by Kestrel through a state government grant and private funds. A conservation restriction is being donated to the Northeast Wilderness Trust as a second layer of protection. He Described the second property as approximately 140 acres donated by the Cowls family to the Trustees of Reservations. Kestrel will hold the conservation restriction over that land.
   b. It was stated that both properties will be permanently protected as "forever wild" forests with no commercial harvesting permitted; limited habitat management is allowed.
   c. Conca asked about the boardwalk at Brightwater Bog and whether treated wood was used. The Kestrel representative was unable to answer but offered to follow up.

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to sign the Kestrel Land Trust Conservation Restriction for the Brown (Montague Rd) location, Walton seconds. Roll call vote Stocker: aye, Walton: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.
VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to sign the Kestrel Land Trust Conservation Restriction for former Cowls land on Poverty Mountain, Walton seconds. Roll call vote Stocker: aye, Walton: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

7. <u>Discuss plans for a 5-minute speech to the MWRA Board on July 10th:</u>
   a. *Massachusetts Water Resources Authority*
   b. Bolton explained the resolution seeks fairer PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) payments and a seat on the MWRA Board for Quabbin-area communities, noting that approximately 43% of Massachusetts residents drink Quabbin water while host communities receive disproportionately small payments and have no board representation.
   c. The town's three representative speakers will be Hayley Bolton, Jim Walton, and Elaine Puleo. Michael DeChiara will be an alternate for Puleo if she cannot attend.
   d. This is an avenue for Shutesbury to ask for equitable treatment and an equitable partnership regarding the Quabbin Watershed and its benefits.

8. <u>Joint discussion with Lake Wyola Advisory Committee (LWAC).</u>

d. Bolton shared a short presentation she made that covers the history of LWAC, the role of an advisory committee, what the current committee structure is missing, a committee proposal for the future, and a timeline.
e. Boltons proposed membership framework for the permanent committee is 12 members with 9 voting members. The 9 voting member seats would be occupied by a representative from the Select Board, Planning Board, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, (3) watershed residents and one at-large resident. The three non-voting members would consist of the Fire Chief, Dam Keeper, and a Technical Expert.
f. The proposed term lengths would be three-year terms.
g. A timeline was shared that states as of late July, application submissions would be open for the 9 voting seats. In August, the Select Board will conduct formal reviews and vote on appointments of the standardized board. In September, there will be the first meeting of the committee, after conflict-of-interest training is completed by all of the members.
h. Makepeace-O'Neil apologized to the audience that the presentation, listening session, and joint meeting did not occur at an earlier meeting before moving forward with the disbandment vote and restructuring.
i. Makepeace-O'Neil asked the other Select Board members if they would be supportive of not making any decisions tonight but rather listen to the public comments and make a decision at a later meeting date. Walton and Stocker agreed that it would be fine.

9. <u>Public Comment: Lake Wyola and Lake Wyola Advisory Committee:</u>

a. The Lake Wyola Advisory Committee called their meeting to order.
b. During this period numerous public comments were made by members of the in-person audience, as well as members of the Zoom audience. Comments ranged from history of the ad-hoc committee, to accepting Makepeace-O'Neil's apology for the Select Board's actions, to rejections of the new proposed committee. Many members of the public felt the decision was made swiftly and not in collaboration or consideration of the current LWAC members. There was also much discussion and disagreement with the proposed non-voting members' positions on the new Charge. Overall, there were mixed public comments with some not in support of the new proposed committee and its composition, some that requested the Select Board to rescind their vote, and others in support of moving forward with the committee change as is, or with minor tweaks.
c. This public comment session lasted for a couple of hours.
d. The Select Board acknowledged that it was good discussion with a lot of good arguments from all different viewpoints. Makepeace-O'Neil acknowledged that the Select Board will work hard to come to the best solution, although it will be impossible to please everybody.
e. The final discussion had was about rescinding the previous Select Board vote to disband the committee. No vote was taken.

i. It was discussed that at a coming meeting, a vote may be made to rescind the prior disbandment vote and allow LWAC to continue their work until a permanent decision is made. In the meantime, the board agreed to consult with Town Counsel on all outstanding procedural questions before the next meeting.

10. Meeting Adjourned at 7:44 pm

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 7/1/26
2. Pole Hearing Packet #31326138
3. (2) Kestrel Land Trust conservation restrictions
4. LWAC Presentation
5. Offer Letter for Town Clerk Position
6. Draft Letter for MWRA Board Meeting

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

** A full version of the 7/7/26 SB meeting will be available to view on the Town of Shutesbury's YouTube page: https://youtu.be/Jl4abdasAbQ