

**TOWN OF ALTON
BUDGET COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING
December 2, 2021, at 6:00 PM
Alton Town Hall**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Reuben Parker, Chair of Budget Committee
Rebecca Johnson
Brock Mitchell
Jake Bemis

OTHER PRESENT

Kellie Troendle
Laura Parker
Tim Broderick
Ryan Heath
Sarah Silk, Solid Waste Department

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Parker called the meeting to order at 6:11PM. Roll call taken for members present.

Review of Agenda

The committee reviewed the agenda. No changes were made.

Mr. Mitchell made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Chair Parker seconded the motion. Motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Budget Presentations/Approvals
a. HHW (4326)

Sarah Silk, Hazardous and Household Waste Coordinator, stated the budget is a little less than last year; one of the reasons is because they have dropped the medicine collection event usually held in February. She stated the numbers of collection were down and it didn't make sense financially to continue doing it. Ms. Silk stated they have also lost the opportunity to use the church building. She outlined the statistics of participation in the hazardous waste collection program, noting 125 people from out of Town, paid to participate. She stated some towns have been participating in the Lake Region Planning Commission collection event so the people come here.

Ms. Silk stated \$2,569 will be coming back from NH DES for a grant and is divided between Alton and Wolfeboro, based on population. She stated it works out to \$0.22 per capita, however the summer population isn't counted.

Ms. Silk stated the Clean Harbors contract has a 3% increase with a 13% recovery fee. That'll be the last year of the second 10 year contract, and she plans to sign again for another 10 year contract.

Ms. Silk stated they may need to encumber funds this year for repair of shingles on the two 10 square foot sheds. She stated she is working on getting a contract for the services to hopefully have work done in the spring.

Mr. Mitchel made a motion to approve the budget for Hazardous and Household Waste in the amount of \$26,945. Mr. Bemis seconded the motion. Motion passed, 4-0-0.

b. Parks & Recreation (4520)

The committee reviewed the budget presented. Chair Parker noted the budget has not changed much since last year.

Mr. Bemis made a motion to approve the Parks and Recreation budget for \$125,887. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion passed, 4-0-0.

c. Grounds & Maintenance (4194)

The committee reviewed the budget presented.

Ms. Troendel stated there was an increase in staff recruiting that was based on increased wages so the Selectmen directed to put in an additional new grounds and maintenance labor position. There was a cemetery laborer that went from a seasonal person to a full time person and that was put into this budget. She stated the Selectmen had directed the administrator and finance officer manager to reduce the budget by \$200,000. Ms. Troendel stated the Board of Selectmen are proposing to remove the grounds and maintenance position.

Mr. Heath stated the Department doesn't feel it's a good move to remove the position entirely. He stated the proposal is to remove the wages for a full time position but they will retain some of the funding to increase the pay for existing employees and to fill a vacancy which is way below competitive wage. He stated currently the maintenance crew is down to one person trying to maintain all the buildings; he stated employees are getting burnt out and it can't continue so they are looking at adding more compensation benefits to keep and retain employees. Mr. Health outlined the lines which would be changing to reflect the proposed changes. He stated they are talking about creative ways to meet the request of the Board of Selectmen without sacrificing everything so they can maintain the resources they have.

Ms. Troendle stated the seasonal employee for the cemetery department will be coming over to the grounds and maintenance department during the off season; it would be a new position in that it will go from seasonal to a permanent full time job. She stated they need additional staff during vacations, etc. Mr. Mitchell asked if they will be able to get done what they need to with the staff. Ms. Troendel stated the department has a lot of responsibilities, but they are doing their best to maintain the level of services they need to.

Chair Parker made a motion to approve the grounds and maintenance budget in the amount of \$271,501. Mr. Mitchell seconded the motion. Motion passed, 4-0-0.

d. Cemetery (4195)

The committee reviewed the proposed budget.

Ms. Troendle explained the lines which were increased for this year; she noted the seasonal laborer position was changed to full time which affect the benefits and uniforms lines. She explained the increase in the overtime line, noting these are often for burials which occur outside of normal working hours.

Mr. Bemis stated he has heard complaints about the mowing and weed wacking in the cemeteries and asked if that was due to the staffing issues. Ms. Troendle stated they weren't able to hire a seasonal cemetery worker; there was only one employee working by himself and they tried to get help from other departments but that didn't always work out. Mr. Mitchell stated it comes back to being understaffed and the advertised positions not being competitive in pay.

Chair Parker made a motion to approve the cemetery budget in the amount of \$38,547. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion passed, 4-0-0.

e. Insurance (4196)

The committee reviewed the proposed budget.

Mr. Heath stated the account is pretty much level funded; the workers compensation went down but there were increases in the property liability insurance due to recent claims. It was confirmed the increases in employees will go into affect next year.

Chair Parker noted the Board of Selectmen recommend a different amount. Ms. Troendle stated that reflects the backing out of hazard pay.

Chair Parker made a motion to approve the insurance budget in the amount of \$???. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion passed, 4-0-0.

f. Benefits (4155)

The committee reviewed the proposed budget.

Mr. Heath explained there are changes in removing a family plan and the fire department had two new positions approved in their budget but those won't start until half way through the year.

Ms. Troendle stated they considered cutting the FICA and Medicare but with over time, it is risky. It was noted a big increase in the amount of \$300,000 was for the New Hampshire retirement and benefits.

Mr. Mitchell made a motion to approve the \$2,265,578 operating budget for benefits. Mr. Bemis seconded the motion. Motion passed, 4-0-0.

2. Alton Central School Budget

The committee reviewed the proposed budget.

Tim Broderick, School Superintendent, stated they will have warrant articles for review on December 9. He stated there is a need for a conservative approach to the budget, mainly due to the enrollment factor; he explained the costs for employees is up 5%. He stated the teachers are under a contract that includes next year so all increases are included in the budget; there is a new labor association for the support staff at the school and the school board is currently in negotiations and any changes will be on a warrant article.

Mr. Broderick stated the ACS capital plan hasn't been updated in a few years but he is working on getting that updated for review and approval by the school board in preparation for next year's budget process. He presented a summary of COVID-19 relief funds and how those were allocated; he stated most of it was used by Fall 2020 including GOPHER and ARPA funds.

Mr. Broderick stated they had a part time LNA but that position will be going to full time. He explained the additional grants they would be receiving as well as the requirements which include upgrades to the facilities' HVAC and student support.

Mr. Broderick talked about enrollment in the school system and distributed data showing enrollment over the last 15 years which shows a decline; he stated the cost per pupil however has increased over the same period of time. He explained the towns of Barnstead and Alton share SAUs so many costs are shared as well as the data which shows when enrollment is down, the costs per student are increased. He stated they have discussed tuition agreements with surrounding towns; he explained there is a possibility of Milton closing their middle high school so there is potential for negotiations with them to bring students to the middle and high schools in Alton.

The committee agreed to table further discussion and approval to December 16 so the members can have a chance to fully review the budgets.

Mr. Mitchell made a motion to table the discussion for the school budget until the meeting of December 16, 2021. Chair Parker seconded the motion. Motion passed, 4-0-0.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes

- **November 4, 2021** – Postponed.

Next Meeting

December 16, 2021, 6:00PM.

ADJOURN

Chair Parker made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Mitchell seconded the motion. Motion passed, 4-0-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Riel

Jennifer Riel, Recording Secretary

APPROVED