

**TOWN OF ALTON
DELIBERATIVE SESSION
FEBRUARY 6, 2024
PROSPECT MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL**

Town Moderator Robin Lane-Douglas welcomed 51 voters to the 2024 Deliberative Session at 6:00 pm.

All in attendance rose to Pledge Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Moderator Lane-Douglas officially opened the Deliberative Session.

Introduction to the head table were made as follows:

Paul LaRochelle introduced the members representing the Town of Alton.

Paul LaRochelle, Chair
Stephen Whitley, Town Attorney
Brock Mitchell, Vice Chair
Andrew Morse, Selectmen
Nick Buonopane, Selectmen
Richard Shea, Selectmen
Ryan Heath, Town Administrator

Guy Maloney introduced the members representing the Alton Budget Committee.

Guy Maloney, Chair
Elizabeth Varney
Priscilla Terry

Robin Lane-Douglas then introduced:

Jennifer Collins, Town Clerk
Carol Long, Deputy Finance Officer

Moderator Lane-Douglas read the moderator rules to be followed at this meeting.

P. LaRochelle read the Selectmen's Report of 2023.

G. Maloney gave the 2023 Report from the Budget Committee.

R. Lane-Douglas read the 2024 Warrant as follows: You are hereby notified to meet at the Prospect Mountain High School, 242 Suncook Valley Road, on Tuesday the sixth (6th) of February in the year Two Thousand and Twenty Four, beginning at six o'clock (6:00) in the evening, for the purpose of deliberating upon the following warrant articles and also to meet on March 12, 2024 at Prospect Mountain High School Gymnasium from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm for Town Elections to approve all of the Warrant Articles by ballot vote.

Article #1: To choose all necessary Town Officers for which there are vacancies, for such terms as may be permitted by law; and to elect: one selectmen for three years, one town clerk/tax collector for three years, one treasurer for three years, one trustee of the trust funds for three years, one library trustee for three years, one library trustee for one year, one moderator for two years, two

budget committee members for three years, two planning board members for three years, one supervisor of the checklist for six years and one zoning board member for three years.

Articles #2-9 pertain to Zoning and were not discussed at this meeting

Article #10: Benefit Pay Capital Reserve Trust Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$50,000.00 to be added to the Benefit Pay Capital Reserve Trust Fund, previously established in 2000. Said funds are recommended by the Town Auditors to be used to pay for benefits accrued by Town employees and redeemed when they leave employment with the Town of Alton, in accordance with the Town Personnel Policy. Majority vote required. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-1). (The estimated tax impact is \$.02)

P. LaRochelle moved Article 10, seconded by Brock Mitchell.

P. LaRochelle stated the funds will be added to the existing capital reserve to pay for the accrued benefits owed to employees leaving employment with the Town, consistent with the conditions laid out in the employee manual. The fund currently has a balance of \$26, 213.46.

No further discussion.

Desmond Douglas made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 10, seconded by Cydney Shapleigh. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #11: Town Operating Budget

Shall the Town raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$10,269,813.00? Should this article be defeated, the Default Budget shall be \$9,521,748.00, which is the same as last year with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised Operating Budget only. This article does not include special or individual articles voted separately. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-1). (Majority vote required) (The estimated tax impact is \$4.70)

G. Maloney moved Article 11, seconded by E. Varney.

G. Maloney stated that the proposed operating budget is the aggregated amount established during the budgeting process that is needed to operate Town functions and services for the year.

Loring Carr asked how much the increase is over last year's operating budget?

G. Maloney answered 11% or \$1,016,833.00.

No other discussion.

G. Maloney made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 11, seconded by P. LaRochelle. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #12: Water Works Operating Budget

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$560,810.00 for the operation and maintenance of the Water Distribution system for the ensuing year, said sum is to be offset by users' fees. Should this article be defeated, the Default Budget shall be \$538,475.00, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town or by law. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (4-0). (Majority vote required) (The estimated tax impact is \$0.26)

G. Maloney moved Article 12, seconded by E. Varney.

G. Maloney stated the proposed water works operating budget is the aggregated amount established during the budgeting process that is needed to operate the Town's municipal water system for the year.

Desmond Douglas stated his concern with the wording "to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate" as no tax dollars should be going to the Water Department.

Ryan Heath, Town Administrator, stated that this in an enterprise fund and RSA 40:13 XI-a requires it to be separated.

Desmond Douglas stated when the Water Commissioners dissolved we were told there would be no cost to the taxpayers. Why is there an estimated tax impact?

B. Mitchell responded there is no impact to the taxpayers since it is funded by the users, this article is due to the RSA requirement.

R. Heath added there is a typo; it should read \$0.026 and the money is being offset by the money coming in from the users.

Lee Hillsgrove asked why is he paying for Town water as he has a private well for his water source?

Attorney Whitley stated that the DRA requires we raise and appropriate all expenses. The revenues will come in and offset the entire appropriation, therefore there is no tax impact.

Cydney Shapleigh requested a point of clarification from the attorney regarding whether the water revenue goes into the unassigned fund balance?

Attorney Whitley responded the revenues go into a separate enterprise fund, not the unassigned fund.

Cydney Shapleigh added this is a town-wide responsibility.

Desmond Douglas asked for the current water fund balance.

R. Heath responded that we are having issues connecting to the wifi and cannot provide the answer at this time.

Desmond Douglas made a motion to amend the article to read: To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$1.00 for the operation and maintenance of the Water Distribution system for the ensuing year, and the sum is to be paid by the user's fees only.

