

TOWN OF ALTON
ALTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
APPROVED 11/13/08
MEETING MINUTES
October 28, 2008

Present: Steve Miller, Chair
Elizabeth Dominick
Richard MacDonald
Sandy Wyatt, School Board Representative
Steve McMahon, Selectmen Representative

Absent: Karen Painter, Vice Chair
Greg Fuller

Others Present: Russ Bailey, Town Administrator
Members of the Public

I. CALL TO ORDER

S. Miller called the meeting order at 6:40 PM.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

K. Painter and G. Fuller were absent. R. MacDonald arrived at 6:45 PM.

S. Wyatt noted that she needed to leave the meeting at 8:30 PM.

IV. AGENDA

S. McMahon motioned to approve the agenda and E. Dominick seconded the motion. U

V. HOUSEKEEPING

S. Miller stated that L. Goossens, School Board Representative, had requested that all school budget review meetings be consecutive. He stated that he is not sure if they can do that or not but they will know for sure at the next meeting.

The meeting minutes from September 11, 2008 were tabled.

S. Miller motioned to approve the amended minutes from October 21, 2008 and E. Dominick seconded the motion.

S. Miller motioned to approve the minutes from October 23, 2008 and S. McMahon seconded the motion.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

R. MacDonald motioned to review the budget for 2009 on a line-by-line basis for Parks and Recreation, Police, Fire, Highway Department, and General Government. S. Miller seconded the motion. R. MacDonald stated he felt the budgets were large enough that they should review them on a line by line basis. E. Dominick stated it was her understanding that they should review the budget prior to the meeting to identify areas where they might need to ask questions. She noted that the Selectmen had already made a lot of cuts and felt that reviewing the budget on a line by line basis might not be beneficial to the process. She spoke about the prioritizing and justification of the budget presented. S. Miller stated he agreed with R. MacDonald and felt that there had been repetitive questions at the last meeting. He felt that time was not saved by reviewing the budget on an "ask question" basis. S. Miller recommended to vote in the affirmative for the motion for a line by line basis for the larger budgets. S. McMahon stated that the committee members were present the previous year and they should know what the answer to their question would be "right off the bat". He noted that the questions that S. Miller felt were repetitive questions were, in fact, no repetitive but were different questions about the same budget line item. He stated that if a department heads were doing their job property then they should be able to justify the budget they were presenting. There was discussion about the budget review process. S. Miller called the vote and the motion failed. (Yes – RM, SM / No – ED, SMc, SW)

S. Miller stated that even though the motion failed that it did not stop R. MacDonald from asking a question for every single line of the budget.

VII. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input

VIII. TAX COLLECTOR - 4133

Anne Kroeger, Director of Tax Department presented the proposed budget for her department for 2008. The Selectmen approved budget for 2009 is \$66,353.00 and that was also the budget submitted by the department head. The budget for 2008 was \$63,484.00 and the actual budget for 2008 is \$49,180.00.

E. Dominick noted that the budget line item for New Equipment (4133-201) was overspent last year and asked about the reason for the expense. A. Kroeger reported that they had to buy a new copy machine because their old one would have cost more money to repair than a new one would have cost.

S. Miller asked about the cost of Computer Expense (4133-162) and asked if there was a contract with BSMI. A. Kroeger noted that this was for software and not for hardware.

S. Miller asked if this was a year that meetings and conferences could be foregone. A. Kroeger stated that it was in one of the RSAs that they had to keep up their certification so they had to

attend certain conferences. She noted that changes to the tax laws were not always communicated via memos or emails and it was best if they attended some of the conference.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:

R. MacDonald motioned to accept the Selectmen's Recommendation of \$66,353.00 for Tax Collector (4133) and S. McMahon seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, SMc, RM, ED)

IX. CEMETERY - 4195

Shirley Lane, Chairmen, Cemetery Trustees, and Mark Devito, Caretaker, presented the proposed budget for 2009. The Selectmen's approved budget for 2009 is \$96,910.00 and that was the same budget presented by the department head. The actual budget for 2008 is \$66,890.00 and the budget for 2008 was \$92,570.00.

S. Lane reported that the Cemetery department does not take any tax dollars and that it is managed by a board of trustees. R. MacDonald asked if they used town water and S. Lane responded that town water is used at the Riverside Cemetery. She noted that it was not good for the head stones to use the water from the river that ran beside the cemetery. The trust fund reimburses the town.

