

TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Select Board
Approved Minutes for Meeting of November 28, 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 – Joyce Campbell-Counts, Conservation Commission; Werner Drouin, Ambulance Admin; Ahmad Esfahani, Planning/Zoning Admin; Misty Gratacos, Office Administrator (incoming); Ben Kercewich, Fire Department; Kim Kercewich, Fire Chief; Jesse Moore, Ambulance Chief; Steve Murrell, Police Chief; Steve Reynolds, Emergency Management Director; Mary Schoppmeyer, Office Administrator (outgoing); Prescott Trafton, Road Agent; Sarah Webb, Chair - Conservation Commission. **Google Meet** – Bobbie Wilson, Ambulance Lieutenant & Vilas Pool Committee Chair.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS: In person – Penny Gendron, Glenn Elsesser, Joe Levesque, Marge Noonan, Barbara Viegner, Judith Willis, one other. **Google Meet** – None.

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

PRESENTATIONS: Ahmad Esfahani re: 2024 Planning & Zoning budget; Sarah Webb re: 2024 Conservation Commission budget.

Mr. Esfahani presented the proposed Planning and Zoning budget for 2024 of \$10,275, a decrease from the 2023 budget of \$11,053. The Admin wages and Supplies line are reduced; the Zoning Officer wages, Advertising, Town Maps, and Postage lines are all increased. A correction was noted for Zoning Officer wages whereby the amount in the 2023 budget (\$1050) was too low; the stipend for that position is \$350 per quarter, which is \$1400. There was no discussion.

Ms. Webb presented the proposed Conservation Commission budget for 2024 of \$1,000, which is slightly reduced from the 2022 budget of \$1076. There was no discussion.

Cemetery Commissioner Jodi Kercewich was not available to present the proposed 2024 Cemetery budget, but she reported by email that she expects no changes to the 2024 budget from the 2023 budget, so the proposed 2024 Cemetery budget is \$29,191. Mr. McCarty noted that most of the Cemetery maintenance budget is spent on headstone repair/replacement. There were some questions about policy pertaining to planting commemorative trees at gravesites and who is responsible for upkeep of such trees with no definitive answers; Mr. McCarty recommended posing those questions to the Cemetery Commission.

ACTION ITEMS: Signed the payroll (\$31,359.67) and tax liability (\$6168.29) manifests for the 12/1 payroll and the Billing 11/28 payables (\$1,055,922.94). Signed one pay rate sheet (EX).

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS: Minutes of November 21, 2023; Minutes from two non-public sessions of November 21, 2023 (personnel). No changes requested. On a motion made by Mr. Kemp and seconded by Mr. Saxton, ***the Board voted unanimously to approve both sets of minutes as submitted.***

Mr. Kemp requested a correction to the minutes of November 14th, which incorrectly stated that Ambulance Chief Moore lives in Acworth when he lives in Alstead.

OLD BUSINESS: Washed-out glass – Mr. McCarty reported that he has a phone meeting with New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) on Wednesday 11/29. **Flood repairs** – Stephens Engineering spoke with the Road Agent regarding the Hydraulics & Hydrology study for flood repairs at the Thayer Brook Road bypass area. The study is needed to apply for FEMA reimbursement for those repairs, and a number is needed for the Warrant Article that is being written. It was noted that there is as yet no letter from the landowner whose property is affected by bypass repairs. **Broadband** – Nothing new to report. **Bridges** – Bills were received and paid for Comstock and Hill Road bridge engineering work done by Hoyle Tanner. **Dams** – Mr. McCarty reported that the RFQ for dam engineering study work is posted and notified; the due date for submissions is December 8th so that a number can be procured for the needed Warrant Article that will fund the dam work. He also noted that there is a meeting scheduled for Thursday 11/29 with DES regarding dredging behind the Vilas Dam. **Town Real Estate** – The realtor recommended a price of \$36,000 to \$38,000 for the 6-acre parcel on Caldwell Pond Road that the town is planning to sell. She has questions with regard to the deeds on the North Road parcel that have been directed to Julie Bacon. **M11 L2 adjacent to Town Hall** – Mr. Kemp reported that he is attempting to schedule a meeting with NHDES to discuss soil contamination. There was also discussion about involving the Alstead Conservation Commission in this process. **Fire Dept Bylaws, policies, & procedures** – Mr. Kemp reported nothing new on this topic as there have been no recent meetings; the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday evening 11/29. **Village Station** – Lighting discussion deferred to mid/late December; Overhead door repair approved last week, vendor is ordering parts and will schedule visit. **Sign trailer agreement** – Deferred to mid/late December. **Plastic recycling** – Considered resolved, remove from Old Business. **Model T insurance** – Nothing new