Attorney Whitley stated DRA requires gross budgeting for the Operating Budget. You will have to raise and appropriate all your expenses, which will include the revenues to offset such expenses. The tax rate is not set until later in the year. The user fees will pay for all of this appropriation. DRA states you need to raise and appropriate the expense in the warrant even though revenues will fill this sum. Therefore; no actual tax impact from this Article.

Desmond Douglas stated his displeasure that the Board can't provide a balance.

R. Heath answered it is not a Capital Reserve, it's a constantly changing number and an enterprise fund.

Attorney Whitley reiterated that due to the previously mentioned RSA, this is similar to the operating budget. You can either vote in favor of the budget or vote it down; which then goes to the default budget. Therefore, you can not amend to the amount to \$1.00.

Richard Lane reminds the Board to be patient with people because many are upset their taxes went up significantly. He then asked if this is a projected figure on the Water Department and it doesn't get billed or returned until the middle of the year?

P. LaRochelle responded that is the understanding.

Richard Lane went on to ask if the church pays taxes? He stated they are users of the Town water and they benefit by not paying taxes, yet still use the service.

R. Heath stated the water fund balance is \$187,670.60.

Loring Carr clarified the water expense will be offset by user fees with no tax impact.

No further discussion.

G. Maloney made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 12, seconded by E. Varney. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #13: Town Treasurer

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to appoint a Town Treasurer in accordance with RSA 41:26-e rather than electing a treasurer. If approved by the voters, the current elected Treasurer shall continue to hold office until the 2025 Town Election. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). (Majority vote required)

R. Shea moved Article 13, seconded by N. Buonopane.

R. Shea stated the purpose of this article is give the Town more control and oversight of our funds and the documentation. With the natural progression of municipal finance rules, regulations, and security it would be in the best interest of the Town to bring the Treasurer functions under the direct access and protection of the Town network and cyber protections.

Loring Carr asked why the Selectmen are eliminating this check and balance?

R. Heath responded the Town's documentation and workings of the duties of the Treasurer are being held on personal computer, in a personal residence, which is not the best practice. It is difficult to mandate an elected official. The intention is not to eliminate the checks and balances, but the process of being in a personal residence.

Loring Carr made a motion to amend the article to read: To see if the Town will vote a Town Treasurer. (Majority vote required) Richard Lane seconded the motion.

Cydney Shapleigh stated that cyber security is scary in this day and age. She believes the Town should issue a laptop to the Treasurer with all our security, firewalls, etc. She feels we are moving towards a Town Manager instead of Town Administrator, it is giving one body more control and she added we do not appoint people in the spirit of Alton.

Jill Houser agrees, we should be issuing a company laptop and personal virtual network. She stated she was unclear what this amendment means and asked for clarification as to what happens if this Article is voted down.

Attorney Whitley answered that if the amendment passes it would mean the position will remain elected.

Andy McLeod requested Mr. Shea restate the rationale for this article.

R. Shea restated the purpose of the article.

P. LaRochelle clarified that it would mean more protection for the Treasury Department to be held under one roof.

Andy McLeod asked for confirmation that removing the ability of the people to elect and moving that responsibility to the Board itself would increase cyber security.

P. LaRochelle responded yes that is the intent.

R. Heath added as an elected position, currently the Town's financial information is being held in a personal residence on a personal computer, not accessible to finance department. It is not an employee at the Town Hall, it is a part time elected position that is not at the Town Hall on a regular basis and it is becoming more and more difficult to conduct business.

Andy McLeod asked if we could require the Treasurer to conduct business at the Town Hall?

R. Heath answered we can try, however as an elected official we can not force them to since they are not an employee of the Town of Alton.

Cydney Shapleigh stated since the elected officials receive a W-2 they are already Town employees. She stated shame on us for not providing them with a computer and necessary firewalls.

Kelly Sullivan agrees with amendment and does not think that the original article is clear for voters to understand what the RSA really means.

Moderator Lane-Douglas made a suggestion, if Mr. Carr is willing, to take out language after the word Treasurer.

Loring Carr agreed.

Attorney Whitley clarified it is the language after Treasurer all the way to the end.

Moderator Lane-Douglas read the amendment to Article 13 “To see if the Town will vote a Town Treasurer.”

Moderator Lane-Douglas put the amendment to Article 13 to vote, with a show of cards the amendment passed.

No further discussion.

Loring Carr made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 13, seconded by Andy McLeod. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as amended.

Article #14: Municipal Parking Lot

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$50,000.00 to expand the Library Parking Lot for Municipal use. This will be a non-lapsing appropriation per RSA 32:7, VI and will not lapse until the project is completed or by 12/31/2028 whichever is sooner. Said funds are to come from the unassigned fund balance. There will be no funds raised from general taxation. This will not affect the tax rate. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (4-0). (Majority vote required.)

B. Mitchell moved Article 14, seconded by A. Morse.

B. Mitchell stated this money will be used to begin the permitting and engineering to expand the library parking lot off Depot Street. This will create a larger municipal parking area in the center of town that can be used by the community for events, municipal business, and employee parking.

Cydney Shapleigh asked what is the unassigned fund balance? How much has been used over the past 3 years to lower the tax rate? What is the recommended minimum unassigned fund balance?

R. Heath answered the unassigned fund balance is \$4,024,052.00, minimum is \$1,547,502.00 and maximum is \$5,261,507.00. The amount used to buy down the tax rate 2021 \$496,173.00, 2022 \$704,900.00 and 2023 \$125,000.00.

Cydney Shapleigh made a motion to amend Article 14 to read: “To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1.00 to expand the Library Parking Lot for Municipal use”, Loring Carr seconded the amendment.

