

TOWN OF ALTON

Alton Budget Committee
Public Minutes

APPROVED – (12/04/07)

November 27, 2007

Members Present: Steve Miller, Chair
Elizabeth Dominick
Gregory Fuller
Richard MacDonald
Karen Painter
Terri Noyes, Alton School Board Representative
Peter Bolster, Alton Selectmen Representative

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

I. ROLL CALL

S. Miller took Roll Call. All members were present.

II. AGENDA

G. Fuller motioned to accept the agenda and P. Bolster seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, RM, PB, KP, ED, GF, TN) □

III. HOUSEKEEPING

There was a discussion about the JMA Budget Committee schedule. The JMA budget FY 2009 will be reviewed on December 3, 10, 13, and 17. The first Public Hearing date will be on January 8, 2008, with a snow date on January 9. A member of the public noted that January 8th was also Election Day and stated that some people would not be available. There was discussion about moving the Public Hearing. The last day the Committee can have the Public Hearing is the 15th of January.

G. Fuller motioned to change the date of the first Public Hearing to January 9, 2008, with the snow date to be on January 10, 2008 and the second Public Hearing to be held on January 11, 2008, with the snow date to be on January 12, 2008. P. Bolster seconded the motion. The first hearing is scheduled for 6PM, and the hearings scheduled for Saturday will be held at 10AM. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, RM, PB, KP, ED, GF, TN) □

P. Bolster motioned to have the Public Hearings taped, televised, and for the tapings to have good audio quality. K. Painter seconded the motion. There was discussion about the quality of the tapings. The motion passed by a vote of six. . (SM, PB, KP, ED, GF, TN / NO - RM) □

The Committee reviewed the minutes of November 13, 2007. R. MacDonald motioned to accept the minutes of November 13, 2007 and P. Bolster seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of six with one abstaining. (SM, PB, KP, ED, GF, RM / abstain - TN)□

S. Miller motioned to accept the minutes of November 8, 2007 and E. Dominick seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of five with two abstaining. (SM, PB, KP, ED, RM / abstain – TN, GF)□

Bob Longabaugh spoke about videotaping the Alton Budget Committee meetings. He spoke about the history of videotaping the Alton Selectmen’s meetings and airing them on Channel 26, the local cable public access channel. He spoke about taping other committee meetings, such as the two local school boards. He noted that the Alton Budget Committee did not want to have their meetings taped but that he could make tapes at a public meeting on their own, with the permission of the chairman of the committee. He stated he didn’t want to make this into an adversarial thing but that he had some points that they might wish to consider. He listed some of the “pros” and “cons” of the taping.

Marybee Longabaugh stated she looked at the Alton Budget Committee as being teachers. She noted that by viewers being able to see what the Committee discussed or made decisions on would be better understood by the citizens. There was an open discussion about some of the options for taping meetings. G. Fuller thanked the Longabaughs for their presentation. S. Miller asked the Longabaughs if they would be willing to videotape the meetings even if there was a “no” vote by the Committee.

There was discussion about some of the options and variables involved with taping meetings. It was decided that a vote would be taken at the end of the meeting.

Copies of The Basic Law of Budgeting were handed out to all Committee members.

Copies of the 2008 Appropriations for Non-Profits were handed out to all Committee members.

Tom Hoops, CIP Committee Chairman, and Christine Tiller, spoke about Capital Improvement Projects. T. Hoops announced that CIP was taking a new angle on their planning. He spoke about Planning Board’s role in the budget process and some examples of planning that other town departments are doing. He discussed ways that the town could save money and asked if it would be more practical for the town to take big financial “hits” for the next year or two to save money in the long run. He stated that it might not be popular with the residents but that it would save money.

R. MacDonald asked why there wasn’t a Capital Reserve account shown on a spreadsheet of the 2008-2013 recommendations by the CIP Committee. T. Hoops stated they were not available. There was discussion about the Selectmen’s recommendations about the CIP

G. Fuller asked for the Selectmen’s recommendations for his review. S. Miller felt that the recommendations should be held until after the Committee’s review of CIP. G. Fuller felt that since it was public information it should be available for review. R. MacDonald motioned to have the Selectmen’s recommendations held for the end of the CIP presentation and S. Miller seconded the motion. R. MacDonald stated, “change is good,” and G. Fuller stated that if that was so, then the Committee’s meetings should be taped. The motion failed by a vote of three “no, three “yes” and one abstain. (No – KP, ED, GF / Yes – RM, PB, SM / abstain – TN)

T. Hoops presented the CIP budget for the Solid Waste Center. There was an open discussion about the Building Site Improvements (\$40,000) and Recycling Equipment (\$25,000). The total CIP budget for Solid Waste is \$65,000. T. Hoops spoke about the new buildings that Scott is planning on installed. C. Tiller stated that the funding of the new buildings was going to be very tight. R. MacDonald suggested the Committee should look at the plans for the new buildings and G. Fuller also felt that the plans should be reviewed.

S. Miller asked T. Hoops to put information from the previous year in the spreadsheet so that the Committee could better see history of the accounts and increases.

T. Hoops spoke about the process that his Committee took to present the recommendations and felt that they should be reviewing the budget in August, not October.

The Committee reviewed the CIP for the Fire Department (\$443,000). The Committee reviewed the requested funds for Engine 1, Engine 2, Engine 4, and Engine 5. G. Fuller asked if the Fire Department had considered used engines and wanted to know why they bought used engines.

