

**NEW LONDON PLANNING BOARD  
WORK SESSION  
MARCH 10, 2009**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Karen Ebel (Chairman), Tom Cotrill (Vice-Chairman), Dale Conly, Clesete Cook, Kenneth McWilliams (Planner), Michael Doheny, Alternate Michelle Holton, and Larry Ballin (Selectmen's Representative), arrived at 7:10pm.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jeff Hollinger

CHAIR Karen Ebel called the meeting to order at 7:05pm. Alternate Michele Holton was asked to sit in for Jeff Hollinger.

**REVISED MASTER PLAN – CHAPTER VI ECONOMIC BASE**

Chair Ebel asked how the PB would like to go through the chapters before them. Everyone seemed to be in agreement with going through the draft with open discussion, picking out the things they liked and didn't like and then going on from there.

Mr. McWilliams, town planner highlighted the fact that in October of 2008, this chapter had been reviewed by the PB through page 27, but that they had stopped before completing the recommendations, due to the fact that the results from the town survey had not yet been received. He commented that since February 20, 2009, when the results had come in, he had reworked some of the recommendations, adding more at the end to try to address some of the items addressed in the attitude survey.

Chair Ebel felt that the PB should address the current economic situation in the plan. She wanted to know if the information from 2006 was still of value due to the change in the current economy. Chair Ebel also asked Mr. McWilliams about the Economic Base chapter. She wanted to know if it is relating what the economic base is, and then trying to come up with a development plan for the town. Mr. McWilliams responded that what they are trying to do is to identify the types of economic development involved (Commercial and Industrial) and decide where it would take place and what kind of policy is needed for the future. Chair Ebel summarized the goal of the Economic Base Chapter by noting that it is an economic development plan based on what we have outlined as our base.

**I. COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS**

Chair Ebel wanted to make a note regarding previous discussions of the town survey review. The survey showed that preservation of agriculture is an important element in the town. Chair Ebel noted that she had recently spoken to Greg Berger (position?) at the transfer station and he informed her that he had 45 people coming in this summer (to do what?). This information made it clear that agriculture is an important part of New London. It also helps to show that agriculture preservation can be an economic driver especially since it meshes well with the rural characteristics that people want to preserve

in town. Chair Ebel surmised that agriculture is an economic driver and not just a preservation issue.

Mr. Doheny commented that it is important to recognize what the economic drivers/needs in the town are.

Peter Stanley agreed on the agricultural aspects of town. He commented that he had recently reviewed the acreage of fields in New London. The town still has just under 700 acres of fields with good agricultural soils. This is more than most towns surrounding New London. Chair Ebel asked if this number included open fields only. Mr. Stanley answered in the affirmative.

Larry Ballin arrived at 7:10pm.

#### **A. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Michael Doheny commented that the town needs to form an economic development committee. Chair Ebel agreed. She remarked that a town-wide committee would be able to do a much better economic analysis than the PB. Mr. Doheny said that he would be willing to start and serve on such a committee. He shared with the PB that schools and downtown shops are the economic drivers for the town. He stated that to many in the town, the “school” has left, since the moving of the middle school to Sutton. He remarked that he felt the district did what was best for the district but not what was best for New London. He compared our situation of a school moving out of a town to a school/situation in Delaware. He noted that the addition of a magnet school to their town had helped to stimulate the town’s economy. Mr. Doheny strongly believed that there is no reason that New London could not take the same measures in our current situation.

#### **B. KEARSARGE COMMUNITY CENTER – STATUS**

Chair Ebel asked about the status of the community center. Larry Ballin answered her noting that it was voted not to pursue the lease option for the old central school building. The original organization is still formed but it is currently not attached to a building. He explained that new members joined the board and found financial prospects, as well as financial liability and costs associated with having the center in that building would equal approximately \$1,000/day in operating costs. Mr. Ballin noted that difficult economic times make it impossible to pursue the center at this time. He shared that a fundraising effort brought in about 800K but it was not enough. Mr. Ballin explained that the board has changed their course for now but still have prospects for future. The building is still the property of the school district and it was noted that it is not being taken care of properly; it has flooded this winter several times, but there has been no action to have things taken care of the right way. Mr. Ballin seconded the idea of an economic development program. A member of the audience, Lake Sunapee Region Chamber of Commerce, Robert Bryant spoke up and noted that he would like to participate in such a program too. Mr. Ballin added

that organizations such as the college, the hospital, the VNA, and the chamber should all be involved. Chair Ebel said that the PB should work with school district to insure proper use and care of the building because it is very important to the town.

