

TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Approved Minutes for Regular Select Board Meeting October 3, 2023 at 6:00 PM
Town Hall, 9 Main Street, Alstead, NH 03602

SELECT BOARD PRESENT: **In person** – Joel McCarty, Chair; Gordon Kemp, member. **Absent:** Matthew Saxton, Vice Chair.

GUESTS: Budget presentation: Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Julie Bacon.

STAFF: **In Person** – Julie Bacon, Town Clerk/Tax Collector; Rich Beringer, Fire Department; Junie Esslinger, Transfer Station; Jesse Moore, Ambulance Chief; Steve Reynolds, Emergency Management Director; Mary Schoppmeyer, Office Administrator. **Google Meet** – Bobbie Wilson, Ambulance Lieutenant.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS: **In person** – Ken Bergeron, Rosemarie Dowling, Glenn Elsesser, Jim Gordon, Joe Levesque, Rich Nalevanko, Marge Noonan, Barbara Viegner, Judith Willis. **Google Meet:** None.

CALL TO ORDER: After the group recited the Pledge of Allegiance, Mr. McCarty called the Select Board meeting to order at 6:00 PM. He reminded the group that it is budget month and listed the budget presentations currently scheduled for October meetings. Then he welcomed Town Clerk and Tax Collector Julie Bacon with warm words of praise for her efforts to advocate for landowners to keep people housed and their taxes current.

PRESENTATION: Ms. Bacon presented her 2024 budget proposal. She noted that for the Town Clerk side, the wages, training, and dog license lines are increased slightly and the supplies, postage, and vital statistics lines are decreased. For the Tax Collector side, the wage, dues & subscriptions, and supplies lines are up and the registry of deeds and research lines are reduced. She noted that she and her deputy plan to take additional training courses next year. Mr. McCarty asked the public if they feel the Town Clerk's office is open enough; Ms. Bacon indicated that she plans to officially change Wednesday morning hours from one hour to four hours. When asked if anyone is investigating phone costs, for example copper landline from Consolidated versus voice-over-internet-protocol (VOIP) service from a digital provider, Ms. Bacon acknowledged that our phone system is rudimentary and the departments could benefit from a system that allowed transferring of calls and other more sophisticated functions than we currently enjoy. Chief Moore noted that Consolidated is obliged to keep the copper lines in service in an outage while digital providers are not. Mr. McCarty suggested that we get numbers and investigate further outside this discussion and asked about any anticipated office equipment changes. Ms. Bacon indicated that the Office Admin has requested a quote from All Service for a new-to-us copier for which the cost would be split across three departments, with the current copier moving to the conference room to replace the unrepairable unit in there. Chief Moore suggested a contact about phone systems; Mr. McCarty will follow up. There was a short discussion about how assessing records get changed when property features change; the answer is that building, demolition, and driveway permits signal the assessors about changes, and word-of-mouth plays a role also. Mr. Elsesser noted that budgets usually deal in whole numbers, and that Ms. Bacon could round up to the nearest dollar to simplify calculations. Asked why research and deed services are down, Ms. Bacon explained that because of her efforts to reduce liens this year, she expects to need fewer research and deed recording services this year. Ms. Bacon further reported that when the year started, there were liens for taxes owed since 2012. As of this meeting, there is one lien that goes back to 2021. The Board thanked Ms. Bacon for the kindness and charm with which she guides people through these upsetting situations and a round of appreciative applause was offered. Having completed her presentation, Ms. Bacon departed.

ACTION ITEMS: Sign the manifests for the 10/6/ payroll (\$27,891.27) and Tax liability (\$5,569.72). Sign the 10/4 Bills manifest (\$40,863.84). Sign one set of All Vets tax credit application and response forms (M67 L19).

MINUTES: Minutes of September 26, 2023 regular meeting. Minutes of September 29, 2023 special meeting. Minutes of two September 26, 2023 non-public sessions. Mr. Kemp requested two changes: 1 - on page 1 of the 9/26 minutes under the **FEMA meeting** report, the words "the state's share is 75%" be changed to "the federal reimbursement is 75%." 2 – On page 3 of the 9/26 minutes in the **Grading** topic under BOARD REPORTS, Mr. Kemp requested that the first instance of the word "requested" be changed to "reported." No further changes were requested. On a motion from Mr. Kemp that was seconded by Mr. McCarty, ***the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes as corrected.***

