

**TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE**  
**Select Board**  
**Approved Minutes for Meeting of December 5, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.**  
**Town Hall, 9 Main Street, Alstead, NH 03602**

**SELECT BOARD PRESENT:** Joel McCarty, Matthew Saxton, Gordon Kemp

**STAFF PRESENT:** **In person** – Junie Esslinger, Transfer Station; Misty Gratacos, Office Admin (incoming); Werner Drouin, Ambulance Admin; Jesse Moore, Ambulance Chief; Steve Murrell, Police Chief; Steve Reynolds, Emergency Management Director; Mary Schoppmeyer, Office Administrator (outgoing); Prescott Trafton, Road Agent; Bobbie Wilson, Ambulance Lieutenant & Supervisor of the Checklist Chair. **Google Meet** – None.

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS:** **In person** – Glenn Elsesser, Jim Gordon, Jonathan Landry, Joe Levesque, Rich Nalevanko, Marge Noonan, Barbara Viegener, Judith Willis. **Google Meet** – None.

**GUESTS:** Corey Donahue, First Net; and his AT&T counterpart, Kevin – to explain the First Net emergency cell phone system for first responders.

**CALL TO ORDER:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and Board Chair called the Select Board meeting to order at 6:00PM.

**2024 BUDGET PRESENTATION:** Ms. Wilson presented the 2024 Supervisors of the Checklist budget request for \$10,310, which is part of the Elections budget. The wage line is increased over 2023 because there are more elections in 2024. A postage line has been added to this budget this year and one-dollar place-holder amounts have been placed in the training and new equipment lines. Questions were fielded about when the NH Primary is (January 23<sup>rd</sup>) and why the new equipment expense was so much lower than budgeted (bought the budgeted number of computers for less money and set them up themselves).

**FIRST NET PRESENTATION:** Corey Donahue from First Net explained the cell phone system that the town is considering for its first responders. The system is designed for first responders and offered by a branch of AT&T. A priority pre-emption feature allows public services to take over bands in an emergency to preserve communications capability. The provider is offering last year's High Power User Equipment all-in-one units at a fifty-percent discount for \$700 each through December 31, with a state agreement service program for \$37.99 per unit. The program includes yearly upgrades and has no contract fee. ARPA funds can be used to purchase the equipment. The town estimates a need for 2 units for ambulance, two for police, 3 for fire, and 3-4 for highway for a total of 10-11 units. The estimated one-time equipment cost is \$7000 - \$7700 and the estimated monthly service cost is \$379.90 – \$417.89 per month, or \$4178.90 - \$4596.79 annually. There was extended additional discussion about equipment and features and comparison to current cell plan expenses. The cell service does not replace the current radios which will remain in use for as long as Mutual Aid uses radios. The Board thanked the gentlemen for their time and presentation and promised a decision by next week.

**MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS:** Corrected Minutes of November 14, 2023; Minutes of November 28, 2023; Minutes from two non-public sessions of November 28, 2023 (personnel). No changes requested. On a motion made by Mr. Kemp and seconded by Mr. Saxton, ***the Board voted unanimously to approve all sets of minutes as submitted.***

**BRIDGE CLOSURE:** Mr. Kemp announced that the state has closed one of the bridges included in the ongoing MOBIL bridge project. The affected bridge is the Hill Road bridge over Darby Brook half way up Bell Hill. The bridge is closed until it is replaced. The sign trailers have been deployed to inform the public. A detour has been posted.

**OLD BUSINESS: Washed-out glass** – Mr. McCarty reported that the Solid Waste division of NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) has notified him that they have no advice regarding the cleanup of the waste glass. He has requested that answer in writing. Meanwhile, the Southwestern Regional Planning Commission wants to discuss the problem and seek expertise from its sources. Both parties suggest hand work. A resident has suggested using fire hoses to create piles of debris. The affected residents want a letter explaining the Board's planned response. Mr. Esslinger asked if there is a map of the affected area. **Thayer Brook bypass** – The Road Agent reported that FEMA needs the letter from the abutting property owner by 12/22 to complete the documentation for the bypass work so that the town can be reimbursed within 30 days. Without the letter the town will not get the necessary funds. Mr. Saxton reported no success with obtaining the letter; Mr. McCarty will join forces to obtain the letter. Mr. Trafton commended the FEMA's efforts to be MUCH more responsive and timely with this year's flood. **Broadband** – Mr. Kemp reported some progress getting a date for the public information meeting set for January; he will continue to follow up. **Bridges** – See "Bridge Closure" above. **Dams** – Mr. McCarty reported that submissions for the posted RFQ are due December 8<sup>th</sup>; so far no submissions have been received. **Town Real Estate** – The Board tasked the Office Admins with forwarding the results of Ms. Bacon's deed research to the Realtor. **M11 L2 adjacent to Town Hall** – Mr. McCarty reported that a meeting is anticipated with the Southwestern Region Planning Commission to determine what soil tests to request. **Fire**

