

Town of Alton
Budget Committee Meeting
January 8, 2013
Minutes
Approved January 10, 2013

Call to Order 6:20pm

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

Marc DeCoff, Selectmen's Representative
Andy McLeod, Chairman
Krista Argiropolis, School Board Representative
Barbara Howard, Member
John Markland, Vice Chairman,
Greg Fuller, Member,

Other Attendees:

E. Russell Bailey, Town Administrator
Ryan Heath, Alton Police Chief
Kathy Oblenes, Alton Central School Business Administrator
Jeff St. Cyr, School Board Representative
Sydney Leggett, Principal, Alton Central School
William Lander, Alton Central School Superintendent

Public Input I

None

Public Input I closed.

Approval of Agenda

**K. Argiropolis motioned to approve Agenda as presented and was seconded by A. McLeod
Vote: AM Yes, MD Yes, BH Yes, G. Fuller, Yes, KA Yes, JM Yes**

Review of Article 11

R. Bailey brought the Budget Committee's concerns to the Board of Selectmen and informed the Committee that the Board has decided to leave the request at \$40,000.00.

Alton Police Chief R. Heath presented the Committee with additional information on the requested new vehicle.

Discussion

Alton Central School Warrant Articles

Articles 1 through 12 were read into the record.

Article 1 – School District Officers – Non Budget Committee article. No vote required by Budget Committee

Discussion

Article 2 – Override Clause
Discussion

Article 3 – Special Warrant Article – Petition Warrant Article is not addressed by the Budget Committee

Article 4 – School Board Pay

Article 5 – Operating Budget
Discussion

Article 6 – Special Warrant Article – Unanticipated Utilities
Discussion

Article 7 – Prospect Master Agreement

J. St. Cyr provided the Committee with several handouts and an overview of the PMHS teacher's contract.

Discussion

Article 8 – Call for Special Meeting

Article 9 – Improvement of Instruction

Article 10 – Prospect Mountain Anticipated Utilities

Article 11 – Prospect General Maintenance

Article 12 – Irrigation Water Repair

Public Input II

Alton resident Loring Carr had questions regarding the wording on the old and new PMHS contract handouts. Mr. Carr also voiced his concerns regarding the Step and Track program currently used by the School Department

Mr. Steve Miller approached the Budget Committee as a citizen of Alton.

Mr. Miller asked what the net cost to the tax payers would be for the cameras and what the expected life of those cameras is. Chairman McLeod responded that the cost to put the audio/video in a vehicle is \$5,600.00 and it will be half matching for a cost of \$2,800.00 per vehicle and one vehicle will be done this year. It is not known at this time the life expectancy of the cameras.

Mr. Miller stated that as a taxpayer he has an issue with the PMHS budget increase of a 3% raise for two years back to back. He stated that he went through a significant number of contracts from different school systems and could not find any over 4%. The teachers are giving up \$24,000.00 in insurance to receive \$150,000.00. They gave up 16% to get 84%.

Mr. Miller stated his issue with the \$40,000.00 cap is that it is being taken out of the Operating Budget which removes it from the review of the JMA Budget Committee, the Town of Alton and the Town of Barnstead Budget Committee to make a change. If it averages \$33,000.00 and the

cap is \$40,000.00 the school district is allowed to have a surplus. This is a way to keep growing and creating a surplus where money is expected to come back to the town that wasn't used in some way. Mr. Miller stated it will now be funding a potential surplus. They took it out of the Budget Committee's control and he is against that. If it is in the contract it is mandated and part of the default budget.

Mr. Miller stated he has an issue with the Certification being part of the Professional Development. That is an additional cost. Potentially they could use \$2,000.00 plus the \$135.00 or if they use \$0, now, instead of being \$0 they would be using \$135.00.

Mr. Miller addressed the \$18,000,000.00 renovation and would like to go on record that he is for a renovation. The school needs to be renovated for safety reasons; to get rid of the modulars and the roof has to be fixed. Mr. Miller has an issue with the amount of \$18,000,000.00. He stated that some school districts qualify for school building funding and we have not applied. PMHS was built with about 30 or 35% contribution from the state.

Mr. Miller noted that a survey sent out by School Board to find out if the people wanted to renovate the school did not ask about \$18,000,000.00. The answer came back yes but less than 45% stated that they wanted a significant renovation to the school.

Mr. Miller believes there are currently unpaid taxes of over \$1,000,000.00 to the town which gives an idea of where the economy of the town is.

Mr. Miller stated that enrollment has been projected by people associated with UNH to decline to 483 by the time the bond matures. The School Board is looking for a building to hold 600 students. PMHS was built for 830 students and there are currently less than 600. Mr. Miller believes we already have an answer to the problem and should move the 7th and 8th grade students out of Barnstead and Alton and move them to the high school and put a firewall in as they did in Gilford.

Mr. Miller continued that from 2007 – 2012 the town's valuation has gone down 11.9%, the taxes in the past 5 years have gone up 27%, and the local school tax has gone up 32%. He noted an example of the local tax rate of Alton is approximately \$6.02, and Wolfeboro which has a brand new high school, their share of the education tax is only \$4.48.

Mr. Miller stated that the way it is projected on the upcoming bond it will be something in excess of \$1.00 per \$1,000.00 increase in property taxes for the next 15 years. That is \$15.00 added to the school tax over that period of time.

Mr. Miller's solution is the petition warrant article as a plan B. Eliminate the modular's for safety issues, fix the roof and the school is not safe as it could be. Authorize a bond for \$7,000,000.00. Currently there is about 7500 square feet of modulars. It costs \$150.00 a square foot to build an addition to the school per the Department of Education. Mr. Miller suggests that we use a figure of \$200.00 to take care of soft costs, the architect, etc. If this is done you can essentially build another 35,000 square feet. He stated that 35,000 square feet is not needed and use 10,000 square feet for the modulars, fix the roof, and take care of all the safety issues. There would also be more than \$7,000,000.00 if the School Board chooses to use the \$980,000.00 in the expendable trusts, and then there would be almost \$8,000,000.00 to fix everything. The cost to the tax payers instead of being a dollar and some change would be less than .40.

Mr. Miller believes the school board is remiss by not offering a Plan B because if the \$18,000,000.00 does not pass then kids get zero. If it doesn't pass you don't fix the modular's, you don't fix the roof, you don't do any safety considerations and you have \$980,000.00 that probably will not be spent and the school board will come back next year and it will probably be \$20,000,000.00.

It is for the sake of the kids that is why I put the petition in there so there is a Plan B because I don't believe the town will pass an \$18,000,000.00 bond issue because it hasn't in the past but I think \$7,000,000.00 is palatable and we can do something for our kids.

Public Input II closed

A. McLeod motioned to adjourn and was seconded by M. DeCoff and passed with all in favor.

Adjournment 8:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Hawksley
Budget Committee Secretary

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