

**TOWN OF ALTON
ALTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
(Approved 12/16/08)
MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 20, 2008**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Steve Miller, Chair
Karen Painter, Vice Chair
Elizabeth Dominick
Richard MacDonald

MEMBERS ABSENT: Greg Fuller
Selectmen's Representative

SAU #72 PRESENT: Terri Noyes, Vice Chair
Sandy Wyatt, Board Member
Kathy Holt, Superintendent
Bonnie Jean Kuras, Principal
Kathy O'Blenes, Business Manager

I. CALL TO ORDER

S. Miller called the meeting to order at 6:47 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. HOUSEKEEPING

S. Miller reported there would be a meeting of the JMA Budget Committee on December 2, 2008. The time would be announced. The meeting will be at one of the conference rooms near the Superintendent's office.

T. Noyes noted there would be a PMHS JMA Board meeting that evening at 6:30 PM.

E. Dominick Greg as chair of the JMA Budget Committee for this year and K. Painter seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of four with one abstaining. (SM, KP, ED, RM / abstain - TN)

V. AGENDA

S. Miller motioned to approve the agenda as presented and E. Domick seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, KP, ED, RM, TN)

VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There were no minutes to be approved.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

The Police Department budget will be approved at the next meeting.

VIII. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

IX. SCHOOL BUDGET

S. Miller suggested reviewing the budget by covering the 1100 department for the first night of the meeting, the various departments of the second night of the meetings, and CIP for the third night of meetings. The Committee agreed to this schedule by consensus.

S. Miller motioned to review the budget on a line-by-line basis and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed by a vote of three with two “no” votes. (SM, RM, KP / no – TN, ED)

K. Holt presented the budget for SAU #72 for 2009-2010. She reported that there were no plans for early retirement so there is an amount of money in the 1100 budget that can be taken out. She reported that the number for health insurance was factored at 15% but that the exact number would be available in December. She spoke about some of the factors, such as NH State Retirement, which is driving up costs.

K. Holt spoke about issues with the roof at Alton Central School. She reported that after the repairs were completed this summer that they checked the snow load capacity for the rest of the building and it was recommended that roof will need to be shoveled to no more than twelve inches. The shoveling will be contracted out to someone who does it professionally. She spoke about the safety concerns for the shoveling of the roof and noted that renovations were not scheduled for the 2009-2010 year. She reported that one of the companies they have contracted with for shoveling had a rate of \$55.00/hour.

K. Holt reported that they are in the third year of a Transportation contract and they will be contracting again soon.

K. Holt reported that Special Education is always volatile and noted that there are five new students who have started this year and there are two out of district students. She spoke about some of the factors that are affecting the budget and felt that this might be the year when they have to tap into the Special Education funds.

K. Holt reported that they are at \$3.99/gal for fuel and that is a locked price. She spoke about the cost of oil and the cost of insurance. S. Miller asked why the school could not fill at current levels and then buy at the \$3.99 rate. There was discussion for strategies for procuring fuel at a lower price but still honoring the contract.

E. Dominick asked about the increased cost of Special Education students. B. Kuras spoke about some of the situations where students have moved into or out of the district.

S. Miller asked K. Holt to explain the Revenue Sheet and asked about the revenue from Medicaid. K. Holt explained that it is from services given to Special Education students in the district. K. O'Blenes explained that the revenue offsets the taxes. K. Holt stated it offset the taxes by going into the tax bill with the exception of the Food Service program.

S. Miller asked about Catastrophic Aid and K. Holt explained that it covers Special Education students who cost two and one half times the cost of a regular Special Education student.

S. Miller asked what "Other Revenue" was and K. O'Blenes explained it was from the rental of the building by groups such as "Weight Watcher" and from "E-Rate" (a rural grant for internet access costs).

S. Miller asked about the building aid for the SAU and K. O'Blenes explained that the second installment of funds would be coming in April, 2009. S. Miller asked what the net cost to the town of Alton was for SAU #72 and K. O'Blenes stated she could get that information to S. Miller. He stated he wants the gross number of cost less revenues. T. Noyes reported that the District Assessment is \$11,610,232.00 and that was the number that S. Miller was looking for.

E. Dominick stated that after she had reviewed the budget she noticed that there was an increase of about \$700,000.00. She noted that wages had increased significantly and benefits had gone up about \$195,000.00. K. Holt noted that the Board would be taking out the money for Early Retirement that was in the budget and noted that Health Insurance would be going down. There was discussion about trends in health insurance costs in the area and it was noted that the Town of Alton came in at flat budget line for health insurance. E. Dominick asked about the increase in Tuition and K. Holt explained that there are two students who have tuition out of district who were not in the 2008-2009 budget but would show up in the 2009-2010 budget. There was a brief discussion about new software.

S. Miller began the review of the 1100 Regular Education budget for 2009-2010. There were no questions about Salaries, Health Insurance, Dental Insurance, Life Insurance, FICA, State Retirement, Tuition Reimbursement, Unemployment Compensation, Workers Compensation, and Other Employee Benefits. It was noted that Tuition to the JMA was level funded at this time but that the actual budget had not been approved by the JMA Board.

S. Miller asked about the increase for Supplies at 7,270.44 from the previous year. K. Holt spoke about the benefits of buying in bulk and some of the requests from the teachers for the various supplies.

