

Town of Alton
Budget Committee Meeting
Town Hall Meeting Room
January 11 2017
Minutes
Approved February 8, 2017

1. Call to Order at 6:30 pm

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

Roger Nelson, Chairman

Andrew Levasseur, Member

Greg Fuller, Vice Chairman

Virgil MacDonald, Selectmen's Representative

David Hershey, Member

Michael Ball, School Department Representative

Terrence O'Rourke, Member

Other Attendees:

Liz Dionne, Town Administrator

4. Approval of Agenda

G. Fuller motioned to approve the Agenda as presented and was seconded by D. Hershey with all in favor

5. Approval of Minutes

T. O'Rourke motioned to approve the Meeting Minutes of December 13, 2017 as presented and was seconded by D. Hershey.

Under Roll Call remove "Excused Absence from G. Fuller and T. O'Rourke.

T. O'Rourke motioned to approve the meeting minutes of December 13, 2017 as amended and was seconded by D. Hershey. The vote was 6-1 with M. Ball abstaining.

D. Hershey motioned to accept the Meeting Minutes of January 3, 2017 as presented with a vote of 6-1 with M. Ball abstaining (no second was heard).

T. O'Rourke motioned to amend the minutes of December 6, 2016 to reflect that G. Fuller and T. O'Rourke were in attendance and was seconded by G. Fuller with all in favor.

T. O'Rourke motioned to accept the minutes of December 6, 2016 as amended and was seconded by G. Fuller with all in favor.

6. Public Hearing – Town of Alton

R. Nelson informed everyone in attendance that the Selectman and Budget Committee approved \$7,131,959.00 for the 2017 Alton Town budget.

Alton Resident Loring Carr stated we usually receive the summary page sheets as a handout and is requesting a copy. R. Nelson stated we have it by department. There was a discussion on what type of hand out L. Carr was looking for.

L. Carr asked for an explanation on the increase for the Police Department. The actual was \$1,123,578.00 and is up to \$1,171,700.00. R. Nelson stated the budget in 2016 was Budget

\$1,177,821.00. The budget for 2017 is \$1,171,700.00 which is a decrease of just under \$7,000.00. The actual expenditures in 2016 were \$1,123,578.00. L. Carr asked why they are asking for so much more money if they didn't spend it. R. Nelson responded that at the beginning of the budget process he made some cuts and a majority voted to go along with what was presented.

L. Carr continued for Animal control actual was \$8,699.00 and the Selectmen recommended \$18,030.00 D. Hershey stated the actual recommended was \$12,330.00 and the Selectmen Recommended 18,030.00. R. Nelson responded that the difference was the Department Head was looking for a stipened that was cut from the budget.

L. Carr stated so the Budget Committee did not cut any money from what the selectman recommended and R. Nelson stated they did but it was not approved by the majority of the Committee.

Alton resident Rubin Wentworth stated that in his opinion the Budget Committee and Board of Selectmen go along simultaneously with whatever the department head wants. He stated he finds if very irresponsible and apprehensible that our tax dollars are not being looked at very carefully. He finds it hard when he goes through the warrant articles and most of everything was passed by the Board of Selectmen 4-0 and a majority were recommended and passed by the Budget Committee. He continued that he can't believe that the town of Alton is that perfect of a world that we don't have some concerns over how the money is being spent. In his review he found at least 10% that could be cut that wouldn't harm the town, the Department Heads the Board of Selectmen. Benefits are one of the biggest things and the Assessor's Office and he would hope that the Budget Committee would go back and look at it and maybe come up with a different approach. Most of you recommended it.

D. Hershey stated at the beginning of the season he made a recommendation to send a request out for all departments to submit 3 budgets. First would be the normally prepared budget, the second budget would be that budget -5% and the third would be the same as the first budget but with a reduction of 10%. It was overturned. Pursuant to that endeavor I support what you are saying but we can try. There are people on the committee that supported that endeavor. R. Nelson stated it was a majority of the BUDGET COMMITTEE that sent a letter to the town and to the schools.

R. Wentworth asked how the Budget Committee ended up agreeing to support the Board of Selectmen's budget. D. Hershey stated we did not have alternatives that were presented. We have been proposed to with regards to fuel costs. Comments were made that you never know what is going to happen in the event of a nuclear catastrophe gasoline could go to \$6.00 a gallon. It would have been far more effective and far more constructive and more appropriate to have the Department h\Heads representing their departments and their expenses to provide the alternative budget options and for that we needed the support of the Selectmen.