R. MacDonald asked about the cost of fuel and S. Lane responded that it depended on how many funerals that they have.

E. Dominick asked about how much longer the trust fund would last. S. Lane responded that there is about two to three years left on what they can spend from the trust fund and explained that there are strict laws on how the money is spent. There was discussion on how revenue was gained by the department.

S. Miller asked how FICA was paid out and S. Lane responded that it is 6.2% that it paid out and that Medicare is paid out at 1.2%. R. Bailey explained that the Benefit Buy-Out is taken from FICA and that Paulette (Finance Department) reviewed the budget. R. MacDonald asked about the decrease in Unemployment and M. DiVito explained that it was the number that Paulette gave to him for the budget.

S. Miller asked about Uniforms and S. Lane explained that they supplied t-shirts and raingear to the staff. He asked about the Recruitment budget line item and S. Lane explained that it was for the recruitment of a part-time employee. She explained there was a new part-time employee and hoped that he would be back next summer.

E. Dominick noted that by her calculations they would be about \$6,000 under budget and M. DiVito stated he thought it would be about \$4,800.00.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:

S. Miller motioned to reduce the budget line item for Staff Recruiting (4195-882) \$200.00 to \$1.00 and Meetings/Conferences (4195-110) \$250.00 to \$1.00. R. MacDonald seconded the motion. R. Bailey stated that Meetings/Conferences could be replaced by magazines or the internet and felt that the cutting of this budget line item was not justified. S. Miller retracted his motion.

S. Miller motioned to flat fund the budget for Cemetery (4195) at \$92,570.00 and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion failed by one yes vote, one abstaining, and two no votes. (Yes – SM / Abstain – RMc / No – ED, SMc)

R. MacDonald motioned to approve the Selectmen's Recommendation for Cemetery (4195) \$96,910.00 and E. Dominick seconded the motion. S. Miller felt that it was the Alton Budget Committee's job to alleviate the financial burden on the tax payers of Alton by trying to flat fund the budget, based on the budget from 2008. E. Dominick stated that the Committee was not a committee of one individual and felt that the committee needed to work as a team. She spoke about the issue of S. Miller reviewing the Police Department's budget on a line by line basis after the vote had failed. S. Miller called the vote. The vote failed with two no votes and two yes votes. (Yes – ED, SMc / No – SM, RM)

S. Miller motioned to reduce Turf/Grounds Expense (4195-449) to \$3,000.00 and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. S. Miller stated that the budget comes in about \$4,000.00 under budget and felt that the cut was justified. The vote failed with two yes votes and two no votes (Yes – SM, RM / No – ED, SMc)

R. MacDonald stated that he felt it was best to adjourn. There were no further recommendations made by the Committee.

X. PLANNING - 4191

Sharon Penney, Town Planner, presented the proposed budget for 2009. The Selectmen approved a budget of \$132,993, which was the same amount submitted by the department head. The budget for 2008 was \$130,000 and the actual budget for 2008 was \$100,390.

S. Penney spoke about the variables of how her department generates revenue for the town. She explained that costs cannot always be controlled because they cannot predict how many subdivisions might come before them. She spoke about the fiscal history of the department and noted that the budget was significantly higher a couple of years ago.

E. Dominick asked if there has been decreases in the number of cases because of the current economy. S. Penney spoke about the peak of the housing market which peaked about two years ago. She stated that there was a decrease in cases and that the building department had a huge number of requests for houses because Alton was a unique town with the low taxes. She felt that this town was fairly "bulletproof" because of the location, quality of life, etc. She felt there would be decreases in growth. The Planning Department's job is to plan, protect and preserve the land, water, and quality of life. She stated they do try to maintain what they have.

S. Miller asked about the justification for Overtime (4191-020) at \$2,500.00. S. Penney responded that it is usually for clerical work that needs to be taken care of. She spoke about the litigiousness of society today and that it was to cover approximately forty night meetings each year. She spoke about the importance of covering the meetings accurately. S. Miller asked why a part-time employee was not utilized rather than using over-time. S. Penney noted that the part-time employee in her department is also utilized by other departments and only works daytime, four days a week. S. Miller asked it could be made a condition of employment if night meetings became a part of her duties and S. Penney stated that would be difficult to do because it would be costly to replace her. She stated that the Planning Assistant would then become the receptionist

and felt that was not the best. R. Bailey stated that the part-timer was hired to work days and that this would not work out at night.