to report, work in progress. **Repurposing of 2012 Dodge as FD Brush Truck** – Warrant article work in progress. **East Station progress report** – Chemical disposal quoted \$860, deferring til 1/2024. **Langdon Transfer Station fee** – Mr. McCarty met impromptu with a Langdon Select Board member over coffee, explained thoughts re: calculation. The discussion will continue. **Comcast Franchise Agreement** -- Mr. McCarty endured a long meeting with the Comcast representative about this agreement, during which it became evident that there seems to be no clear reason to either sign or not sign the agreement. The Board **agreed by consensus to not sign the agreement and to strike this item from the Old Business list.** **Beaver Dam mitigation** – Mr. Kemp reported that he is still trying to set up meetings with Beaver Deceiver people. There was additional discussion of looping in the Conservation Commission.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS: Police Department – Chief Murrell reported that the Tree Lighting will be held on December 8th at 6 PM. Additional donations of lights for the tree are sought; plenty of small lights are in hand, so donations of the larger-sized lights would be great. Chief expressed his thanks to the donors and to Russell Tree, who will assist with hanging the lights. Chief Murrell reported on the status of town generator equipment, whereby the generator at the Town Offices has failed and Jack Fuller recommends having Powers Generator to service it. In addition, the Communications Tower generator keeps melting its control unit and Generac wants Powers to look at it; the visit is scheduled for December 6th. If it is unresolvable, the generator must be replaced as the tower services not only town, but also county communications. Chief reported that the department has responded to 913 service calls to date, compared to 758 in 2022 and 527 in 2019, demonstrating a pattern of steady increase over time. **Highway** – Mr. Trafton reported that Bazin Brothers did some shoulder work on Gilsum Mine Road but it is not complete and he is attempting to contact them (without success so far) to determine when the work can be completed. The Road Agent suggests delaying the opening of the Transfer Station in inclement weather to give the crews time to sand and salt for safety. There was discussion of providing a supply of salted sand for them to apply themselves. Signage would be needed if opening is delayed. **Fire Department** – Chief Kercewich reported that the department has responded to 93 calls YTD and the combo locks on the East Station doors have been replaced. **Ambulance department** – Chief Moore introduced Werner Drouin, his administrative assistant, and praised Werner's efforts on streamlining ambulance billing. Mr. Drouin reported on billing coding, Medicaid & Medicare rates, and having the ambulance billing company update the rates for treatment with no transport and untimely death calls. This discussion will be revisited closer to January 1. It's also time to review the uncollectable bills for 2023 for end-of-year write-offs; this information will inform the policy about billing for treatment with no transport and untimely death calls. Chief Moore also reported positive results with the FirstNet trial and noted that the current pricing rate is locked in until 12/31/23. Mr. Levesque noted that ARPA money can be used to pay for emergency communications equipment and services. Complete FirstNet proposal will be presented next week. Chief reported that he was able to purchase an \$8,000 IV pump from the Diluzio Ambulance liquidation sale for \$1200 and that the pump was purchased with funds from the Ambulance Association donation fund. **Emergency Management** – Director Reynolds reported that he checked with the NH Department of Labor about the requirement to provide running water at the Transfer Station. The facilities provided by the portable restroom that is currently in place are considered the bare minimum. The team did secure warmer safety gear for the winter weather. In addition, Mr. Reynolds reported that the JLMC (Safety) Committee completed work on the safety policy and distributed it to department heads for review; once finalized it will be added to the Employee Manual and employee signoff will be obtained. Finally, Mr. Reynolds reported that work is ongoing to incorporate Alstead into the emergency alerting system that is being implemented to replace the Code Red system. The Director thanked PD Admin Penny Gendron for all of her assistance with JLMC Committee efforts this year.