R. Wentworth stated if there was that much of a concern where the costs lie you must have had your own line items that you recommended and didn't recommend and where the majority of the Budget Committee decided to go along with the plan we couldn't see at least a 1% or 2% decrease. In the end we end up with the Board of Selectmen's budget that agrees with the department heads. I also find it irresponsible for the Board of Selectmen to be fair with us as the taxpayer.

R. Nelson stated that there were three votes taken on the Town budget. The first night there were two votes taken and it was 3-3 not to accept the Town budget. We met a week later with the seventh member of the Committee and the budget passed 4-3. For the Assessing Dept there are

three major factors, the Assessor's salary \$15,000.00; a part time wage officer went up \$14,000.00; and equipment was \$4,255.00.

R. Wentworth stated a \$14,000.00 pay raise a year. Where in the real world do we get that? R. Nelson stated that the administrator came up with a pay plan that met the town and the surrounding communities. Information was taken from twelve different towns some had waterfront and some did not. They took the pay for all the different positions and figured out what we were paying for the Town of Alton. The Step increases have been eliminated and the salaries have been adjusted to where they are now. That is the reason for the increases.

R. Wentworth stated that just adds to his frustration. He does not know of an employee who gets a \$14,000.00 increase unless you are the president of a company of someone in the public sector and he finds it very irresponsible for a community or government agency to even think of doing that. If they were going to appropriate it over a three or four years to get that person up to that level but to do it one year that is a slap to other employees in their own government agency.

T. O'Rourke asked for a point of order. The point of a public hearing is simply to receive input from the public we are not to be engaging in exchanges back and forth this is not what the point of this is. It is to take information. What we are getting into is a defense of ourselves individually and the Committee. We have had a process this entire time and have been at this since October. Every single meeting has public input and I doubt that we have had a single person at public input. We open with public input and close with public input. That was probably the time to bring these concerns up individually per department. I would recommend at this time the Committee stick to what the purpose of this Committee is and accept information from the public and move on.

R. Wentworth remarked that if he had known about the \$14,000.00 pay raise in the fall he would have been here. The reason for a public hearing is to hear the output from a citizen and I was asking questions. If that is they way you would like to treat the taxpayers so be it.

Recess taken at 6:47 pm

Meeting resumed at 6:50 pm

7. Public Hearing – School

R. Nelson stated that the Alton School Budget for 2017-2018 is \$14,796,962 is \$1,060,648 down from last year. Last year's budget was \$15,857,611.00 which includes Alton's portion of the PMHS budget

R. Nelson opened the floor up to questions regarding the school warrant articles.

L. Carr asked about Article 3 and if the last year's budget included the money that was added on the floor was included. S. Miller responded that it does not.

K. O'Blenes asked the Chairman if the Budget Committee would to vote on article 3 which is the operating budget. The previous vote did not include PMHS final number. A vote is also required for Article 9 the warrant article for \$20,000.00 is also needed.

R. Nelson stated that they would vote on it after the public hearing.

L. Carr asked on how many teachers would be affected by the contract.

K. Oblenes stated that it would be 43.9 FTE's.

L. Carr asked about Article 8 and thought it had been rolled into the school renovation.

Pam Styles superintendent stated that it was not part of the renovation. The money we are looking to put into the expendable trust is for the piping on the new boiler. The piping is very old. It would be approximately \$350,000.00. By putting in \$70,000.00 for the next five years we are being fiscally responsible and will be able to pay for it when the need arises. This is a five year project and is for the piping going around the boiler.

L. Carr stated he believes it was previously placed in another article and suggested that the school look into it.

Public Hearing for the school closed
Town Public hearing re-opened

J. Markland stated that for public information the \$14,000.00 was not a raise for the Assessor's office. This was for an additional secretarial position.

The Town Warrant Articles

Article 20

R. Wentworth asked what the total cost of the Gazebo would be. L. Dionne stated we don't have an exact cost yet possibly up to a maximum of \$40,000.00. The project has been initiated by the Historic Society and they plan on doing fund raising and the \$20,000.00 would be to get the structure built and they would take over from there with the donations to finish it.

