

Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes
August 18, 2026 In-Person Meeting Format

Selectboard members present: Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil/Chair, Eric Stocker/ Vice-Chair (virtually), James Walton/ Board Member.

Staff present and Guests: Hayley Bolton: Town Administrator, Brennan Mailloux, Gail Fleischaker, Tom Siefert, Calvin Elison, David Grenier, Leslie Bracebridge, Michael Miller, Michael DeChiara, Lucy Gertz, Angela Cherniak.

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

Agenda Review: As posted.

Public Comment: Tom Siefert made a public comment regarding agenda item number 5. He expressed concern that the agenda item lacked sufficient detail for the public to understand what was being voted on and noted that a relevant email from August 4th could have been attached to the agenda. Siefert requested that the Board discuss but not vote on the item at this meeting, and instead re-post it with more information at the next Select Board Meeting.

Angela Cherniak gave public comment about her concerns regarding the conditions of dirt roads in Shutesbury. She described severe erosion, single lane conditions, large ruts, drainage clogs, silt runoff into streams and wetlands, and dangerous winter conditions including icing. She noted that a sand bin placed by the Highway Department has been empty for years and the shovel has rotted. She gave preference to keeping the roads unpaved but acknowledged distrust in proper maintenance. She gave suggestions for ways to help the situation, including mail-in surveys and the development of a Roads Committee.

General Business:

1. Approve Meeting Minutes for 8/4/26:
 - a. The approval of the Meeting Minutes was tabled until the next meeting as there was discussion about the wording of Agenda Item 2, Section H.
2. Discussion about the intersection of Prescott Rd/ Route 202 intersection. (Consider seeking out to Mass DOT for a Heavy Vehicle Exclusion for Prescott Rd):
 - a. Highway Superintendent David Grenier reported that he had contacted the MassDOT District 2 manager and is awaiting a certified letter outlining what signage and assistance the state can provide. Proposed are additional signs at the top of the hill, along the descent, and at the intersection. Grenier noted that recent rollovers were due to driver error (out-of-adjustment brakes, invalid CDL). Painting speed limits on the road surface was suggested.
 - b. Grenier would like to see more signs also up before the hill to give warning that there's going to be a hill ahead and what the grade is. Grenier stated he requested a turnout as well.

- i. Stocker suggested the creation of a Roads Committee as well as installing speed humps, rumble strips, or a three-way stop.
 - ii. Grenier stated that MassDOT will let the Town know what is legal to put up for signage, what is not legal to, and hopefully answer if the state would be willing to provide the Town with the signs to install.
 - iii. DeChiara suggested this issue became bigger with the creation of Google Maps. He thinks the new signs may change the algorithm of Google Maps. DeChiara also stated any proposed detour has to stay within the town's limits. He thinks discouraging fast trucks from going down the hill is very important and perhaps a traffic study needs to be conducted. He recommended redirecting trucks via Route 63 or through Pelham to Route 202.
 - iv. Stocker raised the point that local truck deliveries are okay, but that trucks should not be using Shutesbury simply as a short cut.
- 3. Review Completed Primary Warrant (Town Clerk Calvin Elison to present it):
 - a. Town Clerk Calvin Elison presented to the Select Board the completed version of the 2026 State Primary Warrant.
 - i. The Primary will be held on Tuesday, September 1, 2026 from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm. The Warrant needs to be posted 7 days prior to the date of the Primary.
 - ii. Walton and Makepeace-O'Neil were in-person to execute the 2 required signatures. Stocker will come in before the deadline to sign his name.

VOTE: Walton makes a motion to approve and sign the State Primary Warrant, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

- 4. Discuss/vote on Application for Use of Town Common. (Play group with families in Shutesbury):
 - a. The application was submitted for use of the Town Common. The description of the event/activity is for a "Play group with families in Shutesbury." The application is for multiple days of Town Common use, although they are back dated.
 - b. The Applicant was not present, so the Select Board stated they would ask them to attend a future Select Board meeting to review their application again.
- 5. Discuss/vote on giving permission to Mary Anne Antonellis to move forward with a knotweed removal sustainability project:
 - b. Antonellis presented a proposed sustainability project as part of the Sustainable Libraries Initiative training.
 - c. The project aims to expand the Library's invasive plant management and native plant education efforts by creating a public demonstration site for invasive plant removal along the west side of Pelham Hill Road, starting at Baker Road and going to the town line. Her proposal includes removal of invasive species,

including Japanese knotweed (about 14 clumps are present 10 to 40 feet wide), using appropriate methods (primarily hand-pulling), followed by tarping the knotweed to suppress regrowth. Antonellis stated she does not plan to use chemicals for this project's approach.

