

Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes
September 2, 2026 Hybrid 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, Tom Siefert, Nettie Harrington-Pangallo, Michael Hooker, Tracy McNaughton, Jessica Makepeace, Liz Goodsell, Matteo Pangallo

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

Agenda Review: As posted.

Public Comment: No public comments were made.

General Business:

1. Approve Meeting Minutes for 8/4/26, 8/18/26, 8/24/26, 8/25/26 10 AM, and 8/25/26 5:30 PM:
 - a.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for 8/4/26 as posted, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for 8/18/26 as posted, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for 8/24/26 as posted, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for 8/25/26 10 AM as posted, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for 8/25/26 5:30 PM as posted, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

2. Discussion about 41 Cooleyville Rd. Thoughts on next steps for the property and review a comparative cost analysis provided by Realtor: Heather Ferrari.
 - a. The Select Board discussed 41 Cooleyville Rd, a property bequeathed to the town by David Ulen. They discussed the need to make a decision on whether or not the town wishes to retain the property and maintain it or sell it. Michael Hooker, an Estate Planning Elder Law Attorney, stated if the town wants the property, he would be happy to deed it over to the town and relinquish all responsibility for

the estate. He would ask for a refund on the real estate taxes that he paid on it (\$1,200.00).

- b. Realtor, Heather Ferrari, assessed the property and provided the town with a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA). The CMA suggests a list price range of \$175,000-\$199,000, with more potential if severe landscaping is conducted. She stated the best course of action would be to present it as is with the hopes that a cash investor would take on the property to fix up. The interior needs a clean out. She did state the market has slowed down quite a bit though, which could affect selling the property.
- c. Any buyer would likely need a variance from the Planning Board.
- d. Ferrari stated that the house has a good feeling and has potential.
- e. Makepeace-O'Neil discussed how we already have a current property in town awaiting a decision, the M.N. Spear Library Building.
- f. Walton stated he believes the town should take on the property.
 - i. The Board discussed how the two worst scenarios that could happen would be the house not selling, or if there becomes a need to tear down the building.
 - ii. Bolton sees it as a minimal risk opportunity.
 - iii. Ferrari stated that in Massachusetts, a seller is responsible for a Title V (5) inspection, a lead paint inspection, and a smoke inspection with the Fire Department before close. Siefert said 1996 is the start date of Title V (5), so any house older than that will likely need an upgrade or replacement of their septic system. He stated if the house is sold as is with a known septic failure, the buyer usually has two years to address it. There would need to be a disclosure during the sale.
 - iv. Hooker stated his two cents are the town would be foolish not to take the opportunity.

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to accept the property of 41 Cooleyville Rd. and pay back Michael Hooker \$1,200.00 in real estate fees, Walton seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

- 3. Discuss and vote on a newly amended Lake Wyola Advisory Committee Charge. (Recommendations and public comments were gathered at their previous 8/25/26 5:30 pm meeting for consideration):
 - a. Bolton presented a new proposed Charge (3.0) for the Lake Wyola Advisory Committee. The Board discussed one section of the Charge, the Community Residents (7 seats) section. They discussed the wording to be used regarding the three (3) residents or property owners. Siefert mentioned that property owners may not be residents, and therefore with the current wording, there could be three non-residents appointed to the committee instead of actual residents. The Board decided on "Three (3) Shutesbury residents or property owners within 2,000 feet of Lake Wyola shore."

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to approve the new Charge of the Lake Wyola Advisory Committee as amended, Walton seconds. Roll call vote Stocker: aye, Walton: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

4. Discussion about having a Fall Special Town Meeting:
 - a. Bolton shared that so far, the town has received around 5 or 6 potential Warrant articles. Two are prior year bills.
 - b. Special Town Meeting has to be posted at least two weeks in advance.
 - c. Harrington-Pangallo stated a smaller Special Town Meeting would be a great opportunity for testing out the new clickers.
 - d. Bolton stated the town is looking at a day in October if a Fall special Town Meeting is to happen. (The date is Saturday, October 17th, with the posting requirement date as October 5th). Locations that could be used are the Shutesbury Elementary School, Shutesbury Public Library, or Shutesbury Town Hall.
 - e. Harrington-Pangallo questioned if there will be enough time to coordinate childcare. She put on the record that having a predictable Fall established date would be beneficial for planning purposes.
 - f. There was discussion about proposing to the Finance Committee an established Town Moderator Expenses budget line.
5. Discussion of Town Administrator's Fiscal Risk Assessment for FY28:
 - a. The Board reviewed a FY28 Fiscal Risk Assessment drafted by Town Administrator Bolton regarding the Town's capital reserves, facility maintenance needs, ADA compliance requirements, and long-term debt capacity in preparation for the FY28 budget cycle.
 - b. The assessment noted that the Town has used reserves strategically in recent years to offset post-pandemic inflation and other temporary operating costs. However, annual transfers to the Capital Stabilization Fund were reduced from the historical level of \$112,695 to \$0 in FY26 and FY27 in order to absorb debt service associated with recent capital purchases, including the Highway dump truck, backhoe, and Lock's Pond culvert.
 - c. The reduction in capital savings has limited the Town's ability to build reserves while significant facility, equipment, and accessibility needs continue to accumulate. Recent building and ADA assessments identified numerous high-priority repairs and accessibility barriers at Town Hall, the Fire Department, Highway Department, MN Spear Public Library/Old Library, and Shutesbury Elementary School. The new Shutesbury Public Library was identified as fully accessible, with only minor adjustments needed.
 - d. The Fire Department also has several anticipated capital needs, including replacement of Engine 2, Brush 1, SCBA breathing packs, the school water supply tank, and the SCBA compressor.
 - e. Preliminary long-range debt modeling indicates that FY28 debt service could increase significantly, particularly if the replacement of Engine 2 is financed