S. Miller reviewed and discussed the costs of books. He asked how many text books were budgeted for and asked what number plus what percent were used to factor the number of books needed. K. Holt reported that they looked at the number of students coming into that grade that would be using those books. S. Miller asked how many students move from Pre-School to Kindergarten and K. Holt stated that there was no way to predict the number moving from one grade to the next in those two grade levels because many parents were looking for all-day Kindergarten.

S. Miller asked about the New Equipment Science. It was noted that there were requests for new equipment. K. Holt explained that because of the issues with the roof next year that there were many requests for new equipment that were put off so that the money could be used towards roof repairs. She noted that some things that were requested in last year's budget would be showing up again in this year's budget because they were not purchased.

S. Miller asked about the decrease in Dues & Fees for Music and K. Holt explained that they are working to make it more equitable for who receives what for dues and fees.

S. Miller asked about the increase for substitute teachers and asked why 770 substitutes were asked for in 2009-2010, when 550 substitutes were asked for in 2008-2009. B. Kuras stated there were many bereavements, maternity days, and professional days. K. Holt explained that there are three professional days per teacher per their contract. She spoke about some of the situations where teachers may be sent out for training. S. Miller asked if this is what they expected going forward. K. O'Blenes stated that she felt they had not budgeted for this properly in the past.

S. Miller asked about what was considered when a teacher was hired, if it was based on budget or if it was based on the best teacher they could find. K. Holt stated that she advised her principals to look for a teacher who would fit best with the team and that budget was a factor. She spoke about academic qualifications, teaching skills, and if they could work in the building with the teachers and with the team.

S. Miller began the review of the Technology budget (1140). It was noted that the Salaries budget line item had a decrease of -2.52% from the previous year. S. Miller clarified that the column for the budget called "Revised Budget 2008-2009" was the budget that was adopted in March, 2008 and K. O'Blenes confirmed that it was. S. Miller asked if the Technology Director received the full raise that had been requested and it was reported that she received half of what was recommended for her. S. Miller asked for a list of all budget transfers and K. Holt stated there was one transfer from the Superintendent's budget and it went into Salaries. S. Miller asked for a breakdown of how much money was put into each salary. He asked for a list of all budget transfers to be presented at the next meeting.

There was review and discussion of Technical Support, Repairs and Maintenance, Travel, and Supplies. K. Holt spoke about the justification for Travel. S. Miller asked if the JMA budgeted for travel at the Federal rate and T. Noyes confirmed that they did.

K. Holt spoke about the justification for the budget line item for Software, which has an increase of \$11,348.00 from the previous year. She noted that for them to continue to use Microsoft that they are purchasing licenses at about \$53.00 per license. The Microsoft agreement will be up in August and if the agreement expires then it will cost more per license to re-state the licenses. K. Holt explained that the school will be switching to a thin client (ghost server) set up but for now they needed to renew these licenses. She spoke about the laptops, computers, thin clients, and other things they have requested. They have asked for 20 new computers, 30 licenses, one laptop computer. There are also some items requested in the Special Education budget. K. Holt reported that they are trying to get funding through grants. She stated that they are behind where they needed to be because she had frozen the budget last year. She noted that ten of the computers that had been requested last year were not purchased and the SmartBoards had not been purchased. She noted some of the other New Equipment items that were not purchased last year.

S. Miller asked about the long-range plan for the Technology budget and B. Kuras stated there was not a number in there for a certain amount of money. B. Kuras stated there were supplies listed but there was not an estimated cost for computers.

S. Miller asked for the justification for Dues and Fees and noted there was an increase of \$3,577.00 for this budget line item from the previous year. K. Holt reported that anti-virus software, web-based program fees, ConnectEd (the telephone alert system) and some other items were driving the increase. She spoke about some of the training that teachers and administration receive in technology, such as in Professional Development, and noted that they had not budgeted for it last year.

S. Miller asked about Contract Services and K. Holt noted it was under "Maintenance" in the budget. He asked if the technology person would be able to fix a computer and K. Holt stated that in some cases they could be fixed and in some cases they could not be fixed. S. Miller spoke about the Technology plan and asked for the variance in the projected amount was over the past three year and stated it was a 45% difference. He stated that the plan was a qualitative plan and the cost was what it was. There was discussion about the Technology plan.

S. Miller asked about the stipend in the Salary adjustment for the Technology Assistant. K. O'Blenes stated it was \$1,500.00 and it went to three different teachers who assisted the Technology department. K. Holt noted that the increases that were in the Superintendent's budget were now in the various departments' budgets.

S. Miller began the review of Special Education (1200) and asked about the increase for Salaries. K. Holt stated that there was more Occupational Therapy being used for Special Education. There was discussion about how Special Education students' Individual Education Plans were arrived at. K. Holt noted that Medicaid billing was something that was done out of house in the past but that the Special Education staff was able to do that now.

R. MacDonald noted that Computers in Special Education was listed under this department but not in Technology. K. Holt stated that because of the way that the school has to report to the state on Special Education, it is best to keep these budget items separate.

S. Miller noted that the review of the budget was going well and asked if the school would be ready with information about CIP at the next meeting.

There were no motions taken on the budget at this time.

X. NEXT MEETING DATES

The next meeting of the Alton Budget Committee is December 4, 2008.

The next meeting of the Alton Budget Committee, to continue the school's budget review, will be December 9 and December 11.

XI. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

R. MacDonald motioned to adjourn and S. Miller seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote. (SM, RM, KP, ED, TN)

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Krista Argiropolis
Recorder