

TOWN OF NEW LONDON  
CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
SEPTEMBER 15, 2007

PRESENT:

Larry Ballin (Selectman), Peter Bianchi, Barbara Brown, Bill Clough, Sue Clough (Board of Selectmen, Chair), Celeste Cook, Rip Cross, Mike Doheny, David Dunning, Karen Ebel (Planning Board, Chair), Jack Harrod, Mark Kaplan (Selectman), Harmon Lewis, Sue Little, Ken McWilliams (Town Planner), Bob MacMichael, Noel Weinstein and Barry Wright.

Chair Clough opened the meeting at 7:40 AM.

1. Master Plan Update - Chair Clough introduced Ken McWilliams, New London's Town Planner, and Karen Ebel, Planning Board Chair, who were present to discuss the Master Plan Update Process.

Mr. McWilliams advised all present that the Planning Board is about to begin their process for updating the 1998 Master Plan. To begin this process they will host three workshops to get public input on various subjects and topics. The first workshop will be held on Friday, October 12 from 7 to 9 PM at the Kearsarge Community Presbyterian Church. This workshop will discuss the basics of a Master Plan, the accomplishments of the 1998 Master Plan and growth trends and projections. The second workshop will be held on Saturday, October 13 from 8:30 AM to 4 PM at the Church. This workshop will discuss the future growth exercise, the envisioning growth exercise and the facilitated discussion groups by topic. The third and final workshop will be held on Saturday, December 1 from 8:30 to 11:30 AM. This workshop will discuss the vision statement for the Master Plan.

Mr. McWilliams outlined the course of events that the Planning Board will follow to complete the Master Plan update. The Board will go through the Master Plan chapter by chapter and hold a public forum in 2009 for revisions and a public hearing for approval.

Mr. Weinstein asked if there was anything from the 1998 Master Plan that will need to be included in the updated version, such as things that have not been finished. Mr. McWilliams said that as the Board goes through the Master Plan they will look at what tasks have been completed and which ones have not. As they find the ones that have not been completed; the Board will compare them to the public input and see if they need to be brought forward in the updated Master Plan.

Mr. Ballin advised that copies of the Master Plan are available downstairs in the Selectmen's office, and it is his hope that there is one at Tracy Memorial Library for everyone to review.

Ms. Ebel stated that she believes the Planning Board has completed many of the items in the 1998 Master Plan. Mr. Markoff asked for an example. Ms. Ebel advised that the Planning Board is currently working on updating the subdivision regulations.

Mr. Harrod told Mr. McWilliams that he believes that the new Energy Committee should be actively involved in the updating of the Master Plan.

Mr. Bianchi noted that the Planning Board finalizes and approves the Master Plan, but the Master Plan is not a regulation, but more of a guideline for the Town. Mr. McWilliams agreed and said that the Master Plan primarily deals with the growth and expansion of the Town. Mr. Bianchi then asked if the Planning Board updated the Master Plan regularly. Mr. McWilliams said no, the Master Plan has not been updated since 1998.

Mr. Clough asked if the Town uses Smart Growth to create new guidelines. Mr. McWilliams said that Smart Growth is a State program, but the Town uses its guidelines.

Mr. Cross asked how the Planning Board expects the survey to get a proper representation of the Town. Mr. McWilliams stated that the Planning Board will use the Grand List (a list of all the property owners in New London), Voters Registration List and the Absentee Ballot Requests to try and get an adequate blend of the population. Questions on the survey will include ones such as: Do you live in New London year round, part time, or not at all. Do you own property in New London or do you rent?

Mr. Cross asked if the survey will be constructed of questions that will be formulated at the workshops. Mr. McWilliams said that yes, each group will be assigned a topic in which they will identify various issues regarding the topic. Their concerns will then be integrated into the survey.

Mr. Cross asked how the Planning Board expects to motivate people to come to the workshops. Mr. McWilliams said that many believe that the Presbyterian Church may not have enough room for all those who will attend. Mr. Ballin reminded all who were present that if one group comes to the workshops and becomes very vocal then their ideas and concerns will be pushed through, so if you have a concern or idea then you need to be there to voice your opinion. Mr. Markoff asked if the Master Plan would then be poised on that one vocal group's issue. Ms. Ebel said no, that this is an evolutionary project that will take over one year to complete, everyone is more than welcome to come and share their opinions. Ms. Cook added that the public is also invited to come to the Planning Board meetings.

Mr. MacMichael said he believes that the church will be a great place to hold these workshops and thanked Mr. McWilliams, Ms. Ebel and any other Planning Board member present for creating these workshops.

Mr. Wright asked how Mr. McWilliams plans to get in touch with the "reverse seasonal residents" (those who go away in the summer and stay in New London during the winter). Mr. McWilliams said that if anyone has information they would like to contribute then the information will be on the Town website and the Town email list. It is important that the Planning Board keeps the public well informed.

