

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES**

November 6, 2006

PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Marion Hafner, Cemetery Trustee
Carol Fraley, Finance Officer
Donald F. Bent, PhD, Health Officer
Michael Morrison & Kim Foss, Municipal Pest Management, Inc.
Terry Dancy, Conservation Commission
Bob Crane, Conservation Commission
Peter Stanley, Conservation Commission
Bob Lavoie, New London resident
Debbie Cross, Intertown Record
Carolyn Dube, Argus Champion

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Kaplan moved to approve the minutes of October 30, 2006. Second Ms. Clough and approved 3-0.

Cemetery Commission: Chair Lyon welcomed Cemetery Commissioner Marion Hafner and Finance Officer Carol Fraley. Ms. Hafner presented the Board of Selectmen with copies of draft rules and regulations that the Cemetery Commission planned to adopt following discussion over the past few months about cemetery funds, the cost to purchase a cemetery lot, and the allocation to perpetual care. Ms. Hafner said the Cemetery Trustees have raised the cost of a lot from \$200 to \$300 – the first increase that she can remember – and will no longer allocate a percentage of the cost to perpetual care of the lots, since such maintenance is already required by statute. Ms. Hafner said the Cemetery Commissioners compared their fee to area towns and concluded that \$300 is average for the cost of a lot. The Trustees will spend down the interest from the existing large perpetual care fund by paying the Town for cemetery maintenance. Ms. Fraley estimated that the fund is about \$300,000 in principal and has accumulated about \$85,000 in interest over time.

Ms. Hafner said she originally thought the Board of Selectmen had to adopt the rules and regulations and new fees, but she understands that the Cemetery Commissioners have the authority to do so. Ms. Levine said that is her understanding of RSA 289, which allows towns to elect cemetery commissioners that operate independently of the Selectmen.

Bob Lavoie asked why, if there was so much money in the perpetual care fund, the Commissioners are raising the rates. Ms. Fraley explained that the principal cannot be spent as it is held in trust on behalf of the lot owners; only the interest can be spent on the maintenance of those lots. She said the Commissioners raised the rates so they would have more money available to operate the cemeteries, and are looking ahead to when they may have to purchase more land for a fourth cemetery in New London. Ms. Hafner said that after the adoption of the new fee and new rules, 100% of the lot fee will go into cemetery maintenance, compared to 60% allocated currently.

Chair Lyon asked how the Cemetery Trustees kept track of the corpus of the fund versus the income. Ms. Levine said that task falls to the Trustees of the Trust Funds, and said that every year Pat Sheehan distributes interest earned to each of the 700 or so separate trusts (lot holders), going back to the 1800s. This will not have to be done for new lots purchased after the adoption of the new regulations, since 100% of the purchase price will go into a maintenance fund and will not establish a trust for perpetual care.

Bob Lavoie asked Ms. Hafner when she thought a new cemetery would be needed. She replied that there is not an immediate need, but they are looking down the line. Mr. Lavoie asked if a capital reserve fund had been started for that purpose, and Ms. Hafner said they had not asked to establish one and she hopes that a generous property owner will make land available.

After further discussion, the Selectmen thanked Ms. Hafner and she departed.

Personnel Matters: Ms. Fraley distributed a memo to the Board of Selectmen regarding the annual payment of holiday bonuses. The Board of Selectmen approved the annual bonuses in the following manner: \$100 for full-time employees; \$50 for part-time employees; and \$25 for lifeguards and student workers in the Library and Town Offices. The total cost to the Town will be approximately \$5,000. Mr. Kaplan moved to approve the annual bonuses, which will be paid out of the Selectmen's Discretionary budget line. Ms. Clough seconded the motion and it was approved 3-0.

Ms. Fraley then distributed a spreadsheet that reflects the impact of the 12% health insurance premium increase in 2007. There is no increase to the Delta Dental premium. Ms. Fraley said that if the allocation of the premium between the employee and the Town were to remain the same, the impact of the increase to the Town would be about \$51,000, of which approximately \$5,000 is attributable to the Library and Sewer employees. Ms. Clough asked if the Budget Committee had discussed this rate increase, and Ms. Levine said they had not met since the information was received, but it would be discussed at the meeting on November 15. Ms. Levine said most of the discussion about health insurance at the Budget Committee level related to Health Savings Accounts (HSAs).

