

**TOWN OF ALTON
BUDGET COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED 11/13/08
MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 30, 2008**

Members Present: Steve Miller, Chair
 Karen Painter, Vice Chair
 Richard MacDonald
 Greg Fuller
 Elizabeth Dominick
 Jeff St. Cyr, School Board Representative
 Steve McMahon, Selectmen's Representative

Others Present: Russ Bailey, Town Administrator
 Members of the Public

I. CALL TO ORDER

S. Miller called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

S. McMahon arrived at 6:48 PM.

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

G. Fuller motioned to approve the agenda and K. Painter seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (GF, KP, ED, RM, SMc, JS, SM)

V. HOUSEKEEPING

a. SCHOOL MEETING DATES

S. Miller stated that the school board has requested to possibly use the date of December 4, 2008 instead of November 20, 2008 as a date to present the budget. R. Bailey stated that CIP has not confirmed if they can change their meeting date but it was most likely it would happen. J. St. Cyr explained there would be a conflict of the meeting scheduled on November 20, 2008 because there were parent/teacher conferences scheduled for that evening.

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Committee reviewed and discussed the meeting minutes of September 11, 2008. K. Painter motioned to approve the meeting minutes of September 11, 2008 as amended and E. Dominick seconded the motion. G. Fuller noted that on page 2 of 3 that his concern was with the law and that he wanted the school board to be paid but if the law was not on their side then they should not receive pay. (SM, KP, GF / abstain – ED, RM, JS)

VII. OLD BUSINESS

G. Fuller asked S. Miller if he had received Jim Sessler's email in response to their question and reported that the response had been sent to the Town Administrator. He gave copies to the Committee members. Ray Carbone, Laconia Daily Sun, requested a copy and S. Miller stated that he could not submit him a copy of the email at this time because it was "attorney/client privilege." S. Miller stated that email was sent on October 20, 2008 to S. Miller but that he did not receive it. He stated that he checks his email daily. The Committee reviewed the email.

J. St. Cyr stated that once the school board budget was presented that there would not be a rotating school board member at that time. There would be a rotating board member during the review of the town budget and that set up was the Board's plan since March.

There was no other old business.

VIII. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

R. Bailey stated that he needed re-scheduled the Town Clerk/Elections for November 13, 2008 and so just the Assessing Department and Fire Department presented their budgets that evening.

IX. ASSESSING DEPARTMENT – 4193

S. Miller motioned to review the budget on a line-by-line basis, as opposed to a question and answer session of review of the budget. He explained there are two reasons for this: (a) to show that the Budget Committee has reviewed every line of the budget and (b) because the public did not have a copy of the budget book. He stated that because this is now on television, this would tell the viewer where every dollar goes. He stated that when they examine the budget on a line-by-line basis that there is more discussion and more time and each item is vetted. He felt it was critical for the examination of the budget. R. MacDonald seconded the motion. G. Fuller stated they discussed this the other night and thought they had made a decision. R. MacDonald stated that it would explain more to the people watching this on television. G. Fuller stated that every line seemed to be dissected if they could spend a nano-second on it and felt that they could not do it that way. S. Miller stated that it was the bottom line of the budget that was in question and spoke of the benefits of reviewing the budget line-by-line. He stated that if the only reason was that if it was quicker, than that was not a good reason. S. McMahon stated he has been through the whole budget as a Selectmen and he reviewed the budget prior to coming to meetings. He stated that he trusted the department heads for knowing their budget and that they have explained

increased budget line items to the Selectmen. He stated that if Committee member had read the budget before they came in to the meetings that they would have questions about things and they could go over things and that anyone who was in the town could get a copy of the document. S. McMahon stated that he was upset by the way the budget was reviewed line-by-line at the last meeting because a vote was taken and they still ran it the way they wanted to. S. Miller asked if the Selectmen made changes as little as \$200.00. He stated he looked at the budget for changes and noted that the Selectmen made changes for. G. Fuller called the question. The motion failed with three yes votes and four no votes. (Yes – KP, SM, RM / No – GF, SM, JS, ED)

Tom Sargent, Town Assessor, presented his department's proposed budget for 2009. The Selectmen recommended a budget of \$155,534.00 for 2009, which was the same amount that the department head had proposed. The budget for 2008 was \$156,816.00 and the actual budget for 2008 is \$112,945.00. T. Sargent noted reductions in two budget line items (4193-010 and 4193-134), totaling \$534.00.

