

**TOWN OF ALTON
BUDGET COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING
December 3, 2025 at 6:00 PM
Alton Town Hall**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Elizabeth Varney, Committee Chair
Priscilla Terry, Committee Member
Hal Shurtleff, Committee Member
Jill Houser, Committee Member
Drew Carter, Selectmen Representative
Christi Wood, School Board Representative
Greg Fuller – Absent (excused)

OTHERS PRESENT

Ryan Heath, Town Administrator
Laura Parker, Finance Manager
James Reinert, Fire Chief

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Varney called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

No changes were made to the agenda.

MOTION: To approve the agenda as presented. Motion by Mr. Carter. Second by Ms. Wood. Motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Terry expressed her displeasure with the employee contribution being 3.5% of their health insurance premium.

NEW BUSINESS

Review of 2026 Budgets

Account – Fire Department

Chief Reinert gave an overview of the department's proposed FY 2026 budget. He explained the four positions added by warrant article last year will need to be added into this operating budget resulting in a significant increase in wages. He added that shift and call coverage lines will be combined into one line moving forward.

Ms. Varney questioned the increase in the benefit buyout line. Chief Reinert explained the default budget did not have a line for the full-time employee's holiday pay.

Ms. Terry noted many of the overall line items have reduced and the increase in the budget seems to be mostly wages.

There was discussion regarding how to educate the public regarding the future consequences of approving warrant articles.

MOTION: To approve the Fire Department budget for FY 2026 in the amount of \$1,326,135. Motion by Mr. Carter. Second by Ms. Wood. Motion passed unanimously.

Account – Water Department 2026 Default Budget

Mr. Heath gave an overview of the department’s proposed FY 2026 default budget noting the only increases are insurances and employment taxes.

MOTION: To approve the Water Department Default budget for FY 2026 in the amount of \$590,653. Motion by Ms. Terry. Second by Ms. Wood. Motion passed unanimously.

Account – Town 2026 Default Budget

Mr. Heath gave an overview of the department’s proposed FY 2026 default budget noting the only increases are items required by law.

Ms. Houser questioned how the Town will reduce costs coming off from two years of default. She cited concerns over costs associated with the free police K-9 and dumping at Solid Waste without stickers. She stressed the importance of communication and educating the public. She would like to see department heads and administration look closely where money could be cut from the budget.

Mr. Heath discussed the reality of the staffing shortage and the alarming rate employees are leaving. He stressed that employees are taking better opportunities with neighboring Towns. He cited examples where departments are trying to save money, whether it be leaving vacant positions open or reducing mailings from the Town Clerk.

Mr. Carter stated that the Board of Selectmen have been working very hard with the department heads over the past two years shaving costs and running short staffed, which is how the Town has survived two years of default.

Mr. Heath added another effort to reduce spending will be to propose pausing the Capital Improvement Plan for one year. He stressed it is an important program, however it is equally important to get healthy on the staffing side of things.

MOTION: To approve the Town 2026 Default budget for FY 2026 in the amount of \$9,795,561. Motion by Mr. Carter. Second by Ms. Terry. Motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 20, 2025

MOTION: To approve the November 20, 2025 minutes as presented. Motion by Ms. Wood. Second by Mr. Shurtleff. Motion passed 4-0 (Ms. Varney and Mr. Carter abstained).

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Houser asked for the status of the potential mailing to the voters. Mr. Heath stated he has been working with the department heads to compile the information to present to the Board of Selectmen to approve.

Future Meeting Dates:

Wednesday, January 7, 2026 6:00 PM (*Public Hearing*)

Wednesday, January 14, 2026 6:00 PM (*Public Hearing Snow Date*)

Thursday, January 15, 2026 6:00 PM (*Public Hearing Snow Date #2*)

The meeting was adjourned at 6:41 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carol Long

Carol Long, Budget Committee Secretary