

Shutesbury Selectboard Meeting Minutes
September 29, 2026 Hybrid Meeting Format

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

Staff present and Guests: Hayley Bolton: Town Administrator, Brennan Mailloux, Calvin Elison, Leslie Bracebridge, George Arvanitis, Nettie Harrington- Pangallo, Michael DeChiara, Gail Fleischaker, Penny Jaques, Susan Millinger, Dave Grenier, Jennifer Wallace, Matteo Pangallo, Penelope Kim, Rita Farrell, Nathan Murphy, Elaine Puleo, Meryl Mandell, Pam Ososky, Elizabeth Armstrong, Ralph Armstrong.

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

Agenda Review: As posted.

Public Comment: No public comments made.

General Business:

1. Approve Meeting Minutes for 9/22/26:

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes for 9/22/26 as posted, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

2. Appointment: Martha Favre as an Associate Member of the Council on Aging Committee:

- a. Three-year term- Ends 6/30/29.
- b. Millinger introduced Martha Favre, noting her prior experience as the Chair of the Council on Aging and her active involvement in the Neighborhood Aging and Dementia Support Program (NADS). Millinger stated Favre has accomplished a great deal and has been helping with outreach to the Fire and Police Departments. Millinger stated Favre's presence would also help us with the eternal problem of establishing a quorum.
- c. Favre will need to be sworn in and complete ethics training.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the appointment of Martha Favre to the Council on Aging as an Associate Member, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

3. Discussion about clean energy regulations and the need to designate a Local Government Representative to deal with clean energy proposals to the town:

- a. DeChiara outlined the responsibilities of the Local Government Representative (LGR) for proposed Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facilities (SCEIFs) in the Town of Shutesbury. During the pre-filing process, the LGR coordinates with the applicant regarding required municipal meetings, public information sessions,

notices to abutters and stakeholders, and required documentation. The LGR reviews the applicant's Pre-Filing Engagement Completion Checklist and determines whether all requirements have been met before the applicant can submit an application. During the application process, the LGR reviews the Consolidated Local Permit Application for completeness within 30 days, coordinates with relevant Town departments and boards as needed, reviews site suitability and proposed mitigation measures and may refer an application to the state for review if the Town lacks the resources or capacity to complete its review within the required timeframe. The LGR also reviews significant changes to a proposed project and is responsible for issuing the Town's final decision on the application and notifying the applicant, DOER, and Town Clerk.

- b. Consolidated Permits can begin October 1st.
- c. DeChiara has been actively working with Jo Comerford's office to allow the costs of the LGR to be charged to the Applicant if the LGR is a consultant, allowable under Ch. 44 Sec. 53G. This idea has currently been approved by the Senate, but not by the House.
- d. DeChiara stated that whoever the LGR is, should have an official email address that forwards to other people such as the Town Administrator, DeChiara, Catherine Hilton, among others.
- e. The Town Administrator is the Local Government Representative by default.
- f. Bolton stated she believes she can handle the role with the help of others assisting her as needed. She stated there will have to be an expectation that the first couple of times may not run as smoothly as later application submissions.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to designate Hayley Bolton as the Local Government Representative to shepherd clean energy proposals, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

- 4. Vote to approve the temporary relocation of in-person early voting on 10/17/26, from the Town Hall to the Shutesbury Elementary School:
 - a. Town Clerk Alison's proposal is that early voting hours on Saturday, 10/17/26, will take place from 8 AM to 9 AM, and then resume from 1 PM to 4 PM. Being in the same location as the Special Town Meeting, Alison hopes it will catch more Shutesbury voters. The remainder of early voting hours for the state election will occur at the Town Hall as usual.

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to approve the temporary relocation of in-person early voting on 10/17/26 from the Town Hall to the Shutesbury Elementary School, for the hours that Calvin Alison decides, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

- 5. Review and approve the October 17th Special Town Meeting Warrant:
 - a. There were a total of 10 Warrant Articles presented at the start. Article 2 regarding appropriation for septic and water consulting services for the M.N. Spear Library

- Building was discussed, and the Board decided to take it off of the Warrant and wait on it. The deletion of the article made it a new total of 9 Warrant Articles.
- b. The Finance Committee will review and vote on the articles at a special Finance Committee meeting held on Thursday, October 1st. Town Counsel will review the Warrant, and it will be posted on Friday, October 2nd by the Constable.
 - c. The Board and Bolton went through all nine Warrant Articles and briefly described each one.
 - d. Harrington-Pangallo shared clickers will be used at the Special Town Meeting.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve and sign the October 17th Special Town Meeting Warrant as amended, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

