

Meeting of the Selectmen of the Town of Alexander, Maine

3 April 2025

Attendance:

Skip Colson*
David Davis*
Carl Oakes*
Beth Johnson*
David Sanford*

Kristy Crawford*

Larry Hill (at the meeting only briefly at the beginning)

Jane Manza
Joe Manza
Roger Holst*
Fran Holst*
Foster Carlow Jr.
Ted Carter*
Bill Barnett*
Crystal Gallina*
Elery Beale*
Danny Sullivan*

(An "*" means that he or she was in the executive session)

Start time: 6:01 PM

Pledge of Allegiance recited.

Motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of 6 March 2025, as amended, by David D. and Carl
Voting: 4 for, Beth abstains for not having been at that meeting

Town Appointments

Skip said he got a hold of all but Jan Sullivan and Pat Cormier about whether they wanted to continue serving in their respective positions. Kristy got a hold of Jan and Pat and they said they are good to continue serving.

Beth will be in charge of General Assistance and Solid Waste. Foster will continue to stay on as representative to Downeast Emergency Medical Service (DEEMS) (AKA Downeast Ambulance).

Motion to accept the Annual Town appointments by Carl and David D.
Voting: Unanimous.

The Downeast Broadband Utility (DBU)

Ted said that he took the letter with the selectmen's questions to Crystal, who is the DBU treasurer. She put together the answers.

Skip said that he has talked about the town's DBU loan with with a lawyer and an accountant. Right now, it appears that the loan is in the town's name. Crystal explained that the *line of credit* is in the town's name, but not the loan. She said she didn't have on hand the agreement of the interlocal loan between J.R. Gibson and Ted. Every town has put the line of credit in their good name because the DBU did not have credit when it started.

Skip read the original warrant article [See "A"] and said that the article as written says the town will guarantee the loan.

Crystal said that it's very much a construction loan. The fact that it's in the town's name is not unusual; the line of credit for each of the other member communities is in the name of each community. Skip said he didn't care about other towns, what he cares about is Alexander.

Bill said that it's his understanding that there was a construction loan right from the beginning. The final loan, has been in the process of being arranged. It will be in the DBU's name, but guaranteed by the town. The town would indeed have to come good for the loan.

As far as the warrant article from the DBU that had been presented in the last meeting, Skip said that the auditor and lawyer, Dan Pitman, when they contacted the Bank, said that it is supposed to be a guarantee of the loan.

Danny said that per the interlocal agreement, that all DBU members signed, this network has been constructed without a dime from Alexander. Crystal pays the bills from the money that comes from those who have subscribed to the fiber optic internet. What makes the DBU work is the collective atmosphere of payment among all the towns. Other towns could actually help to pay Alexander's DBU bills.

When the DBU goes to the long-term loan, the only time the tax payer will be on the hook is if the DBU "falls apart" [through bankruptcy]. If that happens, then the town can sell the network, which has now pretty much doubled in value.

Skip asked for clarification, "Who owns the assets?" Ted said the DBU does. Crystal said that ownership will devolve to the town if it all falls apart.

Kristy said that if the town owns those things, is it also supposed to insure them?

Danny said that, no, the DBU is doing that. The taxpayers would not be impacted by this. When an internet user pays the monthly 67 bucks, and a portion of that goes to the town, that helps to pay the Alexander bills. On the other hand, when you pay for Fidium internet. It goes to them. It's gone. Skip said that that information that has been presented so far has been very helpful.

One question was about the money that's being paid by subscribers into the DBU: Where is that going? Just to pay the interest on the loan?

Answer: It's going to all the bills connected with the DBU, the operating expenses. Crystal said that she records those expenses by town. Every town is allocated their income and expenses. That information is provided to the elected members every month. She certainly wants to make sure that that information gets out. She asked for contact information for the selectmen in order to be sure to send this to them.

The DBU is a joint interlocal agreement. If Alexander does not have enough income being generated to pay its bills, but Calais has more than it needs, then money from Calais helps Alexander. Skip asked, "Is there money that's not being spent?" Crystal replied yes, that the DBU is building up cash reserves. Income may wane at times. For example, when summer residents leave, they disconnect their services. There is more income as the DBU continues to add customers. Currently, the DBU will break even, based on what it has been coming in. Doing revenue sharing was the carrot that would get towns to buy in.

