

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES**

**August 29, 2005**

**PRESENT:**

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Bob Andrews, New London resident  
Karen Bonewald, New London resident  
Jerry Coogan, New London resident  
Courtland Cross, New London resident  
Scott Devoe, New London resident  
Kevin Donovan, New London resident  
Jack & Michele Holton, New London residents  
John Kiernan, New London resident  
Bob & DJ Lavoie, New London residents  
Bob MacMichael, New London resident  
Debra Perkins, New London resident  
Richard Simek, New London resident  
Peggy Theroux, New London resident  
John Tilley, New London resident  
Ernest Welch, New London resident  
Terri Wilcox, New London resident  
Carolyn Dube, Argus Champion

Chair Kaplan opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

KARMA: Chair Kaplan welcomed members of KARMA (Kearsarge Alliance for a Regional Middle School Alternative) and asked who would like to speak first. Bob Andrews informed the Selectmen that those present tonight are residents of New London and are here as individuals, not as representatives of KARMA, even though most are members of KARMA. He read KARMA's mission statement: "The mission of KARMA is to improve the quality of education for students in the Kearsarge Regional School District by preserving schools in communities and providing voters with an alternative middle school solution that includes the renovation of the current middle school." Mr. Andrews said he is one of few people who have interacted with the middle school as a student, teacher, and now as a parent. He and his wife have concerns about the existing middle school, but are also worried about the school proposed in Sutton. He is concerned about the \$30 million cost of the school to a district that is already running on a shoestring budget. He fears the high cost of the new school will impact teachers' salaries, the purchase of textbooks, and the maintenance and repair of school buildings and grounds. He is pleased that the school district is now looking more seriously at the existing school site, though they should have done so sooner. He said that site work at the Sutton site is expected to be close to \$4 million and it is hard to believe the school district could not renovate and expand the existing school and still come out with an excellent product for kids. Mr. Andrews has two primary goals: 1) he would like someone to tell him how a school in Sutton will be better for kids' education than improving the existing building; and 2) he would like the

New London Selectmen, residents, and School Board representatives to have an open meeting to continue the discussion about the middle school.

Richard Simek introduced himself and said he moved to the area about three years ago. When the school question first appeared on the ballot, he asked questions and found a large percentage of people in favor of it. When it did not pass, he discovered that people were in favor of a new school because of the condition of the old school, not because they favored moving the school outside of a community. Research shows that schools in communities do better than schools outside of communities. He found that no thorough evaluation had been performed on the existing site. Now, when school representatives are asked why the school should be built in Sutton, their reply is "we bought the land." He is told that the district has a plan for the existing building, but he hasn't seen it. He also heard that the Board of Selectmen had voted to support moving the school to Sutton, and as a New London resident he is concerned about a vacant building in the center of town. He asked whether the Town should advocate moving the school with no commitment for the use of the old school.

Terri Wilcox said she was in favor of meeting with the Selectmen tonight because the school board representatives think that they represent the school district, not the voters in New London. She wanted to bring her concerns to the Selectmen directly. She does not want an empty building in town. She loves having the kids in town, where they can have invaluable interaction with the community. She can say hello to her friends' kids, and the kids know that their parents are involved. She does not want to give up a school in New London simply because Sutton is an easier site.

Michele Holton clarified that no one here tonight disagrees that the condition of the middle school is awful. Everyone wants what is best for the kids. Her concern is that there was not enough study done of the old school, and it is too critical a question to ignore. Voters were under the impression that all studies and costs were evaluated and Sutton was the best deal. We should not tolerate the condition of the current school, but we need to consider the impact of jumping without a broader picture. Ms. Holton said, "we need to be heard, and have the elected officials listen."

Jerry Coogan spoke from a planning and land use perspective. He said that having a school in the center of town reinforces a sense of community and encourages development in the village area. He said that moving the school to Sutton would be "unsmart growth," the opposite of the smart growth theory supported by planners that encourages development in a compact area where the infrastructure is already in place. New London is centrally located for Newbury, Springfield and Wilmot and has an active community and economy. He suggested leaving one school in New London and building a second school in Warner, which is worth investigating even with the additional cost.

