

TOWN OF ALTON

**ADVANCED COPY SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE
ALTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
ALTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**ALTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
(Approved 11/27/07)
November 8, 2007**

Present: Stephen Miller, Elizabeth Dominick, Richard MacDonald, Karen Painter,
Peter Bolster (Alton Selectmen Representative),
Jeffrey St. Cyr (School Board Representative), Members of the Public

Absent: Gregory Fuller, Krista Argiropolis (Recorder)

I. CONVENE

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

II. ROLL CALL

G. Fuller was absent.

R. MacDonald was absent at the time of roll call but arrived at approximately 8:00PM.

III. AGENDA

The Committee reviewed and discussed the agenda. P. Bolster motioned to accept the agenda and E. Dominick seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, ED, VM, KP, PB, JS / absent – GF)

**IV. OLD BUSINESS/HOUSEKEEPING
a. MINUTES**

K. Painter motioned to approve the minutes of November 1, 2007 and J. St. Cyr seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, ED, VM, KP, PB, JS / absent – GF)

J. St. Cyr motioned to approve the minutes of October 30, 2007 and P. Bolster seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, ED, VM, KP, PB, JS / absent – GF)

S. Miller spoke with R. Bailey about the minutes on the web and stated that they were about one month behind. R. Bailey stated that the recorder needed to send in the approved minutes to Sheri to be placed on the web. S. Miller responded that the recorder had sent them in via email.

S. Miller stated that the Expenses and Encumbrances Report for October 2007 had been handed out to the Committee members for review. A data report of all emergency calls done by the Alton Fire Department for the year was also distributed to the Committee.

There was no other old business.

V. NEW BUSINESS
a. LIBRARY (4550)

Holly Brown, Librarian, presented the requested budget for the Gilman Library for FY 2008. The biggest change to the Library is the salary budget line items and there is a request for increasing the pay of a part-time aide.

The Committee discussed the request for increasing the wages for the part-time Library Aide. H. Brown spoke about the justification for the request. She reported that two library aides had been lost within the last two years to other libraries that offer a high rate of hourly pay. She spoke about the cost of advertising for an aide and the impact that the personnel shortage has on staff. The rate of pay that is requested in the budget is based on what other libraries in the area are paying their aids. The increase in the hourly rate for 2008 reflects a 2.5% cost of living allowance.

There was discussion about department coverage during the summer and vacation times. There is one full-time librarian, one librarian-aide, and two aides, who work 24 hours per week and 4 hours per week, respectfully. There are no new positions requested in the budget and there are no open positions.

A report of what neighboring towns paid their library aides was reviewed. Laconia has no part-time aides but hires high school students at \$7/hour starting pay, with a pay cap of \$9/hour. Gilford pays part-time aides \$10+/hour, with the range capping at about \$14/hour. Barnstead pays part-times aides \$10/hour, starting rate. Wolfboro pays aides a range of \$10.70 - \$14.30/hour, depending on experience. Farmington was not available for a report.

The Committee reviewed and discussed Meetings/Conferences, Dues/Fees, and Travel/Mileage. The justification for Supplies was reviewed. The amount requested for Supplies (4550-131; \$1,700) is based on the estimated total expenditures and anticipated increase in costs.

H. Brown spoke about the requested budget line item for Books/AV Materials (4550-135; \$10,000). This is for materials that are checked out of the library. To date, the library has acquired \$1,977 in books sales, "Conscience Donation Jar" funds that will be used to augment this line item.

There was a discussion about the justification for Building Expense (4550-309; \$3,450). This budget line item covers the alarm system monitoring, heat service contract, boiler inspection and water system service expenditures.

P. Bolster spoke about keeping the quality of the library and felt that it benefited the town to have a good library. He spoke about the library as an asset to the whole community.

There was discussion about internet access at the library.

There were no further questions. All areas were felt to be covered.

b. HIGHWAY

Ken Roberts, Road Agent, Highway Department, presented the requested budget for FY 2008. He spoke about the rough start to the year with the flood and the unanticipated expenses and overages as a result from the flood. He spoke about some of the ongoing road projects they were currently working on and the status of those projects.

The Committee reviewed the requested budget. K. Roberts reported that all department members received a 2.5% cost of living increase. He listed the department members and their position.