Danny said to remember the interlocal agreement: 6 towns decided to work together to get the best internet in the world. Satellite and DSL will become obsolete. But with fiber, you won't be looking at updating for 50 to 75 years.

David D. asked, with the \$25 coming in per customer, Where does that money pay off the loan? Crystal explained that interest on the loans are quarterly.

Danny said that the DBU is looking at the long term financing.

Kristy said that Chris Loughlin, (Baileyville Town Manager) said to her that Baileyville, on its own, already has their DBU loan as a 20 year loan.

Crystal countered that that is simply incorrect.

Kristy asked if, with Alexander's current DBU loan, there is the option to pay off the loan early. Crystal said, "Yes."

Danny said that the DBU will pay down the debt. But in order to do so, it is imperative to get more people to sign up for the service.

Crystal said that the DBU needs to keep a reserve of money for repairs. Skip agreed with her saying, "You're preaching to the choir."

Danny reminded everyone that they are welcome to come to the DBU meetings and that questions are always welcome. Crystal said that Alexander town officials can call her in her office at any time. Skip recounted that the selectmen did not feel that they were getting the answers they needed from the representative. They also sent a letter, but didn't get a reply. He asked for a copy of the minutes of the DBU meetings as well as the finances when they come out.

Crystal asked where the dollar amount of \$677,639 came from [that was written in the proposed Article for the Alexander Town meeting warrant].

Ted said that that's the amount that the lawyer gave. Crystal said that the balance of the loan is \$406,775.09. That's the balance that was on the loan.

Kristy explained that the higher number is with all the interest included plus the principle that would be paid over the 20 years. Crystal said she did not have a copy of that. Kristy said she had emailed them to Ted and Crystal. Crystal said that she has been through all her emails and not found those. She even called Chase Smith at the First bank.

Kristy said that she was speaking with Chase at the bank and emailing Jake Miller (a Senior Vice President of the First National Bank) and Dan Pitman (the DBU lawyer, of Eaton Peabody firm). Whether the loan is in Alexander's name and in whose name the new one will be in. [She read the emails] [Basically they say that the loan will be to the DBU (as the borrower), guaranteed by its income from subscriber fees *and* guaranteed by the member towns.]

Kristy then asked, "Have you formally voted to put the loan in the DBU's name?"

[The basic answer seemed to be, no, not yet.]

The DBU has talked a lot in the last few days.

Danny said that they try not to incur legal fees. To have Dan Pitman at every meeting would be costly. So, they try to keep that to a minimum

Roger asked, "How many voting representatives does the DBU have from each town?"

Crystal explained there is not a simple answer. She has been doing a lot of research and talked to an attorney. DBU leaders haven't had a chance to talk all of that out. Right now everything is in flux. The

amended by-laws were considered by one town but not another. DBU leaders have to sit down with the lawyer and the board. But basically, there are 2 groups of people involved. There are members, and directors. Members have voting rights. Members are required to have an annual meeting as well. The towns have appointed a representative to the DBU. To have an effective meeting with 30 people there would be very difficult. Each community head previously appointed a spokesperson. However, she knows there is a problem and DBU leaders do not know the answer. The lawyer has advised them to get a proposal and present it to the towns.

Skip asked if that would be done at a town meeting or through the selectmen only?

Crystal said it would depend on each town's rules.

Skip asked if she could share what will be proposed for members.

Dan Pitman is working on this. It does need to be fixed. The way the board has been operating is as if the amended bylaws happened where towns would have one director who votes that can't be removed and is untouchable plus an alternate. But is it one or 2 directors that are untouchable?

Roger said that all he reads in the paperwork he has is that all member municipalities have 2 directors.

Crystal explained that this is the original from Calais and Baileyville. What if the DBU had added 6 more towns? Then you have more than 19 people at the meeting.

Skip said he has 3 different copies of DBU bylaws. The one he read says one representative and one alternate. He doesn't know which one is currently in use. He asked that the DBU would please send which ones are being used today.

Crystal said that in her research, she found that one community did accept certain bylaws, but one did not, so those ones are not in effect. All have to be implied for all other members, even if they did not vote on the bylaws that are in effect now. The ones that are in effect now are from November 17, 2017. Crystal said that, as far as she knows, no one on the board of directors would have veto power.

