

TOWN OF ALSTEAD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Select Board

Approved Minutes for Meeting of December 17, 2024 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 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"/>
Julie Bacon	Town Clerk/Tax Collector	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kim Kercewich	Fire Chief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bobbie Wilson	Supervisors of Checklist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Wendy Underwood	Police Department	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mike Kercewich	Fire Chief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMUNITY MEMBERS: **In person:** Barbara Viegner, Joe Levesque, Marge Noonan, Judith Willis, Rich Nalevanko, Glen Elsesser; **Google Meets:**

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 sign bills manifest (\$); review and sign ratio preliminary results; review email from Pierre Sieur, Neighborhood Energy; review November Capital Reserve statement

MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS: 12/10 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** – Mr. McCarty reports that he is working on cash flow. For the Comstock Road and Hill Road bridges, we are going to spend \$234,017.45 in 2024, and \$341,700 in 2025 for environmental permitting and engineering/design work. Mr. Kemp asks if this information is ready for a warrant article, and Mr. McCarty said it is almost ready. Mr. McCarty thinks the warrant article should say we are going to commit to using \$387,000 or more of reimbursements in 2025 toward paying for \$341,000 worth of design work. He wonders if there's a way to appropriate, but not raise these funds, but he is awaiting word from DRA about this. Mr. Kemp thinks we'll need two warrant articles for each bridge (one for the remaining engineering and one for construction). He reminds us that per DRA, we can use State Bridge Aid to offset warrant articles. Mr. McCarty plans to put a copy of his plans and documents on the Town website.
- 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** – Mr. McCarty reports that he is meeting on Thursday with Matthew Hildebrandt of Dubois and King, along with some Board members of the Lake Warren Preservation Association to discuss the possibility of collecting more granular water testing from Lake Warren.
- I. **210 Gilsum Mine Road land merger talks** – No updates.
- J. **Complete Streets Information** – Mr. Levesque reports that they are waiting on NHDOT to let them know how they did with grant applications.
- K. **Ambulance Revolving Fund** – Mr. McCarty reports that the Board is moving along with the plan to provide monthly reporting starting in January.
- L. **Department & Board**

NEW BUSINESS:

- Walpole district withdrawal – Mr. McCarty spoke at length with Steve Verone about why he feels Alstead should be interested in Walpole withdrawing from the Fall Mountain School District. Mr. McCarty thinks he should come to town for a public hearing to discuss this with Alstead residents. There were no objections to this recommendation, so he will make arrangements for this to take place between the Budget Hearing and Deliberative Meeting.

OTHER ITEMS:

Re: MS 434 Form – Mr. Kemp reports that the following changes in revenue are noted:

- One of the biggest drops is in the Vilas Trust Fund, which is typically somewhere around \$100,000-\$120,000 (in the form of six checks). This year the first three checks were drastically smaller, which is a big hit to anticipated revenue. He's called the investment company to find out what may be causing this change.
- There were some other minor adjustments that the State made, mostly to Meals and Rooms and the Highway Block Grant.
- The Town had to revise down Yield Taxes because there was less timber cutting this year. The Town also had to revise down Interest and Penalties on Delinquent Taxes. We did better on Motor Vehicle Fees than anticipated.
- There was a technical correction in where we're supposed to put the Police Department grant.
- There was Capital Reserve that we had forgotten to take out (\$30,000 for the warrant article for the Library). This should be corrected within the next few days.

Tax rate setting process –

- Mr. Kemp reports that the DRA advisor advised the Board to talk to the Town Clerk/Tax Collector because next year is a revaluation year and typically a slew of abatements follow this. She recommends making our overlay larger than our expected abatements. In his research of the records dating back to 2020, it doesn't appear that the Town has previously taken this advice. Ms. Bacon's suggestion is to set \$50,000 aside in anticipation of this, based on her experience with the last revaluation in 2020. Mr. Kemp notes that the more we raise the overlay, the more our tax rate increases. It is possible to use the Fund Balance to reduce taxes and level out the increase in taxes due to the overlay. Mr. McCarty asks when this decision needs to be made, and Mr. Kemp says now. Mr. McCarty asks what's keeping us from making this decision tonight, and Mr. Kemp says lack of consensus. Mrs. Gratacos says that Jaime Dow from DRA says we should increase our overly \$25,000 to cover adjustments. She notes that there is a feature on the form where we can go in and add to the overlay and then recalculate to see what that will look like. She can also put in Fund Balance to offset and recalculate. Mr. Kemp notes that he is not in favor of using Fund Balance for anything but bridge projects. He is also not in favor of increasing the overlay. When asked for his opinion, Mr. Elsesser recommended increasing the overlay to \$30,000 and working with that. The Board unanimously approves increasing the overly to \$30,000 and not using any Fund Balance.

CIP updates – Mr. Elsesser reports that he is still waiting on Mr. Trafton. He believes the Board will only be able to increase budget and warrant articles by \$58,000. The budget is way over that, so we'll potentially fall further behind on Capital Reserves.

Re: Vote Tabulator – Mr. Levesque reports (as Assistant Moderator) that he recently attended a presentation in Keene with the Moderator to see a demonstration of the vote tabulator machine. It appears to be very reliable (they tried to get it to create an error and could not). The Moderator has been tasked with creating a warrant article to raise and appropriate funds for this machine.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Fire Department – Our new Fire Chief, Mike Kercewich, reports that he and our recently retired Fire Chief Kim Kercewich have started working on this transition, which is going well. Kim Kercewich presents prices for the Fire Department related warrant articles: Air packs – \$18,500 for two. Turnout gear – \$12,000 for three (PFAS free). He also reports an increase in the Forestry Budget by \$700. Mr. McCarty asks for this to be provided to the Board in writing. He also reviewed Mr. Kemp’s proposed policy for the use of the burn barrels at the ice rink. They can only be used when there’s snow cover. A fire permit can be obtained to work around this, but it limits burning to after 5:00pm.