T. Hoops stated that the chassis was part of the problem because engines with tanks usually had chassis problems. He discussed some of the disadvantages of purchasing used fire trucks. G Fuller spoke about the tax impact of the new equipment and felt that because more taxes could be raised from the town that it didn't need to be raised.

P. Bolster spoke about the authority of the Fire Department Chief and felt that the Committee should accept the recommendations of the Chief. S. Miller asked why the Selectmen hadn't reviewed this with CIP. R. Bailey spoke about the CIP process and noted that the department heads bring their requests to the CIP Committee, who then presents it to the Selectmen. The Selectmen make their recommendations and the Budget Committee makes their recommendations.

There was an open discussion about the recommendation by the CIP Committee and the spreadsheet that had been presented. C. Tiller spoke about the importance of presenting this to the voters as a plan that hadn't been mapped out in the past but that it would be more beneficial than huge increases each year. It was felt by several Committee members that this plan would be a hard sell. C. Tiller noted that this was a change in concept and thinking. S. Miller stated that it was easier on the voters in a twenty-year period but it was harder to make the decision on it as a ten-year plan.

The Committee continued the review of the Fire Department CIP. There was a discussion about the issues with Ladder 1. S. Miller felt that the Fire Chief needed to be present to give input.

The Committee discussed the request for a car, which will be a new vehicle. The used vehicle they were going to use will be going to another department.

There was a discussion about the changes that are needed to the East Alton station. G. Fuller noted there was an extra zero in the Capital Reserve Building line item on the Special Warrant Articles spreadsheet. The correct amount should be \$122,000.

The Committee reviewed the Ambulance CIP and the rest of the Fire Department's CIP. There were no further questions.

The Committee reviewed the CIP for Town Hall improvements, repair and expansion of sidewalks, and landfill closure. There was discussion about the monitoring of water wells.

P. Bolster spoke about the CIP line item for Town Beach (\$50,000) and stated that the Selectmen were looking at \$25,000 for this line item. He spoke about possibilities of a town recreational facility. There was discussion about the history of a town beach being established in Alton. C. Tiller spoke about the issues with the vote last year at the deliberative session where the town was divided on having the beach.

The Committee reviewed the CIP for the Police Department. There is an offer for two used boats from Fish & Game, who has two Boston Whalers, with motors. The boats will be donated and may need some work, but the CIP budget line item will be reduced to \$0 from \$25,000. The total amount of CIP for Police Station expansion is \$70,000 and the total Police Department Expenditures is \$56,000. There was discussion about the wording of the warrant article for the police station expansion. T. Hoops spoke about his concerns for the warrant article being worded for either the expansion of the station or a new station. R. Bailey assured T. Hoops that the wording would allow for either option for the station.

The Committee reviewed the CIP for Buildings & Grounds. There is a request for a new pickup truck for \$34,000. There was discussion about the justification for the truck. P. Bolster stated that the truck would be used for plowing and other duties. He stated they would not be giving Parks & Recs used cruisers or cars again. The justification for the Capital Reserve Maintenance Equipment line item for \$12,000 was discussed. T. Hoops listed some of the equipment that was being requested, which includes the replacement of a John Deer tractor that has a life expectancy of six years.

The Committee reviewed the CIP for the Alton School Department, which is for \$280,000. T. Noyes stated that rather than assigning the money to windows or the roof, that the money was being used for repairs and renovation. T. Hoops stated that it should be done as a repairs and renovation or as a new school. He stated that they would not recommend this for another year without a plan. T. Noyes stated that adding up what they usually had for windows, fire suppression and other items arrived at the amount. There was discussion about the CIP Committee's request for a plan to be presented.

There was a review of the Highway Department CIP. The Committee discussed the CIP line item for Road Reconstruction \$750,000. R. MacDonald spoke about the upgrades that had been done to the roads but stated that reconstruction had not been done. The Committee reviewed and discussed some of the vehicles that were listed to have reserves set aside for. There was discussion about the road situation and maintaining the roads.

There is \$10,000 for Bridge Reconstruction and only one bridge that's on schedule for next year. This is for existing bridges only.

There is a total of \$1,401,102 recommended for CIP funding for 2008.

The Committee reviewed the 2008 Special Warrant Articles. There was discussion about the percentage of non-profit organization's budget that goes towards administration costs. The Committee reviewed the justification for the warrant article requests.

It was decided by the Committee to vote on the CIP budget and Special Warrant Articles at the December 4, 2007 meeting of the Alton Budget Committee.

There was no other new business.

R. MacDonald motioned to discuss the videotaping of the Alton Budget Committee meetings and G. Fuller seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of six with one abstaining. (SM, PB, KP, ED, GF, RM / abstain - TN)□

The Committee discussed videotaping the meetings. R. MacDonald stated he did not want the meetings taped. P. Bolster spoke about his concerns about things being taken out of context once they were taped and aired. S. Miller stated he wanted the meetings to stay informal. T. Noyes spoke about the need for committees to be transparent.

R. MacDonald motioned to not videotape the meetings and P. Bolster seconded the motion. There was discussion about the “pros” and “cons” of taping the meetings. The motion failed by a vote of three “yes, three “no” and one abstaining. (yes - SM, PB, ED / no - KP, GF, RM / abstain - SM)□

G. Fuller motioned to videotape the meetings and K. Painter seconded the motion. The motion failed by a vote of three “yes, three “no” and one abstaining. (no - SM, PB, ED / yes - KP, GF, RM / abstain - SM)□

P. Bolster motioned to adjourn and K. Painter seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, RM, PB, KP, ED, GF, TN)□

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Recorder, Public Sessions