Cydney Shapleigh stated she is opposed to taking any money out of the fund balance unless it is used to offset the tax rate.

Loring Carr asked if the Selectmen could still do the project if the article failed, would they just have to find the money somewhere else? A Board member responded that is correct. Also, he wanted to know if the Library Trustees have to approve doing work on their property?

R. Heath responded the property is owned by the Town and the proposal was brought to the Trustees last year. We started the preliminary discussions with DES for permitting and feasibility of

the project. Everybody is on board with the concept, now we have to move forward with the design. There are three parties involved: the Library, Alton Flooring and Maxfield Real Estate.

Loring Carr asked if the Library Trustees have to sign off on it or can the Town do the project anyway?

R. Heath said it is not Library land, they are consulted by do not have to sign off on it legally.

Betty Jane Meulenbroke, head of the Library Trustees, stated that this is not Library land. This land is on wetlands and there hasn't been any communication on developing and whether it is EPA approved. She stated that this article is premature.

R. Heath explained the Town needs this money for engineered design and to submit DES permitting. Then they will go back to Trustees with the design. This proposal is for the property located below the parking lot, not on Town property. The Town was approached and given a full easement to utilize and maintain the property.

Betty Jane Meulenbroke added that the public should be aware that this project does not add spaces for the library.

Moderator Lane-Douglas asked if there was any further discussion on the amendment?

Cydney Shapleigh made a motion to amend her amendment to read: "To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1.00 for municipal use of the wetlands adjacent to the Library parking lot.", Desmond Douglas seconded the amendment.

Moderator Lane-Douglas stated that the first amendment needed to be approved first.

Moderator Lane-Douglas put the first amendment to vote by a show of cards, the amendment to Article 14 passed with a favorable vote.

Moderator Lane-Douglas asked Cydney Shapleigh if she still wanted to propose an additional amendment?

Cydney Shapleigh responded yes, she believes it is important for the taxpayers to know the cost this project incurs, not only monetarily, but to the ecological system.

Moderator Lane-Douglas read the second amendment: "To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$1.00 to expand the municipal parking on the wetlands adjacent to the library parking lot."

Moderator Lane-Douglas asked if there was any further discussion on the second amendment.

Seeing no further discussion, Moderator Lane-Douglas put the second amendment to vote by a show of cards, the second amendment to Article 14 passed with a favorable vote.

Moderator Lane-Douglas read the amended Article 14 to make sure everyone was clear what they are voting on. "To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$1.00 to expand the municipal parking on the wetlands adjacent to the library parking lot. This will be a non-lapsing appropriation per RSA 32:7, VI and will not lapse until the project is completed or by 12/31/2028 whichever is sooner."

Lee Hillsgrove asked for clarification whether it is on Town land?

R. Heath explains that the expansion will go on the parcel below the library which is not owned by Town. However, the offer has been made to give the Town an indefinite easement.

Lee Hillsgrove asked if State rules and regulations require that if we take away wetlands, we are supposed to create wetlands somewhere else?

R. Heath responded last years Warrant Article delineated the wetlands, which was done and found that the wetlands have been significantly degraded over the years and DES did not see any issue with project.

Andy Mcleod stated looking at this amendment from a view of the voter, they may think they are getting a bigger parking lot.

Andy Mcleod proposed a third amendment to add: "To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1.00 for engineering drawings and final design and build to expand municipal parking lot." Cydney Shapleigh seconded the amendment.

There was no discussion on Amendment 3 to Article 14.

Moderator Lane-Douglas put the third amendment to vote by a show of cards, the amendment to Article 14 passed with a favorable vote.

Moderator Lane-Douglas asked for discussion on Article 14 as it is amended.

R. Shea would like to see an article voted down instead of having it emasculated to \$1.00 which makes it confusing to the voter.

Cydney Shapleigh stated the point of taking it down to a dollar rather than zero is that it would change the intent of the article, which is not allowed by DRA. Her main reasoning is that we will need these funds to offset the tax rate next year. It also shows that voters in attendance do not feel this article should move forward.

Moderator Lane-Douglas put the amended Article 14 to vote, with a show of cards the amendment passed.

No further discussion.

Richard Lane made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 14, seconded by Jamie Good. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as amended.

Article #15: Capital Reserve Fund Appropriations

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$ 135,000.00 to be added to the following capital reserve funds:

Highway Sand Shed CRF	\$10,000.00
Sidewalk CRF	\$10,000.00
Highway Building Improvements/Repairs CRF	\$20,000.00
Senior Center CRF	\$20,000.00
Town Owned Parking Area CRF	\$15,000.00

IT CRF	\$20,000.00
Building & Improvements Transfer Station CRF	\$20,000.00
Jones Field CRF	\$10,000.00
Milfoil Treatment Program CRF	\$10,000.00

Said funds to be raised through taxation. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Not recommended by the Budget Committee (2-2). (Majority vote required.) (The estimated tax impact is \$.06)

P. LaRochelle moved Article 15, seconded by B. Mitchell.

P. LaRochelle gave the following current fund balances:

Highway Sand Shed CRF	\$29,820.72
Sidewalk CRF	\$15,341.55
Highway Building Improvements/Repairs CRF	\$70,024.59
Senior Center CRF	\$468.70
Town Owned Parking Area CRF	\$52,951.96
IT CRF	\$16,790.74
Building & Improvements Transfer Station CRF	\$167,215.49
Jones Field CRF	\$20,141.32
Milfoil Treatment Program CRF	\$40,955.16

Desmond Douglas asked what body of water is the Milfoil CRF is for?

