

**Town of Alton
Alton Budget Committee
APPROVED
Meeting Minutes
April 16, 2009**

Members Present: Karen Painter, Chair
Greg Fuller, Vice Chair
Richard MacDonald
Steve Miller
Marc DeCoff

Members Absent: School Board Representative

Others Present: Members of the Public

I. CALL TO ORDER

K. Painter called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

All committee members were present. A representative from the school board has not been appointed yet.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

S. Miller requested to add three things to the agenda: special education funding at the high school, Budget Committee/JMA business, and meeting minutes. The amended agenda was accepted by consensus.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

G. Full motioned to approve the draft of the meeting minutes of January 15, 2009 and S. Miller seconded the motion. G. Fuller and S. Miller were the only two committee members present at the meeting held on January 15, 2009 and agreed that the meeting minutes were acceptable as written. The motion passed by a vote of two with four abstaining. These meeting minutes will remain as a draft only. (GF, SM / abstain – MD, KP, LC, RM)

R. MacDonald motioned to approve the meeting minutes of January 20, 2009 and G. Fuller seconded the motion. Two corrections were made on page four, paragraph four: "The motion passed by a vote of ~~three~~ four..." and on page five, paragraph two: "The motion passed by a vote

of ~~three~~ four...” The motion to approve the amended minutes passed by a vote of four with two abstaining. (KP, SM, GF, RM / abstain – LC, MD)

R. MacDonald motioned to approve the meeting minutes of January 26, 2009 and G. Fuller seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of four with two abstaining. (KP, SM, GF, RM / abstain – LC, MD)

G. Fuller motioned to approve the meeting minutes of March 19, 2009 and M. DeCoff seconded the motion. K. Painter reported she had requested information to place in the minutes about the request for an itemized default budget to be available for the Budget Committee to review and to add the upcoming meeting dates. The motion to approve the amended minutes passed by unanimous vote. (KP, SM, GF, RM, LC, MD)

VI. SCHOOL BOARD REPRESENTATIVE

K. Painter reported on a conversation she had had with the chair of the school board, Terri Noyes. She reported that there had been no representative appointed yet and that T. Noyes had stated if she had been aware of the meeting to be held tonight that they would have made sure someone from the Board would have been present.

S. Miller reported on a conversation he had with Lynda Goossens, a member of the Alton School Board, and stated she had asked if it made sense for the Board to have a rotating representative to the Budget Committee. He stated he had told her that it was not in the best interest for the Board to have a rotating member and spoke about the benefits of having a single consistent representative. K. Painter read a letter from the Local Government Center about the issue of having a rotating representative from the Board, as last year the Budget Committee had requested legal clarification on the practice.

VII. ITEMIZED DEFAULT BUDGET

K. Painter asked it would be possible for the Committee to get a copy of the detailed itemized default budget and L. Carr stated he thought that Russ Bailey had placed a copy in the Budget Committee’s mail box.

VIII. RSA 40-13

G. Fuller stated that this was something that he had brought up at the last meeting but did not know if the Selectmen would adopt it unless the Budget Committee presented a special warrant article for voter approval.

K. Painter read RSA 40-13: III to the Budget Committee.

S. Miller spoke about the default budget process and stated that the Budget Committee could be charged with drafting the default budget for the town. He suggested that the Board of Selectmen should meet with the Budget Committee before the default budget be drafted up. He felt that this practice would be in the best interest of the town and in the interest of transparency.

S. Miller motioned that prior to the Board of Selectmen and the Town Manager draft the default budget that they meet with the Budget Committee to discuss what line items should be in the default budget. M. DeCoff seconded the motion. L. Carr stated that the default budget came about with Senate Bill 2 (SB-2) and reported that it was originally passed with “the governing body” in the bill but that for the budget committee to do the default budget, the voters would have to approve it. There was discussion about the items that were included or not included in a default budget. L. Carr listed all of the items that were not to be included in a default budget:

- Elected positions receiving COLAs (Selectmen, Treasurer, Trustees, Cemetery Trustees, Water Commissioner)
- The town attorney would not receive a COLA
- Water & Cemetery – did not cover total cost of health insurance and retirement
- Welfare – agreement with CAP, covered half of Senior Center Director. Expanded hours due to increase in services to seniors
- Conservation – this reflect move from Code Enforcement ¼ of time for covering Conservation Commission
- Hydrant Rental – shows zero – see Fire Department mine for \$5,040 for hydrants.

There was discussion about the payment and management of contracted items in a default budget. S. Miller amended his motion to include the default budget for the school (SAU #72) and to meet with the School Board and Administration and M. DeCoff seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (KP, SM, GF, RM, LC, MD)

S. Miller motioned for the Budget Committee Chair to draft a request for a meeting with the two governing bodies, the town and the school, and M. DeCoff seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (KP, SM, GF, RM, LC, MD)

IX. TOWN EMPLOYEE MANUAL

There was no manual available for review. L. Carr will obtain a manual for the next meeting.