S. Miller asked about the justification for Meetings and Conferences (4191-110) \$1,200.00. S. Penney stated that the \$1,200.00 was to educate twelve people, the Alton Zoning Board and the Alton Planning Board. She stated that the level of the conferences was not like anything they could find online and it was part of their charge to make sure that the board members were current on the laws, etc.

S. Miller asked about the justification for the increase by the Selectmen for Contracted Services (4191-184) \$900.00 (the department head requested \$700.00). S. McMahon stated it was for meeting recorder coverage. S. Miller asked if S. Penney could submit her justification typed next time.

S. Miller asked if Planning Department could have a flat budget if they had to. S. Penney stated she could do it only because they are creating revenue by money they receive. She stated it is hard to anticipate their cost needs because of their department.

XI. POLICE – 4210

Chief Smith and Captain Heath presented the proposed budget for the Alton Police Department. The Selectmen approved a budget for 2009 at \$1,001,576.00 but the budget presented by the department head was \$1,060,525. The budget for 2008 was \$971,139.00 and the actual budget is \$738,386.00.

S. Miller stated he would review the budget on a line by line basis and if other members of the budget committee had questions they could follow.

S. Miller asked about the Police Chief salary (4210-005) at \$85,160. It is for a step and track. The step becomes active in April, 2009. S. Miller asked if there was mileage reimbursement and Chief Smith responded that he receives \$0.20/mile for travel. R. Bailey stated that the chief is not paid via a contract but that he is an employee.

S. McMahon stated that Chief Smith had been able to get several grants and had done well to bring in some money, which had not been done in the past. Chief Smith reported that they have received about \$16,000.00 already in grant money and that they had another one coming in at \$4,600.00. S. Miller asked if the grant would offset their expense line as a credit. Chief Smith stated it would be pitched against their full-time overtime line. R. Bailey explained how this worked per the RSA. Chief Smith explained that this would allow them to have more coverage. R. Heath explained that the grant was specific in how that officer could perform. Chief Smith stated they have also received educational grants in the amount of \$2,600.00.

S. Miller asked about the Full-Time Office Staff (4210-010). There were no questions.

S. Miller asked about F/T Cops (4210-010). There were no questions.

S. Miller asked about School Resource Officer (4210-012). Chief Smith reported that the SRO is compensated as a regular patrol officer and that there wasn't a separate pay grade. He explained that it was done by a decision by the Selectmen. Chief Smith explained that the impact that Barnstead has on program and felt that it was not significant enough to give up that program because it was beneficial to have the officer at both the elementary and high school. S. McMahon

felt that it was the decision of the Selectmen to have the budget line item fall under Full Time Cops (4210-011).

S. Miller asked about Overtime Wages Office (4210-020). Chief Smith explained that he has an auxiliary officer who would be working in place of a volunteer officer. He spoke about the justification for the change.

S. Miller asked about Part-Time Cops (4210-016). There were no questions.

S. Miller asked about the justification for Overtime Wages Office (4210-020). Captain Heath explained the impact that information requests had on this budget line item.

S. Miller asked about Overtime Wages Cops (4210-012). There were no questions. S. Miller asked if there were any plans for another part-time officer to be added or if the total man hours were budgeted the same from the previous year. Chief Smith spoke about some of the special training that officers receive and noted that the money for that training was withheld this year. He stated there were only the increases in salaries this year. S. Miller asked if the number of incidents were up or down from the previous year. Chief Smith reported that the number of incidents is 26% and stated the economy is having an impact on crime rate.

S. Miller asked if there were any questions from 4210-012 to 4210-029. There were no questions.

S. Miller asked if Holiday Pay (4210-032) was for Christmas Pay. Chief Smith stated it was for officers working on holidays.

S. Miller commented on Meetings/Conferences (4210-110) and stated "good job".

S. Miller asked about Dues/Fees (4210-111). E. Dominick noted that one meeting had been cancelled and asked if the dues/fees would be less because of the cancellation. Chief Smith noted that membership dues are still due and spoke about the justification for the expense.

S. Miller asked about Travel/Mileage (4210-122) and Captain Heath explained that sometimes conferences or training goes for one week and they do not have an unmarked car to take. S. Miller asked about the mileage reimbursement for the Chief and R. Bailey confirmed that it will come out of this budget line item. Chief Smith explained that he had planned to move to Alton but due to the housing market, was unable to sell his house and move.

S. Miller asked about Training (4310-113) and asked about the Selectmen's recommendation for \$3,200.00 for this budget line item. Chief Smith spoke about the fitness standards for officers and some of the plans they have for encouraging, not mandating, training for officers.