P. LaRochelle answered Merrymeeting River, the Bay and anywhere else Milfoil is detected.

Desmond Douglas asked if the State of NH is responsible for the Milfoil due to the hatchery and the chemicals they were putting in?

P. LaRochelle stated he hasn't seen anything from the State of NH yet, we've been treating Milfoil and will continue to do so.

David Cumming asked if the current fund balances for each CRF will be on the ballot separately or listed like they are right now?

Moderator Lane-Douglas responded, the ballot will show the total of \$135,000 and the numbers in there right now.

David Cummings stated that will affect the non-profits as well in a later article. By lumping it all together it is all or nothing. If a voter doesn't like one thing on the list they have to vote against the whole thing.

P. LaRochelle responded the current balances will not be shown on the ballot and it is all or nothing.

Richard Lane asked how much is currently in the Milfoil CRF?

P. LaRochelle answered \$40,000.

Richard Lane asked why we need to appropriate more money if we already have \$40,000 in the Milfoil Fund? How much does milfoil cost per year?

Kellie Troendle responded it depends on amount of Milfoil. Last year, we spent \$12,723.00 gross and the State of NH reimbursed 50%. The Town has to have the money to pay for it first, and then we get the reimbursement. There is usually a \$20,000-40,000 spent per year, and then we get reimbursed for half. It depends what is found by DES and what kind of treatment can be used. The town uses herbicide treatment and DASH (Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting). Some of Merrymeeting requires DASH only, you need a permit to use the herbicide.

Richard Lane asked if we spent \$6,000 and the State of NH matched \$6,000 is that reimbursement shown in the current balance?

R. Heath stated no, that comes in as revenue. When it comes back from the State it doesn't automatically wash it out.

Richard Lane asked if that goes into the General Fund?

B. Mitchells responded yes it goes into the General Fund.

Richard Lane stated he does not agree with that, if it is matching funds it should go back into the account it originally came from.

Attorney Whitley stated that it takes a vote of the Town Meeting to put money in a CRF. As the money comes in, you can't just stick it back in there. Town Meeting has to vote it back in.

R. Heath explained the way this Milfoil Grant works is we actually paid \$12,000. The bill came in for \$12,000 from the vendor and we paid it. The State sent their check to us for their 50% match.

Richard Lane said that makes sense; to clarify this you should add a column so it makes sense.

Kellie Troendle added the challenge is we don't know what to expect for milfoil each year. The Committee is doing a great job keeping up with it. Because of this it is not costing as much every year.

No further discussion.

Desmond Douglas made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 15, seconded by Gavin Douglas. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go on the official ballot as written.

Article #16: Fire Department Equipment Capital Reserve

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$200,000.00 to be added to the Fire Department Equipment Capital Reserve Fund as previously established in 1973. Recommended by the Selectmen (5-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-0-1). (Majority vote required.) (The estimated tax impact is \$.09)

A. Morse moved Article 16, seconded by N. Buonopane.

A. Morse stated this money will be used to continue the current Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The funds are needed to repair and replace all apparatus and equipment used by the Fire Department. The fund currently has a balance of \$1,552,289.05.

Richard Lane asked what were the cost of repairs for the Fire Department last year?

Captain Pat O'Brien responded that this particular fund is dictated by the CIP and has a planned \$884,000.00 purchase at end of 2024 for a pumper/tanker. He added that a major pump or engine repair can run \$40,000 to \$60,000. The dollar amount gets as low as \$300,000; designed as minimum in CRF. There is a large sum of money in there now. However, several large dollar value pieces of equipment will need replacement.

Moderator Lane-Douglas asked voters to allow interim Fire Chief Pendergast permission to speak. By a show of cards, Chief Pendergast was granted permission to speak.

Interim Chief Pendergast explained the initial amount they had planned for this article was \$375,000, however with the current situation with the tax rate they were able to work with Town Administrator and Budget Committee and reduce it to \$200,000.

Steven Lydon clarified most of the \$1,500,000 is being spent on ambulance & pumper tanker.

Kelly Sullivan commended the Alton Fire Department for always being prepared for meetings.

No further discussion.

Jamie Good made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 16, seconded by Kelly Sullivan. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go on official ballot as written.

Article #17: Aerial Ladder Truck

To see if the Town will vote to authorize the selectmen to enter into a 7-year lease purchase agreement in the amount of \$1,517,247 to purchase and equipping of an Aerial Ladder Truck for the Fire Department, amount to be financed will be \$717,247 and the remaining \$800,000 will be funded through the Fire Department Equipment Capital Reserve Fund as the Selectmen are agents to expend and further appropriate the sum of \$128,438 for the first year's payment for that purpose. This lease agreement contains an escape clause. The annual lease payments will be approximately \$128,438. Not recommended by the Selectmen (0-5). Recommended by the Budget Committee (4-0). (Majority vote required.) (The estimated tax impact is \$0.33)

R. Shea moved Article 17, seconded by N. Buonopane.

R. Shea stated this lease purchase is being proposed to replace the Fire Department's 25-year-old aerial ladder truck. Vehicles over 15 years of age may lack important safety features. This lease purchase will be utilizing existing funds in the Fire Equipment Capital Reserve Fund and leasing the remaining amount. Current Fund balance is from the above fund \$ 1,552,289.05 (Fire Department Equipment Capital Reserve).

R. Shea went on to state that the Board of Selectmen were not entirely in favor of supporting the purchase of a new ladder truck. However, they unanimously agreed that it is an expensive purchase with important life safety implications so the public should have a chance to vote on it. The 0-5 vote represents a unanimous vote by the board to move the article on to the warrant and allow the people to vote on the ladder truck, not a vote of recommendation.

