

TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE
Select Board
Unapproved Minutes for Meeting of December 19, 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 –Misty Gratacos, Office Admin (incoming); Kim Kercewich, Fire Chief; Jesse Moore, Ambulance Chief; Steve Reynolds, Emergency Management Director; Mary Schoppmeyer, Office Administrator (outgoing); Ben Kercewich, Fire Dept. **Google Meet** – Bindy Curtis, Transfer Station; Bobbie Wilson, Ambulance Lieutenant, Supervisor of the Checklist, Vilas Pool Committee.

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

GUESTS:

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

ACTION ITEMS: Signed one Vilas Pool expense \$19,393.75 (2023 wages reimbursement); reviewed and signed Alstead Ambulance Dept. billing and invoicing guidelines, reviewed and signed letters to residents Haines (Acworth) & Landry (Alstead) regarding washout-deposited glass, reviewed and signed letter to Alstead department heads. Re-reviewed two quotes for outlet installation in Town Hall, decided to get new quotes for project with larger scope; reviewed and signed 2023 Trial Ratio Study report for assessing firm. Mail folder: Reviewed communication regarding boundary dispute.

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS: Minutes of December 12, 2023; Non-Public Session minutes of December 12, 2023. No changes were requested. On a motion from Mr. Kemp that Mr. McCarty seconded, ***the Board voted unanimously to accept regular meeting minutes as submitted.*** On a motion from Mr. McCarty that Mr. Kemp seconded, ***the Board voted unanimously to accept the non-public minutes as submitted, unsealed.***

OLD BUSINESS: Washed-out glass – Mr. McCarty reported that he had a meeting with Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) on Friday, 12/15 to discuss options for mitigating washed out glass. Conclusions from the discussion are that the affected area must be mapped and other affected residents must be identified. Mr. McCarty has composed a letter to the landowners on record to enlist their aid with the latter task. There are indications that SWRPC might pay for the mapping. Another meeting is planned for next week. **Thayer Brook bypass** – The needed letter from the property owner in the location of the bypass was received 12/12 and forwarded to the Road Agent for FEMA documentation. **Broadband** – Mr. Kemp reported that the community question and answer meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 30th, 2024. **Bridges** – Mr. McCarty reported that a meeting with himself, NH DOT and Hoyle Tanner is planned for 12/29 to discuss options for the dual bridge project now that one of the bridges has been closed. Mr. McCarty reminded himself and the rest of the board that the 2022 one-time bridge payment money was placed in the bridge capital reserve fund misguidedly, and it needs to be withdrawn and returned to the general fund. The Admin’s office was tasked with contacting Chief Murrell about placing speed limit signs along the route of the detour for the closed Hill Road bridge. **Dams** – The Admin’s office has contacted the two firms who submitted RFQ responses for Dam engineering to set up presentation times at an upcoming board meeting in order to start the qualifications-based selection process. **Town Real Estate** – Mr. Saxton will contact the realtor to inquire if the properties were listed on the MLS yet. **M11 L2 adjacent to Town Hall** – Upon consulting with SWRPC, Mr. McCarty learned that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has applicable funding for soil and water testing. SWRPC can apply for the necessary funding on the town’s behalf and engage a contractor. First step is to determine whether the property owner is still interested, and then to draft a purchase and sales agreement for \$1 contingent on the results of the testing. The planning commission will review the agreement language. Mr. Kemp will follow up with the landowner. **Fire Dept Bylaws, policies, & procedures** – Mr. Kemp presented the first policy document resulting from his work with the Fire Department, a policy describing how department procedures must be formatted. On a motion from Mr. McCarty that Mr. Kemp seconded, ***the Board voted unanimously to approve the format and guidelines for updating Fire Department procedure and policy documents.*** **Community Power** – Mr. McCarty reiterated that a Cheshire County Commissioner wants to present a case for Alstead to join Cheshire County Community Power and that the conversation is deferred until after the first of the year. **Village Station Lighting & overhead door update** – Next lighting update will be in January. Chief Kercewich reported that not all parts needed for the overhead door repair were available; for budget reasons, the repair will be scheduled for after the first of the year. **Sign trailer agreement** – Deferred to 2024. **Model T insurance status** – Mr. McCarty reported that the Fire Department association has secured insurance for the Model T beginning in November

2023; the next step is for a Memo of Understanding between the association and the Town with regard to the disposition of the antique vehicle. Emergency Management Director Reynolds will provide salient points for that memo. **Repurpose Highway 2012 Dodge** – This idea will be presented as a 2024 warrant article, work in progress. **East Station progress report** – Chief Kercewich reported that the chemical disposal vendor will not secure a removal date until after the first of the year. **Langdon Transfer Station fee** – Mr. McCarty is meeting with the Langdon Select Board to describe how the Alstead Select Board plans to calculate the fee for Langdon's use of the Alstead Transfer Station. (The Board will base the calculation on the previous year's numbers.) **Beaver Dam mitigation** – Mr. Kemp met with Mr. Hancock again to let him know that efforts to obtain quotes continue.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS: Ambulance department – Chief Moore reported 173 calls year to date. **Emergency Management** – Director Reynolds reported that after receiving additional policy samples from Primex and the NH Department of Labor, they have decided to revise their policies more extensively. Another review and recommendation is forthcoming. He has recommended some Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) training resources to the Transfer Station. After the first of the year the Director plans to follow up on the status of existing audits and to conduct inspections of the Historical Society and Vilas Pool. **Fire Department** – Chief Kercewich reported that work on the East Station punch list continues. The chimney was inspected by Westover Chimney and a new cap was ordered for installation later. Water separators were installed on both air compressors. The Fire Department performed a carbon monoxide test at Bragg Lane with the result of 2ppm, well within the normal range. **Police Department** – Chief Murrell reported a successful Tree Lighting festival. The department ran out of donated cookies, consumed 5.5 urns of hot chocolate, and almost all the chili, corn chowder and mac and cheese. The Chief expressed his thanks to all that donated, contributed, and assisted – particularly Corporal Underwood & Penny Gendron, who organized the event from start to finish. Thank you to Mr. Kemp and the Highway crew, who kept the burn pits blazing throughout the event. Thank you to the Fire Department for transporting Santa to the event from the North Pole. Chief Murrell met with the technician from Powers Generator service to look at the communications tower generator and determined that the control panel was melting because the exhaust heat shield had never been installed at the factory. A warranty claim has been filed for that unit. The tech also examined the Town Office generator and could not get it to start. Parts are needed and the Highway Department is ordering them. The Chief reported 932 calls to date and noted that the rate of calls has slowed a bit. A discussion followed about how often Narcan is used; Ambulance Chief Moore replied that the ambulance crew uses it about once a month, but this information must be interpreted with caution because medication mishaps are not uncommon.

