

## **Alstead Advisory Budget Committee Minutes for the September 14, 2016 meeting**

### **Members in attendance:**

Glenn Elsesser  
Marge Noonan  
Carol Reller  
Donna Sabin  
Priscilla Sawa  
Juliana Stevens  
Sam Sutcliffe  
Barbara Viegener  
Mary Ann Wolf

### **Also present:**

Chris Rietmann  
Tim Noonan  
Bob Quaglin

### **Review agenda, minutes and action items from the last meeting:**

The meeting minutes of August 24 were approved (6/yes, 0/no, 2/abstentions).

Chris H. emailed the Select Board regarding our concerns about budget reviews, town employee job descriptions, and building maintenance. Chris R. said that the Selectmen have asked department heads to bring draft budgets to the meetings, and that he will take on the task of creating job descriptions for employees. There are some building repairs underway currently.

### **Review of the CIP:**

We are not sure that funding will come from the state for bridges in a timely manner, so we need to have alternate plans. The figures in the CIP currently reflect receiving state funding. We need to contribute \$25,000 per year to the Bridge Capital Reserve to meet the plan. We should ask David about his plan for the subsidence on Hill Rd.

There are two trucks in the CIP for DPW, one ten-wheeler to replace the 1994 six-wheeler in 2017, and one six-wheeler cab and chassis to replace the 2005 six-wheeler in 2018. It is unlikely that the town can afford to buy all the equipment on the DPW wish list. Chris R. would prefer to reduce the amount of work that the DPW does instead of adding more manpower and equipment.

Lease-to-own programs sound practical but are problematic because the yearly lease amount, possible as much as \$50,000 for an ambulance, rolls into the budget and might cause increases over the 3% cap. Also, after the lease ends, the town owns the equipment. It might be more cost effective to sell equipment after five years instead of leasing it.

### **Cemetery trust funds**

Bruce Bellows is preparing a report on how the cemetery funds can be spent. We will reserve our questions until the report is finished.

### **Unassigned fund balance**

The \$1,090,030 UFB estimated in the DRA's preliminary calculation of the 2015 tax rate (received by the town in November 2015) was reduced by the auditors (in early summer 2016) to \$1,063,065. Subtracting the \$485,500 spent in 2016 warrant articles leaves about \$578,565 in the UFB at this time, not including any unanticipated income or underspending of the 2016 operating budget. \$482,158 of the UFB is unpaid taxes.

### **Transfer station report**

Julie and Priscilla commended Mary Ann and the rest of the transfer station committee on their detailed report to the Select Board. The Select Board immediately approved the committee's recommendation regarding new signage. The Select Board is still considering the recommendation to haul the trash and C&D to Bradford instead of Newport as well as the recommendations on educating residents on the benefits of recycling.

### **Budget review**

We discussed the \$2000 line item for the Vilas Pool Music Festival and whether this should have been covered by the VP trust fund. Also we raised the question of whether the town can be liable for firework accidents at Vilas Pool.

Perhaps we should ask both the Vilas Pool committee and the cemetery committee to present a budget explaining how trust fund money is being spent, if they ask for town tax money.

### **Paving grant for Pine Cliff Road**

The Watershed Assistance grant is a NHDES grant funded under EPA's Clean Water Act and is awarded for projects that improve water quality for impaired lakes such as Lake Warren. The lake is currently listed as impaired for aquatic life. A big contributor is air-borne dust and stormwater runoff from Pine Cliff Road. The grant would apply to paving the road or using hard-packed gravel, as well as widening the buffer between the road and the lake. With this type of grant, a 40% match needs to

come from the town. It can be in the form of in-kind services by town employees or volunteers.

Lisa Murphy, Senior Planner at SRPC, will let us know when grant applications have been announced. Indication of support from both the town and the Lake Warren Association would make a strong grant application.

### Select Board meeting

The Select Board has received three proposals for the bridge design work per the warrant article. Two bids for the retaining wall behind the town office were rejected, but two more are expected. The new wall is up in the Slade cemetery, and work has begun on the Village Station doors.

### Emergency management preparations

Chris R. has completed the requisite training for EMDs, but there is no one else trained as backup. Chris R. has created a detailed proposal for a COAD and the Select Board has approved it. No kickoff meeting has been scheduled yet.

### Budget cap vs tax cap

Tim Noonan has raised the question of whether the 3% cap applies to the Selectmen's proposed operating budget (a budget cap) or to the amount to be raised by new taxes (a tax cap). The Selectmen have historically interpreted the 3% cap as a budget cap. From the research that Tim has done, he concludes that it is a tax cap.

Note: There is general agreement that the tax cap applies to the proposed budget, not to any amended amount from the town meeting.

This is important because the amount of the proposed operating budget (article #2) is significantly more than the amount raised by new taxes (article #2 – non-tax revenues). According to Tim's example, if the amount raised by new taxes is \$900K compared to a budget of \$1.6M, a budget cap would be \$48K compared to a tax cap of \$27K.

Here is the language of the original warrant article adopted in March 2014:

“Shall we adopt the provisions of RSA 32:5-b, and implement a tax cap, whereby the governing body (or budget committee) shall not submit a recommended budget that increases the amount to be raised by local taxes, based on the prior fiscal year's actual amount of local taxes raised for the base budget (not including Warrant Articles), by more than 3% or \$60,000, whichever is less?”

### Action items:

- Glenn will attend the next meeting of the Planning Board and present the CIP.
- We need to find someone from the budget committee to work with Jesse on his budget and revenue tracking.

**Next meeting:**

**September 26:** The Planning Board will host a public hearing on plans for the Bragg Lane property.

**September 27:** DPW will present a budget at the Select Board meeting.

**September 28:** Next meeting of AABC is at the Town Offices.

**Agenda items for next meeting:**

- Items from the punch list: cemetery trust fund usage, budget review, town employee job descriptions, building maintenance, transfer station committee, CIP, and Bragg Lane.

*Minutes submitted by Priscilla Sawa*