

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES**

June 20, 2005

PRESENT:

Mark Kaplan, Chair, Board of Selectmen
Douglas W. Lyon, Selectman
Jessie Levine, Town Administrator

ABSENT:

Ruth I. Clough, Selectman

OTHERS PRESENT:

DJ Lavoie, New London resident
Carolyn Dube, Argus Champion

Chair Kaplan called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Lyon moved to approve the minutes of June 13, 2005, subject to changing one word that he said was not a word. Chair Kaplan seconded and approved 2-0.

Elkins Planning Proposal: The Selectmen reviewed a proposal from the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region Planning Commission to perform a planning study with public involvement for the Elkins area. Mr. Lyon said that the proposal for \$6900 seemed like a modest cost to address what will be a significant issue for New London. He said that a study of Elkins would help the Town and future Boards of Selectmen plan for the future. Chair Kaplan said that he agrees that a study is needed; the only thing in the proposal he questions is whether UVLSRPC should be paid to do the advertisements and mailings or whether that should remain in-house. Ms. Levine said that was certainly something that the Selectmen's Office could do. Chair Kaplan asked her to talk to Ken McWilliams to determine how much of a cost savings that would be for the Town, but estimated that it would bring the proposal into the \$5-6000 range. Mr. Lyon made a motion to accept the proposal pending Ms. Levine's conversation with Mr. McWilliams. Chair Kaplan agreed and the proposal passed 2-0.

Chair Kaplan noted that a number of Elkins residents have lived their entire lives there and any changes would have a dramatic impact on them. He said that even if the study results in a brilliant plan, it would fail without the support of long-time residents. Mr. Lyon agreed that folks who know the area will be important in the process to make suggestions.

Ms. Lavoie asked how this study would relate to the Master Plan. Ms. Levine said that schedule-wise, it is ahead of the Master Plan and will focus on a smaller area. The Master Plan is a tool for the Planning Board and the Town as it plans for the future of the Town, particularly growth and zoning issues. The proposal for the Elkins study includes discussions with the Planning Board, and it is likely that the Elkins study would be incorporated into the Master Plan and would help the Planning Board consider any changes needed in Elkins. She said that the Elkins study is for the Selectmen to consider the use of Town-owned property in Elkins and whether there is a need for additional public space and a new location for the Post Office. Chair Kaplan said that the request for a proposal for this study was driven in part by the Mesa building coming up for sale and the discussions about whether the Town should seek to purchase the building. Mr. Lyon said that the Selectmen had taken the Elkins question to the Budget

Committee and Citizen's Advisory Committee, and those groups felt that any decision should be made in the context of a broader plan. Ms. Levine suggested that the Selectmen meet with Planning Board Chair Karen Ebel early in the process, to discuss the relationship between this study and the Master Plan and to make sure that the study did not happen in a vacuum. Chair Kaplan asked Ms. Levine to set up the meeting, and added that this study would not eliminate the Planning Board function.

Comcast: Ms. Levine referred to a letter and binder received from Comcast regarding the pending purchase of Adelphia by Comcast and the planned transfer of New London's cable franchise to Comcast. Ms. Levine said that according to the material in the binder, the transfer would happen in the first quarter of 2006 "or as soon as practicable." She said that the letter stated that the transfer would occur with no action required from the Selectmen. However, if the Selectmen thought that the transfer needed their approval or comment, there were forms in the binder to make that happen. Mr. Lyon said that when the franchise was purchased by Adelphia, the Selectmen realized that there was no competition, so this deal will likely go through no matter what the Selectmen say. Ms. Levine said that some of the exhibits in the binder listed municipalities across the country that had objected to similar transactions, but all seemed to still use Comcast's services. Ms. Levine said that she will contact a local Comcast rep to get an idea of pricing that New London residents can expect. Mr. Lyon said that since they are purchasing the franchise outright and the franchise agreement allows the company to set the rates with only notification to the Selectmen, Comcast will probably not commit to a rate now. Chair Kaplan said that the FCC has given the communications industry a lot of leeway and the Selectmen have very little say.

Slope n' Shore: Ms. Levine said that Barry Bradford had written to the Selectmen asking if the Town would cover the cost of a police detail for the parking area that Slope n' Shore makes available to the public for the 4th of July Fireworks, which will be on July 2nd this year. Ms. Levine referred to the Selectmen's minutes of September 13, 2004, in which Mr. Bradford had asked the Selectmen why the Town had never helped to offset the cost of police coverage, when so many members of the public use the free parking. At that time, Mr. Lyon had replied that in his nine years as a Selectmen, no one from Slope n' Shore had ever asked. So, Ms. Levine said, this year Slope n' Shore has asked the Town to pay for that coverage.