- 6. Review and vote on Means-Tested Exemption Percentage- Assessors Office:
 - a. It was discussed that Shutesbury offers many opportunities for low-income seniors, blind, and certain veterans upon application and qualification, for exemption from payment of real estate taxes and the Community Preservation surcharge.
 - b. Shutesbury's Means-Tested exemption qualifications include age, limited assets, 10-year minimum home ownership in Shutesbury, and qualification for the previous year's Massachusetts Income Tax Circuit Breaker Tax Credit (CBTC). The amount of the state CBTC varies for each person/household each year based on factors such as income and local tax expenses. Local statute states that the Select Board must vote each year to set the percentage between 50 and 200% of the state CBTC, to offer to Shutesbury qualifiers of the Means-Tested Exemption.
 - i. The maximum Circuit Breaker credit is \$2,820; at 50%, the maximum town credit is approximately \$1,400.
 - ii. Eight applications were received totaling \$11,522 in circuit breaker credits. At 50%, the town cost is approximately \$5,800, funded by adding approximately 2 cents to the residential property tax rate — about \$8 per single-family household.
 - iii. Keeping the percentage stable allows taxpayers to plan consistently year to year.
 - iv. Walton asked Arvanitis about overall financial impact in which Arvanitis clarified the cost is spread across all residential taxpayers and does not affect the overlay.
 - c. It was shared that on September 17th, the Board of Assessors discussed and voted to recommend 50% for FY27.

VOTE: Stocker makes a motion to approve the Assessor's recommendation for an established 50% Means Tested Exemption Percentage, Walton seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

7. Discussion about the Franklin Regional Council of Government's Site Assessment suggestions for the berm in front of the Highway Department Garage, with a potential vote on removing it.
- a. Makepeace-O'Neil shared the FRCOG's May Site Assessment which notes that the berm on the shoulder of the roadway in front of the Highway Department Garage blocks the site line for vehicles pulling out of the Highway Garage. FRCOG suggested relocating or removing the plantings that have grown close to the roadway and are blocking the site line.
 - b. Dave Grenier, Highway Superintendent, requested that the Select Board vote to have it removed and downsized with a low to the ground berm with low flowers and plants. He stated it is a safety issue that has led to multiple near-miss incidents involving vehicles and pickup trucks exiting the garage. Grenier stated he is not opposed to beautification but prioritizes safety.
 - c. Farrell stated the berm has been in place for over 20 years and was installed at the Select Board's request in 2011 to replace the damaged chain link fence that was located there. Farrell stated it has become an area of welcome to those passing through. She stated thousands of dollars were fundraised to transform the eyesore into an attractive garden with the help of many volunteers and hundreds of hours of free labor. Farrell stated the Garden Club has reviewed the report and asks the Select Board to not accept the report or take a vote on doing anything to the berm. The Garden Club asked the Board to:
 - i. First, bring in key stakeholders to hammer out a plan that will meet both the Highway Superintendent's safety concerns while providing an attractive and manageable buffer to the Highway yard.
 - ii. Second, include the Highway Superintendent, the Fire Chief, the Police Chief, Garden Club Representatives, the Town Administrator, and anyone else deemed to be appropriate. The library as well. This group should also address signage along Leverett Road.
 - iii. Third, address the periodic need for overflow parking at large library events and craft an agreement with the Highway Department about the use of the Highway Yard.
 - iv. Fourth, look at the cost, as major alterations would cost the Town money.
 - d. The Garden Club acknowledged there is no dispute that coming out of the Highway Garage, the visibility is bad and that something needs to be done. They just do not believe that the entire berm needs to be removed in its entirety.
 - e. There was discussion about establishing an ad-hoc committee to address the berm situation.
 - f. Elaine Puleo noted the library was not consulted on overflow parking recommendations in the report. Puleo stated that Fire Station parking for library patrons poses serious safety risks, while Highway Department overflow parking during off-hours is manageable. It was suggested that a crosswalk from the Highway Department to the Library be installed as a practical solution.
 - g. Meryl Mandell emphasized that the berm is a cherished community gateway and that some pruning and recontouring could address site lines without full removal.
 - h. Penelope Kim, from a citizen's point of view, stated she is amazed that there is so much discussion going on and that it is apparent that no decision is ready to be

made at the meeting. She stated the ad-hoc committee should be pushed through and created.

