

**TOWN OF ALTON
BUDGET COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING
November 2, 2023, at 6:00 PM
Alton Town Hall**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Jacob Bemis, Member
Priscilla Terry, Member
Elizabeth Varney, Member
Guy Maloney, Member
Carol Locke, School Representative
Richard Shea, Board of Selectmen Representative

OTHERS PRESENT

Ryan Heath, Town Administrator

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bemis called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM. Roll call was taken for members present.

Approval of Agenda

MOTION: To approve the agenda as presented. Motion by ????. Second by ????. Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Organization of the Board

Mr. Bemis stated he does not want to continue a chair. Mr. Malone stated he would be willing to fill the position.

MOTION: To nominate Guy Maloney as Chair of the Budget Committee. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: To nominate Jason Bemis as Vice Chair of the Budget Committee. Motion by Mr. Shane. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bemis stated the joint Budget Committee for the Barnstead and Alton school district meeting will be in December. It was agreed to move the preparations for that meeting to the next meeting.

FY 2024 Budget Review

Account - Budget Committee

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for FY 2024. Mr. Bemis noted the minute transcribing costs were added back in for this year.

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for the Budget Committee in the amount of \$1,846. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Heath gave an overview of the operating budget for FY 2024. He stated the Board of Selectmen approved an overall increase of 11%; he explained that the increases are primarily in wages and benefits. Mr. Heath stated over the last year, they operated with being down 9 positions, 3 of which were full-time police officers and 4 truck drivers. He stated the Board of Selectmen decided to put more effort into hiring and retention, which included a 10% cost of living increase for all employees which helped fill positions that had been open in excess of 7 months. Mr. Heath explained the ongoing problems with the hiring and retention of employees.

Mr. Heath explained the grants and aid received in funding from federal and state sources for FY 2023, which is not anticipated for 2024. He explained the funding for warrant articles as well as capital reserves, as well as funding being utilized from the unreserved fund balance.

The Committee reviewed the budget for streetlights. Mr. Heath stated it is being level-funded, which is the same as the last three years. Level-funded

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for the Streetlights in the amount of \$33,500. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the budget for short-term interest. Mr. Heath explained they have to keep \$1 in this line in case the Town has any anticipation of a loan.

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for the Short Term Interest in the amount of \$11. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the Administrative Account. Mr. Heath noted most of the increases are reflected in wages and benefits.

Mr. Heath gave an update on the extensive work done to the Town Hall building, including work on the chimney and roof.

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for Administration in the amount of \$449,811. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for Assessing. Mr. Heath stated there were increases in wages and the map updating; the other lines are level-funded.

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for Assessing in the amount of \$173,205. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for Audio/Visual. Mr. Heath stated this line is for the audio microphones set up for meetings. He stated a grant was utilized for setting up the new wireless microphones in the third floor meeting room; the budget is for maintenance costs.

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for the Audio/Visual Equipment in the amount of \$2,000. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for Insurance. Mr. Heath stated there were some increases in the retirement for police and fire.

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for Insurance Benefits in the amount of \$2,597,652. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for the Building Department. Mr. Heath stated there were wage increases for the full-time positions; the Board of Selectmen voted to add funds for a part-time employee due to the increase in permits for short-term rentals. He noted there was a reduction in benefits buyout. They also need to buy up-to-date code reference books.

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for the Building Department in the amount of \$152,059. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for the Conservation Commission. Mr. Heath stated a line was added for legal expenses; he explained because the Commission owns land in Town, it is often a conflict to utilize the Town Counsel.

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for the Conservation Commission in the amount of \$25,362. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for Cemeteries. Mr. Heath

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for Cemeteries in the amount of \$6030. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for the Department of Public Works. There was extensive discussion on utility costs. Mr. Heath explained there was a no-interest loan for the upgrades for LED lighting; an energy audit was also conducted and LED lights were installed at the facility.

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for the Department of Public Works and Grounds in the amount of \$152,765. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for Emergency Management. Mr. Heath stated the budget is level funded; he stated some of the fund lines are utilized for obtaining grants.

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for Emergency Management in the amount of \$11,003. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for the Gilman Museum. Mr. Heath stated the budget is level-funded.

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for the Gilman Museum in the amount of \$15,087. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for the Hazardous Waste Program. Mr. Heath explained the budget breakdown which reflects Alton’s portion of the total budget for the program.

MOTION: To approve the budget as presented for the Hazardous Waste Program in the amount of \$25,974. Motion by Ms. Varney. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

None.

Public Input

None.

Other Business

The Committee discussed scheduling future meetings.

Next Meeting:

December 9, 2023, 6:00 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Riel

Jennifer Riel, Recording Secretary