

**TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE**

**Select Board**

**Approved Minutes for Meeting of January 3, 2025 at 5:00 PM**

**Town Offices, 15 Mechanic Street, Alstead, NH 03602**

**SELECT BOARD PRESENT:** Joel McCarty, Chair, Gordon Kemp, and Matthew Saxton.

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Name	Position	In Person	Google Meet
Misty Gratacos	Town Office Administrator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shelley Steuwe	Recording Secretary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stephen Murrell	Police Chief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jesse Moore	Director of Sanitation, EMS & Grounds	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Susan Norlander	Town Moderator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bobbie Wilson	Supervisors of the Checklist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**COMMUNITY MEMBERS:** **In person:** Carol Reller; **Google Meets:** Kenyon Nesbitt

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. McCarty called the Select Board meeting to order at 5:00 PM and then proceeded with leading the agenda-based discussion.

**GUESTS:**

**ACTION ITEMS:** Review and discuss dates regarding FY 2025 Budget, Filing dates, etc.; review and sign purchase order for Highway Dept. (Salt); review and sign unanticipated donation for Police Dept.

**MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS:** 12/27 meeting minutes were reviewed, amended and approved as amended by the Board.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

- A. **Washed-out glass** – No updates.
- B. **Thayer Brook bypass** – No updates.
- C. **Bridge projects** – No updates.
- D. **Dams** – No updates.
- E. **Status of property at M11 L2 (abuts Town Hall)** – No updates.
- F. **Model T MOU** – No updates.
- G. **Fire Dept Policies** – No updates.
- H. **Pine Cliff Rd info/updates** – No updates.
- I. **210 Gilsum Mine Road land merger talks** – No updates.
- J. **Complete Streets Information** – No updates.
- K. **Ambulance Revolving Fund** – No updates.
- L. **Department & Board**

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**OTHER ITEMS:** Ms. Norlander, re: vote tabulator machine

Ms. Norlander joins us today to advocate for the vote tabulator machine. She has been very impressed with the tabulator. The company that manufactures them, Voting Works, is a non-profit 501(c)(3), headed by a PhD engineer from MIT, who has vast experience in voting security. She attended a demonstration in Keene, and also watched a lengthy demonstration on YouTube. It is a simple device, fail safe, and no parts of the machine have the capacity to connect to the internet. The machine weighs 40lbs and takes 3 minutes to set up, and is accompanied by a laptop and printer for reporting at the end of the night. This is the only system that meets the latest federal standard on security and accessibility, and emphasizes strong data and security safety. Voting Works offers training and support and during any election period they have someone stationed within a two hour radius to respond to issues. It also comes with a battery pack in case the power goes out. She and others have done practice ballots, and found that it takes 4 seconds to scan and record the results. We would only need one device for a town our size, which holds up to 4,000 ballots. Voting Works can program any town or school ballots, or we can learn to do that ourselves. We would not need to have a checkout table, which is where the Town Clerk and her Assistant are paid to sit (about 15 hours each for each election), which simplifies and shortens voters' experience. The machine can read fully filled in circles, checks, and x's. If someone overvotes it will make an error sound, so the Moderator or the Assistant Moderator can come over and review the error with the voter, at which point the voter has an opportunity to correct the ballot. It then gets deposited in a separate compartment of the machine, which will end up being hand counted. The machine will record that there is a write-in and a report can be generated for those. All end of day reporting is generated within an hour, plus an additional hour of hands-on work by the moderator and crew. This device is the only tabulating machine that is currently approved in the State of NH by the Secretary of State.

Mr. McCarty asks if voters can still vote without using the tabulator machine, and Ms. Norlander says that they can hand the ballot to the Moderator who will place it in the hand counting bin.

Ms. Norlander says that if purchased this year, the tabulator will not be used until next election. This will also save on many hours of administrative burden by the Moderator, so it would save the Town her preparation time and the amount of time to hand-count by the team.

Mrs. Reller asks what the margin of error is with the machine versus hand-counting, and Ms. Norlander says there are a lot of checks and balances involved in the current system, so human errors are caught. That said, this again adds time and effort, versus the machine having no errors in a fraction of the time.

Ms. Norlander worries the most about the March election, as there's a higher chance of inclement weather and vote counters may not be able to come.

Mrs. Gratacos asks how much the tabulator costs, and Ms. Norlander says \$7,500, \$3,500 of which the Secretary of State will pay if purchased by mid-June of 2026. In addition, it's \$500 per year for maintenance/upgrades, and \$500 per election. There's a 5 year warranty.

Mrs. Gratacos notes that the cost savings by eliminating the checkout table amounts to approximately \$900 over the course of three elections in a year.

Mrs. Wilson asks how the tabulator knows voter's declaration during elections where they need to declare. Ms. Norlander is not sure, but knows they have worked through this and used it here in NH for a couple of elections, including September where declarations were required, and all the reporting it generates satisfies the State's requirements. Mrs. Wilson notes that the State is still going to require us to use a handicap accessible booth and Ms. Norlander says yes, this will stay the same and the voter can hand the Moderator the ballot to be put in the machine or in the hand counting bin. Mrs. Wilson says that if we get rid of the checkout desk, how will we know if a voter checks in but then doesn't end up voting (this happens occasionally). Ms. Norlander does not have an answer, but will find out.

