

## **Alstead Advisory Budget Committee Minutes for the March 23, 2016 meeting**

### **Members in attendance:**

Glenn Elsesser  
Chris Hansen  
Marge Noonan  
Carol Reller  
Donna Sabin  
Priscilla Sawa  
Juliana Stevens  
Sam Sutcliffe  
Les Thomas  
Mary Ann Wolf

### **Also present:**

Michael Gordon  
Chris Rietmann (Select Board)  
Susan Norlander (Town Moderator)  
Barbara Viegner

### **Review agenda and minutes from the last meeting:**

The meeting minutes of March 2 were approved (9/yes, 0/no, 1/abstention).

### **Renewing members were sworn in**

Mary Ann, Les, and Glenn were sworn in by the Town Moderator with 3-year terms. Bonnie will have to be sworn in at a later date.

### **Action items from last meeting:**

Priscilla will look in to revenue reports.

Priscilla will highlight any revisions made in the minutes.

### **Other old business:**

Donna has been working on a quarterly year-to-year expenditure report. The committee would like to see this.

Glenn mentioned again that there are reports available showing DPW hours spent on various projects.

### **News from the Select Board meeting:**

The Select Board approved the \$428K bid selected by the EMSG for a new fire truck. Estimated delivery time is 200 days, once the paper work is complete.

Jesse would like the town to buy AEDs for town facilities and vehicles. The town needs to plan for this and other capital investments for the ambulance squad.

The Select Board met with the town office staff regarding staffing requirements. The Select Board now has a list of tasks that need to be performed by the back office together with a list of the skills required. Using this information, they will decide what clerical help is required and whether to look for a town administrator.

Mike Jasmine asked the Select Board what the Friendly Meals organization needs to do in order to gain the support of the Select Board for the use of the Bragg Lane property. The Select Board suggested coming up with a detailed proposal. The first step is that Mike will take a look at the Bragg Lane property. Chris R. supports the idea of creating a committee to look into the potential uses of the Bragg Lane property.

### The role of the AABC

There has been a lot of discussion around the role of AABC and other advisory committees in town affairs. Some residents and town employees feel that the AABC is inappropriately trying to run the town in place of the Select Board. Some town employees resent the time spent collecting data or answering questions. In addition, there has been some disagreement between the Select Board and AABC as to whether we can advise town voters or only the Select Board. Also, the AABC often felt that their advice was ignored by the Select Board, particularly in regards to following the recommended budget calendar and process.

Some of us questioned whether AABC has any power whatsoever. It was pointed out that knowledge is power, and that collectively the committee has gained a lot of knowledge over the last 20 months. Also, there seems to be more town-wide consensus on the budget and warrant articles since AABC has been active.

Chris R. personally sees the benefit of volunteer committees. He plans to attend AABC meetings as a representative of the Select Board. He intends to follow the budget calendar this year and to have each department head attend the Select Board meetings on a regular basis to review activities and expenditures.

Chris R. agrees that the AABC needs to interface with town employees more efficiently. He recommends that AABC attend the Select Board meetings when a department head is scheduled to review activities and expenditures, in order to ensure that the department head's time is used most efficiently and that the AABC and the Select Board share the same information. This does not mean that AABC can never request a meeting with a department head. Chris R. also recommends that AABC members avoid asking the town office staff for assistance on Wednesdays, when the staff is focused on getting their work done, and he reminds us that data requests take a week.

Chris R has no desire to make AABC subservient to the Select Board. He believes that if we can work together more closely and maintain better communication throughout the year, and if the Select Board can direct our efforts to issues that they think have the most priority, then the Select Board will have no problem in accepting

our advice. The problems in the past came up when the AABC selected its own issues to work on and then announced its conclusions to the town as a whole, without asking for input from the Select Board.

There is some hard work that needs to be done to encourage department heads to look for ways to work more efficiently. The Select Board needs to take on this task, not the AABC. The HR committee suggested that the town have a reward system for employees that identify ways to save money. Also, the Select Board should encourage DPW, in particular, to come up with a time-line of when certain tasks will be performed. The Select Board needs to make all the department heads accountable for tasks not done. Chris R. suggested that the Select Board would establish a monthly report format for the department heads to present.

Chris R. would like to identify areas that the Select Board needs our help with, and is willing to consider areas that we suggest as well. The AABC has identified two key areas of interest: transfer station operations and building maintenance. EMSG needs a few more weeks with the Fire Department to finish up work on the FD's SOG and the requirements for physical exams. The Select Board will work initially with Jesse on the Ambulance budget and capital investments plan, possibly asking for EMSG's help in the future.

AABC is also interested in participating on any committee working on the Bragg Lane property or the town's capital improvements plan.

### **Voting in of officers**

Chris H. was voted in as Chair, Carol as Timekeeper, and Priscilla as Secretary.

### **New business:**

- The AABC needs a copy of the auditors' report.
- The AED should be moved from Vilas Pool to town property.

### **Action items:**

- Priscilla will update the membership list on Google Drive.
- Priscilla will update the calendar with our spring schedule.
- Priscilla will forward the budget process calendar and punch list to Chris.
- Priscilla will look in to revenue reports.
- Priscilla will highlight any revisions made in the minutes.
- Donna will forward her quarter-by-quarter expenditure report to the committee.

### **Next meeting:**

April 13 at the Town Offices. We meet every 2<sup>nd</sup> and every 4<sup>th</sup> week of the month.

*Minutes submitted by Priscilla Sawa*