Chair Lyon said he had done some more reading on HSAs and they appear to be a mechanism to shift healthcare costs from the employer to the employee, and there is no evidence -- due to the newness of the concept -- to support the claim that the benefit will be used more wisely and keep healthcare costs down. He said there is similarly no evidence to support the counter-argument that employees will avoid preventive healthcare and necessary treatment to save the funds for future needs.

Ms. Clough asked why the Town paid 97.5% of the premium (employee pays 2.5%) for a single person, while the Town only pays 89.5% for a two-person or family plan. Ms. Fraley clarified that for two-person and family plan the Town pays 8% of the cost above the 97.5% single plan cost. Ms. Levine said she does not know why the Town pays less of a two-person or family plan than if does a single plan; the decision must have been made by an earlier Board of Selectmen. She noted that towns handle premium payments differently; Newbury, for instance, will pay for a single or two-person plan, but the employee must pay for additional family members.

Chair Lyon said he is comfortable with leaving the allocation as-is and moving the discussion onto the Budget Committee. He said healthcare is a necessary portion of the Town's benefit package and allows the Town to remain an employer of choice. Mr. Kaplan recalled that the Selectmen looked at other plans a few years ago, and asked if it was time to look again at less expensive plans. Ms. Fraley said that the recurring problem with alternative plans is the expense for retirees, which have to be part of the Town's health plan. The increase for retirees this year is 16%.

Bob Lavoie asked what percentage is paid by the employees and what percentage by the Town, and Ms. Fraley explained the allocation. Mr. Lavoie asked if the Selectmen would consider reallocating the cost.

Ms. Levine said that they look at reallocation formulas every year, and the result would be a large increase for the employees and only a small decrease for the Town. Two years ago, the Selectmen reduced the Town's portion by 0.5%. Chair Lyon said any large increase to the employee would eliminate the effect of any raise given to the employee, and he would fall on the side of keeping the Town within a competitive range. Ms. Clough said the Budget Committee will probably want to see what other towns are doing, and Ms. Fraley will copy that information from the Local Government Center's annual survey. Mr. Kaplan said that while the Selectmen want the employees to contribute something, they do not want them to contribute so much that it hurts the employee and does not significantly impact the Town. He said the Selectmen wrangle with the numbers every year and find that the largest cost is the plan itself. The big sticking point for switching to other plans is the effect on retirees.

With respect to the retiree cost, Bob Lavoie said "so what." Chair Lyon said that since the retirees pay their entire premium, they would get clobbered by the premium cost for other plans. Ms. Fraley said that by law, the Towns have to keep retirees on their health insurance plan. Bob Lavoie said it doesn't make sense; presumably competition lowers the cost of health care. Ms. Levine agreed and added that it has not been the Town's goal to find the cheapest healthcare possible, but the best package considering pricing and coverage. She said the two major options are pooling with the Local Government Center or Primex. Primex offers Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, which is still expanding its treatment area. In the past, employees voted against HPHC, even though it was a lower cost. Mr. Lavoie asked if there were other options within Blue Cross, and Ms. Fraley replied that there were. He suggested offering employees a high-cost and low-cost option. Ms. Fraley said that had been done in the past and employees never chose the low-cost option. Mr. Lavoie asked if the current plan is limited, and Ms. Fraley replied that it is in that employees must seek referrals from their primary care physicians and coverage is limited when employees go outside of the plan.

Dispatch Fees: With Ms. Fraley still present, Ms. Levine referred to a draft memo and spreadsheet regarding dispatch fee calculations. Ms. Levine said that 2007 will be the first year with Sunapee Police and Sutton Fire included in the calculation, so she has taken the opportunity to come up with a formula that can be used going forward. She said that she investigated formulas that looked at call volume and population, but the population formulas hurt the towns like Springfield and Grantham, which only use the dispatch center for FAST Squads. She said she kept coming back to call volume as the best indicator of level of use of the dispatch service, but a calculation based strictly on call volume increased Bradford's fee by over \$11,000. She ultimately adopted the idea of a \$3000 base fee, which kept fees level for the smallest agencies, and the remainder of the budget would be allocated by call volume.

Chair Lyon said he had raised the question by e-mail about whether a formula using call volume encouraged agencies to create "workarounds" to avoid calls to dispatch. Ms. Levine said that is still possible, but most workarounds would create more costs for the towns because they would involve hiring employees to answer phones locally, and could create unsafe conditions for police officers who do not communicate with dispatch to avoid calls. She added that since New London is paying 60% of the budget, avoided calls push the cost off on the other towns that share 40% of the dispatch costs.