**Dept Bylaws, policies, & procedures** – Mr. Kemp reported that paper copies existing policies have been found and electronic copies are being produced from them. **Village Station** – Nothing new to report, updates to come in the new year. **Sign trailer agreement** – Unlikely to pursue this year. **East Station progress report** – The OEM Director suggested that a January pickup date be scheduled. **Langdon Transfer Station fee** – Mr. McCarty reported that he has a meeting scheduled with the Langdon Select Board on 12/18 at which he will present the expected calculation formula, which is Total TS operating expenses minus TS Operating revenues, apportioned by population. There was additional discussion about billing Langdon in arrears since the prior year's numbers will always be complete and ready for calculation when the time arrives to determine the number for the coming year. **Beaver Dam mitigation** – Mr. Kemp met with Kevin Bittenbender who is a local beaver expert. His recommendation is to install a beaver pipe to limit water impoundment. The property owner did install a stake to help monitor water levels at the site. Next step is to find a contractor who can do the work and get a quote.

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS: Ambulance department** – Chief Moore reported 169 calls year to date. He commended his crew for saving two lives this weekend in two separate calls and thanked the community members who were instrumental in assisting. He noted that they had used all their oxygen supply and defibrillator pads and had to re-supply. The Board expressed their gratitude for their skill and proficiency. Further, Chief announced that his crew has a training session about HIPAA compliance and bloodborne pathogens scheduled for their next 6 PM department meeting on 12/20 and that he made additional purchases from the DiLuzio liquidation sale and he is investigating how to obtain the First Net system discount without it having to be a 2023 expense. He noted that he added two oxygen tanks to the existing lease which will increase the monthly oxygen expense in his budget. **Transfer Station** – Mr. Esslinger reported that Mr. Pitt and Mr. Sheldon installed a donated pellet stove in the weighing shed at the Transfer Station, providing much-needed warmth. The team expressed their thanks for that donation as well as for recently purchased-cold weather gear. He noted that the cost of pellets would need to be added to the supplies line item in the Transfer Station budget. When asked if any large expenses were expected between now and year's end, he noted that the safety inspection revealed the need for replenishment of eye wash fluid (\$400), possibly baling wire (cost uncertain), gaylor bags (\$160), and glass might have to be shipped. The Board suggested paring down on staffing and limiting shipping for the rest of the year. Mr. Trafton suggested swapping the new container with the other container to avoid damage when backhoeing. The Board commended Mr. Esslinger for his efforts as interim supervisor this year. **Emergency Management** – Director Reynolds reported that the Library and Bragg Lane safety inspections were completed on 12/5 and reports are forthcoming. Among the findings are the need for emergency exit signage at the library and carbon monoxide monitoring at Bragg Lane. He requested a CO test from the Fire Department. Some additional concerns included inappropriate use of propane stove burners and a rodent concern requiring attention. The director reported that he discussed timely filing of incident and accident reports with Primex – by law, workers comp, injury, and accident/incident reports must be filed within 5 days of the incident or accident. Property & liability reports are recommended to be filed within 24 hours or less, the sooner the better. Director Reynolds expressed his thanks to the Office Admins, Penny Gendron, and Chief Murrell for their review comments for the Safety Policy; the revised Health and Safety town policy will be on next week's agenda. A letter stating the town's tax status is still needed from the IRS for grant application documentation; Mr. Kemp will follow up. Next month's quarterly JLMC meeting is moved from Thursday 12/14 to Wednesday 12/13 at 5:15 PM and Office Admin Misty Gratacos has joined the committee. **Police Department** – Chief Murrell announced that preparations for Tree Lighting on Friday 12/8 are nearing fruition and sufficient donations of lights are in hand. Russell Tree will help hang the lights. Hay rides will be available, the Fire Department Association will be selling hot food at the food shack, and the Police Department Fund will be offering hot chocolate and cookies (donations welcomed). A hot time on the old town is anticipated! Powers Generator is coming to service the units at the Communications Tower and Town Offices to see if those units can be repaired. Chief reported 922 calls year to date. He visited Dublin to preview the in-vehicle and body-worn camera systems used by towns in that area and was impressed with the system's ease of use and parameters for programming in policy support. There was additional discussion about the need for camera systems and officer safety. The Board commended the department for their Tree Lighting organizing efforts and looks forward to a fun time. **Highway** – Mr. Trafton reported that he had to order two loads of salt and it was promptly delivered; he apologized for his after-the-fact purchase order. He observed that the unanticipated one-time Highway Block Grant payment recently received and accepted can be used to pay for the salt outside of the operating budget. He noted that his schedule for his seasonal part-time work is on hold and he thanked Mr. Kemp for his assistance with the unexpected bridge closure.

