

**Select Board  
Minutes  
October 4, 2016**

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Leverett Town Hall, 7 pm

Present: Peter D., Julie S., Tom H., Margie M., Lisa S.

Mike from the MR

**Finance Committee** (present: Tom P., Ann D., Phil C.)

The Select Board met with the Finance Committee to take an early stance on the regional assessment agreement which appears as though it will be met by Shutesbury with resistance again this year.

Julie reported that after a recent meeting with Mangano that he asked towns to consider what they might concede if Shutesbury wants to readjust their assessment again this year. Julie stated that she is willing to concede nothing this year. The rest of the Select Board was in agreement. The Finance Committee and Select Board are tired of trying to build a budget around the annual unknown of Shutesbury. It was agreed between both boards that at the next regional assessment meeting a letter be drafted from all 3 towns, in agreement with staying with the rolling average, stating the importance of the stability of the region in staying with the standard that has worked for the last 50 years. The letter would be mailed to all four town's residents. If Shutesbury disagrees they can write their own letter. It was also agreed that if Shutesuey is not in agreement with the other 3 towns that the region go back to the state formula so at least Shutesbury isn't holding the other 3 towns hostage year-after-year.

Ann Delano suggested that intervention be requested of the state in the form of special legislation rewriting the agreement.

The draft budget message with be the same as last year: a 2% increase is allowable with the possibility of minor to severe cuts...

A reserve fund transfer was signed.

An ATM date was not decided on. It will be revisited at a later meeting but the general consensus was to have it in mid-May after Shutesbury.

**Elementary School (also present: Margot L. and Sarah D.)**

The Select Board asked school reps to come to have a conversation about the Elementary School's rating as a level 3 school based on students' not taking the PARCC test. This was the result of many parents opting out of having their kids take the test which the state admitted was ineffective and they were going to discontinue its use. DESE also stated that rating of schools for 2017 would not occur as a result of the test; which is in fact what they did. Leverett had a large number of students opt out which affected the overall school scores.

Margot added that DESE's use of the test has nothing to do with student performance or teacher accountability adding that the size of the school/classes also make the testing rules (mandated percentage of students taking test) unfair and unworkable for a small school. Margot said she'd

welcome DESE to visit the school and make recommendations about how they could improve if the rating actually relates to quality. The Leverett School had alternative testing for students opting out and remains a school with a choice in wait list.

Peter will write an open letter to DESE describing the conversation and issues that the School and Town have with state regulations regarding the formula for school rating based on percentage of children taking standardized tests.

### **Gary Billings**

Gary came in and read his letter stating his plan to retire. His last day will be January 6, 2017. He thanked the board for their support and stated that it has been a pleasure to work in Leverett. He said the department staffing was capable of handling the transition.

### **Business:**

Julie reported that due to a change in the state law, CPA Affordable Housing funds can now be used for mortgage down payment assistance in the form of loans; in some instances this kind of loan is made to bridge the gap between what a buyer has for a down payment and the 20% required to avoid buying PMI (Private Mortgage Insurance). The AHT will be working on a plan to offer down payment to eligible applicants which will be brought to town meeting.

A bid went out for the old surplus fire truck. The highest bid was \$666. **Motion to award the bid to Jeff Matowsky for \$666. Vote: 3-0 in favor.**

David Finn has had a couple of engineers look at the Coke Kiln Rd. Bridge. Estimates for its repair are costly; two more engineers are scheduled to look at it also. Ray Bradley emailed a complaint to the board about the Dudleyville Rd. Bridge. Tom responded to say that David is aware of the problems and will address them before winter.

The minutes of September 20 were approved as written.

The COMMBUYS registration form was signed.

The election warrant was signed.

Motion: To go into executive session with regard to a legal claim. d'Errico, aye; Shively, aye; Hankinson, aye. (8:04 pm)