

TOWN OF ALTON
ALTON BUDGET COMMITTEE
(approved 12/16/08)
December 9, 2008

Members Present: Steve Miller, Chair
Karen Painter, Vice Chair
Richard MacDonald
Greg Fuller
Terri Noyes, School Board Representative
Steve McMahon, Select Board Representative

Members Absent: Elizabeth Dominick

Others Present: Kathy Holt, Superintendent
Kathy O'Blenes, Business Administrator
Bonnie Jean Kuras, Principal

I. CALL TO ORDER

S. Miller called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

II. ROLL CALL

E. Dominick was absent.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

S. Miller asked to add something after the approval of minutes. R. MacDonald asked to post-pone the approval of the Police Department budget. S. Miller reported he had received an email from Jeff St. Cyr

K. Painter motioned to accept the amended agenda and R. MacDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The meeting minutes were not available for approval. K. Argiropolis noted that the meeting minutes were up to date and had been emailed out but she was not able to bring them in this evening.

VI. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

S. Miller reported that there was approximately 500 hours logged in by the Animal Control Officer. He stated that if the Police Department needed to bring in another officer, then they should come before the Board of Selectmen with their request. There was discussion about patrol coverage. The Committee will be discussing this again at the next meeting.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

a. VOTING POLICE

This was tabled until the next meeting.

b. VOTING SCHOOL

S. Miller stated that there was a request from the last meeting for a couple of documents. He stated he was confused by the reports that the Business Administrator had given to him because there was now a column called "FY09 Revised" and the column was new from the previous year.

G. Fuller asked for clarification on Technology (1140) and asked about Microsoft School Agreement. K. Holt explained that the school has a license agreement with Microsoft and this has to be updated. She stated this is for an update. G. Fuller asked if the school has looked into free alternatives to Microsoft Office. K. Holt stated they are looking into some alternatives and noted that they have to use what the students are using at home or might be using in the high school. She stated they are looking at some free alternatives for some things and they are looking for a balance. There was discussion about possibly cost savings that the school has explored.

K. Holt reported that healthcare in the budget was at a 15% increase but that the actual costs came in at 3.9%. She reported that the Board approved this change at their meeting last night and that they removed \$45,000.00 from the early retirement budget line that evening.

S. Miller spoke about heating oil costs and read from an article in the paper that was about other schools in NH that are paying retail price plus \$0.50 through Fred Fuller Oil. K. Holt stated that they have a contract with Huckleberry Oil for \$3.99/gallon. She stated they had gone to Huckleberry already for an amendment on the price for oil and they had agreed to come down, which is how they have the rate of \$3.99/gallon. S. Miller spoke about possible business strategies that the Superintendent could consider for cost savings. K. Holt stated they had a contract with Huckleberry and she had worked with them already on the price of oil.

The Committee continued their review the School Budget for FY 2010.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the budget for Gifted and Talented (1280) at \$116,571.00.

G. Fuller asked if there were any new personnel added to the budget. K. Holt responded that the health assistant will be increased by six hours per week but that there is no new personnel in the budget.

S. Miller asked about the Alton School District Budget Transfer Sheet, School Board Meeting 10/22/07 and asked why \$13,000.00 was given as a raise to one person in Special Education. K. O'Blenes explained that the amount was for approximately 35 aides to receive raises and noted that this was approved last year by the School Board. There was review and discussion of several of the budget line transfers for merit raises. K. Holt stated that because some of these raises were identifiable that she could disclose personnel information. She stated she had a hard time disclosing how much (percentage) was given to a person based on merit because she did not want to discuss the justification for the percentage of the merit raise. K. Painter spoke about her experience working for county government and stated that the salary and raise amounts were public information. The proposed increase for this year (FY 2010) is 4.0%. The Committee discussed some of the recommendations that had been made the previous year and the salaries.

B. Kuras spoke about the process she uses for drafting the budget and noted that cost savings had been recognized in assemblies. She stated that they had looked at ways to save money, not so that it could go into salaries, but so that they could still bring in quality assemblies, getting "more bang for the buck".

The Committee reviewed and discussed Co-Curricular Activities. R. MacDonald asked if some clubs had been cut and K. Holt noted that none of the programs has been cut but that some changes had been made.

The Committee reviewed and discussed Student Athletics.

The Committee reviewed and discussed Summer School. S. Miller asked how the school knew what would be needed for Summer School and if it was state mandates or if it was on a needs basis. B. Kuras explained that Summer School is on a needs basis and spoke about the criteria used to identify students needing assistance for Summer School. K. Painter asked about the increase of 43% for FICA. B. Kuras stated they will be adding personnel to the Summer School program based on some of the needs that have been identified. She spoke about the "Response To Intervention Process" that is used now and stated they have to prepare to provide more services to students but there was not necessarily an increase in the number of students. There were approximately seventy students enrolled in school last year. The Committee discussed the Summer School program.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the budget for FY 2010 for Guidance. There are two full time and one half time guidance councilors. All guidance councilors teach classes. There are 604 students enrolled as of 12/08/08. K. Painter asked about the budgeted amounts for FY 2008, FY 2009 and FY 2010 and noted that the salary would come in at significantly less. K. Holt explained that the person hired for the part-time position came in at a lower step/track than they had budgeted for in 2009. Two of the guidance councilors are paid as administrators and the part-time guidance councilor also teaches health; therefore, she is paid as a teacher, per the teachers' contract. S. Miller felt that the half-time position should be counted as a teacher and shown as a health teacher. K. O'Blenes stated that the Board would need to make the decision on any changes made to the budget. K. Holt stated that the position could be included in General Education.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the budget for FY 2010 for Health Services. There is a request for six additional hours per week for the health assistant. K. O'Blenes noted that the nurse is an administrator and is not part of the master agreement. The health assistant is paid as an administrative assistant.

