

## [Streetlight proposal gets unanimous approval in Shelburne](#)

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SHELBURNE — Residents packed the Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School auditorium Tuesday night to give unanimous approval to a plan to buy the town’s streetlights from Eversource and replace them with low-wattage LED lights that could save the town 27,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per year in reduced electricity and at least \$6,600 per year in operating costs.

There were lengthy discussions about Shelburne’s rising school assessment and a regional agreement change, but voters eventually approved them, along with all other town spending requests.

Town Clerk Joe Judd said there were 164 registered voters in attendance.

### **Streetlights**

The town voted to spend \$75,000 to buy the streetlights on Eversource-owned utility poles, and replace the sodium-vapor light fixtures with Cooper Lighting — low-temperature LED lights that produce an orange-yellow glow. The Lighting Committee estimates the cost of buying the Eversource fixtures will be around \$14,500, with the LED upgrades to cost about \$58,000. However, a Mass Save incentive grant, awarded after completion, could reduce the cost by about \$5,400. And, if the town receives a Green Communities grant, the savings could be even greater.

With the vote in hand, the town can now apply for a Green Communities grant, which the Franklin Regional Council of Governments is already working on. Streetlight Committee Chair Jeff Boettner said the next step is to begin negotiations with Eversource. He is hoping the town can install some of the new lighting by autumn.

If grants end up paying for all or most of the new lighting, then the town’s general fund will be reimbursed for some or all of the expenditure.

### **Mohawk schools**

When the topic changed to education spending, Finance Committee member Matt Popoli asked Mohawk Trail Regional School District officials why the school budget has “ballooned” in the face of declining enrollment. Currently, Shelburne has 84 children enrolled at Buckland-Shelburne Elementary School and 45 students at Mohawk Trail Regional School. School spending constitutes 53% of the town’s budget.

School Committee member Jason Cusimano explained that school bus transportation costs, from a sole bidder, went up 12% this year, while the state cut its reimbursement for regional school transportation from 90% this year to only 60% for fiscal year 2025 — a \$205,000 difference for Mohawk Trail. The state has basically flat-lined aid to schools with declining enrollment, but has raised its required minimum contributions from Mohawk Trail member towns by 5% — \$351,388.

A grant-funded sustainability study is underway to point out strategies for the district's long-range well-being. The study will be completed next spring. Meanwhile, said Superintendent Sheryl Stanton, Mohawk Trail is trying to keep its budget down through attrition, by existing staff taking on more responsibilities, by not hiring for vacant positions and by aggressively pursuing more grants.

Student enrollment from the Mohawk Trail and Hawlemont regional school districts dropped by 59% — from 1,880 students to 780 students — between 1997 and 2024, according to school officials.

Shelburne's bill for all public education in the coming school year will be \$2.8 million for the Mohawk Trail Regional School District and \$156,953 for the Franklin County Technical School. Additionally, Shelburne's share of capital costs is \$56,784 for Mohawk Trail and \$6,650 for Franklin Tech.

Mohawk Trail's revised assessment formula in its regional agreement was approved, although several people thought the district should have waited until the Mohawk Trail/Hawlemont sustainability study had been completed.

## **Budget**

The town approved an omnibus budget of \$5.7 million, representing a 6% increase over the current budget.

Other financial requests approved by voters were:

- \$27,000 for a new internet server and \$5,000 for a new copier for Town Hall. Both sums are coming from the Stabilization Fund.
- \$55,000 from the Housing Trust Fund for a new elevator at the Arms Library.
- \$55,000 from the Housing Trust Fund for repairs and deferred maintenance at the Cowell Gymnasium.

■\$13,483 for Enhanced 911 telephone upgrades at Buckland-Shelburne Elementary and \$3,621 for the same enhancement at Mohawk Trail. In an emergency, a teacher can call 911 from a classroom, and the police will know exactly which classroom the call is coming from.

### **Bylaw revisions**

A few town bylaws were revised. One article officially designated the Planning Board as the town's "Special Permit Granting Authority."

One article did away with a special permit requirement for any walking trails or recreational pathways in town. Planning Board Chair John Wheeler said he didn't think this zoning regulation had ever been enforced, and that getting a special permit would make extra work for volunteer groups and nonprofits wanting to create pedestrian trails.

Another bylaw that read "The town collector shall retain all fees received from Municipal Lien Certificates" was revised to say: "Town employees, and appointed and elected officials are prohibited from collecting any fees and/or fines with their job function. All fees collected by the town ... shall be retained by the town."

Selectboard member Andrew Baker called the old measure "some kind of weird, archaic way to get paid." He said town salaries should be paid by the town and any collected fees should go into the town's general fund.

Judd pointed out that he has never kept any fees paid to the town clerk.

*Source: <https://www.recorder.com/Streetlight-proposal-gets-unanimous-approval-in-Shelburne-55052957>*