

Town of Alexander Selectmen's Meeting

6 March 2025

Attendance:

Skip Colson
David Davis
Foster Carlow Jr.
Carl Oakes
David Sanford

Kristy Crawford
Ted Carter
Larry Hill
Roger Holst
Fran Holst
Heidi Hicks

Meeting called to order at 6:00 PM. Pledge of allegiance recited.

Heidi Hicks spoke on behalf of the Community Connections Center in Baileyville, sponsored by Medical Care Development (MCD) Global Health, a public non-profit. They did surveys to see what local people needed and then helped to provide those things. The survey has a gamut of questions to find out what would they like see in the town? Do they have problems with paying for heat, food, etc.? Then they take that feedback to see how they can act on it.

For example, a lot of people, especially in Woodland, didn't feel that they had a place to gather. So, the Center provides that. Telehealth has been incredibly successful (in schools). In Baileyville, people said they would like to have a walking path, adult education, and community dinners. Yoga and sound baths are also offered. Instead of going all the way to Bangor, people can come in, have their blood drawn there, and have it tested to determine if they need to go to the Bangor area for further treatment, etc. There is also grief support, and a breast cancer support group, to which 10 to 12 people have shown up. A garden was set up for the Woodland Elementary School students to get involved with. Maybe the High School could have a greenhouse.

Heidi would like to try to expand these opportunities to other towns, including Alexander and Princeton. When something is shared on their Facebook page, people can find out about it and join in if they want.

Skip asked Heidi if she had looked into helping people with Hepatitis C. This is because Vietnam-era veterans have higher rates of this than any other group. Heidi said she had not, but would write that down. She said the people of the town could send any other ideas through Kristy. Hopefully, this will connect Alexander to what the Community Connections Center has been doing.

There is no cost to the town. It is funded by two grants one from Harvard Pilgrim (for \$500,000) and the other from MCD, which wrote the grant. It's not even federal money, it's donated from foundations.

Kristy recommended that Heidi look into using the Randy's Variety Facebook page to get the word out in Alexander. That's where everybody goes. Rhonda Oakes does a really good job of keeping people apprised using that page. Heidi said that The Beth C. Wright Cancer Resource Center and Community Connections Center share space in the same building. The director of the cancer resource center said they need to be separate for various reasons.

Approve the Minutes of the Last Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes of 18 February 2025 by Foster and 2nd by Carl

Voting: 4 in favor, David S. abstains, because he was not at that meeting.

Financial Report

Kristy Crawford:

Income for the school has been \$347,997.27. The State has brought in \$185,252.60 and the town has brought in \$206,329.01.

Only 14% of the taxes are yet to be collected. Things are looking good on the town revenue side. Checking interest is \$14,582.47 dollars. From July to November (5 months), the Town made about \$5400 in checking interest. After that deal with the bank, in the next 3 months, the interest was \$9,100 dollars.

On the expense side, \$915,622.80 have been spent for the school.

The County tax is paid.

Solid Waste is paid through December.

The Board of Assessors is halfway through the abatements.

Roads have a balance forward of \$120,352.82.

\$3500 will come in from school plowing.

Local road assistance is \$22,972.00

All the work for the December 2023 storms have finally been fully reimbursed by FEMA. The second FEMA check, of \$9900, came in for work on the Berry, Davis, and Arm Roads.

FEMA did a reimbursement estimate, of \$13,000, but the town didn't spend it all. Kristy put the rest in the miscellaneous account (and labelled it) because FEMA may ask for that money back. There is also \$15,000 for the Pokey road and boat landing.

The town is \$76,173.75 into paying Dale for snow plowing the roads. There are 3 more payments to him.

Road salt cost \$2591.82. Dale also got a load. The cost of it was taken out of his check.

Brent Gibson plows at the municipal and school parking lots.

Problem with the Administrative Account

Kristy thought that \$10,000 would be moved forward into the Administrative account, but the auditor said no, that money will not carry over. So actually, there will be about \$1500 coming into the Administrative account which has about \$25,000 in it now. But, based on last year's expenditures, about \$37,000 will be spent by the end of June. Kristy asked for a March Town Meeting warrant article asking for \$12,000 to \$13,000.

