

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES**

**October 31, 2005**

**PRESENT:**

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Bob and DJ Lavoie, New London residents  
Thomas Brennan Jr., Superintendent, Kearsarge Regional School District  
Michael Warning, Wilmot resident  
Carolyn Dube, Argus Champion

Chair Kaplan called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM.

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Lyon moved to approve the minutes of October 24, 2005 with one correction. Second Ms. Clough and approved 3-0. Ms. Clough asked Ms. Levine to seek clarification from Alan Hanscom regarding the current ratio of sand to salt for winter maintenance and what the ratio would be if the level of salt were reduced.

NH/VT Solid Waste: Chair Kaplan said that there is a meeting of the NH/VT Solid Waste District on Thursday, November 10, and the two New London representatives – Marty Feins and Don McGuinness – cannot attend. Chair Kaplan asked if another Selectmen could go with him, and Mr. Lyon agreed.

Budget Committee Update: Mr. Lyon reported that at the Budget Committee meeting of October 26, the Budget Committee asked for more information on the trends of operating budget and capital expenses over the past ten years and for an analysis of the cost-savings that would follow the purchase of a 10-wheel dump truck in 2007. On the former subject, Ms. Clough suggested that the budget analysis should also report on annual cost-of-living increases and the population growth of town, to put the increasing budget into context. Mr. Lyon said there is also a cost associated with improved professional management of town government. Ms. Levine said she has no doubt that the budget analysis will show increased spending every year, and she wonders what services voters would tolerate being eliminated to reduce the budget. Mr. Lyon said that to save significant funds in the budget, entire programs would have to be eliminated. Mr. Lavoie said it is not a bad idea to do the additional analysis to provide a rational basis for budget increase. Mr. Lyon agreed that the analysis made sense because the more informed the Budget Committee and Selectmen are, the stronger the budget will be. He added that questions posed to the Selectmen come from residents on the street who may have a different way of looking at the budget, and more analysis should help the Selectmen predict what issues will be raised at Town Meeting. It might also help the Selectmen focus the pre-Town Meeting slide presentation to address questions. Mr. Lyon said he would also like to make the Town's website and list serve better so that those media are more effective in communicating information.

Mr. Lyon said the Budget Committee also heard from Ginny Foose and Linda Miller, co-directors of Tracy Library, regarding their 2005 expenditures-to-date and proposed 2006 expenditures. Ms. Levine

said there was some discussion about the manner in which the library budget is administered and how surplus funds are used.

Chair Kaplan referred to the tax rate calculation and asked if there were a better way to communicate how surplus is returned to the taxpayer. Ms. Clough agreed that it is disingenuous to say that surplus funds are "given back" because the taxpayers do not receive a surplus check in the mail. Instead, surplus is used to lower the amount of taxes collected in the following year. Chair Kaplan asked the Lavoies if they had any thoughts on this topic, and Bob Lavoie said he thinks taxpayers are concerned that when there is a surplus year after year, there is no incentive for taxpayers to give additional funds in the next budget. He understands, however, that if the budget is exactly right then the Town can't overspend when there is an emergency. Mr. Lyon agreed that it is a common perception [that the budget should not produce surplus], but said that expectation is realistic. If the budget is accurate to the penny, it encourages departments not to be efficient in their spending because it suggests a "use it or lose it" approach rather than spending intelligently and carefully. Ms. Clough said the Selectmen depend on department heads to spend within their budget and have been fortunate in that regard. She said the Selectmen do not micromanage department spending.

Mr. Lavoie suggested that e-mails containing minutes include not just a list of agenda items discussed but a brief summary of conclusions or decisions reached. Ms. Lavoie said consistent and timely mailing of the minutes would help as well.

Mr. Lyon said the improved website and use of the list serve is an example of professionalism in town government. Ten years ago, these resources were not available to communicate to the public but it takes time and money to do this. Ms. Lavoie said people moving into New London come from professional backgrounds and never before had the opportunity to become involved with local government. This level of communication is one way for people to become more active.

Ms. Levine said she would like to establish a "rumor mill" link on the Town's website, through which residents could submit rumors that they have heard and the Town could respond. For instance, Ms. Levine said that someone approached her recently and asked if it is true that part-time employees were now receiving health insurance benefits paid for by the Town. Ms. Levine informed that person that although part-time employees can now receive such benefits through the Town, the cost is *paid entirely by the part-time employee*, and that all part-time employees who work more than 20 hours are entitled to the same benefits. Ms. Levine wondered if an "ask us" link on the website might invite questions and help with rumor control.

