

**TOWN OF ALTON**

Alton Budget Committee  
Public Minutes

**Approved – (12/04/07)**

November 29, 2007

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

Others Present: Kathleen Holt, Superintendent  
Bonnie Jean Kuras, Principal  
Steve Ross, Assistant Principal  
Deborah Brown, Executive Assistant to the Superintendent  
Kathy O’Blenes, Business Manager  
Krista Argiropolis  
Members of the Public

**I. ROLL CALL**

S. Miller took Roll Call.

**II. HOUSEKEEPING**

There was discussion about a scheduling conflict with a JMA School Board meeting and an Alton Budget Committee meeting. S. Miller spoke briefly with L. Goossens about the meeting schedule. The meeting has tentatively been scheduled for 12/12/07, pending approval of the Barnstead Budget Committee.

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

There were no minutes to approve. S. Miller asked K. Argiropolis to please check the website to make sure that all of the approved minutes, to date, were posted.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

R. MacDonald noted that Bob Longabaugh was not present to videotape the meeting.

## **V. AGENDA**

R. MacDonald motioned to accept the agenda as presented and K. Painter seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, RM, TN, JS, KP, ED, PB / absent – GF)

## **VI. ALTON CENTRAL SCHOOL BUDGET – FY 2009**

Kathleen Holt, Superintendent, presented the proposed budget for the Alton School District for 2008-2009. She spoke about the school's mission statement and the goals of the ACS Board. She spoke about the budgeting priorities, which includes focusing on student centered learning, support the school as a community of learner, meeting the state and federal laws and standards, and maintaining integrity of programming. She spoke about continuing replacement plans and cycles, providing equity between programs and classes when logical and possible, and keeping budget increases relatively low to support potential article for building renovation or construction.

Bonnie Jean Kuras, ACS Principal, spoke about the process of developing a budget. She stated that they consider a number of variables in order to stay consistent with their vision of focusing on what it takes to inspire our students to excel. She noted that more than numbers defines them by what it takes for them to accommodate the students and meet their specific needs. She spoke about the other considerations for developing the budget.

K. Holt reported the total education budget, including PMHS, for 2008-2009, is \$12,356,822. The budget for the previous year was \$11,869,875. The difference is \$486,947, which is a 4.10% increase from the previous year.

K. Holt reported the operating budget for 2008-2009 was \$7,706,698, which is an increase of \$534,134 or 7.45% from the previous year. She spoke about the major factors affecting the budget, which includes the Master Agreement, as approved by the voters in March 2007, and insurance costs. The Master Agreement is 3/35% of the total budget or over half of the budgetary increase. Health Insurance and Dental Insurance costs are calculated 15% and 10%, respectively, of this year's budget.

K. Holt spoke about the SAU adjustment line, which is \$90,161. This is for non-union salary increases. It is moved to each individual's account line during the fiscal year. The budget shows a zero (\$0.00) in the prior fiscal year and placeholder for increases in proposed budget year. The money shows up in the Superintendent's budget but is moved where it is needed for the non-union salary increases.

P. Bolster asked why the budget line item was a huge increase from the previous year. K. Holt responded that they had moved some things and would explain the increases to the budget line item when they reached that part of their presentation.

K. Holt spoke about the new staff positions that affect the increase in the budget. Three new positions have been added to the budget. She reported that the tuition reimbursement budget line item had been cut by \$37,400 from the previous year.

S. Miller asked why they were willing to do this now but weren't willing to do it last year. He spoke about the presentation of the budget last year and stated they wanted to cut that line in the past but were told they couldn't because it was a fixed budget line item. K. Holt responded that

they were taking a risk by decreasing the budget line item. B. Kuras spoke about professional development. T. Noyes felt it was a difference of philosophies and J. St. Cyr noted there was a different administration this year.

K. Holt reported that other factors affecting the budget included transportation, and increases in building & grounds costs.