Bob Lavoie asked how the base fee was determined, and Ms. Levine said she backed into it by using the current fees as a starting point. All towns paid at least \$3000 currently, and adopting a base fee minimized the impact of the new formula in 2007 (it reduced Bradford's increase by \$2000) and minimized the disparity in fees among towns. Plus, it provides a method for incorporating additional towns.

Chair Lyon said Ms. Levine has looked at various formulas over the years, and he likes this proposal because of the philosophies that there is a base cost and the remaining adjustment is based on level of use. Ms. Levine said this year, the same memo will be going to all eight towns, and she hopes that when they

compare their fees to the other towns they will agree with the allocation. Ms. Levine said that in the future the increases will not be as drastic; this is a one-year adjustment to enact a new formula.

Chair Lyon said it is possible that towns will look at other service providers, but it will be difficult for them to find a better service at a better price. In fact, he said it would be hard for towns to find even a lousier service for a better price. Ms. Clough said this seems like a reasonable way to formulate the costs, and the Selectmen approved the approach.

Sunapee Area Watershed Workshop: Ms. Levine said that Terry Dancy, New London's representative to the Sunapee Area Watershed Coalition (SAWC), informed her of a workshop in Sunapee on Wednesday, December 13 at 7:00 PM that he would like the Selectmen to attend. Unfortunately, this date conflicts with an already-scheduled Budget Committee meeting, and Ms. Clough said she is not available on Wednesday evenings. Chair Lyon asked if the area lake associations have been involved with SAWC. Mr. Dancy, who had arrived for the mosquito update, said that some lake associations have participated and are on the circulation list for the workshop announcement. He said one goal of the workshop is to have a broad representation of the population and not just people who are already "converted." Ms. Clough said the Selectmen had passed out information about SAWC to the Citizen's Advisory Committee and had asked for volunteers, but there was no action. Mr. Dancy said he will invite Rob Bryant of the Chamber, who has brochures about the workshop. He hopes Planning Boards get involved because of Master Plan updates and planning and zoning for water resources. He said SAWC hopes to establish uniformity in zoning among the communities around Lake Sunapee.

Mosquito Control Update: At 9:00 AM, the Selectmen were joined by Health Officer Don Bent, Michael Morrison and Kim Foss of Municipal Pest Management, Inc., and members of the New London Conservation Commission. Chair Lyon welcomed those present and said this is the second or third update from Mr. Morrison, and the Selectmen understand from the past reports that the large volume of rain disrupted some of the efforts towards mosquito control, but they had expected a second round later in the summer. Chair Lyon asked, "so, how's the bug business?"

Mr. Morrison said the treatment season was hectic and is continuing, since there has not yet been a killer frost. He distributed a summary of their activities, including testing sites and results, and introduced his colleague, mosquito taxonomist Kimberly Foss, who was in charge of the surveillance program, setting up traps, monitoring data and species, etc. Mr. Morrison said that from May 12-19, there were torrential downpours, and all biological life took a beating. Nonetheless, he said New Hampshire had the best surveillance program of any state, with over 12,000 pools tested for West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE). He said that EEE was found in mosquitoes in many locations, though animal cases were limited to Rockingham County. Kim Foss said that there were no human cases found this year, but with more surveillance activity, there were more positive test results overall. She said that there were also greater numbers of horse and llama vaccinations this year, which may have reduced the disease's impact on animals. There were, however, two fatalities in Massachusetts.

Mr. Morrison said people are taking seriously the warnings and are better protecting themselves. He then referred to the testing results in New London and reported that there was no unusual mosquito population; New London was similar to the rest of the state, including the wetlands along the I93 corridor. He said New London has steeper topology but the wetlands contained the same species as about anywhere in the state. Ms. Clough asked if Morrison worked elsewhere in the immediate area. He said he had emergency permits applied for Proctor Academy and of the Town of Newbury, but was not doing a preventive treatment program like the one in New London. As the dust settles from this year's programs, he will be talking to his client towns about the next steps. He said a lot of towns are investigating adopting mosquito programs for the future as the mosquito populations spreads.

Ms. Foss said there were positive mosquito pools in Exeter, though birds did not test positive. Hudson had this year's only horse case; the more vaccinations made it harder to collect data. Mr. Morrison said that humans and birds are no longer good indicators of the presence of disease. Ms. Foss said that the state has been very actively publicizing this year, especially when positive results are found, and many towns have organized their recreational activities to avoid mosquito-heavy hours.