David D. brought up what about communities that are the same size as Alexander or bigger, would they have power over Alexander in DBU matters?

Crystal replied that the discussion by the two founding member towns, Calais and Baileyville were that they did the "blood, sweat, and tears" of getting it started. Therefore, they wanted to have 2 votes and the rest of the towns that would later join would each have one. This was because Calais was reeling from what happened with the board at their hospital.

Ted pointed out that Alexander was the first to join on and that triggered the expansion of the DBU.

Kristy had said that J.R. Gibson had continuously stated: "Lease agreement for the switching hut." Skip said he had understood that the switching hut is a DBU asset. But it's Alexander's property? Crystal said that all other towns put it in the name of the DBU. Kristy said that Crystal sent her the tax exempt paperwork.

Skip wanted to know "definitely" who owns it.

Crystal said that it is jointly owned. In order for the DBU to insure it, the DBU must own it.

Beth said that, as a member of the DBU, Alexander is interlocked with the DBU. She is sure it's not as much as Calais or Baileyville. Why not have voting directors by percentage or by population?

Crystal said it's in Appendix A. Calais is 58 and Baileyville is 41.

Beth asked if there is a limit to how many more towns can join the DBU. Crystal said that no more towns can join.

Danny said the DBU was very very lucky to do what it did. Now, it would cost twice as much money to start up as it did then. Now, there is zero grant money left to do this. BEAD ["Broadband, Equity, Accessibility, and Deployment" federal grant program] appeared to have \$3 million in funding. But Washington [D.C.] changed this. That money will be going to Starlink and Google and the other satellite internet people instead. Danny had gone through the process to get broadband grant money for Cooper and had found that they wouldn't be eligible for it. Other companies have spent a lot of time and money applying for that grant and have found that it's all unavailable to them.

David D. brought up the fiber optic feed that runs into Crawford on the Crawford Arm Road, including the switching hut at the end of that road.

Ted said that Alexander only gets money from internet users there who are within Alexander.

Skip said that that line was built with Alexander money, so Alexander should get that the money for the Crawford people who use that line too.

Bill said that the Crawford people on that line are not on the DBU's network.

Kristy clarified that J.R. Gibson had said that Crawford people who were on that line would be able to sign up for the DBU's broadband.

Bill said that Robbinston had wanted to do something similar, but it's not possible. That line on the Crawford Arm Road was built just to cover the Alexander people. Skip said the town is making some money off the switching hut, thought.

Roger pointed out that that had not been set yet, as of the last DBU meeting.

Ted said that Crawford had wanted to be a part of the MOOSE Net project, but it hasn't worked out. [MOOSE stands for Maine Online Optical Statewide Enabling]

The DBU's main line runs from Houlton, down Route 1. For MOOSE Net, they were going to run a line from Bangor on Route 9. They [hopefully] would be leasing from the DBU. MOOSE Net was going to work with cellular network providers and it was supposed to be like the DBU. [But that project has been put on hold for now.]

Ted asked if Kristy Crawford could stay in the executive session. Skip did not have a problem with that.

[There was a short recess.]

Motion to go into executive session by Carl and by David D. per MRS Section 405(6)©, at 6:54PM.
Voting: Unanimous

Out of executive session at 7:11 PM

Ted said that, as far as the town warrant article is concerned, he has put it on hold.
Crystal said that she has put the long-term loan on hold and will continue to make the interest payments on Alexander's current loan.
Ted also said that the next DBU meeting will be this Thursday at 1 PM.

[Danny, Bill, Elery and Crystal got up to leave and different people said goodbye to each other for a few minutes.]

Cemetery

Jane Manza:
She has contacted companies about a new sign for the cemetery. There are only 2 companies that do signs in the Bangor area. They are both very expensive. Rhonda and Jane have looked at options. A carved sign would be about \$5,000. A sign that fancy isn't needed, just something for a couple thousand dollars.
David D. said they could do something like Cooper did for their cemetery, which was laser cut-out metal. Someone with a plasma cutter could do it.

Skip put up some ropes to go across for closing the roads into the cemetery for now until the roads firm up. He offered the use of a "Road Closed" sign, if they wanted. Joe said that when he went to the cemetery, it was evident that a vehicle had already been on one of its roads.