B. Kuras spoke more about the process of developing a budget. She spoke about providing equity of learning opportunities, state standards, expectations set forth in the No Child Left Behind mandates, the Master Agreement (teachers' contract), and stated they had taken into consideration the need to be fiscally responsible while looking into the future possibilities of building renovations or new construction. She listed some of the specific budget impacting requests, which includes the implementation of a guidance curriculum, crisis intervention, administrative duties, and student counseling.

B. Kuras spoke about the need for a part-time art teacher. She reported there is one art teacher for the entire school, while the other core specials have 1.5 to 2 teachers implementing programming across the grade levels. She spoke about the need for student participation in art.

R. MacDonald asked if the grandparents' program could assist with the classes. B. Kuras responded that they still needed someone who was certified/highly-qualified to teach the class. She discussed the inter-disciplinary aspects of all students being able to take art.

B. Kuras spoke about the need for a full-time guidance counselor/health teacher. She reported that the PE teachers have taught Health classes in the past. Students are more active, as mandated through NCLB. She spoke about the teachers' class schedule and class loads.

B. Kuras spoke about the request for a part-time custodian. She discussed the justification for the position, which includes the age of the building, the design of the building, and the frequent use of the building. She stated that presently, the maintenance staff is offered the opportunity to work overtime, but they are not always available to work the extra time.

[G. Fuller entered the meeting at approximately 7:20 PM.]

S. Miller spoke about the enrollment information that was in last year's budget book but not in this year's book. He asked why there was less information, such as the cost per student for the elementary, and Special Education. D. Brown noted that Special Education was in the book but that she could get him the cost per student.

S. Miller spoke about the enrollment projections for the school year and asked how they arrived at the enrollment numbers for Kindergarten. B. Kuras responded that there might be some students who were not in Pre-School or maybe attended a full-day day care that was not accounted for.

S. Miller felt there was a negative growth rate or pupil increase in the school right now and asked if that trend might continue. P. Bolster spoke about the possibilities of housing increases in the town. There was discussion about some of the housing developments that might be built in the town.

K. Painter asked how the Pre-School was taught and how students were accepted in Pre-School. B. Kuras responded that some students were Special Education students and some were "model"

students so that the Special Education students would learn from them. K. Holt noted that by law the school was required to educate students from ages 3-21 years old.

S. Miller asked the School Board about the enrollment increases in the high school. He spoke about enrollment counts of some of the grades.

S. Miller noted there was nothing in the revenue section of the budget books and asked if that was done on purpose. K. O'Blenes stated they were working on that and would have that for the Committee at a future meeting.

S. Miller asked for a breakdown of the total number of students enrolled in school sports programs. He asked if there would be a way to breakdown the costs of some of the sports programs that the school had. K. O'Blenes and B. Kuras stated they could get the enrollment numbers for the Committee. It was felt it would be too difficult to compute the costs of the different sports programs because of variables such as uniform cycles, equipment cycles, etc.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the Alton School District Budget for 2008-2009, 1100 – Salaries.

S. Miller asked what Pupil Services was. K. Holt responded that it was for the Parenting Class and some other programs.

P. Bolster noted that the amount spent last year was less than the requested budget amount. T. Noyes responded that the PTSA funded some of the services in the past and it was felt by the Board that the PTSA shouldn't have to pay for the Parenting Class, for example, because it was sometimes court-ordered. There was an open discussion about the Parenting Class.

S. Miller asked K. Holt what her directives were to administration and staff for their development of the budget. He asked if the School Board had given the Superintendent any directives. K. Holt stated that they had not received directives from the School Board and that the budget was zero balance. She stated that no directives were received from the School Board and that she gave no directives to the Principal.

S. Miller asked the School Board why they didn't give a directive on percentage increases for the budget. T. Noyes stated she looked more at needs than at percentages. J. St. Cyr spoke about value of education.

There was discussion about the justification for the rental equipment, including the photocopier.

S. Miller asked why there was an increase in the budget line item for English. B. Kuras spoke about the need for materials that were needed at each grade level. She listed some of the supplies and consumables that were being purchased. There was discussion about some of the re-appropriation or consolidation of certain budget line items.