Mr. Lyon asked if it were true that members of KARMA had looked at student demographics and had come up with figures that were different from the school district's projection. Kevin Donovan said he came up with different figures; the school district projected 700-900 kids by the year 2030, and Mr. Donovan projected 620 kids. He said that once the questions were raised, the School Board agreed to create a population subcommittee to look at the numbers. In 2001, the school district said 700 kids by 2012. In 2003, they said 640 kids by 2012. When he asked the School Board why there were fewer kids projected in the second study, they were unable to answer. Karen Bonewald said she had also looked at the demographic study using a different approach. She said that the class numbers in the next four or five years indicate a decline in students during that time period and then an increase again. Her 2030 figures were pretty close to Mr. Donovan's. The subcommittee is going to be a collaborative effort to get the right information. She added that the school is an important part of the community and too important to lose.

Ms. Clough said she is a believer in smart growth as well, and applauded the efforts of those present to get realistic numbers. She said that she has heard the school district talk about plans for the current

middle school, and understands that though nothing is in stone, they are working hard to come up with a plan. Tom Brennan attended last week's meeting for non-resident taxpayers and emphasized the importance of providing a technical school to meet the needs of students who do not go on to college. Ms. Clough said that she is glad that KARMA is working with the School Board.

Chair Kaplan said that at last week's meeting he pointed to an article in *Time* magazine suggesting that middle schools are bad for children and that K-8 schools are preferable. Chair Kaplan said that he does not know if a K-8 school is good for Kearsarge, but thought the question should be examined thoroughly. If no study has been performed to find out what's best for Kearsarge students, then the School Board has not left "no stone unturned." Chair Kaplan added that the Selectmen's hands are tied. New London has representation on the School Board but those representatives are independent elected officials. The Selectmen can give advice, but cannot tell the School Board what and how it should be.

Mr. Lyon said that when Tom Brennan met with the Selectmen, he made it clear that the questions being raised were driving the work being done by the School Board on various cost studies, wetlands surveys, etc. Mr. Lyon said that while he is not an expert in K-12 education and does not have children in the school district, he believes in education and supports whatever educators ask for. He toured the middle school and was appalled at those conditions, and the demographics showed that there were more kids in the school than the school was designed for, causing unsafe conditions. He believes in moving ahead, but based on decisions that are supported by facts. He does not have evidence pointing one way or another, does not have a bias, and would like to see all information possible and then participate in a process that shares that information.

Jack Holton agreed that New London cannot dictate where a school should be built. However, it can say that before an important financial move is made, the voters should have all information possible. The School Board must convince voters that it is proposing the best solution for the kids and the community. It has not shown that it has sufficiently studied the current building, and sprinklers and improvements could cost less than a new place. Voters must be convinced; it has already been defeated twice at the polls. Chair Kaplan pointed out that the last election changed the charter requirement to 60% majority for borrowing. Mr. Holton agreed, and added that he has heard from even more people against the new middle school since March's election. Mr. Andrews said that New London's vote went from 64% to 58%. He attributed the majority votes to New London's willingness to support educational efforts, but thinks that people are becoming more informed now and opposition is increasing.

Peggy Theroux thanked the Selectmen for the opportunity to meet this evening. She feels bad for her colleagues who are working in poor conditions, and thinks some votes come from people who are desperate for a new building. However, she thinks it would be wrong educationally and that renovating the existing building would cost less. Researchers don't support schools in rural settings, and the School Board should not copy that model.

Michele Holton said that she had thought adequate research had been conducted on the current middle school, and she was surprised to find out that wasn't the case. She wants something really great for the students, but wants it fully studied. She assured the School Board that KARMA is not here to make trouble, but has valid concerns that they want addressed. Ms. Clough replied that she thought KARMA had been heard, and that the School Board appears to be doing the appropriate studies. She asked whether KARMA included members from other towns in the district, and was informed that it did.