Assessing

Jane Manza:
There will be TRIO training with Amy Dunn on April 25, to show the assessors how do data entry.
There are still a few abatements that need to be done. Not everyone is happy with the decisions of the assessors, but no one has been irate, nor made any threats. Skip asked her to please let the selectmen know if that happens.

Jane said that the assessors weren't allowed on one property. When this happens, then the assessors have to make the best judgment that they can of what the property value is. In such a case, property owners cannot file for an abatement and they have no other recourse if they don't like the assessment.

Financials

Kristy Crawford:
For income, almost \$900,000 in taxes have been collected for this year. Mr. Wallace paid his back personal property taxes, except for the 2019-2021 years. Over 11% of remaining taxes are yet to be paid.
The town has received \$383,986.04 in school revenue.
The state has sent \$188,363.90 to the town (Tree growth, revenue sharing, Homestead exemption) \$107,397.45 has come in for the auto excise tax. About \$20,000 each month has been added. The town is on track for the Road Account.

For expenses, \$915,622.80 has been spent on the school
The County tax was \$123,005.00
Next year's county tax will be \$148,980

The County government has been running on a negative balance and has taken out a loan to cover its expenses. It spent just on \$124,000 paying interest on a loan for the year. So, when Alexander paid its tax, it was wasted since it didn't go to any services, it just paid that interest.
Skip had called Billy Howard, a County Commissioner, and had asked if Billy would give a discount if Alexander were to pay its County tax bill now. Billy had replied that they can't afford to do that. They are well over \$2 million in the hole. So, Skip said to that he would rather keep the money in Alexander's account so the town can get the interest from it for as long as possible. Billy Howard and Skip had a very good talk. The new sheriff's department building will cost over 5 million dollars [not paid for with tax dollars, though, but ARPA money].

David D, who is on the County budget committee, said that the town could have saved on taxes if it had paid early. He said it has been difficult to make cuts in the budget. A lot of personnel would have to be cut. There has not been just one item you could get rid of.

Kristy said that the donation line in the financial report is for Downeast Community Partners that the town pays early on. They are asking a lot less money for next fiscal year, but Kristy would not be surprised if an updated letter were to come asking for more.

\$6870.05 in abatements have been done, with an overlay of \$30,000. Unused overlay money goes into the Undesignated Surplus. Skip asked to please let him know what that amount ends up being.

The town currently has \$125,245.59.

The town checking account interest is amazing now at 3.5% except 3% for the sweep account, having made about \$14,500 in interest.

For the Administration Account,

The balance forward was \$0.

\$92,238.00 were raised.

\$50,000 were appropriated.

Half of insurance costs are paid by the Fire Department

\$30,983.00 should be enough until the end of June.

The Road Account balance forward was \$120,352.82.

The school reimburses for its half of plowing (\$3500 out of \$7000). (Plowing is done by Brent Gibson.) FEMA reimbursed \$14,401.07. Some FEMA money is being kept in a separate account just in case it has to be given back. Storm clean up was \$286.64. Culverts were installed.

The Davis Road paving cost \$129,197.07.

\$436.70 was for mowing

Dale pays for the heater, it's taken from his check. Mowing of sides of road, miscellaneous, hours for chainsaws and mileage are all there.

There is one more payment for Dale.

The town got two loads of salt. Dale got one, which came out of his check.

This leaves \$74,340.12 to spend on road improvements.

Cemetery

About \$11 worth of rope was bought by Skip.

The Cemetery account has \$13,761.22 in it and the Cemetery Restoration Fund has \$3910.14 in it.

Hopefully, the ARPA funds will be used up soon.

For building maintenance we are well below \$600 for cleaning, so hourly pay is working.

Carl fixed the sand salt shed.

The electrical line got ripped off of the municipal building, so that had to be put back up.

The electronic key pad on the security system wasn't working, so that had to be fixed.

Solid Waste: they very randomly bill the town. The town appropriates \$55,000 per year, but may need to go up to \$60,000 depending.

Dean Beauchamp, who runs the Baileyville Transfer Station, is trying to keep people out who don't have a sticker, which can be difficult.

Also, if their primary residence is in, say, Calais, but they own property in Alexander, they still take their garbage to Baileyville year round because it doesn't cost them like it would in Calais.

Should a dump sticker be for just town residents?

Do they need a dump sticker if they just own a field?