P. Bolster asked about the increase in the budget line item for Foreign Language. B. Kuras spoke about the integration of foreign language in some of the lower grades and the need for certain teaching materials.

S. Miller asked if any significant cuts or increases were made to budgets. B. Kuras responded that there were some things that were requested, that were felt to be superfluous, but that staff was fiscally responsible. She felt they were careful about what they were requesting.

There was discussion about the justification for the Science department. B. Kuras reported there were some things removed from the lab this year that were unsafe or out-dated.

S. Miller asked if book purchases were on-cycle. B. Kuras responded that books were on-cycle but some books, such as paperback books, needed to be replaced. She spoke about the differentiation of instruction. She stated that the textbook cycle calendar was in the back of the budget book.

E. Dominick asked what was going on with Tech Ed. K. O'Blenes responded there was a typographically error in the column for the books and that would be corrected.

There was discussion about soft cover and hardcover books, and the life cycle of the books. B. Kuras and K. Holt spoke about the different situations where books might go home with students at the end of the year, or might be part of a series.

S. Miller asked what the rating of the school was now. B. Kuras reported that the school had received notice they were "In Need of Improvement" but that was incorrect. She stated they had met the AYP standards. There was discussion about standardized testing.

S. Miller asked if the Periodicals budget line item was for students. B. Kuras responded that the periodicals were for teachers and related to school/teaching but that there were some Weekly Readers' and some others that were used for students. S. Miller asked if this information wasn't on the internet. B. Kuras stated that some of it wasn't on the internet in the format they would like to see and that in some cases, what was on the internet might include a subscription cost.

There was discussion about projecting for class sizes and textbook needs. K. Holt stated they bought for their largest class that would be using the books during the cycle, plus some extras for replacement books or for additional students that might come into the school. S. Miller noted there were significant differences in the size of some the classes and felt this should be in the textbook cycle budget.

S. Miller asked about the justification for the climbing wall and asked if the total amount requested for PE (\$4,457) was all for the climbing wall. B. Kuras responded that only about \$3,000 was for the climbing wall but the rest was for other equipment.

There was discussion about the justification for the new equipment requested for Music Class.

S. Miller asked if a microscope was considered "equipment" in the Science budget. B. Kuras responded that it was. She spoke about some of the Science equipment that had been requested. There was additional discussion about the process of developing the budget.

There was review and discussion of all the new and replacement equipment.

R. MacDonald asked about the Dues & Fees for Music. He asked why the school couldn't just pay the Dues & Fees and the teacher(s) attended the events or organization as a representative of the school. K. Holt stated that some organizations that wouldn't allow for the school to register but that the individual music teachers would have to register or enroll. She spoke about some of the variables that were entailed with Dues & Fees. She spoke about increasing the availability of other, non-athletic based programs for students. There was discussion of how these Dues & Fees were used or not used in the past.

G. Fuller noted there was \$3,861 in Salaries missing from the detailed sheet in the budget book. K. O'Blenes responded that an approximate was given in Salaries but that could change because of variables such as the hiring of new teachers, etc., who would be lower in step/track.

G. Fuller asked about the zero budget line item for Educational Assistant. K. O'Blenes responded that was for the anticipation of a new hire to that position.

G. Fuller asked about the decrease of a teacher's annual salary from one year to the next. K. O'Blenes responded that teacher might be retiring and they were budgeting for a teacher who might be middle step/track from the teacher who was retiring.

G. Fuller asked if the Teacher's Contract was a 4% hike and asked about the other increases they received. D. Brown noted that they all went up one step, as well. There was discussion about some other staff salary increases.

S. Miller asked about the increase in Substitute teachers' amount and the number of days. B. Kuras spoke about some of the professional development, computerized testing training, and other areas where the substitutes would be used to cover classes.

R. MacDonald asked what the "Monitor FS" was. B. Kuras stated the position was a lunchroom monitor and spoke about some of the duties of the monitor. R. MacDonald felt that the position should be funded through the Food Service budget.

