

**TOWN OF ALTON
ALTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**ALTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
DRAFT
November 10, 2009**

Approved 11/19/09

MEMBERS PRESENT: Karen Painter, Chair
Loring Carr, Selectmen's Representative
Terri Noyes, School Board Representative
Steve Miller
Marc DeCoff
Richard MacDonald

MEMBERS ABSENT: Greg Fuller, Vice Chair

OTHERS PRESENT: Kathy Holt, Superintendent
Bonnie Jean Kuras, Principal
Kathy O'Blenes, Business Administrator
Katherine Dix-Herndon, Special Education Director
Sydney Leggett, Curriculum Coordinator

I. CALL TO ORDER

K. Painter called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

G. Fuller was absent.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. PUBLIC INPUT

There were no comments from the public.

V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

M. DeCoff motioned to approve the agenda as presented and S. Miller seconded the motion. S. Miller asked if there were any meeting minutes for approval and K. Painter responded that she was not prepared to approve meeting minutes at this time. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (KP, LC, SM, MD, RM / absent – GF)

VI. NEW BUSINESS

ALTON SCHOOL DISTRICT 2010-2011 BUDGET

Terri Noyes, Chair, Alton School Board, Superintendent Kathy Holt, Principal Bonnie Jean Kuras, and Business Administrator Kathy O'Blenes, presented the proposed budget for the Alton School District 2010-2011. T. Noyes review the school's mission statement, the source of funding, the school's lunch program, and grant money that has been received (\$113,000 over the past two years by eRate grants). She spoke about the concerns with the building, including the roof, floors, windows, and PA system. K. Holt spoke about the fire inspection that they had last year where they had to spend about \$20,000 to come up to code and reported on some of the changes they had to make. T. Noyes spoke about the equipment replacement cycles with the objective to keep things safe and to improve performance. She stated that the objective of the teachers this year is to bring in a budget with as little increase as possible. The teachers' salaries are status quo and the negotiations are still going on for the teachers' contract. T. Noyes spoke about the para educator position that is included in the 2010-2011 budget for the Computer Lab, and changes to the Speech and Language program. She spoke about changes to the increase for the Business Manager, as she has received her degree and agreed to take her raise by one half one year and one half the following year. Health Insurance rates will be known in December and NH Retirement has increased to 8.2%. She noted that there were changes in the Athletic Officials and they have been moved to the salary line in the budget, which is just an accounting basis, but this is not a budget increase.

T. Noyes reported on the new reading program that will be implemented for K-8 and reported that it can cost over \$100,000 to implement the program but ACS will be implementing this over a period of time to lessen the impact. T. Noyes spoke about the Special Education program and reported there was an increase of over \$25,000 in this budget line item and the budget includes the education of out-of-placement students. Transportation bids are being accepted and the budget line is flat at this time.

T. Noyes noted other changes to the budget, such as the budgeting for travel for teachers for Improvement of Instruction and noted that there were changes to the budget line items this is reported in.

T. Noyes reported on changes to Technology, including the purchase of the thirty MacBook laptop computers and two carts to store the computers in.

There was an overage in Special Education last year with the hire of a para educator to support one child that was accepted into school in the pre-school program.

T. Noyes reported on the costs of Building and Grounds but noted that the shoveling of the snow on the roof was not at the level they thought it was but they did not have a prediction on the possible costs.

K. Painter asked if there had been any line item transfers. T. Noyes responded that there were transfers within a function, as the Superintendent can make those transfers without Board approval, but there were no transfers out of the specific functions. T. Noyes reported they had a PowerPoint presentation available if the Committee would like, they could have it presented at Deliberative Session.

There was discussion on how the Committee would proceed. S. Miller requested to have a general question session.