Joe told a story of someone without a sticker who tried to dispose of garbage at the Baileyville transfer station but was caught before doing so and turned away (offended).

Skip wondered if a note should be sent to MMA to ask if residents alone can have a dump sticker, or what.

Kristy also read a letter [see "B"] from MMA about a possible severe lack of funds from the State from July into November because of a drive to gather signatures for a citizens' veto against the State budget. The town may have to send out tax bills early in order to make up for no State money.

Roads

Skip will ask Larry to give a prioritized list of the roads that need to have the brush cut back.

The tree that was leaning over the Spearin Road, and that Larry was going to cut, fell onto the road. It has since been removed. About a half dozen other trees need to come down. Kristy would prefer that town employees do that and not others.

On 311 Arm Road, where Barbara Webber lives, the garbage truck is rutting up the road. Larry has put up a barrier. David D. said that the first time, the truck put ruts in. The second time, the front tire went off the tar. Kristy proposed that the garbage truck owners (Cilley's) be called. Skip said that Larry did call about the first one.

New Business

David D said that he has acquired a cane that can be used like the "Boston Post Cane" to be given to

the oldest citizen in the town. He would also like to get a plaque that would have the names of each recipient as a permanent record in the town office. Kristy said that right now, it's Barbara McArthur. She will be 100 years old in July.

Motion to have David Davis research and come back with dollar amounts for getting a plaque and cane for the oldest citizen in town by Skip and 2nd by David D.

Voting: Unanimous

Roger asked if the cane gets passed on David D. said that in other places, the person kept the cane and it never got returned. Alternatively, a cane could be kept in the office and maybe give the recipient a small plaque. Or, David D. could buy the cane at Peavey's, which would be fairly inexpensive, and that would give them their own cane.

The other question is what the wording would be on the plaque in the office. Josie James, a teacher at Alexander Elementary, would be a good person to help with that.

School Board

Ted Carter:

The School Board meeting will be this Tuesday. They will be looking at drafting the budget.

A few people from town also went to the last AOS 77 superintendent's budget meeting. Skip was the moderator at the last meeting. Two budgets have been proposed and both have been shot down pretty strongly. The sticking point is that the budget is up \$50,000. The people who are coming are saying it's too much. There will be another meeting in the near future. The feeling Ted has gotten is that people are looking for cuts in the office, especially to cut a particular person. Alexander has only had 3 people come to vote, but basically anybody from town could come and represent. More people are needed. Skip expressed concern that if the AOS doesn't get a budget voted in, then Alexander can't come up with *its* school budget. Then they may not be ready for the June town budget meeting and then the town can't commit the taxes. The "June" town meeting may have to be delayed.

Ted said he is aware.

Between that and the State's lack of funds and the County's being deeply in debt....!!

Unfinished Business

The mold on the floor in the office is growing. It will be a health hazard. Lesliann tries to clean it but it keeps coming back. Skip proposed using the

building maintenance fund to pay for a new floor and that bids should be solicited.

Kristy asked if David D. could be put in charge of that? Skip asked Kristy to take care of this rather than have someone else do it.

Who does floors? Alan Ellsmore is well known.

Kristy said she would work in the conference room while the floor was being re-done in the office.

Roger cautioned, though, that if it's mold, a contractor might not want to touch it.

Motion to have Kristy Crawford solicit bids to have the town office floor done over by Skip and 2nd by David D.

Voting: Unanimous

Member Reports

Foster said that everything's good with Downeast Ambulance.

Skip thanked Roger for the helping with the DBU.

Roger said he felt like even though he came to the monthly meeting of the DBU, tonight's meeting didn't turn out the way he had expected.

Ted said that he hoped that his questions were answered.

Foster asked if the town is doing anything for town bicentennial or not.

Kristy said that Rhonda wanted to do a breakfast at the snowmobile club and a cribbage tournament in Fred Wallace's name. Also there will be a craft fair as well, on the weekend of July 11 and 12, after the jubilee. Previously, they have made \$500 at a breakfast there and there was enough seating for everyone.

Motion to adjourn by Carl

Voting: Unanimous.

Town of Alexander Special Town Meeting
Alexander Elementary School
August 24, 2020 6:30 p.m.