OLD BUSINESS: Washout glass deposits – Mr. Kemp reported that he has not yet contacted all complainants who have experienced washed-out glass deposits to arrange an on-site meeting. Ms. Schoppmeyer again reported on Mr. Saxton’s behalf that no quote has yet been received from the vacuum truck owner. Work in progress. **Beaver dams** – Mr. McCarty reported that Cobb Hill Road residents from both towns are open to a meeting to discuss their concerns. **Flood repair update** – Nothing new to report. **Broadband** – Nothing new to report. **Bridges** – Mr. McCarty again reminded those present about the meeting that is scheduled and posted for Tuesday, October 24th at 6 PM to hear the engineering firm present solution options for both the Comstock Road and Hill Road bridges. **Dams** – Mr. McCarty reported that the Dam Bureau favorably reviewed the proposal from Stephens Engineering to develop an RFP/Q for engineering work on the Warren and Vilas Dams to bring them into compliance, so the agreement was signed on September 27th as voted at the September 26th meeting. Mr. Kemp reported that the Vilas Dam gate was opened on Monday October 2nd, and will remain open until all debris can be cleared from in front of the gate, barring interference from an assortment of natural deterrents such as beavers and offended eagles. **Sale of Town Real Estate** – Mr. Kemp reported receiving a text from the owner of 11 Main Street indicating he would be open to a meeting on Thursday morning October 5th to continue negotiations. He requested that Ms. Schoppmeyer post a non-public session at 11 AM on that day. **Fire Department bylaws, policies & procedures** – Mr. Kemp reported that work continues. **Model T disposition** – Mr. McCarty referred Fire Department Association president Mike Kercewich to Haggerty’s Insurance. Mr. McCarty then touched base with Primex, who will insure it if the town owns it but they need a value. Mr. Elsesser asked if the conditions of insuring it would change if it is known that it is stored in a container, given that the policy is a fleet policy. Mr. McCarty recommends getting all the information necessary before deciding how to proceed. Mr. Beringer contributed that based on recent sales of the same vehicle model in the same or similar condition, the value is between nine and eighteen thousand dollars and that because it is not owned by an individual the association has been unable to insure the vehicle. He again noted that long term storage of the vehicle in a container is not going to be good for it. Mr. McCarty indicated that he requested from Mr. Kercewich an official written valuation from an appraiser rather than an anecdotal estimate. He suggested that the Fire Department Association send the information they have and the Fire Department should decide how they want to proceed and bring that to another meeting. **Village Station lighting** – Nothing new to report. **Sign trailer maintenance agreement** – Still tabled pending updated recommendations. Mr. Levesque asked if the new cruiser has a trailer hitch that can be used to tow the signs; no answer available. **Plastic recycling** – On a motion from Mr. Kemp that was seconded by Mr. McCarty after brief additional discussion, ***the Board voted with 2 in favor and one absent that the Transfer Station will continue accepting sorted plastics as before, but that the staff be instructed to deposit all plastics numbered three through seven in the compactor for landfilling.*** **Old cruiser** – Not evaluated yet, nothing new to report. **Disposition of 2012 Dodge Repurposing** – There was contentious discussion about towing the UTV brush truck with a privately-owned vehicle, which is not recommended by Primex because it passes liability on to the unaware vehicle owner, a situation that was addressed at the last meeting by a vote to disallow this practice. Mr. McCarty reiterated his belief that the research done by the Safety Committee has been sound and should be heeded, and that what is needed is a new number for the cost of refurbishing and a warrant article to put the issue in front of the voters. **East Station progress report** – Mr. Kemp observed that the report was received shortly before the meeting with little opportunity to review it but it seems light on detail and suggested that the discussion be tabled until all recipients have had a chance to review it completely.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS: Transfer Station – Mr. Elsesser reported that Shaena Hakey is signing the crew up for a Primex safety class. Mr. McCarty consulted with Mr. Kemp and the **Board members present agreed by consensus to insist that a Transfer Station crew member be selected to serve on the Joint Loss Management (“Safety”) committee.** Mr. Esslinger reported further that the metal dumpster is in disrepair and cannot be trucked; it must be replaced. Mr. McCarty requested quotes in writing and since it’s an emergency, provide the information to the Administrator as soon as possible for submission to the Board. **School Board** – Mr. Levesque reported that the School Board learned that the attorney’s advice was incorrect and they DO need to consult with the Budget Committee before deciding to allocate excess funds to a paving project. Therefore, no single-topic public meeting will be held and the funds will be returned to taxpayers. Mr. McCarty noted that the new superintendent was in Alstead for a meet and greet this past week, and there is a fair bit of leadership disruption at the school district office due to attrition. **Ambulance** – Chief Moore reported that Alstead Ambulance expects to have a memo of understanding with Dartmouth Hitchcock Keene to provide paramedic service to northern Cheshire County at the first meeting of November. Cheshire County EMS will be providing service to southern Cheshire County. All of the medic services expect to cooperatively charge the same rate. The squad has responded to 6 calls so far this week. The squad