X. LEGAL EXPENSE

S. Miller thanked K. Painter for the list of legal fees that she had provided. S. Miller stated it was not normative to pay a retainer and to bill for services rendered. He reported that the town’s attorney received about \$180.00/hr for his services, which he felt was an appropriate amount, but that he also received a retainer of about \$14,000.00. He stated it was his understanding that the retainer is to pay for miscellaneous phone calls and other unbilled items. R. MacDonald stated that the retainer kept the town’s attorney available for people to speak with on the phone. G. Fuller stated that the retainer averaged out to about fifteen minutes per day and that the cost would cover time the attorney spent on the phone. K. Painter spoke about the budget process and felt that if the budget line item did not exceed the amount that was budgeted that it was acceptable. She suggested that the issue should possibly be addressed with the Selectmen as a concerned individual. S. Miller reported that the attorney billed out at small amounts, such as a twelve minute phone call and felt it was in the best interest of the town to review the employment contract.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

K. Painter stated the Committee extended their sincere thanks to S. Miller for his hard work as the chair of the Budget Committee over the years.

K. Painter reported a note had been received by E. Dominick with well-wishes, in response to a note that G. Fuller had sent to her.

S. Miller reported that the school board would be taking \$130,000.00 from the special reserve to cover expenses. He spoke about the school failing AYP and the budget shortages. He felt it was wrong that the school failed AYP and had the issues with the funding. He spoke about ways that the money could be used for things other than special education. There was discussion about budget line item transfers. S. Miller read a section from The Baysider article and the committee discussed the article. It was the consensus of the committee that the school board was doing the right thing to expend money from this special reserve. S. Miller stated he retracted his statement and felt that the money was being used for the right purpose.

K. Painter stated she would ask the school's business administrator if there was any budget line transfers from special education.

S. Miller spoke about the budget committee's role with the JMA and stated that it is purely an advisory position. He spoke about the over funding of the tuition reimbursement budget line item in the high school's budget. He spoke about increasing the role of the budget committee's role with the JMA, in cooperation with the Barnstead Budget Committee. G. Fuller stated that a few years ago each town had a petition warrant article to have the role of the budget committee to be more authoritative and less advisory. He reported that it passed in Barnstead but it was amended in Alton at the deliberative session and it did not pass.

There was discussion about the warrant article that had passed in Barnstead. G. Fuller felt that the article would only need to be voted on and passed in Alton and not at both towns.

S. Miller motioned to explore with the budget committee of Barnstead with the possibility of a joint petition, or Alton singularly, to increase the standing of the JMA budget committee to have the same privileges or charges that are in the RSA. R. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of five with one no vote. (Yes - SM, GF, KP, RM, MD / No - LC)

S. Miller stated he would contact the chair of the budget committee in Barnstead for a meeting in the future.

S. Miller asked the meeting minutes to be available in a timelier manner and felt that there was too long of a wait between when the minutes were approved and the last meeting(s). K. Argiropolis noted that the meeting minutes of January 15 and January 20 had been tabled by a motion made by the Committee at their January 26 meeting. She noted she had been unable to bring copies to the Committee on March 19 because she had not been able to get home prior to the meeting that day to retrieve the copies for the Committee. She reported the minutes had been completed in a timely manner and emailed to the Committee but that other than the March 19 meeting; the minutes had been available for the Committee to approve, if they had wished to do so.

S. Miller spoke about the legal expenses incurred for the Planning Board Chairman. He asked if the town would be able to charge her for legal expenses. S. Miller motioned to ask for the

Selectmen's Representative to ask the Selectmen if there was anything they could do to and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of two, with one "no" vote and three abstaining. (No – KP / Yes – SM, RM / abstain – LC, GF, MD)

R. MacDonald motioned for the selectmen's representatives to find out why fire hydrants are not working on Rand Hill Road. M. DeCoff spoke about the need to test the pressure at the hydrants while more than one hydrant was in operation. G. Fuller seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of four with two abstaining. (Yes – GF, RM, MD, KP / Abstain – SM, LC)

K. Painter reported on some correspondence that was received, which requests that meeting minutes are emailed to Pat Rockwood so that the Selectmen can review them.

L. Carr reviewed his action items from the meeting:

- Employee handbook
- Detailed default budget
- Testing on fire hydrants

XII. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

M. DeCoff motioned to adjourn and G. Fuller seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (KP, SM, GF, RM, LC, MD)

Respectfully Submitted,

Krista Argiropolis
Recorder