Mr. Lyon said that this is a public event attended by a large number of citizens, and he thinks the Town should provide the police assistance. Chair Kaplan agreed.

Painting Projects: Ms. Levine said that she had received two painting bids and expected at least one more by the end of the day today. She asked the Selectmen if they would delegate the decision on the paint bids to her so that contractors could be notified this week. Mr. Lyon and Chair Kaplan were unanimous in their approval to authorize Ms. Levine to award the bids as appropriate.

Northeast Shakespeare Ensemble: Ms. Levine said that she received an e-mail from Patricia Denny of the Northeast Shakespeare Ensemble (NESE). NESE will be rehearsing and performing at Whipple Memorial Town Hall in August, and Ms. Denny had questions about signage. In addition, she asked for Board of Selectmen approval to set up a table at the Information Booth on Saturday, July 23 and Saturday, August 9, 2005, for the sale of tickets to their performance. The Board of Selectmen approved NESE's request pending the approval from the Chamber of Commerce.

Rowell Hill Letter: Ms. Levine referred to a draft letter to residents in the Rowell Hill neighborhood regarding speeding and traffic signs. The Board of Selectmen approved the letter as written. Mr. Lyon said that he would like to see more use of the radar signboard, since the information has been so valuable on Rowell Hill. Chair Kaplan agreed, and the Selectmen asked Ms. Levine to have the sign placed on Old Main Street, Shaker Street, Barrett Road, and Parkside Road, to start.

Letter to Department of Revenue Administration: Ms. Levine referred to a draft letter to the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) appealing the DRA's decision not to allow the Town to use revenue from the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund to offset assessing costs. Ms. Levine said that she is waiting to receive comments from Matt Upton of Upton & Hatfield. The Board of Selectmen approved the letter pending comments from Mr. Upton.

Letter to David Hitchcock: The Selectmen approved Ms. Levine's letter to David Hitchcock.

Joint Board Update: Ms. Levine said that after almost 2 ½ hours, the Joint Board decided not to hire either of the two final candidates for the Joint Assessor position, but to instead increase the offered salary to \$85,000 and re-advertise the position. She said that both of the candidates were excellent but that the Board wanted to make sure it had the best possible person for the job. She said that salary range would be more in line with some of the larger towns and small cities in New Hampshire. Mr. Lyon said that he understands the decision to raise the salary and that it will make the position more competitive while still saving money for the three towns.

Mr. Lyon asked if the Joint Board would consider assessing candidates from out-of-state, and Ms. Levine said that they would consider qualified candidates. She said that the ideal would be someone in-state who could "hit the ground running," but the Board decided not to rule out out-of-state candidates.

Ms. Levine said that she will be meeting later in the morning with Joe Lessard of Municipal Resources, Inc., to discuss an extension of MRI's contract, since the assessor position will now be open until September. She asked the Board of Selectmen for permission to overspend the assessing budget line, since the Town cannot spend from the Revaluation Capital Reserve Fund until it hears back from the DRA. The Selectmen approved the request to overspend.

There being no further public business, Chair Kaplan moved to go into non-public session to discuss a personnel matter pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a). Second Lyon. Roll call vote: Lyon – yes; Kaplan – yes.

Upon returning to public session, Chair Kaplan moved to seal the minutes of the non-public session for one-year. Second Mr. Lyon and approved 2-0.

SIGNATURES:

Building Permits:

- Edgar & Cathleen Gerwig, 489 Bunker Road (Map 63, Lot 5), permit to construct an overhang over front door – Approved (Permit 05-059)

Sign Permits:

- Temporary Sign Permit Application from New London Hospital Auxiliary for sign at entrance to Kearsarge Regional Middle School advertising Hospital Days Book Sale on August 5 & 6 – Approved
- Permanent Sign Permit Application from Tammy Williams for New London Hair Studio at 188 Main Street (Map 73, Lot 2) – Approved

Other Items for Signature:

- Disbursement Voucher for the week of June 20, 2005

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- Municipal Agreement between the Town of New London and the NH Department of Transportation for Newport/County Road sidewalks and intersection improvement for fiscal year 2005-2007 – Approved

There being no further business, the Board of Selectmen voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:10 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie Levine
Town Administrator