Attorney Whitley explained the Moderator just read from the signed warrant, which DRA amended with the gross budget amount of \$1,500,000 and authorizing the Selectmen to enter into a lease agreement. Some of the people present may have the previous version of this article.

Cydney Shapleigh has a hard time reconciling why the Selectmen did not vote in favor of this article and asked that the Selectmen change their vote at the end of this meeting. She added that this piece of equipment is not for high rises, as she has heard others speak of it. It is used for reach and rescue calls such as two story homes. The current ladder truck we own is an antique and if out of service we would need assistance from other towns, which means a longer response time.

Kelly Sullivan asked if the Selectmen vote not in favor is to offset the pay increases that raised taxes? She stated that we are in need of vital services in this Town. Our Town is growing, as can be seen by the increase in building permits. Refusing to give the Fire Department the tools they need is not the way to save money. She asked the Board of Selectmen to reconsider their vote.

Steven Lydon stated this is a matter of life safety for firefighters and residents of this Town. We can't afford to keep putting this off. In 2018 this truck was \$900,000, now it's \$1,500,000. It is costing this Town money every year this is put off.

B. Mitchell explained it is not that they don't support the Fire Department, they felt that the people should be making the decision, not the Selectmen.

P. LaRochelle stated has he has always supported the Fire Department in his five years; such as the purchase of the boat, ambulance and other apparatus. He felt that this decision should be left to the people not the Selectmen.

Loring Carr stated the article still goes to voters no matter what the Board recommends, so that rationale does not make any sense. This goes along with the CIP. He stated he doesn't like the number and that it doesn't seem to have gone out to bid, or that it has gone from 75 FT to 100 FT. However, he will support this due to the increase in cost every year. He added this needs to be addressed and not put off any longer.

Christy Painchaud asked if the Selectmen would consider changing their vote? She believes their vote will sway voters.

Stephen Lydon explained the rationale of going from a 75 ft to 100 ft ladder will allow a much better reach than we currently have.

Cydney Shapleigh would like to see the pursuit of grants in the future to keep from getting to this point.

Richard Lane asked if the old truck has any trade-in value? He urged the Fire Department to put it out to bid to small towns who wouldn't be able to afford a ladder truck otherwise.

Captain O'Brien stated due to the age of this truck the manufacturers weren't willing to give a number on a trade-in. He recognizes that this is a significant purchase and adds there is a two page justification document with further information on the truck available.

Desmond Douglas asked when they sign the lease if it locks the price in right then?

Captain O'Brien stated the purchase price would be locked in today and payments after the first year.

No further discussion.

Desmond Douglas made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 17, seconded by Leslie Jackson. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #18: Rock and Asphalt Crushing Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$30,000 to be added to the Rock & Asphalt Crushing Capital Reserve Fund, as previously established in 2017.

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-1). (Majority vote required.) (The estimated tax impact is \$.01)

N. Buonopane moved Article 18, seconded by A. Morse.

N. Buonopane stated this capital reserve fund was established for the purpose of crushing recyclable materials. The fund currently has a balance of \$36,002.85.

No discussion.

Desmond Douglas made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 18, seconded by Kelly Sullivan. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #19: Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$150,000.00 to be added to the Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve Fund, as previously established in 1995 and to designate the Selectmen as agents to expend. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-0-1). (Majority vote required.) (The estimated tax impact is \$0.07)

P. LaRochelle moved Article 19, seconded by B. Mitchell.

P. LaRochelle stated this capital reserve fund was established to assist with the cost of repair/replacement of Town owned bridges. The fund currently has a balance of \$25,024.88.

Richard Lane asked if anyone has looked into grant money?

P. LaRochelle responded grants are always looked for and applied for.

No further discussion.

R. Shea made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 19, seconded by Richard Lane. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #20: Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$200,000.00 to be added to the Highway Equipment Capital Reserve Fund, as previously established in 1981. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Not recommended by the Budget Committee (2-2). (Majority vote required.) (The estimated tax impact is \$.09)

N. Buonopane moved Article 20, seconded by R. Shea.

N. Buonopane stated these funds would fund the CIP planned 2024 Highway Department replacements of front line fleet vehicles. The fund currently has a balance of \$132,097.22.

No discussion.

R. Shea made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 20, seconded by P LaRochelle. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #21: Retaining Wall Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$50,000.00 to be added to the Retaining Wall Capital Reserve Fund, as previously established in 2018. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-1). (Majority vote required.) (The estimated tax impact is \$.02)

A. Morse moved Article 21, seconded by B. Mitchell.

A. Morse stated the retaining rock wall from the public boat docks to the swim area needs repair. The retaining wall is deteriorating at the water level due to age and wave action. The cost of the repairs is approximately \$90,000. The fund currently has a balance of \$84,260.75.

Loring Carr asked why we are adding \$50,000 if there is already almost enough money in the account to cover this project?

P. LaRochelle explained they did not want to completely deplete the account since there would be future projects such as stair work or fencing.

Scott Kinmond, Public Works Director, explained the initial repointing of the wall will be \$90,000. There will be some additional work. The area of the boat dock and swim dock has deteriorated and the concrete is breaking away. To refurbish the entire waterfront with the exact same stone faced wall would cost \$2,500,000. We are trying to do this as cost effectively as possible, but it will be a continual expense to the Town in order to maintain this wall.

Lee Hillsgrove asked if the Town is able to get any assistance from the State of NH since it is a public dock for boats?