BOARD REPORTS: Chart of Account inquiries – Mr. Kemp asked why Vilas Pool grant revenue is \$10,000 when it should be \$20,000, and why the dust control warrant article was handled as a regular budget line-item account instead of being handled like other warrant articles. The Admin was tasked with investigating the allocations. **Air Dryers** – Mr. Kemp asked whether the Fire Chief has looked into air dryers for the compressors; Chief Kercewich indicated that Deputy Chief Mike Kercewich is looking into that, no information is available yet. **Air pack inventory** – Mr. Kemp asked whether the Fire Department air pack inventory has been completed yet; Chief Kercewich indicated that he is trying to reach Ms. Curtis to arrange for her assistance with the spreadsheet. **Hoses** – Mr. Kemp asked about hose testing; Chief indicated that the quote is for \$2600 and it is being added to the department's 2024 budget request. **Town Policy updates** – Mr. Kemp submitted a Household Hazardous Waste policy that codifies existing practices for reimbursement to residents for hazardous waste disposed of at the Keene Transfer Station, and a policy for seeking input from Department Heads when making major policy decisions, for inclusion in the town policy manual. On a motion from Mr. Kemp that Mr. McCarty seconded, **the Board voted unanimously to adopt both policies and add them to the town policy manual.** **Library roof** – Mr. Saxton reported that Melanson Roofing will perform the semi-annual roof drain cleaning and gutter inspection of the library roof on Wednesday 11/29 at 11 AM. **Building permits slowdown** -- Mr. Saxton reported that there have been very few building permits since September. **Ballot Counting Device Demonstration** – Mr. McCarty reported that the state of New Hampshire has approved two vendors of Ballot Counting machines and that a demonstration would be conducted on Wednesday, 11/29 at 12 noon at the Walpole Town Hall. He noted that the Alstead Moderator cannot attend and would be interested in hearing from anyone who does. **Accept anonymous private donation for welfare use** – Mr. McCarty reported that the town has received an offer of a private donation of \$5000 designated for use by

the Welfare department and asked his fellows if the Board should accept it as unanticipated revenue less than \$10,000. There was no additional discussion. On a motion from Mr. Kemp that Mr. Saxton seconded, ***the Board voted unanimously to accept the private donation.***

NEW BUSINESS: Revenue Study – Mr. Elsesser reported that he and Mr. Kemp did a revenue study and determined reductions that could be made for optimal tax rate results. The Office Admins will investigate the appropriate time for getting that information to DRA. Mr. Elsesser will continue to monitor numbers as the year closes. In addition, Mr. Elsesser made wording recommendations for writing monetary warrant articles.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

INFORMATIONAL:

Next regular Select Board meeting:	Tuesday, December 5 th , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main St.
FM School Board meeting:	Monday, December 11 th , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, High School (2 nd Monday)
FM Budget Committee meeting:	Wednesday, December 20 th , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, High School (3 rd Wednesday)
Next 5-Town Select Board meeting:	TBD – Reschedule in progress

There being no further public business, Mr. McCarty recessed the meeting 7:25 to allow the room to clear for two non-public sessions pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(a) (personnel).

NON-PUBLIC SESSIONS: On a motion made by Mr. Kemp and seconded by Mr. Saxton, ***the Board voted by roll call (Mr. McCarty – y; Mr. Saxton – y; Mr. Kemp – y) to enter non-public session at 7:32 PM pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(a) (personnel).***

Before leaving the session, the Board reviewed and approved the session minutes.

On a motion made by Mr. Kemp and seconded by Mr. Saxton, ***the Board voted unanimously to leave non-public session and return to public session at 7:48 PM.***

On a motion made by Mr. Kemp and seconded by Mr. Saxton, ***the Board voted by roll call (Mr. McCarty – y; Mr. Saxton – y; Mr. Kemp – y) to enter non-public session at 7:50 PM pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(a) (personnel).***

Before leaving the session, the Board reviewed and approved the session minutes.

On a motion made by Mr. Kemp and seconded by Mr. Saxton, ***the Board voted unanimously to leave non-public session and return to public session at 8:22 PM.***

On a motion made by Mr. Kemp and seconded by Mr. Saxton, ***the Board chair adjourned the public meeting at 8:25 p.m.***

Respectfully submitted,



Mary Schoppmeyer, Office Administrator