

Budget Committee
APPROVED Minutes (Approved 10/9/2019)
September 4, 2019 @ 6:30 PM
Alton Town Hall
1 Monument Square
Alton, NH 03809

1. Call to order at 6:33 p.m. by Chairman O'Brien.

2. Roll Call

Present:

Patrick O'Brien, Chairman

Beth Varney, Member

David Hershey, Member

Bob Holt, Member

Roger Nelson, Member

Reuben Wentworth, Selectmen Representative

Paul LaRochelle, Selectmen Representative Alternate

Kristi, Hikel, School Board Representative

3. Approval of Agenda

MOTION by R. Nelson to approve the Agenda as presented for September 4, 2019. Second by D. Hershey. No discussion. Motion passes with all in favor.

4. New Business

P. O'Brien represented the Budget Committee at the CIP Board. This year the CIP Board is looking at moving threshold from \$20,000 to 40,000. Not a lot of info at this point. Dept heads are concerned regarding equipment. Suggest this go on the Agenda to discuss at our next meeting. Discussion on reasoning.

P. LaRochelle reported so there are not so many items, to shrink down to big ticket items, and to reduce confusion to the public.

R. Nelson concerned and questioned why have a Budget Committee if the Selectmen are going to approve items that the public did not vote for (i.e. proposed budget was not approved so default budget was what the public wanted and recently the Selectmen have approved across-the-board town employee raised (retroactive to Jan 1, 2019) at 2%).

B. Holt interjected this they can do this legally by this is not ethically right.

R. Wentworth added defended the BOS, stating whether he agrees with the decision or not.

General discussion on the purpose of the Budget Committee and BOS spending against what town originally voted (i.e. giving employee raises.) retroactive. Bottom line - BOS went against the voters from March. (i.e. historically town has done this before i.e. vehicles, pay raises)

K. Hikel noted that the voters vote on the bottom line not line item by line item.

B Holt would like to know what the 2% cola raise cost and what the 2% merit raise cost. R. Wentworth get the figures. (2.5% merit, cost \$138,000).

Department Head meetings:

P. O'Brien sat with Water Department. P. O'Brien sat with CIP as well.

D. Hershey sat with Library - has unused space in basement they would like to finish off with sheetrock. They would also like to put in a breakroom. D. Hershey would like to get a copy of the Will for guidelines on the trust fund to clear up any confusion with regard to spending.

D. Hershey also sat with IT Department. There was not in the budget accrual for capital purchases. With IT every few years everything become obsolete. They back up once a week. Currently server works very slow. \$11,600 for a new server. Recommend purchasing a used one with hardware and tech support for half the price. There are alternatives.

R. Nelson reported Solid Waste is going to be \$40,000 under budget. Is planning on getting with Department head soon.

P. O'Brien noted Department heads were contacted through Liz Dione to expect Budget Committee are coming to talk with them.

R. Wentworth added Dept heads have been advised to plan a 0 based budget. Nothing to exceed 5%. Next year nothing more than 3.5% including raises. Legal expenses will be going up this year.

P. O'Brien sat with Water Department - met with Courtney. Planning for replacement of Church Street and School Street water lines. Budget posing an increase that is over 5%. Funded by revenue. She has \$40000 in her budget for that project. Non-water users only get taxed for water on town buildings.

General discussion on water department charges vs. revenues.

K. Hikel reported on School Board - Oct 17 workshop day. 0 based budget as per usual. Starting to see cost saving actions. Still need to get water to the ACS field - doing research. Kitchen needs upgrade. Bonds are all paid off. Population is 459 down from around 470. Planning staged of tuitioning in an entire school district. Keeping quality of programs. No major surprises in new budget.

5. Old Business

1. Benchmark Survey

D. Hershey presented proposed format. Noted cells are formulated (formulas are hidden). Comparison between these towns. Explained the categories. Asking the Budget Committee if they want to ask general information or top 5 departments. Selecting the town with reasonable exposure. Other data to include (i.e. last Cola raise, etc.)

R. Nelson feels starting with general information with towns getting used to sharing this information albeit public information.

D. Hershey stated most towns have said yes and would like to be provided with data collected.

K. Hikel would like to see Gilmanton added to this worksheet. Similar in size and demographics.

P. O'Brien - suggested get basic minimum at this time and maybe in near future expand on information collected.

K. Hikel cautioned that this may be taken from outside public as a comparison or rating of towns. Taken out of context.

B. Holt - agrees with someone taking this out of context.

D. Hershey agreed but we are using this for the purpose intended. "Nothing ventured, nothing gained"

Board consensus. Keeping simple. Go forward with gathering information.

MOTION by D. Hershey to begin gathering information from towns willing to be included in survey.

Second by R. Wentworth. No discussion. Motion passes with all in favor.

6. Approval of Minutes

June 26, 2019 Correct the Spelling Kristi Hikel.

MOTION by R. Nelson to approve the Minutes of June 26, 2019 with the correction of the spelling of Kristi Hikel's name. Second by R. Wentworth. Motion passes with 6 in favor and 1 abstention (Hershey).

7. Public Input - None seen or heard. Public Input closed.

8. Other Business. None.

9. Adjournment at 8:00. MOTION by R. Nelson to adjourn at 8 p.m. Second by B Holt. Motion passes with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Schaeffner, Recording Secretary