There was discussion about the justification for the increase in the Technology Director's salary. K. Holt spoke about many of the new responsibilities of the position. She discussed some of the technology that has been implemented at the school and some of the testing or other requirements that are now part of her job. She stated that the Technology Director was not overpaid and was responsible for what went on at the SAU office and the school. She noted that she had been way underpaid. K. Holt spoke about the increased needs for technology in the school.

S. Miller asked what the agreed salary adjustment was for the next budgeting year and K. Holt responded they didn't have a contract with the Technology Director.

S. Miller asked how much of her duties were district-related duties. K. Holt responded that several hours were spent each month; perhaps 4-5 hours working with software or a few hours working with hardware. S. Miller felt this was a nominal amount of time and felt that she had a new title and pay increase but her duties hadn't changed significantly.

G. Fuller asked where the budget line item was under the Principal's budget for the Tech Assistant. K. O'Blenes responded that the part-time tech assistant was also working as a receptionist/assistant to the Assistant Principal. A receptionist had been hired and a full-time Tech Assistant was hired. B. Kuras noted that the compensation was not commiserate with the position and they were trying to bring that up. S. Ross spoke about the improvements to technology for the school and district that the Technology Director had brought in.

E. Dominick asked about the justification for the Tech Support budget line item. K. Holt responded that it was training for teachers and staff for certain programs. She spoke about teachers better receiving their peers in a teaching setting.

S. Miller asked how many people were being trained for \$5,000. B. Kuras responded that all of them would be trained. S. Miller stated that last year there were three people who received training for PowerSchool and asked if that made sense. There was discussion about the justification for the training. K. Holt stated that the Technology Director could be present at the next meeting to address those questions.

S. Miller asked about some of the new technology replacement equipment that was being purchased. He stated that they had the same number of computers/hardware. B. Kuras responded that they had approximately twenty more pieces of hardware than last year.

There was discussion about the request for eighteen flat LCD panel monitors. S. Ross spoke about the energy savings that the LCD monitors afforded them vs. the CRT monitors. He stated they would pay for themselves in 1.5 years. The cost per monitor is \$175 plus shipping.

K. Painter asked if there was an inventory of all the computers and the date of purchase. S. Miller requested the inventory for the next meeting. G. Fuller asked for the specs of the computers that were being purchased. B. Kuras asked if anyone wanted a copy of the Technology Plan and K. Painter responded that she did.

S. Miller asked about the justification for the new printers. K. Holt spoke about the rotation of equipment. She gave the example of replacing an inkjet printer with a laser printer and then moving an inkjet printer into a classroom where it might not be used as frequently, as the inkjet cartridges were expensive.

K. Holt recapped the requests for additional information for the Committee:

- PowerSchool – Who went to the training and how is the \$5,000 being spent
- How many total machines are in the district and what year they were purchased
- Two copies of the tech plan
- The specs for the new computers that are being purchased
- The size of the new monitors that are being purchased.

The Committee reviewed the Special Education proposed budget. There was discussion about the new positions in Special Education. K. Holt stated that the new positions were 1:1 aides for students to cover students that were coming into the school.

R. MacDonald asked why Tuition Reimbursement wasn't being cut down. K. Holt explained that the two individuals generally used the money for their tuition reimbursement. K. O'Blenes stated that perhaps the tuition reimbursement wasn't charged to the correct budget line item for Special Education but may have been charged under the general account. There was discussion about the justification for the requested amount for tuition reimbursement.

S. Miller stated that he would like to see this budget line item budgeted as closely to actual expenses as possible. He asked for the teachers to be polled to find out who was planning on taking classes. B. Kuras stated that they had tried to budget as closely as possible. S. Ross felt that the teachers would respond to say it was in the contract and they would respond that the money should be in the budget. E. Dominick spoke about her concerns about asking the teachers now what they were planning on taking for courses in 2008-2009.

G. Fuller asked if the Special Education budget was mandated. S. Ross responded it was and a lot of it was mandating without funding.

E. Dominick motioned to adjourn and K. Painter seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, RM, TN, JS, KP, ED, PB / absent – GF)

The meeting adjourned at 10:00PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Recorder, Public Session