This led to a discussion about developing the website so that it has greater potential for two-way communication within town. Mr. Lyon said there is an opportunity to make the web-based interaction attractive and interesting. Ms. Levine said that if the web is redesigned, she imagined that Bob Andrews could still act as webmaster and keep it updated, as he does now. Ms. Levine noted that the Town of Peterborough has a useful website. She will spend some time over the next year talking to web designers and discussing pricing.

Planning Board: Ms. Clough reported that the Planning Board has started to review potential zoning amendments to bring to the voters in March, and that is what they spent time doing at their meeting on Tuesday, October 25. There are currently about 13 amendments proposed, and Ken McWilliams and Peter Stanley will draft the proposed amendments for the Planning Board's review. She said the amendments reflect discussions of the Selectmen, Planning Board, and Zoning Board over the previous year. Ms. Levine said she feels strongly about amending the language regarding the keeping of large animals or multiple animals. The current zoning ordinance addresses feed lots and buildings for more than two animals, but does not take into account type of animal or lot size, and this has resulted in questions over the past year. Mr. Lyon suggested it might be timely to address the keeping of wild

animals and pet waste, both of which have been problems in other communities. Ms. Clough said the word on the street is that the Planning Board wants to ban large animals, and Ms. Levine said that there is no desire to ban animals, especially in this town with a strong agricultural history. However, as the town grows and homes become closer together, there needs to be some thought put into the space needs of large animals.

KRSD Budget: At 9:10 AM, the Board of Selectmen were joined by Thomas Brennan Jr., Superintendent of the Kearsarge Regional School District. Mr. Brennan distributed slides that gave an overview of the 2006-2007 proposed KRSD budget, which contains an 8.83% increase (\$2,129,684) over the 2005-2006 budget. Mr. Brennan noted a decline in student population from the last school year (2227) to the current year (2009). The school board anticipated a decline in the elementary and middle schools, but did not expect the increase that occurred in the high school. The original budget requests from school principals came to a budget increase of 10.3%; the SAU administration whittled this down to 10.3% before presenting the budget to the Municipal Budget Committee, and the MBC further whittled the budget to the current 8.83% proposed increase.

Mr. Brennan explained that 61% of the proposed \$2,129,684 increase is due to salaries. The teachers' contract contains a COLA requirement with an agreed date in October on which COLA is established. On that date, COLA was 4.92%, but the union agreed to a COLA of 4.5%. The same increase applies to administrative staff. Benefits make up another 18% of the increase. Property insurance, life insurance, and worker's compensation costs were lowered due to a change in insurance providers. Another decrease was due to transfers of cost from the school budget to the SAU budget.

Mr. Brennan explained that in 2005-2006, out-of-district special needs placement took a big hit, despite the excellent job by Marie Wolfe to control costs. This year, two students had to be placed out-of-district, at a cost of \$182,000 for one and \$160,000 for the other. Out-of-district placements are responsible for a \$494,395 increase in the budget. Ms. Clough asked about the status of the capital reserve fund set aside for out-of-district costs. Mr. Brennan said that as of this year, the fund contained \$225,000. The fund will be used in its entirety to offset this year's out-of-district costs, and the school board will ask for the fund to be replenished next year. Ms. Levine asked if the out-of-district placements lasted until the student left the school or school district, and Mr. Brennan replied that each student's status is examined annually [to determine if they can be kept in the district], but generally, yes, the cost could stay during the student's entire education.

Ms. Levine asked if the term "voter mandates," which was used in the slides to describe contractual costs, was appropriate. She said the term implies that the voters mandated the costs to the school district, when in many ways it's the other way around. These are contractual costs that the school district must meet regardless of the outcome of the vote. Mr. Brennan agreed that the word choice was not appropriate and concurred with Ms. Levine's suggestion that the Selectmen contact New London's MBC members.

Due to this year's over-expenditures for placement and increased fuel costs, Mr. Brennan said, the budget has been frozen since September. He assured the Selectmen that the SAU had adopted a number of fiscal controls and the costs were not a "runaway train." He asked the Selectmen to contact New London's MBC or school board members with any questions, and offered to come back and meet with the Selectmen again if they had additional concerns. He departed at 9:30 AM.

Emergency Management Director: At 9:30 AM, the Selectmen were joined by Michael Warning of Wilmot. Ms. Levine introduced him, explaining that he had been the first to respond to the advertisement for an Emergency Management Director, which Ms. Levine had filled on an interim basis since Bob Nelson passed away in June 2004. Ms. Levine said that she had met with Mr. Warning and that he seems qualified and interested in serving as Emergency Management Director, which is why she invited him to interview with the Selectmen this morning.