**BOARD REPORTS: Ambulance billing and invoicing policy** – Mr. Kemp reported receiving said policy from the Ambulance Chief; the Administrative staff was tasked with preparing it for signatures for the 12/12 meeting. Mr. Kemp asked for a memory refresher about what was decided regarding the old rescue tool (sell it) and repurposing the old police cruiser (on hold pending an ongoing personnel decision). **Building permits** – Mr. Saxton reported that he signed a building permit for a solar installation and that building permits have dropped off as the weather cools. He observed that many of the permits he signed this year were for solar. Mr. Saxton further noted that he had not yet received any reply to the letter to the Spauldings about the removal of trees on the Warren Dam site. **Wetlands** – Mr. McCarty reported that he has a meeting scheduled for 12/14 with NHDES to discuss Vilas Pool, Vilas Dam, & Pine Cliff Road. In addition, he will meet Saturday morning 12/9 with a licensed structural engineer & experienced project manager to review existing plans for the library roof structure, hoping to solve problems with

the current structure in a way that respects the historical status of the building. **Simmeck/Mountain Parks property** -- Mr. McCarty reported receiving observations about the movement of fill from this property and contacted NHDES. A meeting was held that Mr. McCarty was not allowed to attend and he asked residents who notice fill being moved in this area to please advise him of their observations.

**NEW BUSINESS: Town meeting dates** – Mr. McCarty reported the Moderator’s suggestions for the Budget Hearing and Deliberative Sessions for this year’s Town Meeting. The Budget Hearing will be Tuesday, January 16<sup>th</sup> at 5 or 6 PM at the Town Hall, and the Deliberative Session will be Saturday February 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10 AM at the Town Hall. **Holiday observances** – The town policy regarding Select Board meetings during holiday weeks was reviewed and it was noted that both Christmas and New Year’s Day are on a Monday this year and the policy states that there will be no meeting during Christmas week. **Unanticipated funds** – The Board reported that a second private donation for Welfare use was received this week. On a motion from Mr. Kemp that Mr. Saxton seconded, **the Board voted unanimously to accept the privately donated funds designated for Welfare use.** **Proposal for more expedient Select Board meetings** – Mr. McCarty proposed via email some changes to meeting format that would help limit meeting length; his fellow members want more time to consider his suggestions so this discussion was tabled for the next meeting. **Non-public session scheduled** – Mr. McCarty announced that a non-public session would be held on Wednesday 12/6 at 10 AM to review candidates for a posted position.

**SCHOOL BOARD:** Mr. Levesque reported that the Board was working on a Warrant Article to close the North Charlestown Community School and that the Board signed the DOE on 12/4 and it would be immediately submitted to the Department of Education so that the tax rate can be set. The next School Board meeting is Monday, 12/11 at 6 PM at Fall Mountain High School. There was a special meeting on 12/4 to review warrant articles. The School Deliberative Session will be held on Wednesday, February 7<sup>th</sup>; he did not know the Budget Hearing date and will report that next week.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Mr. Nalevanko asked questions about the bridge closure and detour handling.

**INFORMATIONAL:**

<b>Next regular Select Board meeting:</b>	Tuesday, December 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main St.
<b>2024 Budget Hearing:</b>	January 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2024 @ 5 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main Street
<b>2024 Town Meeting Deliberative Session:</b>	February 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2024 @ 10 AM, Town Hall, 9 Main Street
<b>2024 Town Meeting Voting Day:</b>	Tuesday, March 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2024, 8 AM to 7 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main Street
<b>FM School Board meeting:</b>	Monday, December 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, High School (2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday)
<b>FM Budget Committee meeting:</b>	Wednesday, December 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, High School (3 <sup>rd</sup> Wednesday)
<b>Next 5-Town Select Board meeting:</b>	TBD – Reschedule in progress
<b>FM Budget Hearing:</b>	TBD – will report next week.
<b>FM Deliberative Session:</b>	Wednesday February 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2024, time TBD.

There being no further public business, on a motion made by Mr. Saxton and seconded by Mr. Kemp, **the Board chair adjourned the public meeting at 7:54 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,



Mary Schoppmeyer, Office Administrator