

Alstead Advisory Budget Committee Minutes for the January 14 meeting

Members in attendance:

Dan Cull (on phone)
Chris Hansen
Carol Reller
Chris Rietmann
Donna Sabin
Priscilla Sawa
Juliana Stevens
Sam Sutcliffe
Les Thomas
Jonathan Wildes
Mary Ann Wolf

Also present:

Joel McCarty
Glenn Elsesser

Topics discussed:

- DPW — Donna handed out a new version of the budget. There are still several mismatches in the numbers, particularly FICA and wages. The draft budget from the Select Board includes an across-the-board 3% COLA for employees and one change in status. The DPW subcommittee recommends an additional \$45,000 to purchase gravel, salt & chloride, culverts and sand to assure sufficient material for work planned in 2015.
- Public Safety — The subcommittee created a statement that summarizes our support for the budget proposed by the Select Board, while recommending that an inter-department committee be formed to look at ways to be more cost effective. There was a posting on Alstead Chronicles (Facebook) expressing concerns about the Alstead ambulance services, so this effort is timely.
- Marcello is leaving to take a position as a school resource in Hinsdale. He is going to be hard to replace. Joel is looking into hiring additional patrol services from the state or county. We discussed the impact of this event on the warrant article for the new cruiser. If we get a new police cruiser, it will be under warranty and we will be able to do the basic repairs and services in town.
- Gen Gov — The subcommittee recommends approval of the budget proposed by the Select Board, with a single change to the Welfare line item (\$5000

less). The committee also recommends that certain supporting documents on the budget be made available at the public hearing.

- We should have a post-mortem in March to assess what we did well and what we need to improve. Jonathan has a grid showing various levels of skill in the areas of process, reporting and date. This might help the committee identify areas that we want to improve.
- Deliverables, presentations, etc. We discussed whether we should vote today on the subcommittee recommendations, present our results at the preliminary hearing, and post documents on the web site.

Motions:

- The meeting minutes of January 7 were approved.
- Chris H. moved that the recommendations of the Public Safety subcommittee be approved and adopted as the committee's recommendations and that these recommendations be presented at the preliminary hearing. Donna seconded the motion. 11 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
- Juliana moved that the recommendations of the Gen Gov subcommittee be approved and adopted as the entire committee's recommendations and that these recommendations be presented at the preliminary hearing. Mary Ann seconded the motion. 11 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
- Juliana moved that the recommendations of the DPW subcommittee be approved and adopted as the entire committee's recommendations and that these recommendations be presented at the preliminary hearing. Donna seconded the motion. 6 in favor, 4 opposed, 1 abstention.
- Those opposed to the DPW recommendations expressed the reasons why they are opposed — we don't know the current inventory of the materials; the subcommittee didn't justify the recommended amounts of additional materials or verify that we have the personnel and resources to use the materials this year; it will be difficult to convince the voters to approve this increase.
- Those in support of the DPW recommendations explained in the meeting (as well as in subsequent emails) that the amounts of additional materials were recommended by the head of DPW and were in alignment with the amounts requested in previous years.
 - Taking gravel as an example, the 9 year average actually spent on gravel is \$39,068 or \$78,136 over 2 years. In 2014, the town spent \$7,566 and the DPW subcommittee is suggesting spending \$70,000 in 2015 or \$77,566 over 2 years. In effect, the 2014 and proposed 2015 budget represents less than the average actually spent over 2 years.
 - The under spend on gravel in 2014 was a function of a lot of gravel dispersed in 2013 and the SB's fears of unforeseen needs over the summer, fall and winter while they tried to get a handle on what the budget cuts would mean for the town.
 - So, with the grader falling apart, the SB told David not to buy gravel. Then the grader was fixed but, a very wet spring / early summer

created other concerns about a repeat of the freeze/thaw/freeze cycle we had just lived through, which requires a large buy of sand and salt to make the roads safe to drive.

- The DPW was able to disperse \$73,706 worth of gravel in 2013, and David told us that he needs \$70,000 per year to maintain the roads correctly. We should take the leap of faith and trust that what the DPW did in 2013 they can do again in 2015.
 - If Alstead's policy is to have and maintain roads that are passable, safe for citizens, and reliable for the use of our emergency services so that public safety is served, the budget should provide enough funds for that to happen.
 - If David proposes a budget that he needs and intends to use to carry out the policy, we should support that budget. If we or any other citizens are concerned about whether he can accomplish it, then we should direct our Select Board to manage their administration of the town to make sure it gets done, by making sure that needed employees and materials are in place, proper supervision takes place, etc.
- At the preliminary hearing, Chris will describe the committee as a whole and the recommendations of each subcommittee.
 - Carol moved that the summary and the reports of the Public Safety subcommittee be posted on the website. Les seconded. 11 in favor 0 opposed 0 abstentions.
 - Julie moved that the summary and the reports of the Gen Gov subcommittee be posted on the website. Carol seconded. 11 in favor 0 opposed 0 abstentions.
 - Carol moved that the summary of the DPW subcommittee be posted on the website. Donna seconded. 10 in favor 0 opposed 1 abstention.
 - Dan moved that the DPW spreadsheet be posted on the website. No one seconded the motion and there was no discussion.

Action items:

- Subcommittees should notify Chris if they have selected a spokesperson for the Preliminary Hearing.

Next meetings:

January 20 Preliminary Hearing at 7:00 pm at the Town Hall

January 21 AABC meeting at 7:00 pm at the Town Offices.

Agenda items for next AABC meeting:

Discuss the events at the Preliminary Hearing

Comments from the public:

None.