Kristy would like to attend an MMA training on Wednesday, April 16, in person for \$55. However, if there is no money in the Administrative Account, then she will not do any more trainings until after June.

From the 14th to the 18th of March, Kristy will be going to Florida. Lesliann will work at the office on the 16th.

Mr. Davis had said that some of the administrative expenditures looked a little high and Kristy had looked into it.

Kristy didn't know how that could be.

David D. said that it seems to be a lot compared to the rest of the heating season.

Kristy said maybe it's for the propane for the generator. The power was out for several days.

David D. asked Kristy to see where the money has been going.

The town's first FEMA event has been reimbursed. For the second one, in January, some of those roads have been repaired. FEMA estimated \$13,000. The unused money is labelled in miscellaneous. If those roads need more work, the town can use that money if there are receipts for the work.

Kristy also recently signed off on the paperwork for work on the Pokey Road and the Pokey Lake landing. \$1500 for administrative costs her time 5% of overall budget amounts. That check is not here

nor the \$1500. (Other towns didn't even apply for it.)

Roads

Larry Hill:

Larry said he will post the roads tomorrow ["Heavy Loads Limited"].

He was told today that they had a water breakdown in Calais. In the process of digging to fix that, the city workers found that the frost under the road was 8 feet deep!

The sand in the shed is still holding out. Several of the selectmen were happy to hear this and agreed that clearing out most of sand was needed. David D. said that he even thought that the sand on the bottom of the pile came from the former town sand pile down the hill...from decades ago! Larry hadn't thought the sand would last as well as it did. If more sand were to be needed, Larry has talked with Allen Spear, who will sell the town more sand for \$18 a yard.

How much sand can the shed hold? Carl said it's about 1200 yards up to the cement. And Skip reminded that the level of sand is not supposed to go over that. Larry said that Dale is keeping it down below the cement fairly well. He has cleaned it out quite a bit. David D. said that last week, he had taken his tractor out to the shed to clean it out.

Larry said he will cut down the tree next to the Spearin Road when it stops raining.

Planning Board

Larry Hill:

The Planning Board has approved one building permit on the Davis Road. Eddie Perkins had owned the lot for a while, but he put it up for sale and Mike Devine bought it soon after for about \$20,000. He will build a seasonal cabin there. The town will not be putting in a new culvert for this house because the driveway will enter from Route 9. At first, Mike had wanted to put in a holding tank instead of a septic system, but David Lee said that the State almost never allows a permit for that. This is because instead of pumping the tank out, people have punched holes in the bottom of the tank. Kristy told Larry (somewhat jokingly) to tell Mike that there is a body buried on that land. David D. thought that the septic is near a body buried there in a little cemetery plot called the Barnaby Lot. This consisted of 4 posts around a depression. Roger said this was common knowledge around town. Hopefully, Randy Wallace will do the excavation work, since he knows where the burial plot is.

School Board

Ted Carter:

Ted attended the AOS 77 budget meeting, along with two others. At the meeting, the proposed budget was voted down. Ted is the alternate representative from Alexander to the AOS board. Amanda will not be running again. The budget was discussed, but came to no conclusions, except that modifications need to be made.

Ted will not be able to attend the next AOS 77 meeting but Amanda will attend. It will be on March 18 at 6:00 PM at Pembroke Elementary School.

Cemetery

Carl Oakes:

Carl said that he has a price for the trees to be taken down at the cemetery. It will be done by a professional from Jonesboro for \$3600. [See "A"]. He will chip it all up and haul it all away. They would like to grind up those stumps and level the ground.

Kristy is pretty sure that they ordered the sign for the cemetery.

Setting the March Town Meeting Warrant

Ted said that he and Skip had attended the meeting moderator training by MMA. They decided that Ted will moderate the March town meeting and Skip will moderate the June town meeting.

The selectmen in Perry made \$20,000 a year. The Cooper Administrative budget is \$90,000.

