

Town of Alton

Budget Committee Meeting
Minutes

APPROVED

December 7, 2006

Present: Stephen Miller; William Curtin; Elizabeth Dominick (arrived at approx. 6:45pm); Virgil MacDonald; Terri Noyes (ACS Board Rep.), Chris Blackstone (Selectmen's Rep – joined meeting at 8pm) Deb Burton (Executive Secretary to the Superintendent) Michael Tocci (ACS Interim Principal); Kathy O'Blenes (ACS Business Manager); Members of the Public

Absent: Stephen McMahon (Selectmen's Rep.); Laurie Boyce, Krista Argiropolis, Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at about 6:15pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Dominick was noted as being absent at the start of the meeting but joined the meeting shortly after roll call.

Mr. Miller stated that the School Board Deliberative Session will be on February 3, 2007, with a snow date on 9th of February

III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

The Committee reviewed the meeting minutes of November 28, 2006. Mr. Curtin motioned to accept the minutes as written and Mr. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. ALTON CENTRAL SCHOOL

Mr. Miller stated that he met with Mr. Tocci prior to the meeting to explain the procedure. A copy of the current expenditures was distributed to the Committee. Mr. Miller invited Mr. Tocci to make a statement about the budget and said he would like to get through the General (1100) budget.

Mr. Tocci thanked Mr. Miller for meeting with him and making him feel comfortable with the meetings. He explained he arrived in August, when the budget was underway. He stated that ACS uses a zero-based budget where they go back to each account area on an annual basis. He explained the budget justification process for faculty. He stated that in 2004 the NH standards for

school budget was revised completely, which had a great impact on technology. He explained these are unfunded mandates, imposed by the state.

Mr. Tocci spoke about the impact the NCLB (No Child Left Behind) and stated that also would be pointed out to the Committee in their review of the budget.

Mr. Tocci explained how the zero-based budget works. He stated they reviewed a three year history of the account for supplies, and figured a per pupil expense for the budget, extrapolating from that, but they did not go back to a zero base from that. The text book cycle is not zero-based either, because these are on a cycle and they do not know what book they will be buying next year. They do not know specifically what they will have in a year in this category.

Mr. Tocci spoke about some of the cost increases in some of the areas. He stated that when it came to fiscal areas, Ms. O'Blenes could address those issues, and Ms. Burton could address issues relating to the school and other details. Mr. Tocci spoke about some of the things that are being changed or implemented and what drives those changes.

Mr. MacDonald asked about the library shelving and asked if the shelves could be cut down from the 9' shelves they were now. Mr. Tocci stated that library was used by the older students and the height of the shelves was not really an issue. He spoke about some of the infrastructure issues with the library.

Mr. Miller stated he was disappointed the budget was missing some significant pieces of information they had seen in the past couple of years. He asked what the enrollment projection was and the staffing projections. Ms. O'Blenes pointed out that the information was in the book but that the staffing projections could be supplied at a future meeting. It was found that some of the Committee members' books were missing information.

Mr. Miller asked for a breakdown of the soda machine revenues. Ms. O'Blenes stated it was not part of the operating budget. Mr. Miller stated they had received it in the past.

REGULAR EDUCATION 1100:

The Committee began the review of the Regular Education (1100), starting with the line item for Salaries (1100-100; \$1,709,379). Mr. Curtin asked why this was down by \$46,000 and some change. Ms. O'Blenes noted this did not include the collective bargaining or PMHS. There was discussion about how the collective bargaining process worked. There was discussion about the retirement and the line items for the monitors, assistants, etc.

Mr. Miller asked if the Home Instruction line item (1100-110; \$1,000) was for home schooled students. Ms. Burton explained this was for students who may have an emergency situation and may need an at home tutor or other such arrangements.

Ms. Dominick asked how they based the line item for Substitutes (1100-110; \$24,500). Ms. O'Blenes explained that it was based on \$70/day for 350 days and that special education subs were paid for out of their budget.

Mr. Miller asked what the Health Insurance increase would be. Ms. O'Blenes stated it was going to be at a 7.6% increase and there was no increase for Dental Insurance. They had figured on a 15% increase for Health Insurance and Dental Insurance when the budget was first drafted.