S. Miller asked if T. Sargent could learn to drive a boat so someone did not need to pay to drive him. T. Sargent responded that he did not want to learn to drive a boat because he has never done this before. R. Bailey stated that he would not want to go out to an island site alone. G. Fuller asked about Mileage. T. Sargent stated that he had one of the old police cruisers. R. MacDonald asked about Map Updating and T. Sargent explained that it was for the data collector. G. Fuller asked if the Assessor's Department brought in revenue and T. Sargent confirmed that they did.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

S. Miller motioned to recommend the 2009 budget for Assessing (4193) at \$155,184.00 and E. Dominick seconded the motion. It was noted that the budget accepted by the Selectmen was \$155,534.00 but the department head had made cuts since then. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (GF, KP, ED, RM, SMc, JS, SM)

X. FIRE DEPARTMENT – 4220

Scott Williams, Acting Fire Chief, and Mary Jane Driscoll, Secretary, presented the proposed budget for the Alton Fire Department. S. Williams spoke about some of the ways the Fire Department has been working to save money for the town. He spoke about savings in lighting, heating, and telephone that the department recognized. He reported they are sending two people to a grant writing class to save money and they have a full roster.

The Selectmen's recommended budget for 2009 is \$313,621.00, which is an increase of 8.1% over the 2008 budget. The budget for 2008 was \$289,913.00. The actual budget for 2008 is \$225,080.

S. Miller asked about FT Fire Fighter Wages (4220-016) \$38,626.00 and S. Williams stated that the budget line item was decreased by \$10,000.00 from the number that was in the budget books after review and re-configuration of the salaries. E. Dominick stated that the adjustment made sense to her but asked how the average was a "good average". S. Williams explained that they looked at what most people made from the assistant chief on down. E. Dominick asked if the hours would increase and if there was any kind of rolling average they could present. S. Williams stated he had no data because they could not anticipate what emergencies they might have. S. Williams stated they did a line-by-line, per person, for the wages. S. McMahon stated we were very fortunate to have the fire department that we have. E. Dominick stated her concerns were some of the things that were being included in the budget and felt that this was not the year to

have them in the budget. S. Williams stated that if the salaries were pulled out of the budget that the budget was only \$1,000.00 over the previous year's budget. S. Williams explained there are approximately forty members on the roster for the volunteer department. J. St. Cyr asked if exploring students were included on the roster and S. Williams responded that there is one on the roster now but there might be more in the future. J. St. Cyr asked if there was any request to add two full-time fire fighters on the roster and S. Williams stated that it is not a request at this time and spoke about how the ambulance is self-sustaining.

S. Miller noted that twenty-eight of the budget line items were flat lined, including fuel. He stated that other departments' budget for these lines items but they have had as much as a 40% increase in their budget line item. R. Bailey responded that there might be changes in the budget line items for fuel depending on the bid approved for fuel. There were several positive comments about the presentation of the budget for 2009.

G. Fuller stated that the budget is relatively flat because the ambulance was not included in it. S. Williams stated that the ambulance budget will be in a Warrant article and that \$139,000.00 will be requested, which is flat from the previous year. He hoped that the ambulance would return money to the town. G. Fuller asked if there was staffing for the ambulance for the road race and S. Williams explained this was "in and out" money. G. Fuller asked if the same vendor was used for Computer maintenance as the town used and R. Bailey confirmed that there was. There are five desktop computers and two laptop computers. G. Fuller asked about Computer Tech Support cost and if there was a breakdown. S. Williams stated that he could get a breakdown of the cost. S. Williams stated that he has held back on a lot of things this year due to the fire on Mt. Major. G. Fuller asked if the furnaces that S. Williams had mentioned would be a Warrant article and S. Williams stated that the fuel savings would be 50% to 75% and briefly explained the benefits of the new furnace.

S. Miller listed several budget line items that were flat funded and stated that it showed him that a manager looked at his numbers to flat line his budget for the next year. He stated this is what he was looking for at a difficult time.

G. Fuller noted that the fuel expense for 2008 was already over budget and that fuel was flat-lined for 2009. S. Williams reported that they were buying fuel at the gas station on the circle and paying retail price. This will be changing with the new fuel bids.

J. St. Cyr asked if there was any recovery of expense for arson fire cases in town. S. Williams responded that the police department is given a bill for the cost for expense of the fire that they can give to the person who committed the crime. Whenever money is recovered it goes into general fund but generally money is not recovered.