Mrs. Wilson also cautions that while the machine is State-approved now, it may not be years down the line and need to be replaced. Ms. Norlander says that the machine components are made from readily available parts, nothing proprietary, which makes keeping them up to date easier.

Mr. Kemp asks if there is a multi-year contract involved? Ms. Norlander is unsure, but will find out.

Mr. McCarty asks if there are other towns in Cheshire County using this tabulator, and the only one that Ms. Norlander is able to recall is Keene.

Mr. Saxton feels the community interaction involved with vote counting is lost with this machine and puts us further away from community interaction and contribution. Ms. Norlander says they are already using plenty of technology to count votes, and she'd rather people come together for Town meeting and encourage people to be more involved with Town committees. She says there's no chit chatting or socializing during the vote countings, so she's not sure it will have the

impact that Mr. Saxton is concerned about. Mr. Saxton remains firm in his belief that continuously adopting technology will further break down the community aspect of our town.

Mrs. Reller wants to point out that she is the only person in the room who has both used a vote tabulator as a voter and has been a part of the vote counting group in Alstead. She found that the tabulator made life much easier, and that being a vote counter brings an enormous amount of anxiety about accuracy.

Mrs. Wilson agrees with Mr. Saxton. She notes that she talked with the other two Supervisors, and one is fine with the machine, while the other is not in favor.

The Board votes against putting this on the list of Warrant Articles. Ms. Norlander will put forth a petitioned warrant article before 1/14, and will get the answer about contracting in preparation for that.

The draft Warrant Articles were reviewed and discussed. Mrs. Reller recommends providing important background information to clarify questions that will likely come up regarding the budget and Warrant Articles to provide voters at the Deliberative Session. She's happy to connect with someone to put this together. She's also interested in putting together a bar chart that shows what portion of taxes are going towards the Town, County, State, and school over the years.

#### **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**

**Supervisors of the Checklist** – No updates.

**Police Department** – No updates.

**Town Office Administrator** – No updates.

**Transfer Station, Ambulance, and Parks** –

Director Moore reports that:

- Ambulance – The replacement narcotics safe came in today, and he performed a Returned Merchandise Authorization for the old safe. The engine for Ambulance 2 came in today.
- Parks – He connected with Liberty Utilities to evaluate and provide a proposal for fixing the lights above the ice rink.
- Transfer Station – No updates.

#### **BOARD REPORTS:**

**Mr. Kemp** – Found out there are more private donations that have come in and gone straight to Mr. Waldmann, and he recommends having them come straight to the Board for review first.

**Mr. McCarty** – No updates.

**Mr. Saxton** – Spoke with Ben Hoy of the Walpole Transfer Station about recycling Alstead’s plastic. Ben is worried about the volume of increased plastics recycling and fears they’re unable to handle that increase.

He called Mark Danahy and asked him to think about becoming the Town’s Treasurer once Mr. Waldmann retires.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS:**

**INFORMATIONAL:**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION/S:** RSA 91-A:3 II (a)

On a motion made by Mr. Kemp and seconded by Mr. Saxton, ***the Board voted by roll call (Joel – y; Matt – y) to enter non-public at 11:42 AM pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) dismissal.***

On a motion made by Mr. Kemp and seconded by Mr. McCarty ***the Board voted to leave the non-public session at 11:46 AM. The motion passed unanimously.***

On a motion made by Mr. McCarty and seconded by Mr. Kemp ***the Board Chair adjourned the public meeting at 11:46 AM.***

<b>Next regular Select Board meeting:</b>	Tuesday, January 7 @ 5:00 PM, Town Offices, 15 Mechanic Street.
<b>Selectboard Meeting and Public Hearing re: Accepting a donation from a resident</b>	Tuesday, January 14 @ 5:00 PM, Town Offices, 15 Mechanic Street.
<b>Public Hearing re: Walpole withdrawal from FMRSD</b>	Thursday, January 16 @ 5:00 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main Street.
<b>Next FMRSD School Board meeting:</b>	Monday, January 13, 2024 @ 6:00 PM, High School (2nd Monday)
<b>FMRSD Public Hearing</b>	Wednesday, January 15, 2025 @ 5:30 PM, High School
<b>FMRSD Deliberative Session</b>	Wednesday, February 5, 2025 @ 6:30 PM, High School

<b>2025 Alstead Town Budget Hearing</b>	Tuesday, January 21, 2024 @ 5:00 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main Street
<b>2025 Alstead Town Deliberative Session</b>	Saturday, February 1, 2025 @ 10:00 AM , Town Hall, 9 Main Street
<b>2025 Alstead Town Voting Day</b>	Tuesday, March 11, 2025, @ time TBD, Town Hall, 9 Main Street

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Steuwe

Recording Secretary