See "B" for Article 6 about Town Clerk/Tax Collector/Treasurer compensation

Article 7. Deputy clerk

Kristy talked about Lesliann's pay [See "C"]. Lesliann's pay only comes out of Kristy's pay if Lesliann works for more than \$8,000-worth of time. If one calculates her pay at \$18.50 per hour, she can still work one day a week. Kristy doesn't have her come in in the winter as much, and two days a week in the summer, when it is busy. Ted asked Kristy if this is working for Lesliann. Kristy replied that, "She keeps her cards close to her about whether it's working for her" but assumed that Lesliann would always appreciate more pay. Larry asked if Lesliann could work on Monday (when the office isn't currently open). "If you're going to have two people in on Tuesday, why not one person on a Monday when it's not open?" Skip said that if Lesliann is not needed, then he did not want her to come in to work.

Article 8: Pay for all others

Skip said he had considered the idea of paying people the DOT scale minus 20 percent or minus 10 percent.

Carl said that Larry had a hard time getting people to flag at the relatively high rate of \$18 per hour. Kristy said that election workers are actually paid volunteers, so she will be saving some money by not having to pay payroll taxes.

Minimum wage is \$14.65. Skip said that rounding up to \$15 is fine. Kristy said that she has found people who will work for that much money. Skip said that "we will leave it the way it is."

-Foster's term as a selectman will be up.

-Sue Carter is running again on the Board of Assessors.

-For the School Board, Stephen Seavey and Amanda McDonough's terms will be up. Amanda is not running again.

-For the Planning Board, Larry's term will be up, and he said he will run again.

Kristy thought that for the article to add additional money to the Administrative Account, it should probably be \$15,000.

When asked about TRIO, Kristy said that it is \$5000 a year, but the town went from short form to long form. (Amy Dunn did the data input for the long form for \$12,000.)

Proposed Article 20 Discussion

[Basically, Article 20 was intended for the townspeople to vote to allow (or not) to change the fiber optic cable internet construction loan to a long-term loan].

Skip said that he had a lot of concerns with this proposed article [See "E"]. The biggest one is that this is going to leave the town responsible for \$677,639 that the town hasn't agreed to.

Skip read an email from the town auditor about this. [See "D"].

The payments on the loan that the DBU has been making have been routinely 2 to 4 weeks late. The bank has regularly sent letters to the town office to this effect, which have now become a small stack.

Skip recommended that the Board not put this article into the upcoming meeting warrant. Also the Board should send a letter to the DBU. The Board would like to meet with the DBU officials in here. He recommended hiring an attorney to be there. If an agreement about the agreement can be

worked out, then an article can be put into the June Town Meeting.

The auditor is very concerned by the financial side of this.

Ted was very unhappy with what he was hearing and probably surprised by this turn of events. He asked, "Can I get a copy of this letter to our attorney and Danny Sullivan?"

Skip instructed Kristy to talk to Ron and ask first before giving Ted a copy.

Ted said, "I want this done. I have been working on this project done for 6 years!" The First (bank) is waiting for this in order to approve the long-term loan.

Kristy countered that she wants this to be out of the construction loan and into a long-term loan too. But the proposed article 20 doesn't say how the Town is going to pay the loan that it will be taking on. The wording is very different from the article that was voted on for the construction loan several years ago. Why? What if the DBU goes bankrupt because Fidium puts up its own lines and undercuts the DBU? The fiber optic infrastructure of the town would be sold off, but may not go toward paying down Alexander's loan. Then what would the town do to pay it off?

Has Calais transferred its loan yet?

Ted said that Calais, Baileyville and Alexander will all transfer to a long-term loan at the same time. That has been the whole purpose of this.

Foster said he didn't think the article should be on the Town Meeting Warrant as worded.

Ted countered that the fiber optic internet is up and working. Everything is all ready to transfer the loan. The DBU has over \$300,000. It is accumulating that money waiting for the long-term loan to be approved. The longer the town waits to convert the loan, the longer the DBU will have to pay another \$6000 on the current construction loan.

Skip said that, nothing personal, but Ted doesn't have the answers that the selectmen need.

Carl said he didn't think the DBU has been very transparent from the beginning.

David D. said he doesn't understand what is going on with this nor does he understand how the town and the DBU got to this point.

David S. expressed concern about the DBU loan.

Ted tried to explain that the construction is done. Twenty five dollars from every person who subscribes to the fiber optic internet goes to the DBU. It goes to pay down that debt.

Baileyville is having the same as Calais.

But Kristy asked where exactly is that money going? How much of the \$25 is going toward paying down the debt?