Debra Perkins said that she is a lifelong resident of New London and her education started in a one-room schoolhouse and ended at Colby-Sawyer. She is not convinced that the middle school cannot be renovated, and offered the Town Office building as an example of a successful renovation. She agreed that the school district now owns the land in Sutton, but said that the land could be turned around and sold again. It is "money in the bank" for the district.

Bob MacMichael thanked the Selectmen for listening. He said he checked with Janet before coming tonight and confirmed that they would be sending no more children to the school. However, what sticks in his craw is how nicely the former state hospital property on Fruit Street was renovated, and he can't see why the old school can't be saved. He worked on the foundation of the middle school when it was new. He wants real facts and figures, and wants to do what's right. Ernie Welch agreed with Mr. MacMichael that the building should be renovated. Bob Andrews referred to a study done by Chris Lizotte that showed that there was room for an addition. Peggy Theroux said that the Town of Hanover was offered money and acreage to move its high school, but felt that it was more important for the school to be in the community.

John Tilley introduced himself as a New London resident who attended one KARMA meeting, but is speaking tonight solely as a resident. He said that nothing he has read, seen or participated in supports moving kids out-of-town, but there has been tons of evidence, from Princeton and others, showing that kids need people in towns around them. He said Sue Clough knows his child is Emma and is in the fourth grade. Kids who are out-of-town need to be guarded and watched, but they are not *seen*, and seeing is enough in town but not out in the country. Before he moved to New London, he lived in western Pennsylvania, where schools were closed and consolidated and it closed down the towns. He said the activity from 500 families has an impact on this town, from Hannaford's to Clarke's Hardware to Arctic Dreams. Certainly, what's best for the children should drive this conversation, but as New London residents we should also look at the potential impact on this town.

John Kiernan has lived in New London for 50 years, and can't think of a time when the school was in such deplorable condition. The Town should put pressure on the School Board to maintain the exterior of the building and improve the dump behind the building. He commended the Town for having magnificent grounds, and said that the school grounds were an embarrassment for the class reunions during Hospital Days.

Karen Bonewald said she has one final comment, and that is to point out the wonderful cross-section of people who are meeting with the Selectmen tonight. She thanked everyone for coming out. Chair Kaplan thanked them all as well and said that he hopes KARMA and the School Board can work together.

Richard Simek addressed comments about the school district's future plans for the old middle school. He said he is told that the school district believes it takes three years to pass a bond, so if plans are not formed yet, they are at least 3-4 years away from being completed. He asked whether it is true that the New London Selectmen support the Sutton middle school proposal. Mr. Lyon said that two years ago, the School Board asked the Selectmen for support and the Selectmen voted in favor. Last year, the Selectmen did not take a position but asked people to become informed and to exercise their right to vote. He added that if a good case is made to voters in New London, people will support it. He urged the School Board and administration to do their homework and present a good case.

The group departed at 7:55 PM.

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Lyon moved to approve the minutes of August 22. Second Ms. Clough and approved 3-0.

Stoney Brook Road: Ms. Levine referred to a letter from Nicholas Baer and Kristin Smith, who had written to the Selectmen asking them to reconsider their decision to pave Stoney Brook Road this fall. Mr. Lyon said that in his opinion, this letter has arrived way too late for discussion. The Selectmen made a promise at the 2004 Town Meeting to pave the road if the Stoney Brook residents would allow the Town to do so on the Town's schedule. Ms. Clough said that the letter raises valid concerns, but agrees that they were all discussed at the time and taken into consideration. Ms. Levine said that Mr. Baer and Ms. Smith moved into town after all of the discussion took place, and asked the Selectmen whether they

wanted to hold a follow-up meeting with residents to make sure their opinions haven't changed now that the road is in better condition. Mr. Lyon said that he is happy to meet with anyone, but said that unless a strong majority comes out opposed to paving, he would not favor changing the commitment that the Selectmen made at Town Meeting. Chair Kaplan added that he would hate to get involved in a dispute among neighbors.