### **C. NEW LONDON AS A RETIREMENT COMMUNITY**

Meeting attendee, David Cook commented that as he read the report from the town survey, he noticed that there wasn't any discussion of New London as a retirement community. It also didn't mention the needs of the retired or their contributions to the town. He said that there are things that are being done correctly (Council on Aging) and not done correctly (school transfer and changeover). He strongly felt that the presence of the retired in the town must not be overlooked. He commented that he felt most people see New London as a retirement community. There are many retirees in the community that are drawing Social Security. Perhaps the PB should analyze what portion of taxes the retired pay, and what is their source of income. This information would impact on the need for transportation. Mr. Cook commented that if you are going to talk about the economic base, talk about retired, what they are doing today and what their impact on the town is. Chair Ebel opined that more information in this area could be added.

Mr. Doheny suggested that by promoting New London as a retirement community it may "brand" the town in that regard. The question he asked was "What kinds of business do you attract if you brand New London as a retirement community?" Mr. Ballin suggested that we have to look and see what attracts people to New London to retire.

### **D. ZONING FOR FORMER MIDDLE SCHOOL BUILDING**

Mr. Bryant (LSRCC) asked whether the former school building had to be used for educational purposes. Mr. Ballin noted that it was part of the deal with the KCC. Whether it moves forward with the next lease we don't know. Chair Ebel brought up the fact that there was a small piece of property that was restricted as "education-only" but it was not associated with the KCC project. Peter Stanley, Zoning Board, noted that the PB should think about it not being residentially zoned in the future. He brought to light the fact that when the school is not involved in it any more, it will become residentially zoned. He commented that the building is in the center of town and it is something we should think about.

### **E. ATTRACTING COMMERCE IN NEW LONDON**

Meeting attendee, Gerry Gould suggested it was worth going back to survey questions to decide how to proceed with the Master Plan. On question #2 regarding enthusiasm it was found that there was no great enthusiasm for attracting commerce to the town. More enthusiasm was shown for promoting more balanced aged groups, restricting industrial development, and limiting commercial development. He strongly urged the PB to pay attention to what the public has said. Mr. Gould asked

why the town should try to grow when the people who live here are asking the PB not to be proactive. Mr. Doheny responded that the PB is looking ahead to what we'll need in the future. He noted that there is a need to plan for more economic stimulus and growth. He stressed that the Master Plan is a guideline but not an instruction manual. Gould responded that the town should plan for growth but it shouldn't promote growth. Doheny said that he understands Gould's point but doesn't agree with it.

## **F. CURRENT RETAIL CUSTOMERS IN NEW LONDON**

Chair Ebel brought up the subject of the retail stores. She was curious to know who comes and goes and where they are from. Rob Bryant commented that retail traffic is mostly tourist-based than anything. He wished it was more locally driven, but it isn't. People are not coming to New London from other towns, such as Hanover, NH to shop.

David Cook commented that if the total retail sales numbers were analyzed and broken down, the age group distinctions would be significant. Meeting attendee Virginia Soule commented that people love it here just the way it is. She shared that the reason people retire in New London is because it is a lovely, beautiful place to retire. She noted that it is also attractive because it is close to a hospital. Ms. Soule also opined that a young family in town only has two retail stores that they would be interested in shopping at; the grocery store and Huberts. She believes that these people are not shopping at the little boutiques on Main Street.

Larry Ballin believed that one thing the town could do is to promote small business enterprises in town, whether it be internet-based or not, but that we need to promote shopping in town. Doheny agreed. He mentioned the key tag lines: "Shop Local" and "If you build it, they will come." He believes that the town should try to attract work-from-home businesses. The town has fiber optics and High Speed Internet, which can let people live and work right in the same place. Mr. Stanley contributed that opportunities like work-from-home businesses may be aimed at the retired people too because they are usually part-time or more accommodating to a retired lifestyle. He believes that mining this resource to sell to is important as well. Larry Ballin shared that one of the ideas put forth for the old school is a business enterprise center. He noted that because it is a big empty building, one would only need to get some high-tech equipment and make it into an executive office. He stressed that all opportunities must be looked into.