Mr. Weinstein asked if the Planning Board had invited groups of interest like Colby-Sawyer College, New London Hospital and Hannaford's, for example. Mr. McWilliams said that the Board had discussed the idea, but had not extended a special invitation; of course these groups are more than welcome to attend. Mr. Weinstein stated that it might be a good idea to invite them so they do not cross-plan with the Town. Mr. McWilliams repeated himself stating that they are welcome at the workshops but no special invitation will be sent.

Chair Clough stated that after meeting with the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission they have shown interest in providing input to the Town. Mr. Kaplan added that outside forces shape the Town. They put pressure on New London, we cannot stop them, but we can manage them through regulations and ordinances. Mr. McWilliams said that the State is currently design an expansion plan for Interstate 93 which will make it easier to get from Massachusetts to New London. Ms. Ebel added that New London is a hub for the surrounding towns. It would be a good idea to include them in certain aspect of the update. Mr. Weinstein agreed and stated that that is why he thought Colby-Sawyer College, New London Hospital and Hannaford's should be included. Ms. Ebel stated that she believes all of the organizations that Mr. Weinstein referred to will be present, the Planning Board is in contact with them frequently.

Ms. Little asked how the Town will handle situations like the sale of the New London shopping center. Mr. McWilliams said she was unsure how to answer her question, but he can say that the owner has been in to see how they could re-subdivide the property.

Mr. Dunning stated that he believe the Town needs to look at Exit 9 off of Interstate 89 which has seen major boom in the past ten years, this could quite possibly happen at Exit 11. Mr. McWilliams stated that in 1998 there was discussion regarding commercial development, actually there was considerable amounts of discussion regarding the topic. He added that areas around Exit 11 and 12 are now zoned for residential use only, so no commercial use would be permitted. It is up to the residents of New London to keep the commercial growth in the downtown area.

Ms. Ebel added that during the last Master Plan revision, there was a huge community consensus to keep the commercial zone as it is, including the existing businesses. Mr. McWilliams elaborated stating that the Planning Board will have to look at and see if the Town wants to grow with area towns. If that is the case then they may have to expand their commercial areas.

Mr. Lewis stated that the downtown businesses are very busy during the summer months. If someone were to build a shopping center near the exits then their business would drop off.

Mr. Markoff added that the Planning Board needs to look at the population in Town. If there is a dying out of the child base or a bulge in the 70-90 year old range then that should be taken into consideration. He asked if the expenses and revenues would be taken into consideration. Mr. McWilliams told Mr. Markoff that the first workshop will discuss the growth trends and projections; this will look at the age groups you described. The ideas you expressed are important, you should make sure that you can attend the workshops.

Mr. Markoff continued to add that the Planning Board also needs to look at the dynamic drivers that will make the Town develop, for example, Exit 9 is used for motorists to get to Mt. Sunapee in the winter for skiing. The Board also needs to take a long look at the population to create a well-rounded Master Plan.

Ms. Brown added that the Planning Board should also work with the schools. With the school district moving the middle school to Sutton and the New London Outing Club and Kearsarge Community Center into the old middle school, this will have an impact on the amount of people in town during the day.

Chair Clough asked all of the members present to spread the word about the workshop. The Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board are looking forward to having a great crowd. Ms. Cook asked if Mr. McWilliams had a plan in place if they do go over the capacity for the church. Mr. McWilliams said that he did not, but he will sit down with Town Administrator Jessie Levine and Ms. Ebel to discuss the topic.

Main Street: Mr. Lewis opened discussion on the new sidewalks that will be installed on Main Street. He asked if the sidewalks will have the red asphalt or black top. Mr. Kaplan advised him that it will be black top to match the north side of Main Street.

Mr. Harrod asked if the Town will lose a lot of parking spaces to install the new sidewalk. Chair Clough said that there will be roughly the same amount of parking spaces.

Mr. Kaplan added that the sidewalk will create specific entrances to businesses like TDS where vehicles tend to go where they want, now they will have a designated entrance and exit to the building parking area.

Telephone Coverage: Mr. Markoff opened discussion on the split of the telephone coverage. He asked if the split between TDS and Verizon had to do with the Master Plan or ordinances. Mr. McWilliams said that no, the split in coverage has nothing to do with Town ordinances or planning.

Mr. Markoff asked if the Town could do anything to get Verizon to the customers who would like it. Mr. Ballin stated that Town Administrator Jessie Levine is currently working on a fiber optics network to be extended from Hanover. He advised Mr. Markoff to contact Jessie Levine for more information.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 a.m. The next meeting of the CAC will be October 6 in the Sydney Crook Conference Room in the Old Colby Academy Building.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelsie M. Lee  
Recording Secretary