[S. Wyatt left the meeting at 8:30 PM.]

S. Miller asked about Ammunition (4210-114) and Captain Heath explained that it was for the minimum ammunition needed. R. MacDonald spoke about the pit on Rines Road and stated it was "a mess". He stated he had found unspent shells that he had picked up. He spoke about the problems that other towns had with lead contamination. Chief Smith stated that with the limited amount and the small amount of people they have that they will not run into that problem. There was discussion about some of the local shooting ranges.

S. Miller asked about Grant Funding, Office Supplies, Postage, Reference Materials, and General Expense. There were no questions.

S. Miller asked about the justification for Computers (4210-162) \$9,895.00. Chief Smith explained that the expense was for user fees. The cost of IMC user fees is \$4,795.00, tech support fees are \$4,100.00 and hardware upgrades are \$1,000.00. There is a one year rotation for computers and printers where the oldest computer and printer are replaced. Chief Smith explained that the computer systems and the operating systems are the biggest “morale killers” if they are not working properly. Captain Heath explained that the oldest computers are eight to ten years old. There was discussion about technology standards and the justification for the request.

E. Dominick stated that S. Miller was still reviewing the budget on a line-by-line basis and felt that it was against the vote that was recently taken. She stated she found this offensive.

S. Miller reviewed about the Copy Machine. This is a contract amount.

S. Miller asked about Contract Services. Chief Smith stated it made a nice difference for the department felt it was a positive change.

S. Miller asked about Telephone, Printing/Signs, Advertising, and Rental Equipment. There was discussion about some of the equipment that the department may need to rent and the justification for the expense.

S. Miller reviewed about New Equipment, Equipment Expense, Equipment Repairs, Volunteer Officers’ Expense, and Uniforms. There were no questions.

S. Miller asked Vehicle Maintenance (4210-207) and Chief Smith noted some of the justification for the expense.

S. Miller reviewed Tires, DWI Fees, Vehicle Fuel, Canine General, Canine Medical, Investigations, Community Services, Patrol Supplies, Special Operations, and Electricity. S. Miller asked about the increase for Electricity and Chief Smith noted that the increase was due to use of air conditioners.

S. Miller reviewed Building Fuel. R. McDonald asked if that was included in with the bid for the town and R. Bailey confirmed it was.

S. Miller reviewed Water and there were no questions.

S. Miller reviewed Building Expense and asked why the Selectmen reduced it. S. McMahon stated it was for landscaping.

S. Miller reviewed Radio expense and Captain Heath explained that a new radio costs \$1,200.00 and noted that they maintain twenty-one radios.

S. Miller reviewed Infectious Disease Control and asked if there were changes. There was a brief discussion about vaccination schedules.

S. Miller asked about the justification for the Motorcycle Lease (4210-499). Chief Smith spoke about some of the benefits and drawbacks of the motorcycle.

XII. ANIMAL CONTROL - 4414

S. Miller asked why an animal control officer was needed. Chief Smith spoke about the justification for the position with the number of calls that the animal control officer received. Captain Heath spoke about emergency management plans and some of the issues that come up when there is not an animal control officer available. He stated it was not something that you really wanted to burden a police officer or fire chief or town administrator.

R. MacDonald asked why there was an increase in the salary for the Animal Control Officer. Captain Heath stated that there are now mandates for preparation for emergency management and that the position was going to become a part-time position. He explained that by having the Animal Control Officer as a part-time position, rather than an on-call position, that he could be more pro-active. Chief Smith stated that the town is growing and the needs are justified for this position to be part-time. He spoke about tracking of licensing, some of the training, and other standards that the Animal Control Officer has to meet. Captain Heath stated it cost about \$38.00/hour for an officer to do the task that a part-time Animal Control Officer would cost about \$17.00/hour to do. S. Miller asked for the number of calls that the Animal Control Officer made in the past twelve months and if there was an increase in the summer months. Chief Smith stated that the officer was able to help out with dispatch, serving summons, and other things that were beneficial to the department.

R. MacDonald asked about the justification for Humane Society (4414-802) and Chief Smith explained it was for the Ossipee Humane Society, where they took strays.

XIII. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 30, 2008 at 6:30 PM.

The Committee's recommendations for Police, Animal Control, Cemetery, and Planning Department are outstanding.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

R. MacDonald motioned to adjourn and S. McMahon seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, SMc, RM, ED)

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Recorder