P. LaRochelle answered it is on Town Property and we are responsible for maintaining it.

Desmond Douglas asked if the retaining wall would be similar to what is at Harmony Park right now?

P. LaRochelle responded no it will not. It is being repointed and rebuilt exactly as it is now. He further explained they usually do the repairs in the fall when the water level is at it's lowest.

No further discussion.

R. Shea made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 21, seconded by Desmond Douglas. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #22: Alton Bay Community Center Property Capital Reserve

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$30,000, to be added to the Alton Bay Community Center Property Capital Reserve fund, as previously established in 2020.

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Not recommended by the Budget Committee (2-2). (Majority vote required.) (The estimated tax impact is \$.01)

N. Buonopane moved Article 22, seconded by R. Shea.

N. Buonopane stated the funds would be used for interior and exterior repairs such as: painting; replace support beams; decking; boardwalk; fencing; railings; supports for underneath the building and boardwalk; siding; flooring; windows; kitchen; bathrooms; and upgrades/repairs to the septic, electrical, plumbing and heating systems when needed. The fund currently has a balance of \$45,991.48.

Cydney Shapleigh asked if this building is a historical building and if it was on the register?

P. LaRochelle answered yes it is a historic building and no it is not on the register.

Cydney Shapleigh asked if the Board got an estimate for this work?

P. LaRochelle responded this is a rough estimate to do some of the repairs but not a hard estimate from a contractor.

Cydney Shapleigh asked if this will go out to bid? Will the Board not accept bids until we have at least three and will they be opened in public?

P. LaRochelle responded yes, that is how the Board usually does it unless they don't have enough bids come in.

Cydney Shapleigh stated historically if they don't have enough bids they would put it out to bid again and asked if that is what they plan to do in the future?

P. LaRochelle responded yes.

Kelly Sullivan stated this building desperately needs repair and she commends the Board of Selectmen for moving this forward. She stated that she is curious who voted against it on the Budget Committee.

G. Maloney responded he didn't remember who the second person was; he believes he was in favor of it.

No further discussion.

Lee Hillsgrove made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 22, seconded by Richard Lane. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #23: Grounds & Maintenance Vehicle and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000.00 to be added to the Grounds & Maintenance Vehicle and Equipment Capital Reserve Fund, as previously established in 2019. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (4-1) Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-1). (Majority vote required.) (The estimated tax impact is \$.01)

R. Shea moved Article 23, seconded by N. Buonopane.

R. Shea stated the funds would be used to purchase replacement vehicles and equipment when needed for the Grounds and Maintenance Department, which maintains thirty-eight Town properties. Department performs general maintenance of Town properties and buildings, plowing, mowing, trash removal at all Town buildings and public parks, turf management and custodial care of Town buildings. The fund currently has a balance of \$8,735.36.

Richard Lane noticed most of the vehicles say Alton DPW on them. He stated if the Cemetery Trust Fund is used to purchase equipment or vehicles they can only be used for work in the Cemetery. He asked if the Cemetery Trust Fund money is being spent?

Scott Kinmond responded the Cemetery Trust Fund is only being used to purchase equipment such as mowers which are used strictly at the cemetery. He added they just sold the last cemetery truck and the money will go back into trust fund.

No further discussion.

Andrew Jackson made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 23, seconded by Gabrielle O'Toole. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Moderator Lane-Douglas then took a five minute recess, returning at 9:00 pm.

Article #24: Town Hall Building Improvement Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$60,000, to be added to Town Hall Building Improvement Capital Reserve fund, as previously established in 2011. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-1). (Majority vote required.) (The estimated tax impact is \$.03)

P. LaRoche moved Article 24, seconded by A. Morse.

P. LaRoche stated these funds will be added to the Capital Reserve fund for future improvements to the Town Hall Building, such as mechanical upgrades, interior improvements, or exterior enhancements or improvements. The fund currently has a balance of \$32,640.97.

Loring Carr has concerns with the process the Selectmen are following to get pricing. He stated none of the work is going out to bid anymore, specifically the flooring.

P. LaRoche responded that the work currently being done is by the contractor who was previously awarded the bid as a continuation of their contract.

Loring Carr stated that the flooring was given to a flooring contractor, not the original contractor.

R. Heath said that Alton Flooring and Tile was awarded the carpet in the offices; refinishing the hardwood floors will be done by the existing contractor that has been doing the trim and baseboard repairs.

B. Mitchell clarified that anything over \$30,000 goes out to bid.

Loring Carr expressed his displeasure with the Selectmen not going out to bid and added all year long he's been hearing they can't get quotes.

P. LaRoche responded that there is a lot of construction going on, we try to put these things out to bid and contractors are not bidding on them.

Loring Carr questioned why the Selectmen did not take the lowest bid on the work at the Alton Community Center?

B. Mitchell responded that they gave the work to a local contractor that is paying taxes to the Town of Alton.

Loring Carr expressed concerns with the process, the Board did not even read a forty page contract on the new building software before they signed it. He stated the Board is not doing right by the people to not put things out to bid; it's transparency and fairness.

P. LaRoche responded that the contract was reviewed by the Town's Attorney.

Cydney Shapleigh asked for the name of the contractor currently working in the Town Hall.

R. Heath answered the company doing the trim and paint right now is RJ Royals Painting which is working under Eastway Contracting Group.

Cydney Shapleigh asked if any of these contractors are any relation to anyone who works at Town Hall?

R. Heath responded no.

Kelly Sullivan stated that not putting things out to bid and not receiving bids are two separate things. She also noted that the lowest bid not always best. There are other factors such as the company you are working with, the quality of their work and whether they are local.