R. Wentworth stated he offered a donation of \$1,000.00 because he believed that it was going to be built with private donations only. If the Town votes and approves it he will withdraw his \$1,000.00 donation because he does not want to pay for it twice. He agrees with the project but believes it belongs in the hands of raising private funds and not through taxation. He hopes the Budget Committee will change their recommended on this.

Article 21

R. Wentworth stated last year we appropriated money for the sidewalks on the West Side of the Bay and he didn't see any money coming out.

L. Dionne stated there is a separate capital reserve fund for Bay sidewalks only. There are a couple of sidewalk capital reserve funds and this one can be used for any of the side-walks in town and the one for the Bay sidewalks can only be used for the bay.

R. Wentworth stated he is confused why there are two separate funds. L. Dionne was unsure stating they were created years back and she is not sure why there is a separate capital reserve fund for just the Bay sidewalks.

L. Carr stated that the first sidewalk capital reserve fund was for the ones in the town. That was separate and it was started before the one for the Bay. People told us the Bay sidewalks needed looking into. The Board of Selectmen at the time went down to the Bay and decided that yes they did need to be re-done and started another one. The one in Town was supposed to continue and was supposed to be done in phases and was presented at the deliberative session it was not going to mix with the one down at the bay. The Bay one starts from the bridge on down and they were not supposed to be mixed. Unfortunately the Board of Selectmen has decided that they will combine them which he is totally opposed to. We started down by the Scott Williams project and the Bay one was supposed to be separate. The way that it is worded they are going to be mixing. We wanted the ones in Town to be looked at and the Bay one was added later one.

Article 22

R. Wentworth stated he believes that this is the land between the Alton Christian Conference Center and Pops Clam shop. He stated that this is about the only grassy area that is left in the Bay and he is against it. We are overusing the Bay as it is as a community and if we take this grass area away and the gazebo is there and you put pavement in there we are taking away all green space. The last time he knew the Planning Board and the Selectmen was stating we want green space. So now it looks like we will have asphalt space. To spend this much money down there I would rather see the Selectmen go for green space with swings and slides, for a park for children. We are about one of the only communities on the lake that doesn't have a place for the kids except the public dock and the beach. No swings no picnic area really to speak of unless you are on a slope.

Article 31

R. Wentworth feels that it is such a small building and he can't see the Parks and Recreation staying in their location and does not feel a special fund is necessary and feels it should be in their regular budget.

Article 32

R. Wentworth stated that he thought the West Alton Community Center was turned back over to the West Alton Fire Association a few years ago, they wanted the building back. L. Dionne responded that in 2016 the West Alton Fire Association no longer wanted that building or the fire station and it was turned over to the town in probate court.

Article 33

R. Wentworth stated he feels that it is an exuberant cost for two vehicles for five years especially with the leasing options that are out there now and believes it could be cut in half and \$25,000.00 would be more than adequate. That would be on a 3 year lease and you would be turning a vehicle over every three years and we would still be saving about \$20,000.00 a year. R. Wentworth stated he has done his homework on that and maybe the town could look at it again.

S. Miller stated the Board of Selectmen and Budget Committee should look at unintended consequences. In the past when we have owned the vehicles we passed down good automobiles which had limited use and passed it to another department. We no longer have the ability to do that. This has caused us to buy other vehicles or lease vehicles for other departments. Now we have to buy or lease vehicles for other departments.

Article 36

R. Wentworth asked regarding all of the ambulance funds if they pass how much would be left and he would like to know what the balance would be. Does one of these articles also include the new ambulance? It is kind of confusing.

L. Dionne responded that the Ambulance has already been purchased out of the fund. R. Wentworth stated he didn't know that could be done and that the DRA said it couldn't be done until Town Meeting. L. Dionne stated there is a capital reserve fund that is set up for fire department equipment which includes vehicles and the Selectmen are the agents to expend so a new ambulance was taken out of the equipment fund not the ambulance fund. R. Wentworth asked if the Board of Selectmen would be paying back the equipment fund from the ambulance fund because that is what the ambulance fund was originally established for the replacement of ambulances. L. Dionne stated no. R. Wentworth if I looked at the equipment fund I wouldn't be able to tell an ambulance came out of it and not out of the ambulance fund which was stated by the taxpayers at a town meeting back in 1995. L. Dionne stated she didn't know if an ambulance

G. Fuller confirmed that R. Wentworth was correct.

The current balance in the Fire Department Equipment fund is \$292,753.00.

