

Alstead Advisory Budget Committee Minutes for the January 7 meeting

Members in attendance:

Chris Hansen
Carol Reller
Chris Rietmann
Donna Sabin
Priscilla Sawa
Juliana Stevens
Sam Sutcliffe
Jonathan Wildes
Mary Ann Wolf

Also present:

Susan Norlander
Glen Elsesser
Joel McCarty

Topics discussed:

- Susan Norlander thanked us for all the work that this committee has done. She will attend the January 20 preliminary hearing, which is run by the Selectmen, and she will run the February 7 deliberative session as Town Moderator. At the deliberative session, she will start by describing the work that we have been doing. She will then ask a member of AABC to speak to each warrant article. After that, any other member of the public can address the article. She is open to suggestions about whether to set time limits, allow dialogue, and so forth.
- There are some issues with the way the budget is presented that should be explained up front — the moving of employee benefits from Gen Gov to each department, the effect of the 8% cut on the budgeted vs actual wages, the inclusion of the school and county taxes in the town budget and so forth.
- At the deliberative session, it is the job of the Select Board to defend or explain the 2014 expenditures.
- We'd like to see Matt's posters by January 14, if possible. We'd like to post them online.
- If there is an amendment to an article, we should offer it at the end of the discussion of that article at the deliberative session. We should also announce our intention to offer an amendment at the preliminary hearing.
- Susan will draw up a description of the rules she will use for the deliberative session and post them on the website. We need some kind of device (a flip

chart?) to cue the audience as to where we are in the process. Two important rules are how to handle "I move the question" and "I move reconsideration".

- The Public Safety subcommittee's documents have been posted for the members of the committee. We recommend forming a subcommittee after the 2015 budget process is complete to look at consolidation and/or regionalization of Public Safety.
- The SB would like to change the pay rate in 2015 for employees whose skill set has changed, through certification or training, for example. We discussed again adding a COLA for town employees to the 2015 budget.
- The Gen Gov subcommittee says that they are OK with the budget as set by the SB, with the exception of some line items. Perhaps the welfare line item could be reduced, and some budgeted items should be aligned more closely with actual expenditures. We will have to justify the cost of the assistant town administrator and explain the moving of employee benefits to each department.

Motions:

- The meeting minutes of December 17 were approved.

Action items:

- Juliana will work on the rules for the deliberative session with Susan.
- Chris R. will write up a list of the members of this committee, a description of the volunteer nature of the committee, and a thank you to the department heads (and Glenn) who gave their time to bring us up to speed.
- Susan will get together, possibly by Skype, with the committee members who have not yet taken the oath of office. (Chris will resend her the list.)
- Each subcommittee must have all its documents ready to be uploaded to the website by January 14.

Next meeting:

January 14 at 7:00 pm.

Agenda items for next meeting:

- The DPW subcommittee will make a brief presentation of their findings.
- We will decide how to make recommendations to the town -- as a subcommittee, as a committee, or as individuals.

Comments from the public:

None.