Cydney Shapleigh asked what is the next phase of work?

R. Heath answered flooring, elevator from previous non-lapsing warrant article, fire escape currently being installed, finishing the paint and trim work. Also, the renovation to Heidke room to get rid of filing cabinets, men's room and break room/kitchenette.

Cydney Shapleigh asked what the \$57,000 in expenditures last year were for? Was this flooring?

R. Heath responded finishing restrooms, electrical work. There was quite a bit of exposed live wires in the walls from the basement to the third floor.

Lee Hillsgrove asked for a cost breakdown by each floor? What was the cost of the 3rd floor renovation?

R. Heath answered that when they started the 3rd floor renovation there were five roof leaks which came down through the horsehair plaster, you can see the six foot stain on the carpet in the meeting room from it. There were two chimneys that were rotted out completely. There is a 28 page photo album of the pre-existing conditions which the public is welcome to view.

Lee Hillsgrove questioned whether it was worth running the elevator to the 3rd floor?

R. Heath responded that the elevator will not run to the 3rd floor.

Lee Hillsgrove questioned how handicapped people get to the 3rd floor?

R. Heath answered they don't. ADA requirements on a historical building require improvements to ADA access, but not if it is not architecturally or engineeringly possible. Such as putting in an elevator shaft when the balcony is over the clock tower. We can not compromise the clock tower. Also, we do not provide any services to the public on the 3rd floor.

Lee Hillsgrove asked if it were true that if the Town Administrator is not there the public can not access the 3rd floor, even with the secretary being there?

R. Heath responded yes that is true. There was a room built on the stage, the most historical part of our building, to store legal files. We have moved the legal files to the 3rd floor and are doing repairs that have been kicked down the road for over twenty years. His secretary has a key and can escort someone up there if they would like to see it; up to this point there have been no requests to do so.

Cydney Shapleigh asked if the legal files are locked in a fire proof cabinet every night?

R. Heath stated that the legal files are locked but have never been in a fire proof cabinet.

Cydney Shapleigh said there is no real reason to deny public access to a public building which tax payer money pays for.

R. Heath said anytime someone wants a tour they just need to ask.

Loring Carr asked if the Board will start going out to bid on these things? Will the Board start to have specs?

P. LaRochelle responded we have gone out to bid and we will continue to do so.

No further discussion.

Christine Painchaud made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 24, seconded by David Cummings. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go on the official ballot as written.

Article #25: IT Network Server Replacement

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of \$40,000, to be used for the replacement and upgrade of the Town's information technology servers. Said funds are to come from the unassigned fund balance. There will be no funds raised from general taxation. This will not affect the tax rate. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (4-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-1). (Majority vote required.)

B. Mitchell moved Article 25, seconded by P. LaRochelle.

B. Mitchell stated these funds will be used to replace 8 out of the 9 unsupported and outdated Town network servers.

Priscilla Terry stated the Budget Committee recommendation is incorrect; her notes show it was supposed to be 4-0.

G. Maloney suggested to check the minutes.

Moderator Lane-Douglas asked if the minutes were available.

G. Maloney stated no.

Moderator Lane-Douglas added this will need to be looked into.

No further discussion.

Moderator Lane-Douglas stated the Town Attorney has advised if we are going to correct Budget Committee recommendation we should not vote to restrict reconsideration.

No motion was made and Article 25 was left unrestricted to reconsideration due to the research needed on the Budget Committee recommendation.

Article #26: New Riverside Cemetery Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum \$50,000 to be added to the New Riverside Cemetery Capital Reserve Fund, previously established in 2023. Recommended by the Board of

Selectmen (4-1). Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-1). (Majority vote required) (The estimated tax impact is \$.02)

A. Morse moved Article 26, seconded by N. Buonopane.

A. Morse stated this fund is used for the expansion and maintaining of the the New Riverside Cemetery, located on Suncook Valley Highway. The expansion will include additional burial lots, and columbarium relocation and expansion. This will also include future expansion of the maintenance facilities at the cemetery. The fund currently has a balance of \$75,000.00.

No discussion.

P. LaRochelle made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 26, seconded by B. Mitchell. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go on the official ballot as written.

Article #27: Highway Reconstruction Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$1,450,000.00 to be added to the Highway Reconstruction Capital Reserve Fund, as previously established in 1998. Said amount is partially offset by revenues from the Highway Block Grant Fund estimated to be \$201,935.00. This is an annual appropriation that provides for the Maintenance of existing roadways. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (3-0-1). (Majority vote required.) (The estimated tax impact is \$.66)

P. LaRochelle moved Article 27, seconded by R. Shea.

P. LaRochelle stated this capital reserve fund was established to continue the pavement preservation and road rehabilitation a practice which aligns with our Road Surface Management System and manages costs to the town by performing this practice. The fund currently has a balance of \$70,726.39.

No discussion.

P. LaRochelle made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 27, seconded by B. Mitchell. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #28: Environmental Capital Reserve Fund

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$25,000.00 to be added to the Environmental Capital Reserve Fund, as previously established in 2022. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (3-2). Not recommended by the Budget Committee (1-3). (Majority vote required) (The estimated tax impact is \$.01)

N. Buonopane moved Article 28, seconded by P. LaRochelle.

N. Buonopane stated this fund would be used for events such as severe storm damage or septic system failures which can result in environmental damage that should be addressed and corrected as quickly as possible in order to avoid extensive and long-lasting adverse consequences. The warrant article makes the funds available to any Town department that finds itself facing and environmentally-related challenge. The fund currently has a balance of \$36,452.87.