## **G. HOUSING AT OLD MIDDLE SCHOOL LOCATION**

Virginia Soule asked if the building has to be used for educational purposes. She believed that housing would be great in the space where the old school currently sits. Mr. Ballin responded that the school is owned by the school so that question should be directed to the school board.

A recommendation for the use of the building (school) was made. A recommendation was made to promote and preserve the local economy.

## **H. WIDER AGE GROUPS NEEDED IN NEW LONDON**

Meeting attendee, Terry Dancy made a suggestion that the PB should look towards having a wider age group in the town. He commented that it is mostly a retirement community, but one thing that attracted him to New London was the reasonable retail base in the town. He noted that over the years, some retail businesses have disappeared in the town. Chair Ebel agreed that one of the PB recommendations should be to promote a mix of ages in the town. She added that young people won't come here if we don't offer things they would like. She stressed that "Retirement Community" doesn't mean that we aren't interested in developing the economy.

Celeste Cook came at 7:25pm

## **I. HOUSING, continued...**

David Cook shared that he recently sold a condo for a deceased client. It was located in a successful housing establishment that had been created out of a situation much like the one New London is dealing with currently with the empty school building. Mr. Cook feels that increasing housing would benefit the town and that new housing would fit like a glove for the space in question. He said that a package to fit all six towns who own the school would need to be created to convince them that housing was a good idea and that they would benefit from it. Doheny responded that with housing, the town would get 24 condos. With a school, New London would get 400 families who would bring economic stimulus to the town. Doheny believes that schools are important in our town. Ms. Soule said that she still felt condos would bring in families. Doheny suggested that he wants another school to open in the area.

A recommendation was made to promote more families and housing in the area.  
A recommendation was made to promote agriculture.

Robert Bryant added that he liked words "evaluate" and "diversity" which were used in the survey, because it applies to agriculture and economy, with regards to the Master Plan. The Economic Development Committee would evaluate the uses of the school. Chair Ebel noted a lot of enthusiasm on agriculture in the last meeting.

## **II. WAGE AND INCOME INFORMATION**

Chair Ebel asked everyone to look at P. 15 regarding unemployment. The data was from the 2000 census. Chair asked if there was any way to access this information from more current data. Mr. McWilliams responded that he would check to see if there is more recent data in with regards to town and/or county.

### **III. GENERAL SURVEY FEEDBACK**

David Cook asked to review page #2 of the survey. He felt that some of the answers were meaningless or really off the mark. He noted that either the wrong questions were asked or they were answered by the wrong people. The words “Continuing trend as a retirement community” can be interpreted as a positive OR a negative mark for the town. He believed that some discussion needs to be made regarding the validity of the questions.

Virginia Soule contributed by noting that no survey will represent each demographic group. From everything she had read, it seems that people love the town the way it is, especially the scenic aspects.

### **IV. FUTURE PLANS FOR NEW LONDON BUSINESSES**

David Cook extended that the PB should extract a paragraph from each owner of the shops in town about their future plans for their businesses. Chair Ebel agreed but noted that it is hard to get a good response from the business owners. She agreed to form a letter to try and get an idea of future business plans. She noted that the shopping plaza is a huge part of the town and the PB really needs to find out who they are and what their plans are for the future.

#### **1. PROSPERITY OF BUSINESSES IN TOWN**

Chair Ebel asked Robert Bryant if he had any idea about the cash that flows through the establishments in town. Rob said he did not, but he would try to find out. Chair Ebel noted that she was not interested in the hospital or college, but just the retail stores. Mr. Doheny suggested checking with the NH Department of revenue for that information. Chair Ebel asked Mr. Bryant to look into the matter further, and he agreed.

