

Alstead Advisory Budget Committee

Minutes for the September 16, 2015 meeting

Members in attendance:

Bonnie Chase
Chris Hansen
Carol Reller
Marge Noonan
Donna Sabin
Priscilla Sawa
Nick Sintros
Juliana Stevens
Mary Ann Wolf

Also present:

Michael Gordon
Karn McShane
Chris Rietmann

Opening topics:

- Michael Gordon explained that he will be recording AABC meetings from now on and posting them on YouTube and also on the Alstead Government Oversight and Alstead Chronicles Facebook pages.

New Business:

- We discussed the role of this committee with regards to its mandate and its independence from the Select Board. Some residents have suggested that the AABC should work more closely with the Select Board and not present an independent opinion to the town residents.
 - As one example of how AABC works closely with the Select Board, the DPW subcommittee of AABC has worked with the head of DPW to prepare preliminary budgets to present to the Select Board both for 2015 and 2016.
 - As another example, AABC agreed with the Select Board on almost every line of the Select Board's budget as proposed at the deliberative session. AABC did not present a separate budget.
 - As an example of how AABC can independently come to a different conclusion from the Select Board, even based on the same data, AABC voted unanimously to offer an amendment at the 2015 deliberative session to increase the 2015 budget by \$52,000 (3.5%).
- While discussing the role of this committee, several concerns that are shared by both the Select Board and AABC came to light:

- There is concern that the work done by town employees who work for multiple departments is not being tracked properly and is perhaps being arbitrarily applied to one department or another.
- Another concern is that there is no published schedule of departmental budget reviews by the Select Board.
- Another example of poor tracking or reporting of expenses is the Food Shelf and Friendly Meals. It is not clear how much the town pays to support these programs.
- Labor is our biggest cost, and we need to track better how town employees spend their time.
- Another concern is that DPW employees are still working summer hours – from 6:00 am to 4:00 pm. Sunrise is not until 6:30, so it is not clear what they are doing at that time of day. Why wait until December to start the winter hours?
- We also briefly discussed the role of this committee with regards to other residents. Some residents have expressed concern that the recommendations of AABC are given more weight in the annual report and in the deliberative session than, for example, a group of residents that have signed in support of a warrant article. It was noted that AABC's meetings are open to the public, and meeting minutes are also available. We encourage all residents who are interested in the budget to join us.
- We discussed various ways to work with the Select Board and the department heads for the 2016 budget, but did not reach agreement.

Select Board:

- The DPW presented a 2016 budget that is 2.99% over last year's budget. There was some concern that the 5.5% increase in full-time wages represented another pay increase for DPW employees in addition to the one they received this year. Glenn E. was able to explain why this was not the case, but the Select Board is still not convinced that the part-time and over-time wages budgeted for 2016 are accurate. Tom Dowling suggested making a detailed spreadsheet showing each employee and the fulltime/part-time/overtime hours to be worked by department and task.
- Chris R. suggested that the Select Board lower the budget for line items where the budgeted amount has not recently been fully spent.
- The financing of Friendly Meals has become a little clearer. The kitchen itself is owned by the town, and the town pays for the utilities. Friendly Meals owns a good deal of the kitchen equipment. The town might contract out that kitchen to other cooks. The money would flow into the town through Friendly Meals, which would get a portion of that income as a donation. Scheduling, insurance and clean-up are issues to be worked out.
- The Select Board is forming a subcommittee to look at health insurance costs and alternatives to Health Trust, used by many NH municipalities to insure their employees.

- The lease for the new police cruiser has been signed.
- Residents can get a burn permit on line.
- The majority of opinions expressed at the meeting supported looking into instituting the “pay as you throw” approach at the transfer station.

Quarterly Report committee:

The quarterly report has not been sent out because the computer was down. At least one Select Board member wants to check the final version, with return address and the dates for the 2016 budget process, before it goes out. We need to make sure that the dates are correct.

EMSG committee:

- The FD Truck Committee has recommended that the town buy a combo rescue/pumper to replace the separate pumper and rescue truck, scheduled for replacement in 2016 and 2018, respectively.
- The FD Truck Committee will look for multiple quotes from local suppliers.
- The hiring process for the police chief is behind schedule because of a scheduling conflict.
- Chris R will work with EMSG on the 2016 the Emergency Management budget.
- Marcello and Chris R will work with EMSG on the 2016 PD budget.

HR committee:

This committee will file a report with the Select Board by the end of the month. Their recommendations may have some impact on the 2016 budget.

DPW committee:

Glenn E. emailed us a copy of the 2016 budget proposed by DPW at the most recent Select Board meeting, along with some detailed info on wages.

Gen Gov committee:

- The subcommittee met and decided that their scope is everything that is not covered by other subcommittees. They have generated a list of questions about the nature of some of these "orphan line items," as well as the budget related to them, and are looking for answers.
- The subcommittee feels that some line items, such as fuel, water and so forth should be broken out by department.
- The downside of breaking items out by department is that it then becomes difficult to look at the total amount spent by the town on fuel, for example.
- There are many line items in the DPW budget, for example, where no money has been spent for the last two years, as well as this year.
- We need a systematic way (SmartPhone app?) for employees to report the hours spent by department and task, as well as someone who can then pull

the raw data into a form that makes it accessible to the Select Board and AABC.

Financial Planning/Tools committee:

No report.

Old business:

- We have a copy of the Model Local Welfare Guidelines.

Motions:

- The meeting minutes of September 9 were approved as amended (6/yes, 0/no, 2/abstentions)
- We recommend to the Select Board that fuel and cable be broken out by department and that work hours be broken out by department or task. (Moved 1. Bonnie 2. Chris H.: 8/yes, 0/no, 1/abstention).

Action items:

- Committee members should watch the webnair on *Cutting Trash in Half: How New Hampshire Cities and Towns are Turning to PAYT Programs*, available at the following link: <http://youtu.be/-Gz9TX9SgRA>.
- Donna will try to make the Welfare Guidelines available to all committee members.

Next meeting:

Sep 23 at 7:00 pm at the Town Offices.

Planned absences:

- Les Thomas will not attend the Sep 23 meeting.
- Donna will not attend the Sep 23 meeting.
- Chris H. will not attend the Sep 23 or Sep 30 meeting. Carol will chair in his place.
- Priscilla will not attend the Sep 23, Sep 30 meeting or the Oct 7 meeting.

Agenda items for next meeting:

- Discuss Welfare Guidelines.

Comments from the public:

- None.