There were no further questions from the Committee.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:

K. Painter motioned to accept the Selectmen's recommendations of \$313,621.00 for the 2009 budget for Fire Department (4220) and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. G. Fuller noted that there was an increase of 8% in this budget and noted that the Planning budget had been reduced but had had less of an increase. S. Miller spoke about the justification for the increase and felt the budget was well done and included cost savings. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (GF, KP, ED, RM, SMc, JS, SM)

XI. SHORT TERM DEBT – 4723

S. Miller motioned to accept the Selectmen's recommendations for Short Term Debt at \$1.00 and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (GF, KP, ED, RM, SMc, JS, SM)

XII. LEGAL – 4153

R. Bailey presented the budget for Legal. The Selectmen's recommended budget is for \$84,452.00. There is a 3% increase from the previous year. The actual budget for 2008 is \$116,817.00, whereas the budget for 2008 was \$84,031. R. Bailey explained that the cell tower case was driving up the budget but they hoped to have it settled soon. There was discussion about the fee levels that are charged by the attorney. S. Miller asked if R. Bailey felt the budget was under-budget for next year and R. Bailey responded that the cell tower, if everything goes our way, should be fine, but it depends on some existing cases that he cannot comment on if things continue. He stated that this is as up in the air as fuel cost.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

S. Miller motioned to accept the Selectmen's recommendations for Legal (4153) for the 2009 budget at \$84,452.00 and K. Painter seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (GF, KP, ED, RM, SMc, JS, SM)

XIII. INSURANCE – 4196

The Selectmen's recommended budget for Insurance for 2009 is \$157,168. The budget for 2008 was \$140,471.

R. Bailey explained this covers workers' comp, unemployment, liability, etc., and that the insurance is through the Local Government Center. S. Miller asked what the percentage the benefits were of the salary lines. R. Bailey stated it was about 20% but that it varied per employee. It stays pretty much the same each year and will go up or down based on health insurance. There was discussion about retirement costs.

COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION:

S. Miller motioned to accept the Selectmen's recommendation for Insurance (4196) at \$157,168.00 for the 2009 budget and K. Painter seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (GF, KP, ED, RM, SMc, JS, SM)

XIV. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT – 4290

The Selectmen's recommended budget for 2009 is \$3,516.00 and the budget for 2008 was \$3,528.00. The actual budget for 2008 is \$279.00.

R. Bailey presented the budget for Emergency Management. He stated the budget was flat lines and that the Town Hall would be made the main building to be used in case of emergency. He reported he is applying for a grant to fund an EOC and explained the benefit of having the EOC away from the Police Department, because they are a first responder.

COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATIONS:

S. Miller asked if the money in this budget would be spent and R. Bailey responded that it would be spent. G. Fuller asked if the satellite phone was in this budget and R. Bailey stated it was under contract services. J. St. Cyr stated if money would be spent out of this budget before the end of the fiscal year and R. Bailey responded that there would be. G. Fuller asked if \$28.00/month was the contracted amount for the satellite phone and R. Bailey stated that it was the cost per month and he was unsure where the phone would be located.

K. Painter motioned to accept the Selectmen’s recommendations for the 2009 budget for Emergency Management (4290) at \$3,516.00 and S. Miller seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (GF, KP, ED, RM, SMc, JS, SM)

XV. GILMAN MUSEUM – 4575

R. Bailey presented the budget for the Gilman Museum. He reported that the septic system has failed and needed to be replaced. S. Miller asked about Contract Services at \$3,000.00 and R. Bailey explained that the \$3,000.00 is to catalog and refurbish the items in the museum. He noted that this was funded by a trust fund that was set up by Mr. Gilman when he passed away. There is about \$120,000.00 in the trust fund. There was discussion about the use of the museum and possible revenue that could be received to the town/trust fund from opening the museum.

COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATIONS:

S. Miller motioned to accept the Selectmen’s recommendations for the 2009 budget for Gilman Museum (4575) at \$3,000.00 and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. G. Fuller stated his concern with this budget is that it comes out of a trust fund that the money is spent from the principal. He stated that there is only \$120,000.00 to \$130,000.00 when there will not be anymore left in the trust fund. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (GF, KP, ED, RM, SMc, JS, SM)

XVI. BUDGET COMMITTEE – 4131

S. Miller reported that there is a flat budget for 2009 of \$2,071, which was the same for 2008. There was discussion about postage, advertising, contracted services, and office supplies. G. Fuller asked who made out the budget and R. Bailey reported that he made the budget. G. Fuller noted that S. Miller had asked to zero out some of the budget line items and noted that S. Miller might not be the Chair this next year, and felt that the budget line items should be left. There was discussion about the relevancy of the G. Fuller’s comment.

COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATION:

S. Miller motioned to accept the recommendations of the Selectmen for \$2,071.00 for Budget Committee (4131) and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (GF, KP, ED, RM, SMc, JS, SM)

There was a brief break.

S. Miller apologized for his comments made to G. Fuller during the discussion about the Budget Committee’s budget for 2009. G. Fuller also apologized.

A copy of the SAU #72 budget was distributed to the Committee members. J. St. Cyr spoke about how the binders were being recycled as a cost savings.

XVII. COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 10/28/08

a. POLICE – 4210

S. Miller asked about the mileage reimbursement for the Police Chief and asked if the cost was going to be about \$2,500 to \$3,000 more. R. Bailey confirmed it would be and that it would be added to line 4210-112 Mileage but he had not spoken to the Selectmen about adding money to the budget. He stated he would need to speak with the Selectmen before he could answer that. S. Miller asked the Committee if they still wanted to approve this budget. E. Dominick noted that there might be other amendments to budgets they have already approved.

G. Fuller stated he was not present at the last meeting to review this budget and stated that if they were going to vote on it that night that he would abstain from voting.

It was the consensus of the Committee to table their recommendations of this budget until the next meeting.

b. ANIMAL CONTROL – 4414

S. Miller stated that it was his understanding, as explained by the Police Chief, that this is position is a part-time officer and that the animal control officer would also be working as a dispatcher, participating in other police duties. He asked if an animal control officer was needed for \$14,925.00 and a part-time officer needed.

S. Miller motioned to change the budget line item for ACO Salary 4414-009 from \$27,649.00 to \$11,324.00, the amount of the prior year. R. MacDonald seconded the motion. R. Bailey noted that \$11,419.00 has already been spent in 2008 in this budget line item. He spoke about some of the duties and scope of work for the animal control officer. S. Miller asked for the reason for the budget for 2008 by the Police Chief. R. Bailey stated it was based on the on-call costs and that it just was not working and reminded S. Miller that he had asked the Chief for a list of calls. J. St. Cyr asked if the animal control officer had any other training other than being a sworn police officer. R. Bailey explained that they should be a part-time officer and did not know if other training was required. J. St. Cyr asked what R. Bailey's recommendation was for this action and R. Bailey stated he felt this budget should be increased. K. Painter suggested that the Committee wait for the data from the Police Chief about calls. S. McMahon noted that the entire actual budget for 2008, to date, was for Salary and the Humane Society. He stated that this year, with those numbers, which the Committee would be able to see where the expenses were for this department. The motion failed with two yes votes, four no votes, and one abstained. (Yes – SM, RM / Abstain – GF / No – JS, SMc, KP, ED)

The approval of this budget will be tabled for the next meeting.

c. CEMETERY – 4195

S. Miller motioned to accept the Selectmen's recommendation for the 2009 budget of \$96,910.00 and E. Dominick seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of six with one abstaining. (Yes - KP, ED, RM, SMc, JS, SM / abstain – GF)

d. PLANNING – 4191

S. Miller stated that he had asked the Town Planner if she could bring in her budget at the amount budgeted for \$130,000.00, based on the 2008 budget. He stated she said she could do that but that it would be with some difficulty.

S. Miller motioned to fund the budget for Planning Department 4191 to be funded at \$130,000. R. MacDonald seconded the motion. S. Miller stated that he had the legal opinion that a department's bottom line of a budget could be reduced but that the bottom line of a town's budget could not be reduced. He had a document from a lawyer with the legal opinion. G. Fuller stated he was not going to vote for the motion because he would like to see specific areas where the cuts would be made. There was discussion about the proposed cut to the budget.

S. Miller withdrew his motion.

S. Miller motioned to reduce the budget line item for Overtime Wages Office (4191-020) by \$2,000.00, making the budget line item \$500.00 and K. Painter seconded the motion. There was discussion about the motion. S. Miller stated he would prefer to leave it to the manager as to where they would take the money out but that he felt the Overtime Wage line was the most flexible line. The motion (Yes – SM / Abstain – GF / No - KP, ED, RM, SMc, JS)

S. McMahon motioned to accept the Selectmen's recommendation for \$132,993.00 for the 2009 budget for the Planning Department and E. Dominick seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of four with two no votes and one abstaining. (Yes - ED, KP, JS / abstain – GF / no – SM, RM)

XVIII. ADJOURNMENT

S. Miller motioned to adjourn and K. Painter seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (GF, KP, ED, RM, SMc, JS, SM)

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Recorder