### **V. ECONOMIC ASSETS AND LIMITATIONS**

Chair Ebel asked the board to focus on page 26 regarding benefits to local shopping. PB member Tom Cotrill added that the business community needs to ramp it up and send the message that if people don't spend their money in town, they will suffer in the long run. Chair Ebel asked Mr. McWilliams about items represented in bold within the text. Mr. McWilliams noted that there was no reason for the bold. It was something accidentally carried over from another section.

Chair Ebel asked if the list of Economic Assets and Limitations should be kept and if anything should be added. Mr. Cotrill noted that we should add an economic loss of the middle school. Chair Ebel suggested that the loss of the school should go under limitations. She also asked those at the meeting to look at the Economic Assets, particularly #4 Colby Sawyer College Market, and change it to “Institutional Market.” This way, the plan would outline the college and hospital in one item.

David Cook commented that when the hospital did their expansion they must have done an economic development study. He thought that perhaps they would share their findings with the PB. PB member, Celeste Cook was asked by Chair Ebel if she would feel comfortable looking into that. She said yes.

Chair Ebel noted that Volunteerism is a large value from the retired in the town.

Tom Cotrill suggested adding another paragraph to include the bandstand and it's functions (?).

Mr. Cook noted that the hospital is claiming to be one of the top 10 hospitals in the state. He believes the PB should find out if it is true. He feels that this would be a draw to the town. Mr. McWilliams noted that there has been something written about this with regards to the new expansion. Celeste Cook agreed that this would definitely be an asset.

Chair Ebel focused on #12, "Strong Financial Institutions." She asked if it was true that "All our financial institutions are strong?" David Cook noted that probably the answer is yes. Smaller banks did not sell their mortgages to wall-street but rather kept them locally. He said to find out if the institutions are strong, one would only need to ask for the percentage of retained mortgages. Chair Ebel, noting that Mr. Cook was undoubtedly knowledgeable with regards to this matter, asked if he would he go to the local banks and find out their stability. Mr. Cook agreed. He noted that in this day in age with the economy the way it is, banks should be excited to tell us they are stable.

Tom Cotrill suggested the omission of the Capital Region Development Corporation (CRDC) in the language, as it is not an advertisement.

Chair Ebel asked if an asset to the town was agricultural land. Several in attendance noted that yes, it was an asset. Doheny added that another asset is our downtown area.

Robert Bryant asked about the wording in #11 "High Disposable Income." He felt that even though it was true, it sounds elitist to use the term "disposable income." Mr. Cotrill suggested we, instead, comment on the high support of community charities/not-for-profit in the town. Larry Ballin suggested adding in volunteer hours as well.

Chair Ebel asked if it should be added in the Economic Limitations section about how the town doesn't have a mixed population. She asked if it should mention about workforce housing or if it should stick with population. Tom Cotrill answered in the affirmative.

Chair Ebel asked about #4 in the Limitations section. She wanted to know if the PB felt that it was a limitation that there is nothing near the interstate (gas stations, stores..etc..). Mr. Cotrill added that people buy more when they are here in the community instead of stopping for gas right off of the interstate. He noted that some people like to drive through town instead of stopping off the interstate and getting back on again. He feels that this is not a limitation and it is not a bad thing.

Discussion ensued regarding the Elkins business loop and why it was called as such. When it was created, there was business there, noted Peter Stanley. Chair Ebel asked if Elkins should be part of New London's stimulus. She wanted to make sure it was in the list. Larry Ballin & Celeste Cook said that they will get back to Chair Ebel with details on Elkins as a stimulus for the town of New London.

Mr. Doheny asked to add a limitation. He wanted to add "not having a school."

Celeste Cook commented that we are involved in competitive markets. People receiving prescriptions at hospitals are encouraged to go to Wal-Mart because they are \$4 as opposed to regular prices at the pharmacy. She admitted that we cannot address this, but that it is a limitation.

## **VI. SUMMARY AND VISION**

Chair Ebel asked if what is written is what is wanted. David Cook suggested adding a volunteer sentence. He felt that this would be a great place to show the value of volunteerism in the town and that it deserves to be in the summary/vision. Chair Ebel agreed and noted that there is a strong spirit of volunteerism in the town.

## **VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Chair Ebel asked about recommendations. Were there any new ones and asked for any to be added.

