

**TOWN OF ALTON  
ALTON BUDGET COMMITTEE**

**APPROVED 11/13/08  
MEETING MINUTES  
November 6, 2008**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Miller, Chair  
Karen Painter, Vice Chair  
Richard MacDonald  
Greg Fuller  
Elizabeth Dominick  
Maureen Smith, School Board Representative  
Steve McMahon, Selectmen's Representative

OTHERS PRESENT: Russ Bailey, Town Administrator  
Members of the Public

I. CALL TO ORDER

S. Miller called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

S. McMahon was absent at the time of roll call but arrive at approximately 6:50 PM.

III. REPORT BY TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

R. Bailey announced that the school wants to keep the original meeting schedule and he has confirmed with CIP that the meeting dates will stay the same. He stated the Town Clerk and Conservation Department would meet with the Budget Committee on November 13, 2008.

IV. AGENDA

It was noted that the Conservation Department would not be presenting their budget this evening, as scheduled, but would be presenting it at the November 13, 2008 meeting. G. Fuller motioned to approve the agenda, as amended, and K. Painter seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, KP, GF, RM, ED, MS / absent – SMc)

V. OLD BUSINESS

S. Miller presented the Activity Log for the Animal Control Officer, from the Alton Police Department. The document was submitted as a follow-up item to questions that the Committee had about the calls/duties of the Animal Control Officer. S. Miller asked if there was an ACO for the first six months of 2007 and R. Bailey stated it could be that he thought that there was a

different tracking mechanism for the ACO activity during that time and it was something he could check into. There was review and discussion of the various warnings and citations. S. Miller asked for statistics on how many trips there was to the animal shelter and for the disposal of animals. R. Bailey stated he could find out and get back to the Committee with the answer.

S. Miller motioned to table the decision on the Animal Control budget for 2009 and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of six with one abstaining. (SM, KP, GF, RM, ED, MS / abstain – SMc)

## VI. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

## VII. LIBRARY – 4550

Holly Brown, Librarian, presented the proposed 2009 budget for the Gilman Library. Linda Hess and Shirley Copland, Gilman Library Trustees, were present to help with the presentation of the budget. The Selectmen's recommended budget for 2009 is \$85,909.00. The budget for 2008 was \$75,972.00.

H. Brown reported that there is a 3% COLA added to the budget and that there is a part-time library aides added to the budget, along with the justification for the position. H. Brown reported that she is the only member of the staff who is full-time. There are two part-time employees. She spoke about the coverage of the part-time employees and stated there is just one library aide left now. She reported that the aide left because there were not enough hours and the pay did not match what another library could offer. She stated that the other person working in the library has been there for two years now and that she will be leaving in March 2009 because she is part of the Community Action Program unless H. Brown can bring her on-board as an employee of the Gilman Library. There was discussion about daily/hourly staff coverage for the library. H. Brown listed some of the duties that the part-time aide has and felt that they were fortunate to have her for the library.

H. Brown reviewed some of the statistics of circulation; 228 new library cards from January to October, 2008. There was an increase in the usage of materials in July 2008 by 38% from the previous year. In January through August in 2008, there has been a 28% increase in internet usage. There are four computers for public internet access and all are connected to the network. There are a total of ten computers in the library.

S. Miller asked where FICA and benefits are in the budget and R. Bailey noted that they are built into the Town's budget, which has not been covered yet. H. Brown noted that the library is not part of the step process for the town and what they are asking for is not a step but a COLA. The library is open for 36 hours a week. There are approximately ninety man-hours to cover the library.

S. Miller asked what the coverage was like with 2.5 employees during the day. H. Brown spoke about the coverage for a typical workweek. She stated that if someone is ill then they are "sunk" and spoke about some of the services the volunteers help with but noted that they are not trained or comfortable with some duties, such as checking out books, answering questions from the public or answering phones because they are volunteers. She stated that her concern this summer

was being down a person was a tremendous strain on her staff. She stated that many of her staff have health concerns or health issues and it was apparent that they were very short handed. She stated she did not ask to bring someone on part-time that she would lose them and she didn't want to ask last year because she doesn't want to tax the budget last year. She noted that she had about 55 hours of vacation time and five holidays accrued that if she did not take those days she would lose them.