All that is known is that the DBU is only making minimum payments on Alexander's loan.

Carl said that he thinks that the Town of Alexander should get a report at least every year, if not more often. The selectmen haven't seen any dollar figures.

[It became clear that none of the 5 selectmen nor the Town Treasurer were comfortable with the circumstances of the Town's financial relationship with the DBU.]

Motion to not include the proposed DBU article 20 in the Annual March Town meeting by Skip and 2nd by Foster

Voting: Unanimous

Ted reminded the selectmen that on August 24, 2020 the townspeople voted 60 to 11 to approve this concept. The town is in this no matter what. Skip said that the selectmen have an obligation to know where the town's money is going and coming from. As far as the DBU is concerned, the selectmen and town treasurer do not know currently know this or see how this will work to their satisfaction.

Ted said that the DBU has to pay for poles. The DBU has to pay insurance. (It recently changed to a cheaper insurance provider). Bill Barnett and Riverside Electric fix this and maintain it.

Kristy again emphasized that she wants to make sure that the money that is made is going toward paying down this debt.

Ted said that is what the bank goes for. The bank, The First, has been good to the DBU. The DBU's lawyers, Eaton Peabody, came up with the loan.

Skip said that he would like to meet with DBU officers: people who can answer the questions and who can talk finances. Kristy said that she would like to have Danny Sullivan, DBU President, Crystal Gallina, in charge of finances, and Bill Barnett, Network Operator.

Skip and Kristy had sent a note to MMA and gotten a list of attorneys that practice municipal law. Skip said he would like permission to do preliminary

work to find a lawyer to assist the Town with this. Some lawyers in Calais are Mahar and Clark. There is also Talbert & Talbert in Machias.

Motion for the Board of Selectmen to seek legal counsel in order to clarify the contract between the Town of Alexander and the Downeast Broadband Utility by Skip and 2nd by Carl.

Voting: 4 for, Foster abstains for reason of dislike of the options for lawyers in Calais

Skip thought that the town would have a lawyer there for that meeting.

Ted was concerned, saying that if the Town has a lawyer there, then the DBU should bring a lawyer, which would cost the DBU and the town thousands of dollars that could have been spent on something else. He asked if he could try to arrange with the 3 people to be at the meeting without the lawyers. Skip said that before anything is signed, the town should have legal advice. "We need to cover ourselves."

Skip's neighbor Geoffrey Johnson, was also mentioned, who has been working on taking the Bar Exam, but not sure if he passed it yet.

[Much more discussion ensues, which Skip asks to put an end to for the sake of time and getting things done in the meeting.]

Ted said that he will call Danny Sullivan. He asked for a letter of exactly what the selectmen want to know from the DBU.

Ted will not be in town on the 18th for the DBU meeting, so he will send those questions along to the DBU Board.

Motion to approve the warrant for the March 2025 Town Meeting by Foster and 2nd by Carl.

Voting: Unanimous

Motion to adjourn by Foster at 7:48 PM

Voting: Unanimous.

“A”

Nor' East Tree Care
PO Box 123
Jonesboro ME 04648

631803

Statement	DATE	TERMS
	Monday 1/13/2025	Bid
TO		
Carl Oakes		

IN ACCOUNT WITH
Alexander Cemetery

Please consider this price for removal
of 6 trees listed @ Alexander cemetery

	Clump of 4 Spruce			
	1 maple with dead branches and limbs			
	1 spruce/fir located in back corner near bank			
				1 work Day → 3600
	- Crew of 3 or more			
	- climbing for safe removal			
	- chipping brush			
	- hauling wood			

CURRENT	OVER 30 DAYS	OVER 60 DAYS	TOTAL AMOUNT
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B

Last year Insurance was \$2951.46 monthly or \$35,417.52

Currently insurance is 3,203.83 a month for my family. Up 8.55%

3203.83

X 12

\$38,445.96

~~35417.52~~

33028.44

Last year my salary was 1246.15 bi weekly

1246.15

X 26

\$32,400.00

A 2% pay increase would be an additional 648 a year or \$25 per paycheck - \$33,048.00

A 2.5% pay increase would be an additional 810 a year or \$31.15 per paycheck - \$33,210.00

A 6% pay increase would be an additional 1944 a year or \$74.77 per paycheck - \$34,344.00

A 6.9% pay increase would be an additional 2235.60 a year or \$95.98 per paycheck - \$34635.60

PAY

The AOS personnel are getting 6.5% raises and 23% increase in insurance and Special Ed director is getting a 7.3% raise and 8.4% increase in insurance.

