

Alstead Advisory Budget Committee

Minutes for the September 9, 2015 meeting

Members in attendance:

Bonnie Chase
Glenn Elsesser
Chris Hansen
Carol Reller
Marge Noonan
Priscilla Sawa
Juliana Stevens
Sam Sutcliffe
Les Thomas
Jonathan Wildes
Mary Ann Wolf

Also present:

Chris Rietmann
Barbara Viegner

Select Board:

- The schedule for the 2016 budget meetings has been decided:
 - Jan 12, budget hearing
 - Feb 6, deliberative session
 - Mar 8, town meeting.
- One candidate for the Police Chief position has been selected to take the physical exam and fitness test, and after that, to submit to a background check, polygraph, and so forth. The Hiring Committee also liked one of the other candidates, but had reservations because that candidate is not currently living in NH.
- Dave Crosby will attend every other SB meeting starting Sep 16 so that the Select Board can keep a better eye on DPW projects and expenses.
- Dave Crosby proposed an 8% increase for all DPW employees in his 2015 budget. DPW employees have been receiving this wage increase since March, even though the current Select Board's intention was to give a smaller raise, similar to that received by other town employees. Glenn E. uncovered this error while working on the DPW budget for 2016. We agreed that the Select Board needs to define a new process for implementing and reviewing wage increases. At least one member felt that the Select Board should define the wages for each department; department heads should not be allowed to propose wage increases.

Quarterly Report committee:

- Joel read the draft of the AABC quarterly communication at the Select Board meeting. There was general agreement that it was well-written.
- We discussed whether it is necessary to continue mailing out the quarterly communications, instead of just allowing taxpayers to pick up a copy somewhere or find it online. We agreed that we would mail it out this time.

EMSG committee:

- The Fire Dept has formed a Truck Committee and will draw up specs for the three types of trucks that we're looking at. We've found two companies in New England that sell used equipment.
- We should look into prices for standard trucks, not just custom trucks.

HR committee:

This committee is benchmarking benefits and wages, creating an org. chart, and drafting policy guidelines, including how to do performance reviews.

DPW committee:

- The committee met with Dave Crosby. He hired a new employee for the road crew because some of the five employees in the department are working on sanitation, mowing, and so forth. The paving of North Rd is done, 80 hours of grading is underway, installing culverts is next, and then spreading gravel.
- Dave is looking for a replacement for the 1994 6-wheeler dump truck that is scheduled to be replaced in 2016. The estimated cost is \$190K, but we have only \$166K in the Highway capital reserve fund.
- The trash compactor is fixed.
- We need better data on hours worked per project and on equipment maintenance (not just DPW). DPW employees are using a smartphone app to track their hours, but this data is not available for regular review. It was suggested that spreadsheet skills be required as part of the job description of the head of DPW.
- We've asked for a presentation on a pay-per-bag system for the transfer station, in the hopes that this might increase recycling.

Gen Gov committee:

This committee hasn't met yet.

Financial Planning/Tools committee

Chris R. watched the webcast for Host Analytics and thought the software looks good. Jonathan has started a discussion with Host Analytics about a possible purchase.

New business:

Some taxpayers have expressed concern that this committee was allowed to offer an opinion on each warrant article in the town report. Some felt that allowing the committee to sit together at the front of the room during the hearing and the deliberative session gave undue emphasis to the committee's recommendations. In contrast, the taxpayers who signed a petition for certain warrant articles felt that their opinions were not given equal weight.

We need to clarify whether this committee is different from any other group of concerned taxpayers, and if so, how it is different. We also need to clarify whether our activities can/should be directed by the Select Board, or whether we must operate more independently.

Motions:

- The meeting minutes of September 2 were approved (5/yes, 0/no, 3/abstentions).
- The Quarterly Report was approved, with the addition of a date (Moved 1. Juliana 2. Glenn E.: 10/yes, 0/no, 1/abstention).

Action items:

- Chris R. will explain how the Select Board will ensure that wage increases are implemented as intended.
- Committee members can join a live demo of Host Analytics or watch a previously recorded demo at <http://www.hostanalytics.com/learn/demos>. (The Host Analytics EPM Suite demo is a good place to get an overview. It's one hour long.)

Next meeting:

September 16 at 7:00 pm at the Town Offices.

Agenda items for next meeting:

- Discuss the role of this committee vs. any other group of concerned taxpayers.

Comments from the public:

- None.