

TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE
2023 Budget Hearing
Approved Minutes of January 18, 2023 at 5:05 p.m.
Town Offices, 9 Main Street, Alstead, NH 03602

SELECT BOARD PRESENT: Joseph Levesque; Joel McCarty; Matthew Saxton.

STAFF PRESENT: In person: Julie Bacon, Town Clerk/Tax Collector; Ben Hoy, Kim Kercewich, Fire Chief; Transfer Station Supervisor; Susan Norlander, Moderator; Jesse Moore, Ambulance Lieutenant; Steve Murrell, Police Chief; Darren Perlongo, Ambulance; Steve Reynolds, Emergency Management director; Mary Schoppmeyer, Office Admin; Prescott Trafton, Road Agent; Bobbie Wilson, Ambulance Lieutenant. **Google Meet:** none.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS: In person: Glenn Elsesser, Gordon Kemp, Marge Noonan, Barb Viegner, Judith Willis. **Google Meet:** None.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER: The Board Chair called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

ACTION ITEMS: Review the proposed 2023 budget and warrant articles with the public in attendance.

PROPOSED 2023 BUDGET: Mr. Saxton noted some of the challenges that the current economic climate has presented on the path to this budget. Mr. Levesque reported that the proposed 2023 budget is \$1,692,583.66, and that the proposed budget is slightly lower than the default budget of \$1,700,334.91.

OPEN FORUM: Mr. Levesque read the budget totals and allowed for discussion after each one. He noted that departments with full time workers saw an increase in wages due to a policy obligation that provides for a paid-time-off (PTO) cash-out at year's end beginning in 2023.

Executive: \$86,976, decrease of \$837.64. Mr. Levesque noted that the decrease is the result of one fewer full-time employee and a reduction of the Board stipends to \$1. Increases due to PTO cash-out and payroll service. No discussion.
Town Clerk: \$39579.36, increase of \$1528.36 due to PTO cash-out. No discussion.

Elections: \$12,227.00, decrease of \$8479 due to fewer elections scheduled in 2023. No discussion.

Tax Collector: \$39,669.36, increase of \$279.36, due mostly to PTO cash-out. No discussion.

Treasurer: No change.

Auditors and Assessors: \$31,500, increase of \$1000 due to contractual rate increase. No discussion.

Legal Fees: \$10,000, increase of \$2500. No discussion.

Personnel Administration: \$207,155, increase of \$35990.77 due to increased health insurance premiums, increased police retirement costs, increased unemployment and workers comp. Some discussion about the unemployment increase.

Planning/Zoning: \$10,828, increase of \$1698 due to the need for a town laptop to use instead of employee's personal device.

General Government: \$151,038, decrease of \$13,478 due to cuts mostly in Maintenance & Repairs. No discussion.

Cemeteries: \$28,223, decrease of \$999 due to deferring headstone maintenance. No discussion.

Insurance: \$25,110, increase of \$6975 due to premium increases. No discussion.

Regional Associations: \$3,679, increase of \$12 in fees. No discussion.

Police Department: \$196,619.58, increase of \$5270.58 due mostly to PTO cash-out. Noted that increased overtime budgeted will be paid by a reimbursement grant. No discussion.

Ambulance: \$55,303, increase of \$11,511 due to anticipated paramedic certification and resulting personnel increase, which will also result in increased revenue. Discussion: Noted 18.9% increase in call volume in 2022 expected to continue in 2023. Expecting higher repair costs due to aging equipment.

Fire Department: \$50,660, decrease of \$12,332 due to cuts in supplies, training, maintenance and repair, and new equipment. No discussion.

Forest Fire: \$5326, decrease of \$875 due to cuts in wages, training, and maintenance & repairs. No discussion.

Emergency Management: \$29,639, increase of \$500 due to increased supply costs and dispatch fee increases.

Communications: \$1, no changes, no discussion.

DPW Administration: \$79,212.61, increase of \$2206.61 due to PTO cash-out obligation. No discussion.
DPW Highway & Streets: \$358,014.75, decrease of \$4757.25. Full time wages up due to PTO cash-out obligation; decreases due to cuts in overtime, dead tree work, contract equip/labor, mowing, & equipment rental.
Street lighting: \$6500, increase of \$500 due to increased electric rates.
Sanitation Administration: \$76,146, decrease of \$2366 due to cuts in advertising, equipment rental, dues & subscriptions, vehicle repairs, and new equipment.
Solid Waste/Recycling Disposal: \$102,092, increase of \$16,808 due to trucking costs and disposal contracts. It was noted that this is also a revenue-generating department.
Health Agencies: \$18,257, increase of \$857 due to increased 2023 asks. Same 5 agencies as last year.
Welfare: \$10,330, unchanged from last year. No discussion.
DPW Parks & Recreation: \$7845, decrease of \$699 due to cuts in wages, supplies, and new equipment. No discussion.
Library: \$45,000, decrease of \$2488, no discussion.
Vilas Pool Park: \$1, unchanged from last year, no discussion.
Patriotic Purposes: \$376, decrease of \$125, no discussion.
Conservation Commission: \$1076, increase of \$50. Question from the floor was what does NRI stand for. Possibly Natural Resource Inventory, a task that town Conservation Commissions commonly perform. Admin will check with ACC to confirm.
Debt Interest (T.A.N.): \$500, no change from last year, no discussion.

Total proposed 2023 budget is \$1,692,583.66, an increase of \$22,542.43 over last year's budget.

Budget adjustments requested:

- Remove the \$1 line for dust control because there is a dust control warrant article.
- Change the Sand number in the default budget to \$35,000 from \$3500 (typo).
- Change the New Equipment number for Parks & Rec in the Default Budget to \$500.
- Change the Sanitation Advertising number in the default budget to \$50 from \$150 (typo).
- Projected revenues for 2023 are needed.