The Committee reviewed FICA (1100-220; \$150,409), State Retirement (1100-230; \$118,120), Unemployment Compensation (1100-250; \$2,760), Worker's Compensation (1100-260; \$9,634), and Administrative Benefit Plan 1% (1100-290, \$584). All of these items are hard figures.

Mr. Miller asked why the school was offering a parenting class (Professional Services for Pupils; \$3,500) which was only \$500. Mr. Tocci explained that it was for parents, to teach them and assist them in their parenting. He felt that by the parents being able to be more effective at home, then the students would perform better in school. Mr. Miller asked about the benefits of the Artist in Residence. Mr. Tocci spoke about how students perform better when there is art integrated into the curriculum and about the other benefits of the program. There was discussion about grants that are available for the arts.

Mr. Miller asked why the line item for Repairs and Maintenance for Music was \$1,500 every year. Ms. O'Blenes stated there were no costs to that line item at this time, for the current fiscal year.

There was a discussion about the Rentals, for the copiers, laminators, etc. Ms. Burton explained that they are on a three-year cycle. She stated there is one machine that has over one million copies on it. There was discussion about the usage of the machine, how some are networked, and how some are placed in areas suited for where they would get the most use. There is now code access to the machines, which is assigned to the teachers, volunteers, and other staff, for the measuring of the volume of copies. Ms. Burton stated copier rental included toner, service contract, and staples.

Mr. Miller asked Ms. Blackstone to join the meeting as the Selectman Representative. Ms. Blackstone accepted. (8:00pm)

Mr. Miller asked for a purchase vs. lease illustration on a copier for the next meeting, just to see the validation of the leasing of the machine. Ms. Blackstone suggested a co-operative buying agreement for the municipal departments and the school to get better pricing from the vendors.

Mr. Miller asked how the projection for the students for the next year was figured. Mr. Tocci stated he looked at the current enrollment and based it on that. He noted there was an annual increase of about 16 students each year, on a year-to-year basis.

Mr. Miller asked why there was a large increase on art supplies, from \$6,500 FY 2007 to \$8,127 FY 2008. Mr. Tocci stated that this was because Kindergarten was not included in the art program in the past but this will be changing.

Mr. Miller asked about the increase in the English supplies, which had a \$921 increase over the last year's budget. Mr. Tocci stated that since this was an area where students were tested, it was felt that more supplies, such as books, were needed. This was to help them improve in the area of writing. Ms. Blackstone asked if there was any professional development plan where this would be a focus as well. Mr. Tocci stated that this was being developed and implemented, as it had been lacking in the past. He noted that some districts were already doing this but that Alton had not had a program in place in the past. Mr. Tocci spoke about some of the in-house conferences, etc. that would be taking place.

Mr. Tocci spoke about the Health supplies and the new mandates from NCLB for nutrition. He explained that this is why there is an increase of \$841 in this area.

Mr. Tocci spoke about the Tech Ed program and commended the program for what it does, encompassing the different skills the students are learning in math, physics, and other areas.

Mr. Miller asked why there was a decrease in the Math Supplies line item of \$21.98. Mr. Tocci stated there were increases in other areas for math that would be reviewed later in the budget.

Mr. Miller asked why there was an increase of \$1,000 in the Music Supplies line item. Mr. Tocci stated this was a K-8 program and there were two teachers. He pointed out that he had met with the teachers about the justification. He stated he felt it was nominal increase, although percentage-wise it was a large increase (30%) but that he felt they got a “big bang for their buck” for the budget line item. Mr. Tocci stated he felt there was a weakness in the arts in Alton and that he did not understand Mr. Miller’s agenda in this area. There are only ten students enrolled in band. He stated that Alton would not stack up compared with other districts. Mr. Miller stated he was simply “playing devil’s advocate” about this subject because others may ask the same questions if they were sitting in his seat. He stated that he had no agenda against the arts but did have to explore all the facets of the budget.

Mr. Tocci spoke about the increase of \$3,000 for Science Supplies, which was \$3,000 for the previous fiscal year and was requested at \$6,000. Mr. Miller asked for a copy of the itemized list of the supplies for science. Mr. Tocci stated there had been a tremendous turnover of teachers for science and math in the middle school, although he did not know exactly why that was so.