attended the swift water rescue training two weeks ago and asked Rescue Inc. to come and do a 2-hour non-water class for all town staff. New ambulance is fully in service; it will be a couple of weeks before the old ambulance can go into the shop for repairs. Mr. McCarty noted that the squad is waiting to be certified by Medicaid and Medicare for advanced billing, which will take 35 to 90 days. There were two simultaneous calls in the middle of the night with a ten-person response. Mr. Kemp asked whether the squad charges paramedic rates to private insurance and Chief reminded the group that the Board recently passed Medicare and Medicaid rate increases. Mr. McCarty reminded the group about the intent to submit a warrant article to set up an ambulance revolving fund to make ambulance revenue immediately available to the squad and alleviate cash flow issues. Mr. Elsesser asked whether the ambulance revenue will be adjusted down in the MS-434 and whether that reduction would cause a tax increase. The answer was that expenses would go down correspondingly and the goal has always been for the service to pay for itself. Finally, Chief Moore reported that he provided a reimbursement check from the ambulance fund for supplies purchased for the new ambulance as promised at a previous meeting. **Emergency Management** – Mr. Reynolds reported that he learned from FEMA today that work with Prescott on the administrative costs of the July (2023) flooding is in progress. The newest cruiser is at Kmiec's with an electrical problem. The furnace servicing is scheduled; servicing of the waste oil furnaces at the Highway Department and Transfer Station was completed by Arrow on Tuesday October 3rd. The remaining furnaces are scheduled to be serviced on November 29th and November 30th, three each on both days. Mr. Reynolds asked whether the chimney at East Station can be serviced by the furnace servicing company because it needs emergency work, and the Office Administrator was tasked with following up on that. Mr. Reynolds showed photos of coiled hose on the floor at East Station that violate safety regulations about egress to the engines and wondered why there are no hose storage racks. There was contentious discussion and Mr. McCarty observed that it is likely all could agree that the East Station progress is not happening as quickly as desired. Mr. Reynolds then assured the Board that he would follow up with the Safety Committee on the status report received from the Fire Department just before the meeting. Finally, he reported that Mutual Aid costs are projected to increase about five percent for 2024 and more will be known in November. In addition, Mr. Reynolds requested an agenda item for the next meeting to address the request for a quote for the cost of disposing of the chemical barrel at East Station, which was supposed to be provided this week. **Capital Improvement** – Mr. Elsesser has nothing to report but reiterated his advice that because of inflation, it is more advisable to purchase big-ticket capital equipment outright rather than putting savings aside in the short- to mid-term. Mr. Nalevanko concurred with that recommendation. **Hiring** – Mr. McCarty asked Mr. Nalevanko to review agreement information provided by an employment agency the Board was considering using to find candidates for the open Office Administrator position. Mr. Nalevanko is unhappy with the cost and limitations of the agreement and does not recommend entering into that agreement. Ms. Schoppmeyer reported that she has not yet investigated the Indeed hiring platform but plans to do that.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Mr. Nalevanko asked what happened with the cell tower negotiations; Mr. Kemp replied that the scope is widened and they are still seeking prices for the options, and it is still a work in progress. Mrs. Dowling asked whether the letter to the Spauldings pertaining to the tree work needed near Warren Dam has been sent. Ms. Schoppmeyer reported on Mr. Saxton's behalf that he is working on the letter and has a bit more work to do on it. Mrs. Dowling asked if funding for paving must be put on a warrant article and voted on or if it can be funded with grants. Mr. Levesque indicates that there are few grants for paving; those that are available pertain to hazard mitigation, which requires proving that there is some danger, and we have a grant in progress for that and are awaiting approval for it, and we can have only one per year. Mrs. Dowling asked if more flashing speed signs can be placed on Pine Cliff Road. Mr. McCarty replied that there are only two flashing signs and they will be used as the Road Agent instructs; however, he is sure that any existing signage we already own could be considered there.

There being no further public business, on a motion from Mr. McCarty that was seconded by Mr. Kemp, **Mr. McCarty recessed the public meeting at 7:25 PM to allow the room to clear for one non-public sessions.**

On a motion from Mr. McCarty that Mr. Kemp seconded, the Board voted by roll call (McCarty – Y, Kemp – Y) to enter non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A: II (a) at 7:34 PM. The Board reviewed and approved the minutes from the session before returning to public session.

On a motion from Mr. McCarty that Mr. Kemp seconded, the Board voted to return to public session at 7:53 PM.

BOARD REPORTS: Simmeck Administrative Order from DES -- Mr. McCarty reported that he continues to follow up on this order, issued by the DES in 2006 and raised by Tim Roettiger at a recent meeting. **FD air compressor** – Mr.

Kemp reported that Chief Moore received a call from Laura LaMears, who cleans the town spaces, that water was leaking from the air compressor unit in the Village Station. Mr. Kemp investigated and found an unusually high amount of water in the compressor tank. **General postings** – Ms. Schoppmeyer was tasked with scheduling interviews with the two current candidates and posting non-public meetings for them; with posting the holiday closure of the Town Offices on Monday October 9th and the subsequent moving of the Select Board meeting that week from Tuesday to Wednesday.

There being no further business, on a motion from Mr. Kemp, Mr. McCarty adjourned the public meeting at 8:09 PM.

INFORMATIONAL:

Next regular Select Board meeting:	Tuesday, October 3 rd , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main St.
FM School Board meeting:	Monday, October 9 th , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, High School.
FM Budget Committee meeting:	Wednesday, October 18 th , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, High School.
MOBIL Bridge solutions meeting	Tuesday, October 24 th , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main St.
Next 5-Town Select Board meeting:	Wednesday, October 25 th , 2023 @ 4 PM, Acworth.

Respectfully submitted,



Mary Schoppmeyer, Office Administrator