

TOWN OF ALLENSTOWN
Budget Committee
16 School Street
Allenstown, New Hampshire 03275

Minutes of Regular Meeting
September 8, 2011

Present at the meeting: Lisa Komm, Fern Bissonnette, Don Chaput, Penny Touchette, Carl Caporale, Larry Anderson, Jerry McKenney, and Carol Merrill

Late to meeting: Mike Frascinella

Others present: Jeff Gryval, Select Board Ex officio; Tom Irzyk, School Board Ex officio; Richard Caruso (new member to be appointed tonight)

Absent from meeting: David Coolidge (Excused); Jon Richardson (Unexcused)

Ms. Touchette opened the meeting at 6:18 p.m.

Minutes.

Ms. Touchette began with the Minutes from the April 21, 2011 and May 19, 2011 Budget Committee meetings for approval by the members. She had e-mailed copies to committee members a couple of weeks prior for their review.

Mr. Anderson made a Motion to accept the Minutes of April 21, 2011 as typed. Mr. McKenney seconded the Motion. With the exception of Mr. Bissonnette and Mr. Gryval, who abstained, all were in favor, and the Motion passed.

Mr. Anderson made a Motion to accept the Minutes of May 19, 2011 as typed. Ms. Komm seconded the Motion. With the exception of Mr. Gryval, who abstained, all were in favor, and the Motion passed.

Appoint New Member.

Ms. Touchette reflected upon a topic from the last meeting regarding Richard Caruso, who expressed an interest in becoming a part of the Budget Committee. She asked him to explain why he wanted to become a part of the committee. Mr. Caruso said he had been a resident of Allenstown since the previous summer and had become attached to the town very quickly. He said he and his wife were always seeking ways to serve their community, and this was the first step he felt he could take. Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Caruso if he had any past budget experience, to which he replied that he had taken classes in the Masters Program at SNHU and had attained an MBA.

Mr. Anderson made a Motion to appoint Richard Caruso as a member of the Budget Committee. Mr. Caporale seconded the Motion. All were in favor, and

the Motion passed. Ms. Touchette informed him that he could go see Diane Demers right away and be sworn in so that he would be eligible to cast his vote for the remainder of the meeting and thereafter. Mr. Caruso left the room to take care of that while Ms. Demers was still in her office.

Update on Budget Preparations.

Ms. Touchette asked Mr. Gryval if Mr. Apple had yet drawn up the proposed schedule for budget submissions to the Select Board. Mr. Gryval replied that he had and that a copy of that schedule should be in her packet.

She then asked Budget Committee members if they had had a chance to go over the expenditures in preparation for writing up budgets, and most said they had and were doing well with it.

Mr. Irzyk spoke up to offer that his early numbers showed approximately \$250,000 being turned back in at the end of the year. He said there were some repairs coming up; however the school had managed to encumber some funds to do some of them. One of these was for the boiler at AES, which needed some work. He added that over the past 5 years, they had managed to get emergent repairs done, asbestos remediated, and all facilities in good shape without having to raise taxes, so the overall outlook was that the school budget was in fairly good shape.

Ms. Touchette asked Mr. Gryval if the Town Hall was going to need any repairs that would have to be taken into consideration. Mr. Gryval replied that the Town Hall is an “ancient” building, as everyone in attendance was aware, and has been fairly consistently “falling apart around us”. Most recently, the phone system, which happens to be the old system from the Police Department, had been malfunctioning and causing issues with the computers as well.

Mr. Gryval went on to say that the department with the biggest needs list was the Highway Department, what with their leaking roof, elderly trucks (one of which was retired last year), and loader that is not legal to operate on the roads due to nonworking lights, broken windows, and leaking hydraulics. He stressed that this was going to be a bigger problem when winter arrives, since that loader is a key player in loading the sanders on the plow trucks for winter road maintenance.

He mentioned that the Fire Department’s fleet consists of many aging trucks, but there is no plan to replace anything there in the next year. He reiterated that the Select Board had decided to take a “one department at a time” approach, taking turns each year to fulfill the most important of a given department’s needs.

Mr. Gryval talked about the Select Board’s decision last year to make retention of personnel a priority. Due to nonpassing budgets over the past 4 years, Allenstown had fallen dangerously behind what other communities were paying similar employees. He said Allenstown had a constant stream of employees leaving to work in surrounding towns which would pay them \$5,000.00 to \$10,000.00 more per year to start, citing the Police Department

as a prime example. After exploring the costs involved in hiring and training new Police officers versus giving existing officers a 5% rate increase to keep them in Allenstown, what needed to be done was quite obvious.

He went on to explain how the Select Board had approached Mr. Pellissier last year to explain that situation, asking him if he could hold off on his Warrant Article until the following year so that all Allenstown employees could receive a 5%, across the board pay increase, and Mr. Pellissier had agreed. This, of course, meant that the Budget Committee needed to be prepared for the Highway Department's upcoming proposed budget, as it would be their "turn" for 2012.

Mr. Irzyk again spoke up with regard to the school budget, specifically the negotiations for the pay and benefits packages which were voted down last year; he said the same offer of savings may no longer be on the table this year. He said they were getting as early a start as possible this year to try to avoid the last minute issues of last year. Furthermore, he said enrollment was pretty close to his estimates of last year, so that was promising.

Selectmen's Schedule for Hearing Budgets.

Mr. Gryval said the schedule was set, so Ms. Touchette read from the schedule what the Select Board would be hearing at their next meeting on September 12. The four presenting departments would be Executive, Town Clerk, Tax Collector, and Parks and Recreation. Mr. Gryval informed Budget Committee members that due to Mr. Apple's guidance, the budgets presented should be ready for the Select Board's vote at the first presentation. He added that the Select Board had approved the schedule that Mr. Apple had brought to them, and they planned to stick to it no matter what.

The Select Board meeting on September 19 would hear from the Fire Department, Forestry, and Library. This led to a discussion about the Budget Committee's meeting schedule. Everyone agreed that the weekly meeting schedule of last year was too much, and felt that meeting every other week should be sufficient.

Mr. Gryval spent several minutes answering some questions from Mr. Caruso to help get him up to speed; this was all review for the remainder of the Budget Committee.

Schedule Upcoming Budget Committee Meetings.

Ms. Touchette asked Budget Committee members about scheduling their next meeting to review the budgets heard by the Select Board on September 12. September 22 seemed the next reasonable date, and everyone agreed. With that, it was decided to schedule the next Budget Committee meeting for Thursday, September 22, 2011 at 6:15 p.m.

She said she thought it best to try to follow the Select Board's schedule, and projected the next Budget Committee meeting after the Select Board heard budgets on September 19 to be best planned for October 6.

With the Select Board hearing from the Police Department on September 26, a Budget Committee meeting was then scheduled for October 20.

The Highway and Welfare Departments would present to the Select Board on October 3, so the corresponding Budget Committee meeting was set for November 3.

Personnel, Zoning, Insurance, Sewer, and Ambulance would present to the Select Board on October 17. The next Budget Committee meeting was set for November 17.

Ms. Touchette said she would finalize this schedule of meetings and e-mail it to all members. She then asked Mr. Gryval if she would be able to attain a copy of proposed budgets prior to the Budget Committee meetings so that questions can be asked ahead of time, again, to try to streamline the process a bit better than last year. All of the Budget Committee meetings will begin at 6:15 p.m.

Adjournment.

Mr. Irzyk made a Motion to close the meeting. Mr. McKenney seconded the Motion. All were in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Date approved: _____

Penny Touchette, Chair
Allenstown Municipal Budget Committee