through the General Fund. This could substantially reduce the Town's unused Excess Levy Capacity and limit flexibility for future operating costs, statutory requirements, and capital needs.

- f. The assessment also reviewed the Town's use of Free Cash, which has increased in recent years to address temporary school costs, health insurance increases, OPEB, transportation, library expenses, and building repairs. As operating conditions stabilize, the assessment recommends reducing reliance on Free Cash for recurring operating expenses and directing one-time funds toward long-term capital needs.
- g. Recommendations Discussed:
 - i. Develop a phased plan to restore annual contributions to the Capital Stabilization Fund.
 - ii. Evaluate financing options for major capital purchases, including whether a voter-approved Debt Exclusion should be considered for the replacement of Engine 2.
 - iii. Establish guidelines for financing major and medium-sized capital projects.
 - iv. Maintain conservative New Growth projections and consider directing unexpected revenue increases toward capital reserves.
 - v. Prioritize high-liability, life-safety, code, and ADA accessibility improvements.
 - vi. Pursue available state and federal grants for accessibility and public safety projects, including the Massachusetts Office on Disability Municipal ADA Grant Program and FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grants.
 - vii. Preserve sufficient operating contingency and levy capacity to address future operational and statutory requirements.

6. Town Administrator Report:

Town Administrator Bolton provided the Board with updates on several matters.

- a. Interbasin Transfer Hearing: Bolton reported that the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) is seeking approval to increase its transfer of water from the Quabbin Reservoir by 20 million gallons per day to expand its service area. A public hearing is scheduled for September 30, 2026, in Belchertown.
 - i. Bolton noted concerns regarding the lack of representation for watershed host and steward communities on the MWRA Board of Directors, as well as concerns about the regulatory process for approving additional water withdrawals. State Senator Jo Comerford and State Representative Aaron Saunders are working to prohibit new Quabbin water transfers until a comprehensive evaluation of water needs in surrounding western and north-central Massachusetts communities has been completed.
- b. Lake Wyola Dam Grant: Bolton reported that the Town was awarded \$250,000 through the Energy and Environmental Affairs Dam and Seawall Program for the

Lake Wyola Dam Repairs Design and Permitting project. The funding will be distributed over FY27 and FY28, with no required Town match.

- i. Bolton explained that the dam is currently classified as a High Hazard Potential structure and is considered unsafe due to sinkholes and severe seepage around the low-level outlet pipe. Temporary stabilization measures and a controlled lake drawdown are currently being used to maintain safety. The grant will allow the Town to move forward with data collection, engineering and design, and permitting for permanent repairs with the goal of improving the dam's condition rating to Fair or better.
 - ii. Bolton highlighted the project's benefits to public safety, fire protection, recreation, the local economy, and ecological resources. The EEA precontract form and task budget were finalized and submitted on September 2, 2026. The Town will execute the contract documents once they become available.
- c. Winter Recovery Assistance Program (WRAP): Bolton reported that the MassDOT Winter Recovery Assistance Program provides state funding to municipalities for repairs to transportation infrastructure damaged by severe winter weather. Of the \$100 million in total funding, \$80 million is being distributed automatically to municipalities based on locally owned road lane mileage. Shutesbury's allocation is \$81,877.36.
 - i. The remaining \$20 million will be awarded competitively to communities experiencing extraordinary winter storm hardship. Eligible expenses include pavement repairs, pothole patching, striping, guardrails, traffic signals, drainage, and related road maintenance. Bolton reported that applications are due Friday and that she will be reviewing invoices to determine the Town's final funding request.
- d. Governor Listening Session
 - ii. The Town will be hosting the Governor for a listening session on Monday, October 26th and 12:30 pm at the Shutesbury Public Library. Discussion will be about battery energy storage.

7. Meeting Adjourned at 6:55 pm

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil 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 8/18/26, 8/24/26, 8/25/26 10 AM and 8/25/26 5:30 PM
2. Fiscal Risk Assessment for FY28
3. Comparative Market Analysis
4. Planning Board Lake Wyola Watershed Map

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

** A full version of the 9/2/26 SB meeting will be available to view on the Town of Shutesbury's
YouTube page: <https://youtu.be/BwGRtTgq7a0>

