

ALGMinutes, September 25, 8AM, Room 204 and Zoom

Present: Bart Wendell, facilitator; Dean Charter, SB, Alissa Nicol SB( remote) ;Scott Sullivan,, Roland Bourdon, FC;Tori Campbell, Leela Ramachandran, SC ( remote). John Mangiaratti, Peter Light, Ellie Anderson and Sheri Matthews, staff, Audience:David Martin,SB; Anita Arum, fire chief.( there were three people in the remote audience)

Documents and extra info: agenda, ALG charter and ground rules, minutes from last April and draft of ALG multi- year planning model

Bart opened this first ALG session with an introduction of who he is, how the ALG started and it's unique position in the state. He noted that the town manager has taken on the task of convener and its purpose is to forge an agreement among the three entities to take a budget to Town Meeting for approval.

Looking at the ALG Charter and Ground rules, Bart noted that the best way to fail was through misunderstanding and assumptions

Scott: looking back at last year we defined the process for consensus but we did not reach consensus. The issue is that we do need to reach a consensus— last year was the first time we did not. We have to get past this hurdle.

Bart: last year there was not an agreement on the DPW

Alissa: it was the DPW debt exclusion and costs for out-year projects.  
There was general agreement with Alissa's position

Bart: the consensus is an agreement to take the best possible solution to town meeting— not everyone will be happy but it will be the best possible solution. Members here have to go back to boards and committees and it's essential to get a workable agreement.

John: looking at the document ( ground rules) we did the first four bullets. What we did didn't feel like a consensus but we all went to Town Meeting with a budget that was successfully passed.

Scott: I agree with John— the one-year budget model in the warrant was correct and passed. The issue was the out-years. If the goal of the ALG is a one-year budget then it was successful. But the charter of the finance committee is to have an ALG model that also has the out-years. How do we reconcile the two?

Alissa: I'd like to focus on what John and Scott have said: one-year budget v. a multi-year. With the present plan I'd be comfortable to only publish FY 26. There is confusion in the bullets— one-year and multi-year.

Bart: does that mean you don't want the multi-year plan? You all have to decide what you want.

Scott: what Alissa states is an initial approach. We can have a clear consensus on the budget. But I need to go back to my board to discuss the multi-year approach. We will have to leave room for disagreements.

Alissa: every board needs to agree on the budget and that gets presented.

Roland :

: we need to strive for a multi- year plan for the financial health of the Town. We need to STRIVE.

Bart: we need to be clear— the working assumption will be for agreement on the budget and we will need to see how we can get the best support for the out- years— out - years are at best a guess. There is no guarantee on the multiple year models; but they can be useful.

Bart: what is a consensus: everyone here agrees that it's the way to go and they support and “sell” the agreement before their boards and committees.

There was general agreement.

Roland: we need to clean up the model: it's still showing Parker Damon debt.

Bart: I suggest the John and Peter clean up the model is there agreement on the rest of the charter:

The discussion that followed was about when to have public comment. It was noted that people had to leave for work and they could not hang around after 9. It was suggested that there be public comment during sections of deliberation. That was deemed too time- consuming and that there need to be a decisive stop time.

\*\*\*So it was agreed to have public comment at the end and have a start time of 7:30 rather than 8 and a stop time at 9 or before.

Minutes were accepted

FY 25-26 update

Peter: finance dept. is having the audit as early as possible. It will be posted as soon as it comes in.

FY 25 close out:

1. We received an IRS rebate for our geo thermal of \$2.9M— that includes \$200K in interest.
2. Positive outcome on Chapter 70 \$367K ; transportation\$100K; \$50K Medicare— overall we are \$4.15M on the positive side.

Expenses: we have an \$85K variance

Our preliminary E&D is \$4.4M (3.78%)

We took \$2.1M out of E&D for capital to revolving for improvements on the HS roof.

The governors supplement budget put the money back in the circuit breaker and SPED out- of Placement tuitions— we have a full year in reserves.

We are still in a grave situation; I'd like to see E&D above 4%.

John : I'd like to introduce our new budget director Ellie Anderson - she was treasures & collector. She's been involved in the budget process ( under the tutelage of Marianne Fleckner) FY 25 is still in audit. We presented a budget update that included the Select Board's 5 short-term and 7 long- term goals.

Ellie: property taxes are coming in at 98.7% payment for 2025. Local fees are \$1.2M above estimates

John: the budget process has started. Oct. 20 department heads will present. I will present to the SB on Nov. 17th. The budget book will be ready the 1st week of Jan.

FY26

Peter: capital; we finished the HS roofs; Parker Damon debt is retired; the only labor costs are in connection with the resurfacing of the tennis courts. We have 3 electric buses through an EPA/ State grant at no cost. They be in service in October.

We've had a visit from a South Korean science class— it's been very instructive. We are working on the strategic planning process and district reorganization. The goal is to improve student outcomes. The meeting with the consultant will be on TV.

Finances: it's too early to do expenses. The governor has finally given \$150/student. The SC revolted the budget, lowering the assessment and they were able to restore critical positions in reading specialists.

Alissa: I'd like to know about the impact of the electric busses. What is the fuel consumption from 14 Forest Road. Will there be an increase in electric costs— will that cause a shift in budgeting?

John: construction at Kelley's corner is in its 3rd year. Things are starting to look good. I know the paving started just as school was opening ,but we made it work. The lines now on the road are temporary. There will be median islands; drivers will have to use Carroll Spinney Way to get to Rt 111— there will not be a left hand turn at the intersection of Rts. 111 & 27. People have already presented plans to invest in that area.

We are working with the fire chief to settle on a plan for the operation of the EMTs and firefighters. We are prioritizing service. This winter the center station will open and west closed. In the spring we will settle on the best plan

Grants: \$599K for complete streets in South Acton; \$500k HVAC project with the schools.

From a staffing point, FY 25 saw a ton of vacancies. We are now in a better position. Expenses are Ok ; it's too early to report on revenues.

Review of the Model

John: start at the bottom: \$4.3M deficit— largest seen at the start of a budget session. It shows we have a lot of work to do.

Changes in the model will be made.

Scott : will they be in time to review before the next meeting?

Peter: the schools have gotten a revised number for health care: there is an 18% increase for FY 27; a 60% increase for retired workers. We are hoping they are wrong. It will mean a \$3.3M increase in school budget.

Next Meeting

After discussion, looking at calendars : the next meeting will be 10/15 at 7:30 AM

Ann Chang