Ms. Clough suggested a return letter to Mr. Baer and Ms. Smith explaining how this issue came about and the Selectmen's commitment at Town Meeting and that the Selectmen could not change their plans without hearing from a majority of the residents on Stoney Brook Road.

AIL Request to Serve Alcohol: Ms. Levine referred to a letter from Betsy Boege on behalf of Adventures in Learning seeking permission to serve alcohol for a Curriculum Committee meeting at Tracy Library on September 21 from 5:30-7:00 PM. The Selectmen approved the request as long as committee abides by the conditions in the Town's Alcohol Ordinance.

Knights Hill Road: Ms. Levine referred to a letter from Jane Bassick on Knights Hill Road asking the Town to post signs regarding children on horseback in the area. Ms. Levine has not yet spoke to Richard Lee or David Seastrand about this request, and will report back to the Selectmen with their opinions.

AED: Ms. Levine said that thanks to grant applications filed by Fire Captain Jay Lyon, the Town Offices and Police Department/Town Hall received Automatic Emergency Defibrillators (AED) for public use in emergency. Jay Lyon will conduct training on their use for office staff. In the Town Office building, the AED will be kept in an alarmed box immediately outside of the Selectmen's Office, so that it will be accessible to after-hours users of the building.

Colby-Sawyer Celebration: Ms. Levine said that everything is coming together for the Town of New London/Colby-Sawyer celebration on September 18 and that advertisements and invitations would go out this week. Chair Kaplan said that the purpose of the event is to celebrate the interrelationship among the two institutions on the occasion of President Anne Ponder's departure.

Budget Committee Recap: Mr. Lyon reported that the Budget Committee met on August 11 and that Barry Wright has been elected chair. In addition, Stefan Timbrell will be losing his residency by the end of the month and his spot will need to be filled. The Budget Committee discussed whether to return to the subcommittee format of working with Department Heads on their budgets. The advantage is that the smaller groups learn more about the department requests, but the disadvantage is that in the past the groups did not perform and lost department head confidence. The Budget Committee compromised by asking Department Heads to make presentations to the entire Budget Committee, and if follow-up is needed it could be performed by a subcommittee. In support of the subcommittee involvement, Mr. Lyon pointed to Doug Baxter's presentation at the 2004 Town Meeting on the Police Department vehicles. Ms. Levine said that the Budget Committee also had some discussion about changing the fiscal year, and research remains to be done on that question. Pat Blanchard and John Wilson were appointed to the Capital Improvements Program subcommittee.

Planning Board Recap: Ms. Clough said that the August 9 meeting at Town Hall was long and hot. The primary hearing was on the Granger subdivision application, and the most important result was the proposal to use a hydrogeological engineer to look at the potential impact of blasting on subsurface water, including abutters' well water. Ms. Clough said that the New London Mini-Mart proposal was referred to the ZBA for a variance for the front-yard setback for a canopy, and then will return to the Planning Board for final site plan review.

Peter Stanley joined the meeting at 8:30 PM. There being no further public business, Chair Kaplan move to go into non-public session to discuss legal advice (per RSA 91:A-2) and potential litigation per RSA

91:A-3 II(e), and potential tax deeding of a property per RSA 91:A-3 II (c). Roll call vote: Lyon – yes; Clough – yes; Kaplan – yes.

Upon returning from non-public session, the Selectmen continued their public meeting.

Town Hall Renovation: Ms. Levine said that on September 1, the Town will remove the antique flags from the display cases in Whipple Memorial Hall. The flags are in very poor condition and are deteriorating rapidly. A textile expert, Deborah Bede, will help with their removal and storage, and Peter Garre has some thoughts for new displays, including replica flags. Also in September, two windows at a time will be removed for restoration. When the windows are removed, either the storm windows will be lowered or plywood will be put up. The Hall will be closed for most of November for interior painting and ceiling work.

Elkins Planning Study: Ms. Levine said that the subcommittee will meet in Elkins on September 1 to talk about the September 17 public workshop.