Jamie Good questioned if this article relates to Article 14 Municipal Parking Lot?

R. Heath responded no.

Kelly Sullivan followed up with asking could it be used for the municipal parking lot?

P. LaRochelle responded no. It would be used for storm drains and septic system failures which could result in environmental damage.

No further discussion.

Pat O'Brien made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 28, seconded by A. Morse. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #29: Local Radio Communications

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$50,000.00 to repair and replace the local radio communications for the Town of Alton. Said funds are to come from the unassigned fund balance. There will be no funds raised from general taxation. This will not affect the tax rate. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee (4-0) (Majority vote required)

R. Shea moved Article 29, seconded by A. Morse.

R. Shea stated these funds will be used to repair, maintain, and purchase new radio, repeater, and support equipment needed for Town departments and vehicles. This will ensure our municipal departments can adequately communicate with each other during emergency and storm operations with or without power.

Cydney Shapleigh wanted to confirm this will update equipment so that first responders can communicate from within the high school to the outside.

R. Heath responded this is the second part to last years warrant article. Currently the equipment in the high school ties in to the Prospect Mountain tower. Due to the storms we have, we lose Prospect Mountain tower pretty regularly. This article will allow set up of a secondary tower off the cell tower on Jude Hill.

Cydney Shapleigh confirmed that this would include the school. Ryan Heath was in agreeance.

No further discussion.

Kelly Sullivan made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 29, seconded by A. Morse. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #30: Nonprofits

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$49,325.00 for the purpose of supporting the following nonprofits and their individual appropriations:

American Red Cross	\$2,000.00
Caregivers of Southern Carroll County & Vicinity, Inc.	\$2,000.00
Granite VNA & Hospice	\$12,000.00
Community Action Program (CAP)	\$10,000.00
Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)	\$500.00

Lakes Region Mental Health Center fka Genesis	\$15,750.00
Life Ministries, Inc.	\$3,000.00
New Beginnings	\$1,575.00
Waypoint fka Child and Family Services	\$2,500.00

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). Recommended by the Budget Committee 3-1).
(Majority vote required) (The estimated tax impact is \$.02)

P. LaRochelle moved Article 30, seconded by N. Buonopane.

P. LaRochelle stated this is the same list as last year with the exception of Alton Family Services. We have combined all the nonprofits on one article this year.

P. Terry stated the Budget Committee voted to add \$100 for Alton Family Services and inquired why it is not listed.

R. Heath responded the Town received a letter from Alton Family Services requesting no donation due to them receiving an unforeseen property donation which allowed them to fund their program this year.

No further discussion.

Richard Lane made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 30, seconded by Landon Baker. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article #31: Discontinue The Old Rand Hill Road

To see if the Town will vote to discontinue completely pursuant to RSA 231:43 the old portion of Rand Hill Road from the foot hills of Rand Hill to the house of Jonathan Jones as described in the March 12th 1850 Town Meeting minutes. Recommended by the Board of Selectmen (5-0). (Majority vote required)

B. Mitchell moved Article 31, seconded by A. Morse.

B. Mitchell stated this is a housekeeping issue and deferred to the Town Administrator to elaborate further.

R. Heath explained that white house at the corner of Spring Street and Rand Hill Road; the Old Rand Hill Rd runs through the house. Old Rand Hill Road was never properly discontinued when they built the new road.

No further discussion.

Kelly Sullivan made a motion to restrict reconsideration of Article 31, seconded by Landon Baker. The motion passed with a favorable vote and will go to the official ballot as written.

Article 32: Reports of Committees

To hear reports of any committees, boards, trustees, commissions, officials, agents or concerns of voters; and vote to accept the same. Furthermore, to conduct any other business that may legally come before said meeting.

Moderator Lane-Douglas asks if there is any other business?

Cydney Shapleigh thanked the Budget Committee and Board of Selectmen for their hard work in what is often a thankless job. Also, she expressed concern that we are not retaining Courtney Mitchell as Water Superintendent. She is the most talented of anyone that has held this position, holds the most licenses and stated she is wildly disappointed.

Kelly Sullivan piggybacked on Cydney Shapleigh's comments thanking Budget Committee and Board of Selectmen and expressed her disappointment over losing Courtney Mitchell's leadership in the Water Department.

Lee Hillsgrove stated we need bigger ads in the newspaper for this meeting. He thanked Robin Lane-Douglas for serving as Moderator since this will be her last year.

Patrick O'Brien acknowledged the Board of Selectmen for their ongoing support of the Fire Department and added he didn't want to leave the meeting with an appearance of the Board having a lack of support for Fire Department as a whole.

P. LaRochelle spoke as a resident. He stated he has lived in Alton 25 years and loves this town. He has dedicated many years to serving this community. He truly cares for the taxpayers and certainly for the employees who he feels are the best employees in surrounding areas and towns. It is clear tonight that people do not accept the fact that things are changing in this Town. He stated he has worked hard for this Town and led from his heart. He may not have always made the right decision but did what he thought was right. Therefore, he announced his resignation from all Town boards and committees.

Robin Lane-Douglas stated that she did not run for moderator again however it has been her pleasure and honor to serve.

B. Mitchell spoke on behalf of the Selectmen and thanked Robin Lane-Douglas for her service and all she has done for the Town.

Richard Lane reiterated thanks for Robin Lane-Douglas. Also, he expressed sadness for Mr. LaRochelle resigning.

Richard Lane made a motion to close the meeting, seconded by Lee Hillsgrove. Motion passed with a favorable vote.

The meeting adjourned at 9:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Long
Recording Secretary