Mr. Kaplan referred to the testing data from Mr. Morrison and asked what "neg" meant next to the mosquito pool. Ms. Foss said that with every trap set, she would identify the species of mosquitoes present, and then send them to the state for testing for WNV or EEE. "Neg" means that the tests were negative. All tests in New London were negative. Mr. Kaplan asked what that tells them about New London, and Mr. Morrison replied that it does not tell them that there is no EEE, only that there was no EEE among the mosquitoes tested. He said the more sampling conducted, the better chance they have of reading the results, although he added that they tested in the areas where they would most expect to find positive results. Based on the testing results, there is less risk in New London than in other towns.

Ms. Foss said the state only contacts them if the test results are positive. Her staff puts out traps and collects samples, which she speciates, and then someone from the state lab picks up the mosquitoes. She tries to rotate the traps for location and timing, and she is unable to get here every day. The tests give them information about the potential for the virus but are not an exact picture of the environment. Mr. Kaplan said that it is important for Dr. Bent, the health officer, to see that the testing came back negative. Ms. Foss said the testing does not confirm that we do not have the disease.

Chair Lyon said that based on this discussion, he can conclude that the state is more active and aggressive in publicizing the hazards and in reporting any positive findings, and that there are more positive tests this year, mostly in Rockingham County, which could be the result of more testing and not necessarily more presence of the virus. Mr. Morrison said there were positive tests in Hillsborough and Strafford counties as well. Ms. Foss said the first step to finding positive pools is to test; last year she was working in Keene and set a trap in Dublin on her way past a red maple swamp, and found a high concentrate of the *melanura* species and the pool tested positive for EEE. She said she can't say something doesn't exist if she's not even looking for it.

Ms. Levine asked if the company had the capacity to increase its number of clients if more towns were interested. Mr. Morrison said there are now a number of clients within a loop that can absorb additional clients easier now. Ms. Foss said she supervises a number of additional trained people who are dispatched to the towns served.

Mr. Kaplan asked what it would mean if there were a low rate of *melanura* found. Mr. Morrison said that would reduce the town's chances of hosting EEE. Ms. Foss said New London did not have a lot of *melanura*, which is odd because their larvae were everywhere during the spring collection. The rains in April and May washed out roads and mapped sites and affected the mosquito counts.

Ms. Foss then put up a map that showed the mapped and tested sites and the areas where they received permission to treat with larvicide (they did not have a map showing actual treatment sights, but will provide one to the town). Ms. Foss said she has a thick file of records relating to every site, the type of grass, moss, etc. If they are asked to continue with the program next year, she would like to do more site identification. Mr. Morrison said the information on the map will grow every year. Ms. Foss said there were some areas that she had identified where traps were not set, which was disappointing and will be corrected next year. This included the area behind the school. She would like to spend another year to better document the areas where mosquitoes and humans would most likely interact. She said the list of people who wanted sites tested was very useful; they checked the sites and left door tags to let people know they had stopped by. Dr. Bent said the town could make more of an effort to involve citizens, and

Ms. Foss said that Atkinson, Windham and Dover had aggressive campaigns that included their websites. She suggested it could also be an insert in tax bills.

Ms. Clough asked how many people had agreed to have their property treated. Ms. Foss said there were only three negative responses because the property owners' concerns were greater than what she could address and she could not answer all of their questions. Those properties have been added to the "no treatment" list. Ms. Clough asked if they continued the treatment for another year, would they assume they could treat the same properties unless otherwise notified. Ms. Foss replied in the affirmative.

Chair Lyon said the Town would like a map of the areas actually treated, and Mr. Morrison said it will not be a problem to review his forms regarding the application of the larvicide. Ms. Levine also asked for GPS information, which would be useful for mapping catch basins. Ms. Foss will supply the points she logged. Dr. Bent said the state had appropriated money for mosquito control, but has earmarked it for emergency treatment and not for towns that are taking preventive measures.

Ms. Levine asked Mr. Morrison for a proposal for the program for next year, in the event that the Town decides to continue the program. Bob Crane said that the Conservation Commission remains interested and willing to help identify wetlands and other areas that may be off the beaten path. Ms. Foss thanked them, although she said that areas that are not accessible by people are not as high of a concern due to the short flight distance of a mosquito. However, sites that are pocketed between streets would be useful to know about; she mostly has to rely on residents to volunteer that information. She would rather concentrate on areas with higher populations.

Bob Lavoie asked if the program cost was close to the estimate, and Mr. Morrison replied that it was a contract cost, so it was fixed. This year he probably got hurt by the contract due to the storms.