BOARD REPORTS: Vilas Pool – Mr. Kemp reported that the Bell Tower at the park has been closed for the season, and a safety harness anchor has been installed to improve the safety of the task of opening, closing and maintaining the Bell Tower. **Promotion** – Mr. Kemp announced the promotion of Jesse Moore to Director of EMS, Sanitation and Grounds. The job description was presented for review and comments. The position combines duties from three different departments and begins January 1, 2024. The salary offered will come from the existing budgets of the departments whose duties were combined. Mr. Reynolds and Mr. Nalevanko commended the Board for a forward-thinking approach; Mr. McCarty likes the idea of a full-time EMS person on staff to improve response time. **Changes to Select Board meetings** – Mr. McCarty reported that at the 12/6 meeting the Board decided that Select Board meetings will begin at 5pm beginning with the 1/3/24 meeting, and that department heads need not report each week and can send written reports for the packet. To reiterate the motion that already passed, on a motion from Mr. McCarty that Mr. Kemp seconded, ***the Board voted unanimously to return to the 5pm meeting time and to accept department reports once a month.***

NEW BUSINESS: First Net– Mr. Kemp submitted a comparison analysis with his suggestions for cellular devices to transition to First Net from our existing provider. Service costs per month of our current cellular plan is about \$300 per month; the First Net cost would be approximately \$425 per month; the new equipment cost would be reduced by half (\$4200 instead of \$8400). Mr. McCarty wanted reassurance that all affected departments were on board with the proposal. It was noted that addition equipment could be purchased at opportune sales moments. On a motion from Mr. McCarty that Mr. Kemp seconded, ***the Board voted unanimously to budget for First Net cellular service beginning in 2024 according to Mr. Kemp's proposal.***

GRANTS: Mr. Levesque reported that he has submitted the grant for the new dumpster that was purchased and that he is moving forward with the MagnaGrip grant for the exhaust scrubbers for both fire stations. There was an additional discussion about assuring that there are no hidden additional costs in the form of maintenance and support as we experienced with the sign trailers.

SCHOOL BOARD: Mr. Levesque reports that the Administration's proposed 2024 budget is 9% over last year. The Budget Committee and School Board disliked the 9% increase and proposed a budget that is 3.5% over last year. He noted that the State revised the Adequacy Aid distribution, increasing Alstead's school tax rate by \$7 per thousand. (By comparison, Langdon's school tax rate increased by \$27 per thousand given their Adequacy Aid portion.) There is a warrant article proposing the closure of the Sarah Porter School in Langdon due to declining enrollment; solutions are being discussed.

PLANNING COMMISSION: Mr. Levesque reported that he is joining the commission's brownfield committee, and that Executive Director Tim Murphy plans to retire soon.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Mr. Elsesser wondered if the 2 shipments of salt had been allocated to the one-time Highway Block Grant. The Admin will follow up. There was a short discussion about the new tax rate (\$25.43) and how the increase is partially the result of not accurately estimating changes in tax penalty and fee revenues. Ms. Wilson asked for the tax rates for the other government entities (State & local education, county); the Admin noted that those values are available in the office and on the web. Mr. Nalevanko wondered why the road was closed in Langdon (pole down). Mr. Reynolds asked the Admin whether Mutual Aid number were available yet (none known).

INFORMATIONAL:

Next regular Select Board meeting:	Tuesday, December 19 th , 2023 @ 6:00 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main St.
2024 Budget Hearing:	January 16 th , 2024 @ 5 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main Street
2024 Town Meeting Deliberative Session:	February 3 rd , 2024 @ 10 AM, Town Hall, 9 Main Street
2024 Town Meeting Voting Day:	Tuesday, March 12 th , 2024, 8 AM to 7 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main Street
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
FM Budget Hearing:	TBD – will report next week.
FM Deliberative Session:	Wednesday February 7 th , 2024, time TBD.

There being no further public business, the Board Chair recessed the meeting to allow the public to depart in preparation for a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(a).

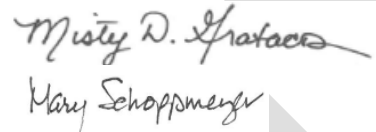
NON-PUBLIC SESSIONS: On a motion made by Mr. McCarty and seconded by Mr. Kemp, ***the Board voted by roll call (Mr. McCarty – y; Mr. Saxton – y; Mr. Kemp – y) to enter non-public session at 7:55 PM pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(a) (personnel).***

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 8:14 PM.***

On a motion made by Mr. Saxton and seconded by Mr. Kemp, ***the Board chair adjourned the public meeting at 8:15 p.m.***

Respectfully submitted,



Misty Gratacos & Mary Schoppmeyer
Office Administrators