- d. Small grant funds would be used to rent a dumpster for disposal of invasive plants and purchase heavy-duty tarps, supplemented by existing program funds.
- e. Community partners, including the Conservation Commission, Subduing Knotweed Task Force, and Kestrel Land Trust, have expressed interest in collaborating.
- f. Volunteers and partners would monitor the site over several years, with the goal of eliminating knotweed along this section of road within five years.
- g. Educational signage would be installed after removal to explain invasive plant management and the benefits of restoring native habitats.
- h. Antonellis requested Selectboard permission to proceed with the project and asked for Highway Department assistance with removing and loading knotweed into the dumpster.
- i. The target timeline for initial removal and tarping is September 15–October 15.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to vote to support Mary Anne Antonellis and David Grenier's quest to get rid of knotweed in the discussed locations, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

6. Discuss properties on Wendell Rd. (56 Wendell Rd H-127 & H-26):

- j. 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.
- k. 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.
- l. As of right now, the most recent update Bolton has received from Town Treasurer, Ryan Mailloux, is that there has been no movement on the properties.
- m. Bolton shared an email from a resident that raised relevant questions such as: Was there foam used to fight the fire? Did any vehicles leak gasoline or oil onto the property? Is there lead paint or asbestos? What happened with the fuel tank on the property? Is the water still potable?
- n. Stocker stated it is important to understand the environmental factors before any actions are taken, such as tearing down the building. He stated it is also important to think about the future, as any land could be important to have for future, down-the-road opportunities such as a new town building location.
- o. Makepeace-O'Neil stated she thinks a serious discussion should be had regarding taking ownership of the lots.

- p. Bolton stated she will reach out to relevant and necessary contacts with questions.

7. Personnel Board, Select Board Representative:

- i. Bolton shared that there is a need for a new Select Board Representative to the Personnel Board. The Town Moderator made the Town aware that Melissa Makepeace-O'Neil has passed her term limit as the Select Board's Representative.

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to appoint James Walton as the Select Board Representative to the Personnel Board, Makepeace-O'Neil 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 stated that the replacement platform for CodeRed, Bright Arrow, is now live. Bolton encouraged the public to sign up for emergency alerts and notifications.

b. Grant Watch

- i. Technical Assistance Grant is still to be announced.
- ii. The Lake Wyola Dam Design Grant is also still to be announced.

c. Bolton stated there has been on-going Personnel Department Check-Ins conducted with Town Employees such as the Treasurer, Police Chief, and Town Accountant. Job Descriptions are being reviewed for the first time since 2018.

d. Special Town Meeting Planning

- i. Bolton stated she plans to meet with Calvin Elison, Brennan Mailloux, and Town Moderator, Nettie Harrington-Pangallo, to discuss logistics and plan for a proposed Fall Special Town Meeting.

e. Bolton stated she wants to do a joint meeting with the Finance Committee and Capital Planning to prepare for the upcoming budget season and review long range planning tools and preliminary FY28 assumptions. The Select Board is looking at either September 1st or 15th as possible dates.

f. Bolton shared that there is a prior Shutesbury resident who is now buried in Hadley who participated in the Boston Tea Party. There is going to be a recognition event in September for individuals to attend.

9. Meeting Adjourned at 6:35 pm

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

Document and Other Items Used at the Meeting:

1. Meeting Minutes for 8/4/26
2. Mary Anne Antonellis Email Requesting Support for her Knotweed Project
3. Town Common Use Application
4. State Primary Warrant
5. Cherniak's Public Comment

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

** A full version of the 8/18/26 SB meeting will be available to view on the Town of Shutesbury's YouTube page: <https://youtu.be/M1m3hstall0>