Police Department – Chief Murrell reports that they have received 1,034 calls to date. Corporal Underwood reports that there is a new Driver’s Education teacher at the high school – Don Miller. Mr. Miller asked Corporal Underwood to come in to talk to his students about driver etiquette and laws, and she’s joined by someone from either the Fire Department or Ambulance. She has enjoyed doing this so far and looks forward to continuing. Chief Murrell reports that he was notified in a meeting today with the County that their reporting system, Crime Star, is being phased out, and there’s a push now with the County for Central Square or CSI. He notes we’ll have to match whatever the County goes to for integration purposes. If they choose Central Square, they’ll divy up the cost to towns based on population, and Central Square is also offering incentives for Crime Star users. While using Crime Star, they cannot obtain grant money for the mobile data terminals, but will be able to with these two new companies. Mr. McCarty asks if there’s anything the Board needs to be aware of for the 2025 budget, and Chief Murrell says there’s no way to tell when this transition will happen. Mr. Nalevanko says questions/concerns about this can be directed to Jim Gruber, NH Representative. Mr. McCarty asks that if anyone becomes aware of an implementation schedule to please let the Board know. Chief Murrell asks for an update on the wage study for the Land Use Clerk and the Planning and Zoning Board Administrative position. Mr. McCarty believes this was properly researched and reported on in Ms. Wolf’s wage study presentation, and that the Board will not be doing additional work on this at this time.

Town Office Administrator – Mrs. Gratacos reports that she is meeting with the Transfer Station employees as Human Resources Director on 12/18 to discuss a recent employee complaint about a resident’s behavior. She also met with Vanessa from AFLAK and found out that any part time employee of the Town who works 19 hours or more per week qualifies for AFLAK. This is not information reflected in our personal policy, which will need to be updated.

Transfer Station, Ambulance, and Parks –

Director Moore reports that:

- Ambulance – The engine for Ambulance 2 will be ordered tomorrow. Mr. Saxton informed Director Moore that in a recent conversation with a resident, there was an offer for a donation to help support these repairs. The loaner ambulance is up and running at the East Station. There was a recent catastrophic failure with Ambulance 1, but this was quickly resolved and it is back in action. They have received around 180 calls to date.
- Parks – Residents are enjoying the new skate rink. The bulbs above the rink need to be replaced.
- Transfer Station – He spoke with Mr. Lund today, who has finished installing the railing, and will be installing a new set of stairs to the lower compactor tomorrow.

BOARD REPORTS:

Mr. Kemp – Asks Mrs. Gratacos to set Chief Kercewich up with a Town email.

Mr. McCarty – Thank you to Mr. Levesque, Ms. Willis, and Ms. Wolf, for decorating around town. The bus driver who was recently in a bad accident is now home recovering, and there has been a Meal Train to assist she and her husband.

Mr. Saxton – Would like to revisit the discussion of whether or not to recycle plastic. He thinks residents who have been doing this should be consulted before making any decisions. Brian Patneau from NRRRA says that 90-95% of each bale we make gets recycled. Mr. Kemp says that while they may be processed and housed in a warehouse, the majority ultimately doesn't get used for new products and ends up in a landfill. Mr. McCarty is not in favor of continuing plastics recycling. Mr. Kemp is only in favor of continuing recycling #2 plastic if someone can discover a way to more efficiently house the plastic until there's enough to make a bale.

Mr. McCarty motions that we stop recycling plastic as of 1/1, and Mr. Kemp seconds this. Mr. Saxton is not in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS:

INFORMATIONAL:

- Town offices will be closing early on Dec 24th (1:00pm), closed 12/25 and 12/26; also, closing early on Dec 31st (1:00pm). Selectboard meetings for these two weeks will be held on 12/27 at 10:00 am and 1/3 at 10:00 am.
- The Transfer Station will be closed Christmas and New Year's Day, and they are unable to provide a substitute weekday these two weeks, so they will only be open those two Saturdays.
- Thank you to Chief Kercewich for 50 years of service with the Alstead Fire Department, 24 of those as Fire Chief, and congratulations on his recent retirement as Chief. Congratulations to Mike Kercewich, who has been appointed as the new Fire Chief.

EXECUTIVE SESSION/S:

On a motion made by Mr. McCarty and seconded by Mr. Saxton *the Board Chair adjourned the public meeting at 6:50 PM.*

Next regular Select Board meeting:	Friday, December 27, 2024 @ 10:00 AM, Town Offices, 15 Mechanic Street.
Next FM School Board meeting:	Monday, January 13, 2024 @ 6:00 PM, High School (2nd Monday)
2025 Alstead Town Budget Hearing	Tuesday, January 21, 2024 @ 5:00 PM, Town Hall, 9 Main Street
2025 Alstead Town Deliberative Session	Saturday, February 1, 2025 @ 10:00 AM , Town Hall, 9 Main Street
2025 Alstead Town Voting Day	Tuesday, March 12, 2025, @ time TBD, Town Hall, 9 Main Street
Next 5-Town Select Board meeting:	TBD – Reschedule in progress

Respectfully submitted,

Shelley Steuwe

Recording Secretary