Chair Kaplan asked Mr. Warning what interested him about serving on the Emergency Management Committee (EMC). Mr. Warning replied that he would like to assist New London in establishing a general action plan that is more specific to the town. He would call the EMC together to discuss the roles on the committee and what would happen in the event of emergency. He said that when he met with Ms. Levine, she noted that there are specific hazard areas that the EMC has identified and is in the process of developing plans to address. Those include Pleasant Lake Dam and I89 (hazardous material transport). He said he has chaired a national committee on safety for the last seven years and is familiar with working with experts and creating documents or policies to address safety issues. He is familiar with running this kind of committee, although he has done so for large businesses, not communities. He is not an expert in emergency response, but will rely on department heads who are. He would like to assist them in finding training opportunities and grants for preparation.

Ms. Clough asked how the health officer fits in to the EMC, considering biological threats. Ms. Levine said that the health officer is a member of the EMC and has been actively following biological threats and regional health issues. She said that Bob Nelson and Don Bent, the health officer, had worked together in preparing the regional small pox vaccination plan. This led to a discussion about small localized emergencies vs. town-wide disasters.

Mr. Warning said that emergency response preparation seems to focus on terrorist events, and he said that while New London is vulnerable in that it is wide open and does not have security, the threat is minimal in that there is no particular target here. Mr. Lyon agreed that the likelihood of New London being a target is low, but a global event could affect our population. For that reason, it is fortunate that New London has a hospital to care for the sick during an emergency. Ms. Clough noted the Cricentis' generosity during the ice storm, and Mr. Warning said he would talk to Hannaford management about their policies in a town-wide emergency.

The Selectmen thanked Mr. Warning for his interest in the volunteer position, and he departed at 10:05 AM.

Archives Week: Ms. Levine said that she had received a copy of a proclamation from Governor Lynch declaring the week of November 6-13 as Archives Week. The Selectmen asked her to run an announcement in the Shopper recognizing the Archives Committee and other volunteers.

#### **Building Permits:**

- Scott Fitzgerald, King Hill Road (Map 129, Lot 009), permit to construct two-story modular home with attached garage and laundry room – Approved (Permit 05-137)
- Ryan Qualified Personal Residential Trust, 688 Burpee Hill Road (Map 056, Lot 004), permit to build small garden shed at rear of existing garage – Approved (Permit 05-139)
- Thomas Maloof Trust, 130 King Hill Road (Map 122, Lot 018), permit to build 10' x 14' shed "after the fact" – Approved (Permit 05-140)
- David Sussman, 93 Job Seamans Acres (Map 073, Lot 087), permit to construct various additions for various additions per specifications-new sunroom, garage, second floor bedrooms – Approved (Permit 05-141)
- Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust, 638 Newport Road (Map 045, Lot 001), permit to demolish 17 buildings; 15 of the buildings will be burned over the winter months (December-February); 1 building will be removed in November and another building is collapsed – Approved (Permit 05-142)

**Sign Permit Applications:**

- Temporary Sign Permit for sign at New London Information Booth for the First Baptist Church Holiday Fair, November 19, 2005.
- Temporary Sign Permit for sign at New London Information Booth for November 5, 2005 for New London Outing Club's Annual Ski & Skate Sale from 9 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Kearsarge Middle School Cafeteria.
- Temporary Sign Permit for sign at New London Information Booth from December 3-11, 2005, for the Fells Holiday House Tour.
- Temporary Sign Permit for sign at New London Information Booth from April 15-22, 2006, for the New London Hospital Auxiliary Rummage Sale.
- Temporary Sign Permit for sign at New London Information Booth for St. Andrew's Episcopal Church St. Nicholas Fair, Saturday, December 3, 2005.
- Permanent Sign Permit for Sleeper Corporation, 256 Main Street, (Map 084, Lot 060) for 3 ft. sq. sign stating "Art of Nature" to be placed on existing post (opposite Farmer's Wife).

**Other Items for Signature:**

- Disbursement & Payroll Voucher for the week of October 31, 2005 – Approved
- Application for use of Whipple Memorial Town Hall by Sunapee Kearsarge Intercommunity Theater (SKIT) for auditions on January 9, & 10, 2006, rehearsals on January 23 through February 8, 2006, ShowTime February 9-12, 2006 at 5:30 to 10:30 p.m.
- Local Government Center Certificate of Authorizing Resolution for COBRA and retiree billing – Approved

Chair Kaplan moved to go into non-public session to discuss the investigation of a personnel matter, pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a). Roll call vote: Lyon – yes; Clough – yes; Kaplan – yes. Upon returning to public session, the Selectmen voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:30 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie Levine  
Town Administrator