

Alstead Advisory Budget Committee Minutes for the January 13, 2016 meeting

Members in attendance:

Marge Noonan
Carol Reller
Donna Sabin
Priscilla Sawa
Juliana Stevens
Les Thomas

Also present:

Bob Quaglin
Barbara Viegener

Review agenda and minutes from the last meeting:

The meeting minutes of January 6 were approved (6/yes, 0/no, 0/abstentions).

Action items from last meeting:

Carol found out that cemetery expenses must be paid only from the interest on the fund, not the principal. With interest rates so low, there is not enough income to cover expenses.

Carol recommended to the Selectmen that they include the name of the cemetery in the warrant article about repairing cemetery stone walls. Also, related warrant articles should be grouped together in the list.

Kelly reported to Carol that the MuniSmart training went well, but additional training (and funding for training) will be necessary. We agreed that training could be postponed until after the town meeting.

Department budget status:

Because some department heads did not receive a follow-up review of their budget proposals from the Selectmen, they learned at the Budget Hearing that the Selectmen had cut their budgets.

The Selectmen met after the Budget Hearing and made some revisions to the budget. A line for Town Administrator (\$37,500) was added to Executive, without increasing the bottom line. (Presumably, that amount was taken from the Administrative Assistant line and/or the Clerical line, but we don't know for sure.) The amount required for the school hot line (\$600) has been restored to the Police Department landline. The Alstead Festival was renamed the Vilas Music Festival and given \$2000.

Select Board meeting and Budget Hearing:

After some discussion of the role of the proposed town administrator, Les moved that we support the concept of hiring a town administrator. (4/yes, 1/no, 1/abstention).

We noted that Friendly Meals is not the only non-profit organization supported by the town, although it is the only one whose expenses are broken out in the budget. Also, there are additional costs to the town associated with Friendly Meals that are not shown in the budget, such as DPW staff hours.

The committee expressed general support for the 2.55% increase in the operating budget proposed by the Selectmen.

Warrant articles:

We reviewed our recommendations for the funding of warrant articles. Some committee members expressed concern about spending down the unassigned fund balance by more than \$450,000 in a single year. We decided to change the amount allocated from UFB for the fire truck from \$80,000 to \$70,000 and the amount for paving from \$250,000 to \$210,000. (6/yes, 0/no, 0/abstentions).

We want to find out whether our votes on the warrant articles will be included on the ballot.

Subcommittee reports:

The EMSG is reviewing the four bids received for the new fire truck for compliance with the spec.

Action items:

- Priscilla will follow up with Kelly to let her know that MuniSmart Training can be postponed until spring.
- Carol will update our recommendations on the warrant articles and send them to the Selectmen.
- Carol will ask for the AABC to be put on the Selectmen's agenda to discuss our recommendations for warrant articles.
- Priscilla will draft the AABC section of the annual report.

Next meeting:

January 20 at 6:30 pm at the Town Offices.

Agenda items for next meeting:

- Develop our strategy for the deliberative session.

Minutes submitted by Priscilla Sawa