S. Miller noted they were looking at a 5% decrease in enrollment over the next year and if any thoughts were given to how they were going to form their sections next year. He asked what the teacher-to-student ratio was for pre-school. K. Holt responded that pre-school is more of a Special Education program and noted that the ratios are not the way they would be for the higher grades because it was based on the needs of the students in the program and their IEP (Individual Education Plan). There are 24 students in

the pre-school program and it consists of model students (students without special needs) and students with IEP's or identified needs. There was discussion about teacher-to-student ratio in the classrooms. Catherine Dix-Herndon, Special Education Director, reported that there would not be three pre-school programs next year, so they are planning on having two pre-school programs.

S. Miller confirmed that there were no increases in teaching personnel and T. Noyes noted there was only a new para educator position requested in the budget.

S. Miller asked if there were any significant savings with the decrease in enrollment. T. Noyes noted that there was still a teacher in the room being paid the same whether there were twenty students or seventeen students in a classroom. She stated that unless they were buying uniforms that there would not be a significant cost savings. K. Holt spoke about the efforts that are made to move teachers around to address class needs.

S. Miller requested a revenue sheet like what was received last year and K. O'Blenes stated she could provide him with this year's report at the next meeting.

SPECIAL EDUCATION 1200

Katherine Dix Herndon, Special Education Director, presented the proposed budget for her department. She spoke about the increase in the budget line item for out of district placements, which resulted in about \$25,000. K. Holt reported there was a public hearing last year for the Board to withdraw money out of the trust fund and noted they did not need to tap the fund at all but they were able to avoid the expenses that were anticipated at the time of the hearing.

S. Miller asked why there was not a schedule (spreadsheet) at the beginning of the budget and K. O'Blenes responded that she did not have time to produce it this year because it is hand-keyed into Excel. K. Holt stated they were about six-weeks ahead of last year schedule on the budget.

The Committee reviewed the budget on a line-by-line basis. S. Miller asked about the increase in Salary, and K. Holt noted that the para-educator added last year would show up in the budget. There is not a para-professional added to this (Special Education) budget. S. Miller asked where the money came for this position and K. O'Blenes stated the money was transferred in the budget within the function. K. Dix-Herndon spoke about the shifting of para-professionals within the grades to meet the needs of the students. T. Noyes noted that one paraprofessional was added to the Special Education budget last year. There was discussion about the cost of the new position.

L. Carr asked about the Special Education staff that received the Special Olympics stipends and requested to know how much they received. K. Dix-Herndon stated that the money was to pay staff that supported the students participating in the event. K. O'Blenes reported it cost about \$4,100 for salaries, benefits, etc., for the Special Olympics stipend. There was discussion about the decrease in the budget line item for Other Personnel with Retirement and K. Dix-Herndon noted it was for a para-educator at the high school.

S. Miller asked if the school made AYP last year and K. Dix-Herndon stated that they worked very hard last year to make AYP but they did not make it last year. K Holt noted that whenever a sub-group of the school did not make AYP then the whole school did not make AYP. S. Miller asked about the scores of the NECAP and K. Holt responded that she did not have the scores in front of her to speak to the question. She stated she was not satisfied that they did not make AYP and felt the scores should have been higher in AYP and for NECAP. She stated she was not prepared to speak about the scores but would be glad to discuss it on Thursday. He stated that the NECAP scores did not seem like good scores to him, as a lay person, but that he felt there should be more discussion about the scores. K. Painter stated she

would like to continue the review of the Special Education budget and then they could discuss test scores, etc.

K. Painter asked why Other Personnel Without Retirement was zeroed out and K. O'Blenes noted that the number was now absorbed into the fulltime position. R. MacDonald asked if teachers contributed to the Health Insurance and K. Dix-Herndon responded that they contribute ten percent. K. O'Blenes reported that they are as much as fifty percent under the national trend.

S. Miller asked when the contracts were going to be negotiated and asked if "the other side" has asked for additional benefits and T. Noyes responded that she could not answer that. K. Dix-Herndon noted that they did not have many full-time staff for para-educators, that most of them were part-time employees.

S. Miller asked if mileage was now in the budget and K. Holt stated that it is being accounted for but it is not being budgeted because the individual can determine what they are going to do (expend) for mileage. She stated that in Professional Development, the individual could spend the money all on conferences or all on classes, at their choosing. She spoke about accounting for the expenditures.