There was a brief break.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the budget for FY 2010 for Speech Services. There are approximately thirty-five students who take part of this service.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the budget for FY 2010 for Improvement of Instruction. K. Holt reported that per the master agreement, \$2,000/teacher is supposed to be available but that about 50% of that is used. K. O'Blenes stated there was an increase in teachers using Improvement of Instruction this year. She reported that approximately \$14,000 has been used this year. There was \$84,108 budgeted for FY 2009 and \$88,909 has been budgeted for FY 2010. There was discussion about the justification for the Travel increase of 1000% and B. Kuras noted that this is to pay mileage for some of the conferences that they might ask teachers to attend and that it is not for classes the teachers choose to take. The Committee discussed some of the school committees.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the budget for FY 2010 for Library & Media. There was discussion about the subscriptions that are needed for the Library.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the budget for FY 2010 for School Board. There is a salary increase proposed for the Board at a rate of 2.52% from the previous year. There was review of the salaries of the Board Chairperson, Board Members, School Treasurer, School Clerk, School Moderator and Kindergarten Census Taker. K. Holt spoke for the justification for the salary increase for the Board. She stated that she saw the Board members at least twice a week during the day and once a week at night. She stated that there was ten hours per week spent per Board member, not to mention time spent with phone calls from parents and input given at the supermarket, etc. S. Miller stated he wanted to "play devil's advocate" and suggested that the increase for the position should be held until the end of a member's term. He noted that the State Representatives were paid by mileage, \$100.00/year, and free vehicle registration. He spoke about the timing of the increase. There was discussion about some of the cuts that had been made in the budget and the increase that has been proposed for the Board. K. Holt stated that some of the cuts were due to consolidation of supplies and review of buying practices, and she felt that the Board deserved a raise.

The Committee reviewed and discussed SAU Office budget for FY 2010. There was discussion of the two committees that were budgeted for last year that are now budgeted for under Professional Development budget. The Committee spoke about the cleaning and maintenance of the business office. K. O'Blenes reviewed the budget lines for the care of the building and grounds. She spoke about the justification for the request for four locking fire-proof file cabinets and discussed the need for secure storage for many of the documents in the business office. G. Fuller asked if the Business Office or school has considered using voice over internet protocol for saving money on telephone. K. Holt stated she did not know the answer to that but that they did receive federal money for communications. There was discussion about the length of time some of the records and documents are required to be kept, by law.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the budget for Principal's Office for FY 2010. G. Fuller asked how much the non-contractual staff paid for health insurance. K. O'Blenes stated that they

follow the teachers' contract and pay 9% of the total premium. Employees have to work 35 hours per week to be eligible for insurance. There was discussion about the cost of consulting services, mainly auditors. K. O'Blenes spoke about the increase for the cost of auditors. G. Fuller spoke about the benefits of digital phone service and the savings that could be recognized.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the budget for FY 2010 for Building and Maintenance. R. MacDonald stated that they had added a part-time custodian and were told that the overtime budget line item would be decreased. He noted that there was still overtime and asked for the justification of the expense. The Committee discussed the cost of fuel that the school purchases, such as heating oil and propane. There was discussion about the costs of maintaining the grounds and buildings, including the problems with the school roof. K. Holt spoke about the roof and the need to shovel the roof because of structure problems.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the budget for FY 2010 for Transportation, which is for contracted services.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the budget for FY 2010 for Food Services. This is a self-funded department and the revenue from the food also pays for the salaries for three helpers, one director, and one supervisor.

K. Holt presented the list of Capital Reserves and Special Education Trusts. The Special Education reserve Expendable Trust is for \$60,000.00. T. Noyes reported that the Board voted to decrease the original amount, which was \$100,000.00, to \$60,000.00 at last night's meeting. K. Holt spoke about the impact that an unanticipated special education student could have on a school's special education budget. She noted that the money can only be used for special education. T. Noyes reported there would be a Warrant article for land, as well, and reported that the Board had voted it to be \$500,000.00, one time expense. She stated that the Board felt that with the uncertain economic times that it was best not to have a bond at this time.

The Committee reviewed the list of Debt Services. There was no discussion.

There was discussion about when the hearing for the school's budget would be scheduled.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2008.

IX. PUBLIC INPUT

There was no public input.

X. ADJOURNMENT

SMc/GF 10:08 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Krista Argiropolis
Recorder