Mr. McCarty noted that in order to carry the warrant articles forward to the Ballot, they must be on record at this public hearing. He then read the warrant articles and allowed for discussion after each one:

Article 01 - Election of Officers: To choose all necessary officers for the ensuing year.

Article 02 - Operating Budget: \$1,692,583.66, with a default budget of \$1,732,234.91.

Article 03 - Cost-of-Living Adjustment: Totaling \$23321.68 from taxation, for the purpose of providing a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for employees. Extended discussion of what percentage and of COLA vs merit raises.

It was suggested that department heads send merit increase information to Mr. Elsesser, and that the resulting COLA and merit increase amounts be calculated and added to the proposed budget number in article 2 at deliberative session.

Article 04 - Paving: Totaling up to \$500,000 for the purpose of reclaiming and paving Gilsum Mine Road, with up to \$403757.13 coming from unassigned fund balance; \$81,424.87 coming from the Alstead Special One-time Highway Payment; and up to \$15,000 raised by taxation.

Article 05 - 10-Wheel Dump Truck: Totaling up to \$250,000 for the purpose of purchasing a 10-wheel dump truck, with up to \$180,000 from Highway Capital Reserve and up to \$75,000 from taxation. Non-lapsing per RSA 32:7, VI until purchased or until December 31, 2024, whichever is sooner.

Article 06 - Road Striping: Totaling up to \$11,000 for the purpose of striping roads, from taxation.

Article 07 - Dust Control: Totaling up to \$15,000 for the purpose of dust control, from taxation.

Article 08 - Add to Bridge Capital Reserve Fund: Totaling \$45,033.22, from the Alstead Special One-Time Bridge Payment.

Article 09 - Add to Transfer Station Capital Reserve Fund: Totaling \$8,000 from taxation.

Article 10 - Add to Shedd-Porter Memorial Library Capital Reserve Fund: Totaling \$25,000 from taxation.

Article 11 - Add to Ambulance Capital Reserve Fund: Totaling \$25,000 from taxation.

Article 12 - Used Ambulance Vehicle: Totaling up to \$180,000 from Ambulance Capital Reserve for the purpose of purchasing and equipping a used ambulance vehicle. ***It was suggested that this article be moved out of the capital reserve articles and placed with the equipment articles, with subsequent renumbering. The Board agreed.***

Article 13 - Add to Police Capital Reserve Fund: Totaling \$15,000 from taxation.

Article 14 - Add to Vilas Pool Capital Reserve Fund: Totaling \$5000 from taxation.

Article 15 - Paint Historical Society Steeple: Totaling \$40,000 from taxation, for the purpose of painting the Historical Society Steeple. Non-lapsing per RSA 32:7, VI and will not lapse until the contractor completes the work in 2024. ***It was***

suggested to replace the word “Paint” with the words “Repair and Preserve” to allow additional options other than painting. The Board agreed.

It was noted that Highway (\$75,000) and Fire Department (\$65,000) capital reserve articles were inadvertently omitted, and should be added before Article 15, with subsequent renumbering.

Article 16 - Purchase Main Street Property (M11 L2): Totaling up to \$35,000 from taxation, in order to purchase the Main Street property adjacent to the Town Hall/Fire Station.

Article 17 - Repair Fire Engine 3: Totaling up to \$25,000 from taxation, for the purpose of repairing Engine 3. ***It was suggested to increase the amount to \$30,000. The Board agreed.***

Article 18 - Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus Equipment (SCBA): Totaling up to \$20,000 from taxation, for the purpose of replacing two SCBA units for the Fire Department.

It was noted that the library warrant article was omitted from the list of articles presented and needs to be inserted at this point with subsequent renumbering. The Board agreed.

Article 19 - Adopt a 5% Tax Cap per RSA 32:5-b: To see if the town will vote to replace the existing 3% tax cap that was passed with modifications in 2014, with a 5% tax cap that has no modifications. ***It was pointed out that the original text of this article needs to be replaced with the text that is explicitly prescribed by the RSA. The Board agreed.***

Article 20 - Rescind the existing 3% Tax Cap: To see if the town will vote to rescind the 3% tax cap that was passed per RSA 32:5-b but with modifications in 2014, in order to make way for passing a 5% tax cap without modifications. ***It was pointed out that the text of this article is explicitly prescribed by the RSA and needs to be replaced with that text. The Board agreed.***

Article 21 - Large-Scale Municipal Solar Generation and Electric Vehicle Charging: Should the Board explore the economic, environmental, and land-use consequences of large-scale municipal solar generation and electric vehicle charging and report back to the Town no later than February 1, 2024. ***It was suggested that this item need not be a warrant article and that it be stricken. The Board agreed.***

INFORMATIONAL: The next regular meeting of the Select Board is scheduled for Tuesday, January 24th, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. in the Town Hall, 9 Main Street. The Alstead Deliberative Session will be held Saturday 2/4 at 10 AM in the Town Hall, 9 Main Street. The School Board Deliberative Session will be held Thursday 2/9 at 5:30 or 6:00 p.m. in the Fall Mountain auditorium. The next 5-town Select Board hearing is Friday, January 27th at 4:30 PM in Langdon. Town Meeting Voting Day is Saturday 3/14 from 8 AM to 7 PM at the Town Hall, 9 Main Street.

On a motion made by Mr. Saxton and seconded by Mr. McCarty, ***the Board Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:29 p.m.***

Respectfully submitted,



Mary Schoppmeyer, Office Administrator