S. Miller spoke about options for changing the work hours that people could be available for coverage. H. Brown listed the days and hours that staff are available for coverage. She stated she felt it compromised security to say that she was the only person on staff on a Saturday. S. McMahon stated that the library could not be run by one person and spoke about the need for additional coverage. R. Bailey stated that you also had to account for vacation, down time, sickness, holiday time, etc. and stated that a good manager factored that in a budget. S. Miller stated he was not trying to say that H. Brown was not a good manager. There was discussion about the library's services to the town.

H. Brown spoke about the kickoff program for the summer and noted there were about 300 people present when the kickoff program was held that day. She stated the staff was elated about the event but that if she kept overtaxing her staff that they would be burned out.

K. Painter clarified that the position that was in the budget wasn't a new position but one that was funded through Community Action Program (CAP). H. Brown confirmed that K. Painter was correct with her comment. E. Dominick noted that the new position would be for an employee that was already trained so there would be no cost to the town for the training of the employee.

G. Fuller asked about the benefit buy-out line and it was noted that the Trustees dictate the Librarian's benefits. G. Fuller asked about the expense of the person who was out sick and noted the October 2008 expense report. H. Brown noted that the person had some sick leave time and had worker's comp.

G. Fuller asked how much has been taken in from book sales, etc., and H. Brown reported that \$2,395.00 has been taken in and about \$40.00 of that has been spent so far. She reported that there is \$38.00 remaining in the budget line item for 2008 for 4550-135 Books/AV Materials. There was an open discussion about the bill pay cycle of the town's finance department.

G. Fuller asked if the person who would be hired had to come in at \$10.56 now (2009). H. Brown spoke about the pay that other aides are receiving and the scope of services and training that the aides have received. She felt that the requested pay was justified.

S. Miller asked about budget line 4550-135, Books, and asked if the town paid retail price for books and materials that were purchased. H. Brown stated that they got books at about 40% off, but it varied by book. The prices are set by the publisher and sometimes there is no discount available. She explained some the variables that can cause changes in the price of books. S. Miller asked how many books were ordered each month. H. Brown stated she does not order a quota of books or materials on a month-by-month basis but they might get twenty new books in a month, and spoke about trends in popular books that people were looking for. The average book cost is about \$25.00, which costs about \$15.00 with discounts, if available. H. Brown spoke about books on tape, books on CD, DVDs, and periodicals that might be ordered in a month. She spoke about the "new arrival" shelf and noted that it's hard to keep it stocked at times. She stated that if she brings in twenty best sellers in a month that you wouldn't see them on the shelf because they

will be on a waiting list. She stated they have a waiting list ten people long for one certain book at the time.

S. Miller asked if there was a fee for interlibrary loans. H. Brown explained the interlibrary loan system and stated that if they can send it, they send it via the van two days a week and the loaning library makes all the rules for the library. She stated that an item has to be six months old before it can be part of the inter-library loan program. She stated that an item going out of the library on the inter-library loan program goes out for one month, and that includes travel time. There is no fee for the program but there are standards that are set by the state. She noted some of the criteria that must be met by the library to be a part of the program.

G. Fuller asked about the budget line item for Electricity and noted that they were at 46-kilowatt hours and stated it was a 40% increase. He asked if there was some way the lights could be placed on a timer to go off earlier. H. Brown stated that the lights are on a timer to come on at 5:30 PM and to go off before 10:00 PM. She noted they were on that late because of the book drop and felt it should be well lit for safety issues. There are timers on the lights. G. Fuller asked how many lights were outside. H. Brown stated she did not know how many lights were outside and spoke about the florescent lighting.

H. Brown stated she would be happy to review each budget line item, if needed, to explain the requested budget. S. Miller stated he felt it was not necessary at this time.

There was a five-minute break.

#### COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

R. MacDonald motioned to accept the Selectmen's recommendations for the proposed budget 2009 for Library (4550) at \$124181 and E. Dominick seconded the motion. There was discussion about the services the library offered to the town. The motion passed by a vote of five with two "no" votes. (SMc, KP, RM, ED, MS / No – GF, SM)

### VIII. HIGHWAY

S. Miller stated he would like to review the Highway budget on a line-by-line basis and felt that it would result in a more thorough review of the budget. He spoke about the benefits of reviewing the budget this way. R. Bailey stated that there had already been motions and failed votes for reviewing the budget that way and stated he (S. Miller) could not do that because of Robert's Rules. S. Miller motioned to review the budget for the Highway Department (4312) on a line-by-line basis and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of four. (Yes – SM, RM, KP, GF / No – SMc, ED, MS)

Ken Roberts, Director, Highway Department, presented the proposed budget for 2009. He stated they took a "heavy hit" in 2008 and there were several budget line items that were not spent. He stated they are not withholding services but that there is an increase in some of the material but those are things they cannot change.

The Selectmen's recommended budget for 2009 is \$1,052,753.00 and the budget for 2008 is \$1,007,299.00. The 2009 budget is a 4.51% increase from the previous year.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line item for Road Agent, which has a step and a COLA factored into it. There is a 6.09% increase from the previous year. There was review and discussion about the wage and step matrix included in the budget books.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line item for Office Staff. The Selectmen decided that an extra step should be included in the pay to bring the secretary's pay up to par with the other secretaries in the town. There was discussion about the justification for the pay increase. G. Fuller asked if there was a change in the job responsibilities from 2007 to 2008 to 2009 and K. Roberts explained there are some committees, etc. that she does for R. Bailey. It was noted that this increase is something that has been done with other positions in the town in the past. K. Roberts stated it was not something that he had submitted but that this was a request by the Selectmen.

S. Miller reviewed the Full-Time Wages Road Crew budget line item. There are no changes in step. K. Roberts explained that not all road crewmembers are at the same step and reviewed the positions of the various members of the road crew. S. Miller asked if any other step raises for other departments have been authorized by the Selectmen and S. McMahon stated there were not, as best he knew. S. McMahon noted that some of the truck drivers were making \$12.00 to \$13.00 per hour. There was discussion about the pay rate increases for truck drivers. K. Roberts noted that the drivers were making about \$9.00 in 1993. K. Painter noted that there was a decrease and asked if it was due to a staff turnover, and K. Roberts stated that there was a turnover of about two people each year.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line item for Flagger, Alcohol and Drug Testing, Benefit Buy Out, Over-time Road Crew Wages, and Over-time Wages Office. There were no questions.

S. Miller reviewed the Meetings and Conferences budget line item and K. Roberts stated there was a hazardous materials conference they wanted to attend but that there had not been one close enough to attend but that he budgeted for it in case one was held near-by.