AES teachers are receiving a 6.9% pay increase and 6.6% increase in insurance

AES support staff are receiving a 9.4% pay increase and 4.5% increase in insurance

AES Special Ed Teacher is getting 6.6% pay increase and 5% increase in insurance

Overall an average of 6.98% increase in pay, and 5.37% increase in insurance for AES and the AOS has an average of 6.9% increase in pay, and 15.7% increase in insurance

C

Deputy

Currently the deputy makes \$18/hr and has a cap of \$8,000

A 2.5% raise ~\$0.50

she can work 1 day a week at \$18.50 and earn \$7,696

A \$1.00 raise (\$19.00/hr) she could work 1 day a week and come in at 7904

Last year the deputy used \$7547.00

alexander.taxcollector@gmail.com

From: Ronald Bean <ron@wadmancpa.com>
Sent: Monday, March 3, 2025 3:55 PM
To: alexander.taxcollector@gmail.com
Subject: Re: DBU Loan



Hey Kristy

I can't tell if they are asking the Town to take on this debt that is suppose to be their responsibility or if they are just asking the Town to guarantee the debt, but they are trying to put the Town on the hook for the debt in one way or another. So essentially if it is a guarantee, then if they fail to make debt payments, it will be the Town's responsibility to pay it.

And I don't recall seeing any sort of agreement where the Town agreed to doing this. It was suppose to be their assets, their debt. And they utilize the payments for the service to the Townspeople to pay the debt. I didn't agree with how the original debt was handled and see no reason why you as a Town would agree to this. If they want this, then it seems to me that ownership of the assets also becomes the Town's.

I would definitely be asking for clarification on this and what it means from your attorney before including it as a warrant article and having them advise you. But the Town should be careful on this in my opinion. Makes me wonder why. If the bank is requiring a guarantee from the Town to issue the debt to them because they don't trust DBU to make the payments or what is really happening here.

Thanks
Ron

On Thu, Feb 27, 2025 at 2:06 PM <alexander.taxcollector@gmail.com> wrote:

The DBU just sent me an article to be included in the town warrant, and a treasurers statement to sign. I don't understand them, can you take a look.

Kristy Crawford

Town of Alexander

Tax Collector/ Treasurer/ Clerk

50 Cooper Rd

Article [X]. To see if the residents will vote to authorize the Town to extend its credit in an amount not to exceed \$406,776, whether through the issuance of one or more general obligation bonds of the Town, one or more revenue obligation bonds of the Town, a municipal guarantee of debts of the Downeast Broadband Utility, a similar instrument or transaction or any combination of the above, any of which may be callable bonds, the proceeds to be used to finance or guarantee the Town's portion of the debts of the Downeast Broadband Utility as set forth in the Interlocal Agreement dated 10/14/2020, including but not limited to costs associated with constructing and equipping a municipal broadband network operated by Downeast Broadband Utility.

ARTICLE [X] TREASURER'S FINANCIAL STATEMENT
[30-A-M.R.S.A. §5772 (2-A)]

Total Town Indebtedness	
A. Bond principal outstanding and unpaid:	\$0
B. Bonds authorized and not yet issued:	\$0
C. Maximum Debt to be incurred if this article is approved:	\$406,776
Total:	\$406776

Estimated Debt Service Costs:

<u>Principal</u>	<u>\$406,776</u>
<u>Estimated Interest rate:</u>	<u>5.61%</u>
<u>Estimated term:</u>	<u>20 years</u>
<u>Max. Estimated interest:</u>	<u>\$270,863</u>
<u>Total Debt Service to be Paid through Maturity:</u>	<u>\$677,639</u>

Validity:

The validity of the bonds and of the voters' ratification of the bonds may not be affected by any errors in the above estimates. If the actual amount of the total debt service for the bond issue varies from the estimate, the ratification by the electors is nevertheless conclusive and the validity of the bond issue is not affected by reason of the variance.

Town Treasurer