It was suggested that the second sentence in recommendation #6 should be deleted. The sentence discussed proposed amendments to the zoning board which are no longer needed.

It was also suggested that recommendation #8 regarding Appearance Guidelines should be deleted.

Health, tourism and education are assets to mention in a lead-up recommendation.

Mr. McWilliams noted the following recommendations that needed changes:

#12 - Research and development park. In the last draft it was suggested that an appropriate location for such a park be found. The survey results show no majority support at this time and further study is needed. Mr. McWilliams suggested to do part of the Land-Use chapter to develop land-use plan.

Chair Ebel suggested that the recommendation which came from question #7 in the survey regarding support (by about 50%) on specific commercial uses. In addition, the support of banks were just under 50% (due to the recent economic situation). Others agreed that this was not important to put into the Master Plan.

#13 –Fiber Optic System – The phrase “...and at the appropriate time have the town of New London invest in the Fiber Optic System.” The survey showed that 70% of the people supported investment in the system.

#14 – Regional vs. Local Commercial Growth – Suggested that we deal with this in the Land Use Chapter because there was no real direction from the survey results.

Peter Stanley asked if it is necessary to have each of these items in the recommendation section. He noted that we are explaining findings of the survey and not actually making a recommendation. Mr. Cotrill understood the question and offered the term:

“considerations” instead of “recommendations.” Chair Ebel added that after the Land-Use Chapter is analyzed, the board can make a recommendation one way or another. She said that if a recommendation still cannot be made, it will be called a consideration.

Mr. Dancey brought up the fact that the Master Plan is helping the board to look into the future. He said that the town’s approach to the plan will attract businesses to this area. He reminded everyone that the plan is not a description of actions.

David Cook had a comment regarding item #12 - Low visual impact. He noted that the noise level throughout the property near Interstate 89 rendered it almost unusable. He said that R&D could probably use it, but it couldn’t be used for residential. He commented that the emphasis on “visual” in our statement doesn’t take account of the noise level. If someone came along with a visually satisfactory R&D use, Mr. Cook believes it should be taken into consideration.

## **CHAPTER VIII - TRANSPORTATION**

Chair Ebel called for comments. She began discussion with the discussion of the condition of bridges on page 7. She wanted to know the date from which the information was gathered. Mr. McWilliams responded that he was unsure and would find out so that a date could be present with the table. Also with regard to the bridges section, Chair Ebel asked about “off-site improvements” and whether the town has ever considered using the impact fee system. Mr. McWilliams responded saying that there was no longer a need for an impact fee system because the need for those charges to be collected via the fee has been reauthorized by the state legislature.???

### **A. ECONOMIC STIMULUS PROJECTS**

Chair Ebel asked if there were any upcoming projects resulting from the Economic Stimulus Package. Mr. Ballin noted two upcoming paving projects being funded by the stimulus: Exit 11 off of Interstate 89 to Potter Place, and Exit 11 to 12A North and South-bound lanes will be re-paved. Cotrill expressed interested in Crocket’s Corner being made into a roundabout due to it being a dangerous intersection. Larry Ballin said he would bring it up \_\_\_\_\_ where? \_\_\_\_\_ if given the chance.

### **B. POTENTIAL SCENIC ROAD NOMINATIONS**

Chair Ebel asked where the list on page 8 came from. Mr. McWilliams responded that the list from last master plan. He said that the conservation committee did not want to get involved with this list because scenic roads don't have much limitation – there must be permission before cutting trees, but not much else. Jerry Gould added that there are many trails within these scenic roads. He added that these walking/biking areas can be used to get to the business district. He said that he would like to see more about the trail networks for recreation in the town. Inns and B&Bs should recommend trails to their guests. Mr. Gould has agreed to come up with some words to illustrate this for the Master Plan.

With regards to the area's trails, Mr. McWilliams noted that within the Community facilities and services section, the existence and details of the trails will be covered, as will recreation and the sidewalks in town.

### **C. TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS**

Chair Ebel asked if it was necessary to include the entire table with the accident numbers from 2008 which appears on page 11. The board agreed to take out table #5 and to update Table #4, "Most Accident Prone Locations" which have data only through 2007.