Mr. Tocci spoke about the increase in the Social Studies Supplies, at \$716. He noted that this was for materials for students for projects.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget line items for Books; Reading, Art, English, and Foreign Language. Mr. Tocci stated that Tech Ed was not in the text book cycle in the past, but that this was now included in the budget. Books for Social Sciences, Reading, Health, and other General Education needs were reviewed. Mr. Tocci spoke about how books are purchased and how cost savings could be obtained if books were bought with a projection of the incoming students who would be using them. He stated that to buy 15 books a few years later, would be far more expensive than if those 15 books had been purchased when the lot was first procured because of price breaks. There was a discussion about the textbook cycle process and resources.

Mr. Tocci spoke about the Workbooks - Math (\$6,485). He said that a new program had been implemented but that they had not purchased the workbooks last year when they purchased the new text books, and that this was no uncommon.

The Committee reviewed the Audio/Visual line items for the various departments – Art, Reading, Social Science, Music, etc. There were no questions.

The Committee reviewed the Periodicals line items for the various departments. There were no questions.

The Committee reviewed the Software, Equipment, and Furniture lines items for the various departments. There was a discussion about the equipment that was needed for Physical Education and what was being replaced. Mr. Curtin requested that a detailed list of what was being purchased would be helpful. Mrs. Burton mentioned what the justification was for that line item.

Mr. Miller asked if there was going to be a line in the budget for tuition to the JMA. Ms. O’Blenes stated that this was the correct place for the placement of this line item, per the NH Dept. of Education.

Mr. Miller reviewed the 1100 account and stated he thought the bottom line was incorrect.

Mr. Tocci requested to defer the Special Education and Technology departments until the next meeting, which is scheduled on 12/14/06.

There was a brief break.

GIFTED & TALENTED 1410:

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for FY 2008 for Gifted & Talented (1410; \$97,703). The salary, health insurance, dental insurance, FICA, NH Retirement, Unemployment Compensation, Workers Compensation, and other professional services. There was a discussion about how the line items were arrived at for the assemblies, as they were all at \$1,000, except for the Author/Reading Assembly, which was at \$2,000. It was felt that these could be rounded up just for the sake of rounding up the numbers.

Mr. Miller asked what the G & T General Supplies were about, which was at \$500. Ms. Burton stated this was the title of the account – Gifted and Talented. There were no further questions.

The Committee reviewed the budget line items for Gifted and Talented - Audio Visual and Periodicals. There were no questions.

Ms. Noyes noted that the Dues and Fees (\$4,465) was listed for all of the co-curricular programs that students could be enrolled in. She stated that students could not participate if the dues and fees were not paid. There were no further questions.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES 1410:

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget for FY 2008 for Co-Curricular Activities (1410; \$30,670). Mr. Miller asked what the Team Leaders (\$3,000) program was. Mr. Tocci stated it was a group of advisors focused on curriculum, staffing, and other aspects of the school. He stated that if this was approved, a job description would be developed. The team is made up of core members of the faculty and staff. Mr. Miller asked if the Skills Support (\$4,200) was for a stipend for one person. Ms. Burton stated this was for all grades, and was for various after school programs for skills development.

Mr. Miller asked what percentage the benefits and retirement were of the budget's salary line. Ms. O'Blenes stated she could not answer that. Mr. Miller asked if she could provide that information in future, because it would usually make up 30%, 40%, 50%, etc. of the salary budget.

The Committee reviewed the budget line items for FICA, Worker's Compensation, and Other Professional Assemblies. Mr. Tocci spoke about the assemblies, stating that some of that was for Kindergarten assemblies. Mr. Miller noted the average increase for this was 13%-15%. Mr. Tocci noted that some of the assemblies were new, such as the reading assembly. Ms. Burton stated that each teacher provided justification on what they wanted and why, which was how they arrived at the budget line items that were requested. She stated that each grade level asked for a certain amount. Mr. Tocci stated that the line items were, historically, spent out. Mr. Curtin stated that the cost was at \$1.48/student for assemblies.