Assessing Update: Ms. Levine said that Norm Bernaiche, the new assessor, will perform the statistical update and may contract for outside help. He still expects to complete the project by mid-October.

Health Insurance: Ms. Levine said that at the Selectmen's last meeting, they agreed to allow regular part-time employees to buy in to the Town's health insurance at their own cost, and wanted to see the cost of pro-rated insurance coverage. Ms. Levine presented the Selectmen with a spreadsheet showing the cost if the Town paid for part-time coverage as a percentage of a full-time schedule. The cost would be approximately \$45,000 per year. Ms. Levine also referred to an e-mail from the Local Government Center regarding the part-time positions and volunteer positions that could be allowed to purchase Town health insurance with Selectmen approval. The Selectmen made no decision with respect to pro-rated health insurance or volunteer health insurance, but agreed again to allow regular part-time employees who work 20 or more hours per week on a regular basis to buy in to the Town's health insurance at their own cost.

## **SIGNATURES:**

### **Building Permits:**

- John & Kerri Mulhern, 185 South Pleasant Street (Map 52, Lot 15), permit to add two heated bedrooms above new two-car garage – Approved (Permit 05-093)
- Paul & Joanne Lazdowski, 40 Moyah's Lane (Map 103, Lot 15), permit to remove & replace existing dug-in boathouse on Lake Sunapee – DENIED due to Zoning Ordinance prohibition against construction in 50'-waterfront setback (Permit 05-100)
- Karen & Scott Slogic, 111 Shaker Street (Map 99, Lot 1), permit to remove existing covered porch and construct 9' x 12' mudroom – Approved (Permit 05-102)
- Andrew & Jennifer Hager, 93 Sugarhouse Road (Map 35, Lot 6), permit to erect 24' x 24' detached garage and finish basement – Approved (Permit 05-103)
- Alexander & Elizabeth Lutsky, 227 Birch Acres Road (Map 74, Lot 27), permit to tear down existing porch and build heated room 16' x 18' – Approved (Permit 05-104)
- Nancy Carr Robertson Allen, 56 Laurel Lane (Map 89, Lot 17), permit to construct new 26' x 28' garage – Approved (Permit 05-105)

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- Claire C. Lyons, 188 Elkins Road (Map 88, Lot 3), permit to erect pre-constructed shed – DENIED due to failure to meet setback requirements (Permit 05-107)
- Tracy Memorial Library, 304 Main Street (Map 84, Lot 54), permit to remove existing French doors and balcony & install round copper roof – Approved (Permit 05-108)
- Bob and Emily Foehl, 1028 Lakeshore Drive (Map 64, Lot 9), permit to replace existing decking surface with screen enclosure – Approved (Permit 05-109)
- Robert S. Foote, 706 Seamans Road (Map 98, Lot 37), permit to build footbridge over seasonal stream – Approved (Permit 05-110)

**Sign Permit Applications:**

- Temporary Sign Permit Application for sign at New London Information Booth from August 20-27 for Pack 71 Cub Scouts registration, games & food on Town Common, August 27 from 11-1 - Approved

**Other Items for Signature:**

- Application for Use of Town Office Conference Room by American Red Cross, Concord Chapter, for Saturdays, September 10, September 24, November 5 and December 17, 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM – Approved
- Application for Use of Town Office Conference Room by Adventures in Learning for Wednesday, September 7 from 9-11:00 AM, Tuesdays from January 17-February 7 (9:15 – 11:45 AM and 1:15-3:45 PM) and Thursdays from January 20-March 2 (9:15-11:45 AM)– Approved
- Municipal Agent Automation Project (MAAP) Agreement with State of New Hampshire
- Abatement for Susan Fitzgerald, 271 Burnt Hill Road (Map 29, Lot 7), for Land Use Change Tax in the amount of \$10,000 – Approved
- Appointment of Matthew McClay as part-time Police Officer – Approved

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie Levine  
Town Administrator