Ms. Levine said she will keep the map and copies of the summary available in the Town Offices for members of the public who were interested in the findings. Chair Lyon thanked Mr. Morrison and Ms. Foss, and they departed.

Whipple Hall Basement: Ms. Levine referred to a letter from Chris Lizotte, architect from Sheerr McCrystal Palson, regarding his \$3200 proposal to redesign the basement and ADA compliant access to the basement of Whipple Town Hall. Ms. Levine said the bulk of the design will be the ADA access, as the space will easily be split into storage and exercise space for the Police Department and public meeting space. The Selectmen agreed that the proposal was a reasonable price and authorized Ms. Levine to accept it. Bob Lavoie asked if the project would go to bid, and Ms. Levine said the law does not require the project to be bid. Mr. Lavoie asked if there wasn't a philosophical requirement to go to bid, and Ms. Clough said she would like to have the project bid. Mr. Lavoie asked if the cost would include furnishings, and Ms. Levine said the construction cost would not include furnishings but that would be included in costs brought to Town Meeting. Mr. Lavoie asked if the Town would be purchasing gym equipment, and Ms. Levine said the Police Department already has some equipment. The Town did not pay for the equipment at the Fire Department; it was either donated or purchased with donated funds. The Police Department may do the same and may apply for a health grant for such equipment.

Fiber Project: Ms. Levine reported that the WCNH.net members met in Hanover on Thursday and concluded that it needs independent advice to help decide between the two major proposals: Packetfront and Burlington Telecom.

Roundabout Update: Ms. Levine said that she and Richard Lee met with the engineers from Clough, Harbour on Friday, and had meetings with Todd Cartier of the Water Precinct, representatives from Sugar River Savings Bank and Jake's Market, and Ledyard Bank and New London Hospital. The design is proceeding and they will coordinate with the Water Precinct to replace the water main along County Road during the road construction so that the road does not have to be opened twice. Combining projects may

also reduce the cost of the project for the Town and Water Precinct, as well as the Hospital if its site work is done at the same time. She said one area of concern was the entrance at Jake's and Sugar River, and they had strong indications that both parties would agree to a shared entrance from Newport Road, which will be safer and allow a left turn into and out of Jake's, which would not be possible leaving its Newport Road entrance as is.

New London Inn: Ms. Levine said she sent a draft easement to Bart Mayer for comments, and expects to hear from him soon.

Building Permits:

Arthur McMurrich, 208 Stoney Brook Road (Map 137, Lot 018), permit to remove section of existing deck, frame in multi-tier deck and replace deck material on remaining deck. New deck total will be 300 square feet – Approved (Permit 06-141)

- Millstone Realty, 40 Andover Road (Map 122, Lot 001), permit to roof 8' x 15' staircase at rear of building and wood storage, add to front entrance 6' x 8'-9" on each side of existing entrance not heated – Denied (Permit 06-142)-Refer to ZBA, constitutes expansion of nonconforming use-Article XX, A,2 and expansion of nonconforming building-Article XX, B,2 front yard setback
- Geraldine Messer, 130 Sutton Road (Map 123, Lot 028), permit to demolish old shed – Approved (Permit 06-143)

Sign Permit Applications: NONE

Other Items for Signature:

- Disbursement Voucher for the week of November 6, 2006 – Approved
- Boat agent renewal authorization for 2007 - Approved
- Notice of Intent to Cut Wood or Timber for Howard-Wheeler Sunapee Trust, 196 Hastings Landing Road (Map 116, Lot 002) - Approved
- New Appointment Cards for 2006 – Recreation Commission - William G. Ross, Conservation Commission - Leslie W. Norman, Dan H. Allen, Victoria V. Koron, Terence E. Dancy (Alternate), Planning Board – Celeste C. Cook, Dale L. Conly, Zoning Board of Adjustment – D. Russell Cooper, William D. Green Jr., Robert A. Foose (Alternate), Elizabeth J. Herrick (Alternate), Laurie T. DiClerico (Alternate), Town Archives – Verne E. Barrett, Constance Reece, Nancy Dutton, Constance M. Granger, Barbara J. Stearns, Board of Firewards – Stephen W. Ensign, Richard N. Brady, terms expire March 2009 - Approved

Tax Abatements:

- John B. Lightfoot Trust, Bunker Road (Map 063, Lot 006) – Approved
- Janewood Trust, 246 Lakeshore Drive (Map 036, Lot 012) - Approved

There being no further business, the Board of Selectmen adjourned the meeting at 11:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie W. Levine
Town Administrator