Article 38

R. Wentworth asked if the fire truck would fit in the station. D. Hershey responded no and it would also be in a flood plain.

Article 39

S. Miller stated he believed the point was made that they were financing 50%. R. Nelson stated it is a \$250,000.00 expense. L. Dionne stated she wanted to let everyone know that the Fire Chief has applied for a grant for 30 sets and it is hoped that it will be approved. The matching portion the town would have to come up with would be approximately 15-20% and if approved would zero out this warrant article out.

R. Wentworth stated after reviewing all of the articles that were recommended it totals \$2,729,235.00. That is a third of the operating budget. It will put the town at a \$10,000,000.00 budget if everything passes. He asked did the Budget Committee get a copy of a CIP plan from the Board of Selectmen. It has been ten years since the Town has had a CIP. L. Dionne stated the Board of Selectmen has asked the Planning Department to reinstate the CIP and they are going to do so.

L Carr stated he believes the town has to disclose the Town estimated revenues. R. Nelson stated he would have these at the deliberative session and L. Carr stated it will not be a legal meeting. L. Dionne stated that the Finance Office is closed.

There was a discussion on whether the estimated revenues needed to be read into the record.

Public hearing for the town was closed at 7:27 pm and re-opened for the School Public Hearing.

S. Miller stated he would like an opportunity to read the school revenues into the minutes

K Oblenes read into the record the School Department estimated revenues.

- The Catastrophic aid \$50,000.00
- Federal Grants \$100,000.00
- Medicaid \$90,000.00
- Children nutrition \$120,000.00
- Food Service income, \$126,717.00
- Other PMHS \$50,000.00

Total estimated non taxable revenues \$836,717.00

The district assessment which is the gross minus the revenues which equals the assessment is \$13,960,245.00.

Recess taken at 7:30 pm
Resumed at 745

R. Nelson stated the Town anticipated Revenues for the town for 2016 are \$16,065,575.22.

T. O'Rourke motioned to adjourn the public hearing for the Town Budget and was seconded by D. Hershey with all in favor.

School Warrant Article 3

T. O'Rourke motioned to accept Warrant Article 3 as presented and was seconded by M. Ball.

The Budget Committee votes 5-2 with G. Fuller and R. Nelson voting against.

School Warrant Article 9

T. O'Rourke motioned to accept Warrant Article 9 as presented and was seconded by M. Ball.

D. Hershey stated the number of students for Alton and Budget is it a 50/50 split. K. Oblenes responded that Capital projects are a 50/50 split.

The Budget Committee votes 7-0 in favor.

The School Department Public Hearing is closed.

R. Nelson asked based upon public input on Warrant Article 20, does anyone on the Budget Committee feel the need to re-vote.

Warrant Article 20

R. Nelson motioned to re-vote and approve Article 20 and was seconded by T. O'Rourke, vote was 5-2. The vote remained the same.

Warrant Article 22

G. Nelson motioned to reconsider Warrant Article 22 and was seconded by T. O'Rourke.

G. Nelson motioned to accept Warrant Article 22 and was seconded by T. O'Rourke.

The vote was not recommended 2-5.

Article 31

There was a discussion on the need for Article 31.

G. Fuller motioned to re-consider Warrant Article 31 and was seconded by D. Hershey.

D. Hershey motioned to accept Warrant article 31 and was seconded by T. O'Rourke.

There was a discussion on the purpose of the fund.

The Budget Committee vote is 4-3 with D. Hershey, G. Fuller and R. Nelson voting against. Vote remains the same.

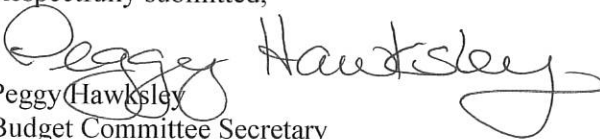
8. Other Business
None

9. Adjourn

R. Nelson motioned to adjourn and was seconded by T. O'Rourke with all in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,


Peggy Hawksley
Budget Committee Secretary

Approved February 8, 2017

03/10/2017

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CLERK