S. Miller reviewed the budget for Dues and Fees, Travel Mileage, Office Supplies, and Postage. The budget line item for Reference Materials is in case the mechanic needs to buy a book. There were no questions or comments about the budget line items for General Expense, Pothole Repairs and Sand. K. Roberts stated that they bid out Sand for three years, which was beneficial for them. He noted that the price of Salt has increased.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line item for Gravel. K. Roberts explained there is about 28 miles of gravel roads in the town. He explained how the gravel is used for repairing the roads.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line items for Crack Seal and Road Grinding. There were no questions.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line items for Computer and K. Roberts reported that the mechanic needs a laptop computer for diagnostics for some of the vehicles. He spoke about the benefits of the laptop computer for the use of the mechanic. There was discussion about the justification for the request of a laser printer.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line items for Street Sweeping, Catch Basin Cleaning, and Snow Removal Contracts. K. Roberts explained the contract process and the criteria that a plow has to meet in order to contract with the Town.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line items for Rock Excavation. There were no questions. There was discussion about the budget line item for Roadside Mowing. K. Roberts explained that the mowing is done for sight distance purpose and that nothing is done on the state roads.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line items for Telephone, Printing/Signs, Advertising, Equipment Rental, and New Equipment. It was noted that the Selectmen had changed New Equipment to \$7,000.00. The budget for 2008 was \$10,594.00, so the Selectmen's recommended budget for 2009 is a decrease of 33.92%.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line item for Misc. Equipment Expense, which was \$3,200 for 2008 and the Selectmen's recommended budget for 2009 was \$2,500, a decrease of 21.88%. S. McMahon stated that the Selectmen were trying to keep the budget as flat as possible and so some cuts were made. He noted that the Police Department's budget was completely different than what the Budget Committee had been given to review.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line item for Uniforms. K. Roberts stated that they bought the uniforms and did not rent them. He noted that his department did not max this budget line item each year and stated that there was a savings of \$1,000.00 this year because the staff did not buy new uniforms or boots. K. Painter asked if there was enough safety equipment for the staff and K. Roberts responded that there is enough safety equipment for staff at this time.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line item for Vehicle Expense. K. Roberts reported on some of the unexpected things that can come up for vehicle expense. He stated they would be over by more than \$2,600.00 in this budget line item this year. He explained that the mechanic goes over each vehicle and that vehicles are not sent out. He spoke about some of the issues with the grader.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line item for Tires. R. MacDonald asked what was kept in inventory and K. Roberts stated that seasonal tires are kept and changed out. He stated that the cost of tires is going up and felt that if there was an overrun on a budget line item that it would be reviewed with the Selectmen.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line item for Vehicle Fuel and it was noted there is a 36.68% increase from the previous year.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line item for Trapping. There were no questions.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line item for Electricity and asked if every department in the town got their electricity from the Co-Op and R. Bailey noted that they are.

S. Miller reviewed the budget line item for Building Fuel and K. Roberts stated there are two buildings that are heated and noted that there is a shortage in waste oil. He stated there might be a need for alternative heat for one of the buildings.

The Committee reviewed the following: Building Expense, Radios, Bridge/Guardrail Expense, Culverts/Drains, Tree Removal, Dust Control, and Line Painting.

K. Roberts spoke about the justification for Turf Establishment, Infectious Disease, FEMA, York Rake, Spreaders, Chipper, and Plow Equipment.

There was review of the budget line items for P/B Sweeper, Steam Cleaner, Trailer, Delineation of Wetlands, Emergency Reconstruction, EPA Expense, and DES Fees. K. Roberts spoke about

Emergency Reconstruction and noted that this budget line item is the first one that is replaced when they receive money from FEMA. S. Miller asked if it made sense to have a Warrant article for Emergency Reconstruction and R. Bailey stated that there were not any towns that he knew about that did that and did not recommend it from a tax stand point. R. Bailey stated that part of the fund balance was for emergencies. He explained that the State recommends that towns have a certain amount. K. Roberts stated that this budget line is not something that gets dipped into often.

K. Roberts asked when CIP would be discussed and S. Miller noted that December 4, 2008 was the meeting date. The Warrant articles will be presented to the Budget Committee by R. Bailey, after the Selectmen have reviewed them. There was a brief discussion about some of the Warrant articles that might be presented by the Highway Department.

There were no other questions and all areas were felt to be covered.

#### COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

G. Fuller motioned to make budget line item 4312-010 F/T Office Staff, \$30,285.00 and K. Painter seconded the motion. There was discussion about the justification for the raise suggested. The motion passed by a vote of four, with two "no" votes and one abstaining. (Yes – SM, KP, ED, GF / No – MS, SMc / Abstain – RM)

S. Miller motioned to reduce the budget line item 4312-016 - P/T Seasonal, presented at \$5,600.00, to \$0.00 (zero). There was no second.

G. Fuller motioned to approve the 2009 budget for Highway (4312) at \$1,051,858.00 and K. Painter seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of six. (SM, KP, GF, RM, ED, MS / No – SMc)

#### IX. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for November 13, 2008. K. Painter noted she would not be present at that meeting.

#### X. ADJOURN

S. McMahon motioned to adjourn and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, KP, GF, RM, ED, MS, SMc)

The meeting adjourned at 9:38 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Recorder