There was discussion about the impact of the floods on the Highway Department's budget. None of the overtime wages that were spent will be reimbursed by FEMA.

K. Roberts reported on the requested budget line items for Meetings & Conferences (4312-110; \$665). There are three meetings and conferences that are budgeted for in 2008: DOT Hazard Materials, MSHA, and UNH.

K. Roberts spoke about the mechanic and the general expenses that were associated with the position. This year (2007) is the second year of having a full-time mechanic on staff. The requested budget line item for FY 2008 for this (4312-139) is \$10,000 and this is level-funded from the previous year. K. Painter requested a detailed list of the inventory for the mechanic. There was a discussion about the mechanic's inventory and possibly budgeting for his services differently in the future.

[Recorder's Note: R. MacDonald joined the meeting at approximately 8:00PM.]

The Committee reviewed and discussed the requested budget line items for pothole repairs, salt, sand, and gravel.

There was discussion about a requested budget line item for Pavement Shim (4312-144; \$1). There is a plan for reconstruction, repairs and other long-term maintenance on the roads that will in a contingency fund. There is also a requested budget line item for Road Grinding (4312-148; \$1) which is also going to covered under the reconstruction plan.

K. Roberts spoke about Catch Basin Cleaning (4312-165; \$4,200). This is a service that is done in the spring to keep the drains clean. There has been a reduction in this requested budget line item from the previous year by \$1,200 because most of the drains are up to date and less maintenance is needed for them.

K. Roberts spoke about Uniforms/Safety (4312-206; \$9,508). He stated that the safety equipment costs verify because of personnel changes and wear and tear on the clothing.

There was discussion about Vehicle Fuel (4312-214; \$71,171) and the current market trend of increases in fuel costs. The current cost is \$2.32/gal and usage is estimated to increase by 20%. K. Roberts spoke about how he arrived at the estimate for fuel costs. The department mostly uses Diesel fuel. The 2007 budget for this line item was \$66,761. P. Bolster spoke about the effect on the rates for fuel costs because of things that the Highway Department did now that used to be done by contractors.

There was discussion about Trapping (4312-246; \$1,200). K. Roberts reported on some of the issues he has had with beavers and the justification for the increase in this budget line item.

The Committee discussed utility costs, Tree Work, Dust Control, and Turf Establishment. The increase in the requested budget amount for Line Painting (4312-448; \$12,633). K. Roberts spoke about the costs involved with getting the lines painted correctly and so that they last. He felt it was best to get someone to do this professionally and planned on hiring a contractor for the task. He spoke about the process of line painting. The crosswalks and parking lots in town will all be done.

K. Painter spoke about Turf Establishment (4312-449; \$4,000) and noted that there had been no money spent out of this budget line item this year. K. Roberts responded that due to the flood, they had not had time to do any hydro-seeding and this was something they probably wouldn't use this year but would use the following year because of some of the projects that were planned.

K. Roberts spoke about Emergency Reconstruction (4312-699; \$10,000). He reported this is for expenses incurred by rains, floods, collapsed culverts and other unforeseen disasters. S. Miller asked why this couldn't be a warrant article, rather than a contingency fund where it could be used for office supplies or other things. S. Miller stated that K. Roberts could spend his budget any way he wanted and felt that if this was in a warrant article then it would more controlled spending.

R. Bailey stated he was not going to support a bunch of warrant articles and felt that this should be in the budget. He felt that if people disagreed with the Selectmen approving this money to be spent properly in this budget, then they should vote out the Selectmen. He stated that the Selectmen had approved this contingency fund in this budget.

S. Miller stated that he believed the Budget Committee was there to be a check-and-balance for the Selectmen and the Town Administrator. He spoke about the process of reviewing the requested budget and asking questions about it to make sure that any questions were put to rest. There was an open discussion about warrant articles.

K. Roberts asked if the Budget Committee wanted to hear about Highway Department CIP. R. Bailey responded that CIP would be presented at a future meeting.

c. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

The Committee reviewed the requested budget for FY 2008 for General Government.

S. Miller asked why the Trustees Salaries (4130-003; \$5,068) was down from the previous year (the 2007 budgeted amount for this same line item was \$5,917) and R. Bailey responded that another line was created in 4130-205, General Expense for Trustees.