Town Clerk Kristy Crawford called the meeting to order

Article 1

Ted Carter was elected as Moderator

Article 2

Skip Colson was elected as Deputy Moderator

Ted Carter asked for a Moment of Silence for Howard "Pike" Seavey one of Alexander's Fore Fathers. Pike served as a Selectman, Road Commissioner, and as an Assessor to name a few and was active in the community.

A motion was made to allow Non Residents Dan Sullivan DBU President and Tim McAfee CEO of Pioneer Broadband to speak on the upcoming Article. Motion passed

Article 3

To see if the Town of Alexander will guarantee a loan of \$540,537.69 to construct and implement a fiber broadband network in Alexander. The cost is derived from \$491,429.72 to construct the network and \$49,142.97 to join the Downeast Broad Band Utility (DBU) for insurance, liability, legal costs and implementing the network. The loan will be repaid by those residents of Alexander who utilize the service over the length of the loan.

A vote to approve this warrant.

- Allows construction of the network to proceed
- Allows Alexander to formally join the DBU and have 1 voting member on the DBU Board,
- Directs the selectmen to appoint both a voting member to the DBU Board and an alternate for 3 year terms.

James Gibson Jr. gave a Financial Report and answered questions

Dan Sullivan and Tim McAfee gave an overview of their responsibilities and opened for floor for questions.

Alexander DBU Liaison Ted Carter spoke and tied all the info together.

A vote was called. 60 yes votes, 11 no votes, Motion passed.

Meeting Adjourned

Respectfully,

Rhonda Oakes
Selectmen's Secretary

B



60 Community Drive | Augusta, ME 04330-9486
1-800-452-8786 (in state) | (t) 207-623-8428
(f) 207-624-0129

To: Elected & Appointed Officials
Economic Development Directors
Finance Directors
Municipal Clerks
Tax Collectors & Treasurers

From: Kate Dufour, Advocacy & Communications
Director

Date: April 3, 2025

Re: FY 2026 – FY 2027 State General Fund
Budget – What’s at Stake

As reported in the news, on March 25 a group of current and former Maine lawmakers submitted an application for a people’s veto referendum, challenging the enactment of PL 2025, c. 2, printed as LD 609. This bill contains the baseline appropriations and expenditures necessary to close out FY 2025 and enable the state to continue its operations as of July 1 of this year. Among the FY 2026 and FY 2027 appropriations are \$1.5 billion for K-12 education, \$265 million in each year of the biennium for the revenue sharing program, and \$20.3 million in both FY 2026 and FY 2027 to help support county jail operations.

Due to the submission of the application, the implementation of the budget is on hold.

As the process of a citizen initiative veto provides, the Secretary of State (SOS) has until April 8 to draft the wording of the ballot question and to share it with the applicants before issuing the physical petitions on which signatures will be gathered and recorded. The petitioners will then have until 5 p.m. on June 18 to collect and return the required number of signatures to the SOS, which is based on

the number of votes cast in the previous gubernatorial election and currently set at 67,682.

If petitioners submit collected signatures by the June deadline and the secretary certifies that a sufficient number of signatures are valid, then implementation of the budget will remain on hold until the results of the November 4 referendum election are certified.

If the referendum fails, then the revenue and expenditure initiatives found in the adopted budget will be implemented.

However, if the question is approved by the voters, then the budget is null and void and the delay in funding will be extended until the Legislature can reconvene to draft and adopt a replacement budget.

This means that without a budget, state funding for K-12 education and county jails, as well as revenue sharing for municipalities, will not be available on July 1, 2025. Furthermore, depending on the outcome of the citizen petition, local governments could be without state funding until late November or later.

The concern among municipal leaders is that absent a state budget, the property taxpayers will be on the hook for funding the state and local share of school, county and municipal services. This is a serious matter, and one that should rise above state level partisan politics.

While the citizen veto process plays out, the Maine State Legislature should be working on the development of a budget that can be supported by two-thirds of our state lawmakers to avoid a state shutdown.

While members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee continue to discuss budget matters, it does not guarantee that a state shutdown will be averted.

For this reason, it is important that municipal officials connect with their legislators and demand the adoption and implementation of a budget before July 1, as well as discuss what is at risk with your residents, business community and property owners.

The legislature’s inability to adopt a budget does not bode well for Maine and more importantly, related burdens should not be borne by the property taxpayers.