- i. It was stated an ad-hoc committee could include 5 stakeholders such as a Representative from the Garden's Club, The Library, Fire Chief, Police Chief, and Highway Superintendent.
 - i. A draft Charge will be created by Bolton for the October 27th Select Board Meeting for review. Bolton will also meet with Grenier and FRCOG to better understand the report's intent and discuss any potential grant opportunities.
 - j. Grenier stated his part-time worker, Carl Lounder, can assist the Garden Club with any work, as needed.
 - k. Initial trimming can be done in October. The Garden Club will be in contact with Highway Superintendent David Grenier.
8. Discussion and potential vote on relocating picnic tables from behind the M.N. Spear Library Building to the new Shutesbury Public Library.
- a. At the previous Select Board meeting on 9/15/26, Penny Jaques requested that one or both picnic tables that are no longer being used behind the M.N. Spear Library Building be relocated to the new Shutesbury Public Library.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to approve the relocation of the picnic tables from the M.N. Spear Library Building to the new, Shutesbury Public Library, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

9. Unanticipated Business- Nomination of Inspector of Animals Form:
- a. In accordance with MGL. Ch 129, a nomination has to be made by each town for the position of Inspector of Animals. The current expiration date is April 30, 2027.
 - b. Amanda Britt, who has experience with farming and animals, offered to be appointed to the position temporarily. There is a stipend attached to the position.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to appoint Amanda Britt as Inspector of Animals, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

10. Town Administrator Report:
- a. Interbasin Transfer Hearing:
 - i. Bolton shared there is a hearing on Wednesday, September 30th in Belchertown that both Bolton and Stocker plan on attending.
 - ii. This hearing is for the proposed 20-million-gallon transfer of water out of the Quabbin Reservoir to unknown communities in the East. Bolton stated she is working with Hardwick and New Salem Town Coordinators on a standardized web page toolkit for communities opposing the transfer.
 - b. Wheelock Solar Site:

- i. Bolton shared that she talked with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and is waiting on their guidance. She stated she believes there is a willingness on the part of NextEra to look at their Special Permit, specifically around fire control and communication conditions. They are still assessing the need for an environmental assessment to be conducted.
- c. Support Letter for FRCOG
 - i. The Board was asked to sign a support letter for FRCOG's application to become a regional partner for water quality management planning, tied to the Town's stormwater management work.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to sign the Franklin Regional Council of Governments Water Quality Management Planning Grant Proposal, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

- d. Green Communities Grant
 - i. Bolton is working with Michael DeChiara and Nathan Heard on a Green Communities Grant Application that is due next week. They are looking to do weatherization, LED lighting, and some heat pump work at the Town Hall, the M.N. Spear Library Building, and the Shutesbury Elementary School. The grant is in the ballpark of \$130,000.
- e. Environmental Bond Bill Support Letter
 - i. Stocker raised an unanticipated item, that the Select Board sign a support letter to the Conference Committee, where the Environmental Bond Bill is currently sitting.

VOTE: Makepeace-O'Neil makes a motion to E-sign a letter that is drafted by Bolton in support of the Environmental Bond Bill which includes Quabbin equity legislation, Stocker seconds. Roll call vote Walton: aye, Stocker: aye, Makepeace-O'Neil: aye; motion carries.

- f. Salary Alignment Study
 - i. Bolton noted that salaries for Highway Operators, the Police Sergeant, and Full-Time Police Officers were artificially high in the first study. A corrected study will be prepared for Fy28. A letter to staff explaining the discrepancies is being drafted for Personnel Board review.
- g. Leslie Bracebridge stated she went to the Jeremiah Cady ceremony recently and presented two documents there to the CEO and leader of the ceremony. By the end of the weekend, a representative reached out to her regarding hosting a presentation for the town. Bracebridge asked about potentially utilizing a space for a presentation. The Select Board offered the Downstairs Meeting Room of the Town Hall, with help setting up as needed.

11. Meeting Adjourned at 7:08 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 9/22/26
2. October 17th Special Town Meeting Warrant
3. May 2026 FRCOG Site Assessment
4. Nomination of Inspector of Animals Form

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

** A full version of the 9/29/26 SB meeting will be available to view on the Town of Shutesbury's YouTube page: <https://youtu.be/qbDc59aEPHl>