R. Bailey spoke about the Administrators Salary (4130-005; \$77,207) and stated that his contract was up next year, so this amount would probably change.

The Committee discussed the Finance Officer's salary. P. Bolster spoke about the high quality employees that the Town of Alton was fortunate to have. He felt that some people worked above and beyond what they were expected to do. He spoke about the costs that would be incurred if someone left and needed to be replaced. S. Miller felt that no one was irreplaceable. R. Bailey spoke about recognizing special circumstances and giving extra to those who performed extra.

The Committee reviewed and discussed P/T Office Staff, Over Time Wages, Benefit Buy-Out, and Career Development. R. Bailey spoke about the plan to achieve records electronically and to store them differently.

R. Bailey spoke about the computer network for the town. He discussed the fiber optic network they were now using. He also spoke about his cell phone stipend, which is \$30/month. He felt this was a fair amount and was comfortable with the stipend.

R. Bailey spoke about the Consultant budget line item. He discussed situations when he might bring in a consultant for various reasons.

d. LEGAL

There was discussion about the Town Attorney's contract. There is a retainer that has to be paid to the attorney. R. Bailey spoke about the importance of keeping the same attorney and the continuity of service they would receive from the attorney. There was an open discussion about legal fees and anticipated legal expenses.

e. BENEFITS

The Committee reviewed and discussed the requested budget for Benefits. R. Bailey spoke about the increase in Life/Disability Insurance. There was discussion about the Merit Pay given out to employees.

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

VII. BUDGET VOTES

LIBRARY (4550)

J. St. Cyr motioned to increase the requested budget line item 4550-017 (Part Time Aides \$14,912) by \$1,500 and P. Bolster seconded the motion. K. Painter thought that the requested budget amount brought the aides pay up to the level of the other towns. There was a discussion about the merits of the increase. The motion failed by a vote of three "yes" and three "no" votes. (Yes – PB, JS, KP / No – ED, RM, SM)

P. Bolster motioned to approve the requested budget for Gilman Library (4550) at \$114,244 for FY 2008 and E. Dominick seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, ED, VM, KP, PB, JS / absent – GF)

HIGHWAY (4312)

E. Dominick motioned to increase the requested budget line item for General Expense (4312-139; \$10,000) by \$15,000. There was no second to the motion.

S. Miller motioned to decrease the requested budget line item for Uniforms (4312-206; \$9,508) to \$7,000 and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of five. (SM, ED, VM, KP, JS / absent – GF / No - PB)

K. Painter spoke about possibly making a separate department for the Vehicle Maintenance/Mechanic and breaking out the costs.

S. Miller motioned to decrease the requested budget line item for Spreaders (4312-528; \$4,000) to \$3,000 and R. MacDonald seconded the vote. S. Miller stated that the budget line item had never gone to \$4,000 in the past and felt that \$3,000 was sufficient. The motion passed by a vote of four. (SM, ED, VM, KP / absent – GF / No – PB, JS)

S. Miller motioned to decrease the requested budget line item for Line Painting (4312-448; \$12,633) to \$9,000. There was no second to the motion.

S. Miller motioned to decrease the requested budget line item for Vehicle Fuel (4312-214; \$71,171) to \$66,761. R. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of four. (SM, ED, VM, KP / absent – GF / No – PB, JS)

P. Bolster motioned to approve the amended requested budget for Highway Department (4312) for FY 2008 at \$1,007,299 and S. Miller seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, ED, VM, KP, PB, JS / absent – GF)

BENEFITS (4155)

E. Dominick motioned to approve the requested budget for Benefits (4155) at \$1,124,293 for FY 2008 and P. Bolster seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, ED, VM, KP, PB, JS / absent – GF)

LEGAL FEES (4153)

R. MacDonald motioned to approve the requested budget for Legal Fees (4153) at \$84,031 for FY 2008 and E. Dominick seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, ED, VM, KP, PB, JS / absent – GF)

GENERAL GOVERNMENT (4130)

S. Miller motioned to approve the requested budget for General Government (4130) at \$315,860 for FY 2008 and P. Bolster seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, ED, VM, KP, PB, JS / absent – GF)

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

R. MacDonald motioned to adjourn and P. Bolster seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, ED, VM, KP, PB, JS / absent – GF)

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Recorder, Public Sessions