### **D. TRAFFIC COUNTS**

Chair Ebel asked Mr. McWilliams if TABLE VIII-5 regarding Average Daily Traffic Counts: 2000-2007 from the NHDOT was as up to date as could be. Mr. McWilliams answered in the affirmative.

### **E. WINTER MAINTENANCE PRACTICES**

Chair Ebel noted that the Little Sunapee Protective Association worked with the DOT to minimize the use of salt on state roads. This has proven effective with noticeable drops in conductivity levels in the lake. Mr. Ballin suggested that we use broad language noting that the town will continue to monitor, with the state, the runoff from the road into the lake. Chair Ebel also noted that the name of the Protective Association should be changed to Little Sunapee Protective Association.

### **F. TRAFFIC CALMING**

Chair Ebel asked if the board wanted to keep the section on traffic calming. Mr. Ballin noted that he thought the whole section could be removed.

### **G. TRAFFIC IMPACTS**

Board member Celeste Cook asked if the Ragged Mountain Resort reference should remain in the description. Mr. Ballin noted that it should not be removed as their project (of??) is still moving forward at this point.

## **H. MAIN STREET ROAD PROJECT**

After much discussion it was decided to note in this section the fact that a new roundabout had been built and is fully-functioning successfully in the town.

## **I. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

Larry Ballin explained that it should be noted in this section that there are local people offering services and it is fee-based. He said that while it may be too expensive, it is available. Mr. Ballin noted that volunteers play a big part in public transportation too. David Cook said that there are statistics from the COA in the town report regarding volunteers providing public transportation.

It was noted by Robert Bryant that Vermont Transit does not stop in New London any more. The second paragraph should be deleted. Also, the words “in addition” should be removed from the third paragraph.

Mr. Cotrill asked that contact information for Rideshare out. Also, the reference to LID should be taken out of the Park and Ride Facility section.

## **J. ISSUES**

#1. Mr. Cotrill suggested changing the text from second sentence to state that ...”local officials has begun to meet to identify and attempt to improve the safety of the intersection.”

#10 – Delete this issue regarding weekend traffic due to Mt. Sunapee peak time of operation.

#3 – The text “main street needs to be reconstructed” should be changed. Some of this has already been done. Keep the section regarding bike lanes and burying the utilities.

#5 – Delete this issue regarding methods to slow down vehicles.

#18 – Delete this issue regarding transportation needs of disadvantaged, seniors and Disabled not being adequately met at present time.

#19 – Delete this issue regarding evaluating road conditions and prioritizing repair/maintenance needs.

#14 – Delete this issue regarding scenic road designations.

## **K. GOALS**

Mr. Ballin and Celeste Cook discussed the wording in the goals section. Mr. Ballin said that it should be stressed as “transportation infrastructure” not transportation

system. It was decided that transportation “system” may make people think of public busses and the like.

## **L. RECOMMENDATIONS**

#7 – Delete this recommendation having to do with a public bus service starting to serve the greater New London area. Also, remove # 7 in the Issues section.

#6 – This recommendation should have the wording changed to “Manchester regional airport and other regional transportation hubs” as opposed to just one location (Manchester-Boston Regional Airport).

#4 – The first sentence regarding sidewalks, trails and bicycle routs should be kept. The rest should be deleted.

#7 Should a recommendation be a feasibility of studying public transportation in the area. (survey results suggest people are interested in this).

#21 Remove this entire section. Mr. Cotrill noted that there is a lot of space used in this section for parking. He wondered if it is really a big problem. Mr. McWilliams explained that this information came from a parking and traffic study done by the regional planning commission in 2004. Larry Ballin suggested that it could be removed. All agreed.

**A MOTION was made to accept the minutes of the February 24, 2009 Planning Board Meeting. MOVED (Conly), SECONDED (Holton).**

**UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT**

Chair Ebel announced that Dale Conly and Celeste Cook are leaving the Planning Board, as their terms are up March 31, 2009. Their last meeting will be March 24, 2009.

Chair Ebel will also be stepping down as Chairman and Tom Cotrill will be nominated as chairman.

Larry Ballin will be replaced in upcoming meeting as he is moving to School Board Chair.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:25pm