Mr. Miller asked about the Grandparent program (\$1,750) which pays for mileage. Ms. Burton explained this was part of a grant for this program. The cost is based on the number of participants and they have one new participant this year. At one time, there were five or six participants.

There was a discussion about Yearbooks (\$1,500). Mr. Miller asked about why there was a yearbook for elementary students. Mr. Miller suggested raising the price of the yearbooks to generate revenue.

Mr. Miller asked about the Food (\$1,500) budget, and what it entailed. Ms. Burton stated it was various events, conferences, meetings, and other programs.

STUDENT ATHLETICS 1420:

Mr. Miller reviewed the Salary line item (\$16,050) and noted there was an Ms. Burton noted that the Salaries was not an increase, but that there was an error on last year's budget. Mr. Miller stated that he had asked Laura Rogers to take his salary of \$700 or \$800, whatever he was being paid, and match it with the soda machine funds, and buy \$1,400 or \$1,600 of equipment. He asked if this made sense because he thought this would be done by other coaches if matching funds were provided. Mr. Tocci stated that there would not be matching funds always available and this was at the discretion of the school board.

Ms. Blackstone asked what the shelf life was of the medical supplies (\$1,041). Mr. Tocci stated this was a good question but they had implemented the Universal Precautions that were made mandatory, as well as other programs. He stated he was sure there were some items that needed to be replaced. There was a discussion about the medical services provided.

Mr. Miller asked about the justification of the supplies. Ms. Burton read off the list of supplies, handbooks, equipment, and other sundries needed for the Student Athletics for all of the sports that are listed in the budget. No new equipment has been requested this year.

SUMMER SCHOOL 1430:

Mr. Miller reviewed the proposed budget for Summer School (\$8,036). There were no questions.

GUIDANCE 2120:

Mr. Tocci spoke about the duties and rolls of the Guidance Department. He stated it was an excellent department and did a lot to help the students, as there were a lot of dysfunctional families.

The Committee reviewed the proposed budget line items for Salaries, Health Insurance, Dental Insurance, FICA, NH Retirement, and Tuition Reimbursement (3,000). Mr. Miller asked how the reimbursement was done. Mr. Tocci stated that the district paid up to \$1,500 per year and the employee had to pay the balance, if there was any.

Mr. Miller asked what the NWEA – Northwest Evaluation Association (\$7,000) was and Mr. Tocci stated this was for testing and it was a wonderful program. There was discussion about some of the other programs, such as the Leaders in Prevention Program (\$1,200), SADD (\$1,500) and the K-2 Tiger program (\$550).

Mr. Tocci spoke about the NWEA Training (\$5,000) and stated it was imperative that staff was properly trained so that they could identify where the students needed additional instruction. This would help the students to meet the grade level expectations (GLE). He stated the program needed the support of the training.

There were no other questions about Guidance (\$187,891).

HEALTH SERVICES 2130:

The Committee reviewed the budget for Health (\$73,788). Mr. Miller asked about the new position that is being requested, for a part-time health assistant (4 hrs/180 days) and what it entailed. Mr. Tocci stated there was an average of 100 students per day at the nurse's office. He emphasized the need for a second health professional in the school. Mr. Miller offered cost savings suggestions, based on students who were using trips to the nurses' offices as a way to avoid class. There was discussion about possible liability if the policies on allowing students to visit the

nurse's office were changed. Mr. Tocci stated that most schools had additional coverage, such as Barnstead (part-time), Deerfield (part-time), Stafford (part-time), and Epping (full-time assistant).

The Committee reviewed the Salary, Health Insurance, Dental Insurance, FICA, NH Retirement, Unemployment Compensation, Workers Compensation, Employee Benefit, etc. There were no questions.

SPEECH SERVICES 2150:

The Committee reviewed Speech Services (\$3,328). There were no questions.

Mr. Miller stated that they would complete the Budget at the next meeting, 12/14/06 at 6pm.

XIII. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

There will be a meeting on Tuesday, December 12, 2006 to review the finalized town budget.

XIV. AJOURNMENT

Mr. Curtin motioned to adjourn and Mr. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. (SM, VM, WC, LB, ED, TN, PS)

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:40pm.

Respectively Submitted,

Krista A. Argiropolis
Keeper and Transcriber of Minutes