S. Miller asked how much money was used for Tuition Reimbursement this year and noted that \$668.00 has been spent so far this year. There was discussion about the money spent for Tuition Reimbursement in the past and K. Holt spoke about the need for the funding to be available. S. Miller asked if \$1,000 has ever been spent out of Tuition Reimbursement in the past five years and K. Dix-Herndon stated that two years ago she had attended a conference that cost well over that amount and that her Occupational Therapist would be attending training. K. Holt spoke about her review of the requests for professional development and noted that it must be tied to their personal professional development plan, which is tied to the master plan.

S. Miller asked if the Superintendent asked for a teacher's plan for any classes they might be attending and expenses that might be anticipated for the upcoming year. K. Holt reported that half of the contractual amount was in the budget and stated that it would not be appropriate for a teacher to wait two or three years to be up to date on their skills. K. Painter asked if they had any differentiation between Tuition Reimbursement and Continuing Education and K. Holt responded they did not. There was discussion about Admin Employee Benefit. K. Holt noted that there was an increase in Professional Services – Elementary by \$8,687 for Occupational Therapy, which is driven by the IEP's for students.

There was review and discussion of the budget line item for Professional Services High School and K. Holt noted that the high school now has their own service provider for Physical Therapy, hence the decrease of the budget line item from \$41,000 to \$25,000. L. Carr asked if the \$16,000 would be in the high school and T. Noyes confirmed that it will be in the high school's budget.

K. Painter asked if the nursing services provided were provided by the school nurse or if it was outside services and K. Dix-Herndon responded that it is an outside service and it is an RN or LPN.

K. Painter asked about the budget line item for Travel and K. Holt responded that this is for assigned travel, such as training in Concord, and their mileage is paid for. This is also for mileage reimbursement for sub-contracted specialist's mileage, court, home visits, etc. K. Painter asked why there was such a difference between the Travel budget line items for the high school vs. the elementary and K. Dix-Herndon noted that there was less staff needing to travel at the high school.

S. Miller asked how much of the Special Education budget is paid for with local money and K. Holt responded that there is Medicare money that is received that is received specific to a student and there might be grant money received. The money received is supplemental and it is illegal for that money to

supplant the budget. K. Holt stated they have to supplement what they already get or it will be in the budget.

K. Painter asked why there was a decrease in the Workbooks. K. Dix-Herndon responded that some of the funds came from AARA funds and that was just for K-2.

K. Painter asked what the Equipment-New (high school) Communication Device was and K. Dix-Herndon responded that it was for one student.

M. DeCoff asked about Computer Replacement and noted that only about \$775 had been spent so far and K. Dix-Herndon noted that the \$4,000 that is in the budget will be spent. T. Noyes noted they were not that far into their budget this year.

There was a brief break.

GENERAL FUND 1100

The Committee reviewed the budget for General Fund line-by-line. There has been no additions in the number of teachers or in the number of people retiring. There will be a para-educator hired in 2010-2011 as support staff. There were no increases in salaries in the budget. There is track movement for two (possibly three) of the teachers and a slight change in rates in retirement, as one teacher retired and one took her position and is at a lower-rate in the retirement system. The track movement was explained as being due to education (degree earned) by the teacher, per the RSA and is not part of the contract. There are no automatic increase in pay or benefits for non-contractual staff members. T. Noyes noted that at time things have been aligned by what the teachers get but that is not expected from non-contractual personnel.

There was discussion about Home Instruction and B. Kuras stated it was for home instruction for students with a medical condition and reported they were obligated to make sure students received a free and appropriate education.

K. O'Blenes spoke about the anticipated Track Movement in the budget and stated they don't always have a "heads up". S. Miller asked if this was the same thing as Professional Development, and B. Kuras clarified that Professional Development line was for classes, books, etc., but did not cover Track Movement, which was part of the salaries. S. Miller felt that K. Holt was doing a great job with the budgeting and management of the Professional Development budget line item.

