

Alstead Advisory Budget Committee Minutes for the July 22, 2015 meeting

Members in attendance:

Bonnie Chase
Glenn Elsesser
Chris Hansen
Carol Reller
Donna Sabin
Priscilla Sawa
Nick Sintros
Juliana Stevens
Sam Sutcliffe
Jonathan Wildes
Mary Ann Wolf

Also present:

Anita Jones
Chris Rietmann

Topics discussed:

- We decided that we would like to continue to receive the Treasurer's monthly reports, even though monitoring the town's cash flow is not necessarily a high priority for us at this point. It is not necessary for Hans to visit us again.
- Donna mentioned that she found a discrepancy in the accounting for the trust funds. She is waiting for an answer from the responsible party.
- The Select Board intends to start the budget process in August.
- Jonathan proposes that we or the Select Board provide a target number for each department's budget, and that each department provide in return a season-based or project-based budget.

Select Board meeting:

- The Select Board did only a quick line-by-line review of the budget at the meeting last week, due to a lengthy discussion of the open-carry incidence at Vilas Pool.
- There was no meeting this week due to vacations by two Selectmen.

DPW subcommittee:

- We discussed how the funds allocated in the DPW department need to be moved around to accommodate expenditures for the Cobb Hill project. In the

future, we have to ask the right questions of the DPW and Select Board so that we are aware of key projects like the Cobb Hill project before they happen.

- The committee will schedule a meeting with DPW in a few weeks.

EMSG subcommittee:

- The committee had a productive meeting with the Fire Department. Those who attended are convinced that the town will need to purchase a replacement for the 1987 pumper engine. There are differing opinions in the FD as to what type of replacement is appropriate.
- We are aware that Bellows Falls, for example, received a significant grant in order to purchase a new "combo" engine. If we want to pursue large grants, we need to learn more about our accounting options. Our current understanding is that we are required to enter the amount we expect to receive from a grant as a line item in the budget. This requirement in effect causes us to raise the grant money through new taxes. If instead there were a way to fund a grant appropriation from the fund balance, we could avoid adding new taxes.
- The Police Chief Search Committee met this evening and went through the resumes received. The committee will ask four of those candidates to fill out applications. Applicants can talk with Chief Bromley if they have questions about the town or the position. The committee will meet again in two weeks to review the applications. Interviews will take place after that meeting.

Quarterly Report subcommittee:

- A possible topic for the next report is property assessments, including the impact of conservancy and current use on assessments and resale value.
- We are not sure when or how property owners will receive notification of the new assessments.

Financial Planning/Tools subcommittees:

- Glenn E. has started to plug data into the "trends in expenditures over time" report format.
- There is a finite list of applications specified by the state that the town can use for tax collection. An On Line Analytical Processing (OLAP) tool would provide interactive, multidimensional analysis capabilities but might be prohibitively expensive. Poor man's alternatives are linked Excel spreadsheets, a MS Access database, Budget Maestro, and so forth.

Motions:

- The meeting minutes of July 8 were approved (yes/6, no/0, abstentions/3).

Action items:

- Sam will find out when the assessment notifications will be available to all residents.
- Jonathan will find out from two OLAP software companies the price of their baseline software package.
- Juliana will ask her contact in the State Department if there is an accounting guru who could consult with us about software tools options.
- Jonathan and Priscilla will work to get the Excel data for the "trends in expenditures over time" report.
- Glenn will work on the capital plan.

Next meeting:

August 12 at 7:00 pm at the Town Offices. **Our August meetings now appear on the Town Calendar accessible from alsteadnh.org.**

Agenda items for next meeting:

- Frequency of future meetings
- Subcommittee reports

Comments from the public:

- None.