K. Painter asked about the differences in the budget line item for Substitute teachers. K. O'Blenes noted there was an overage in that budget line item from the previous year so that budget line item was increase in anticipation of the trend from the previous year.

K. Painter asked for an explanation for Tuition Reimbursement and K. O'Blenes responded that last year the Committee had requested that money be placed in the Tuition Reimbursement budget line item.

S. Miller asked what the Parenting Class was in the Professional Services and B. Kuras responded that it is for a class that is provided to parents. B. Kuras noted that the Artist in Resident was in the budget last year but it was kept out so that they could keep their expenses low.

The Repairs and Maintenance budget line items for the various departments was reviewed. B. Kuras stated that when they were meeting with staff about the budget that they stressed they budget for necessities.

There was discussion about the maintenance costs for the fax machines, shredders, etc., S. Miller felt that the cost of the maintenance would be replace a fax machines. K. O'Blenes stated that there were two large, commercial quality fax machines.

There was discussion about the budget for PMHS. The 2010-2011 budget is \$6,778,680 and Alton will be paying 49.81% of that, based on enrollment per the Joint Maintenance Agreement.

S. Miller asked about the cost of textbook orders and if the decrease in enrollment was taken into account. B. Kuras responded that they place the orders in the summer and it is based on enrollment by grades, with anticipated enrollment in the upcoming years/grades. Textbook cycle will be discussed later in the budget review. The Science textbook cycle was completed last year.

There was discussion about coursework for credit going into the high school. T. Noyes responded that this is something that they are looking into at the JMA.

S. Miller spoke about the budget line item for Science and B.Kuras spoke about what was done with the money that was given to them a couple of years ago for Science.

There was review and discussion of the Classroom Supplies, Textbooks, and Audio/Visual. S. Miller stated he commended them for what they trying to do with keeping the budget low but asked why they had cut all of the budget line items for Audio/Visual. K. Holt responded that they may not have requested anything in those budget line items. B. Kuras stated there may have been items purchases last year and the teachers had sufficient materials. The budget line items for Periodicals, Software, and Equipment – New were reviewed. S. Miller asked what the Equipment-New-Computer budget line item was for and B. Kuras responded that it was for things needed in the Technology Ed classroom but that it was not for the Technology Department.

K. Holt noted that there were many zeros and decreases in the budget and as Steve had noticed the test scores were in need of improvement. She reported that new reading program has been selected. The budget has been kept "tight" so that the focus can be placed on the new program. Sydney Leggett, Curriculum Coordinator, spoke about the new program that will be implemented at ACS. She stated that the middle school opted out of the last textbook replacement cycle so they hadn't had anything new for the last twelve years, so that was a need. She reported that the Curriculum Committee felt it would be better if they started with the middle school, which is the greatest area of need. They will be doing a "train the trainer" type program for three grades at a time, starting with the middle school. The Science Department text book cycle has completed and reading will be implemented in this budget. Math curriculum will be implemented three years after that. S. Miller felt that a hard look should be taken at personnel to review who would be teaching the curriculum. S. Leggett stated she agreed with him and that is a very strong area for them to begin, which was why they were starting with the middle school teachers first. She spoke about the teachers in the middle school program that will be using professional development hours and money. She reported that professional development comes with any new program that is implemented and teachers would receive one to two days of training with the new program. K. Holt responded that professional development can cost no money (free) or take a class that costs \$6,000. She stated that just because a teacher did not spend all the money budgeted for professional development did not mean that the teacher was unmotivated. T. Noyes noted that all the money that was left was returned to the town at the end of the year.

The remainder of the budget will be covered at Thursday's meeting.

VII. CORRESPONDENCE

K. Painter reported that reports were received from the Highway Department on the overtime for the mechanic. Reports were received from the Alton Fire Department for the pagers cost, and Gilman Library reported on circulation totals.

R. MacDonald noted that reports were still needed from the Police Department.

VIII. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

M. DeCoff motioned to adjourn and S. Miller seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (KP, LC, SM, MD, RM / absent – GF)

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Krista Argiropolis
Recorder