

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES**

June 27, 2005

PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

John Chiarella, Owner, Norsk Cross-Country Ski Center
Karen Ebel, Planning Board Chair
Bob and DJ Lavoie, New London residents
Debbie Cross, Intertown Record
Carolyn Dube, Argus Champion

Chair Kaplan called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

Norsk Ski Touring Center: Chair Kaplan welcomed John Chiarella, owner of the Norsk Ski Touring Center, and referred to Mr. Chiarella's letter to the Selectmen dated June 16, 2005. Mr. Chiarella said that letter spells out Norsk's situation. Mr. Chiarella and his wife bought Norsk from the Schlossers about five years ago, after the Schlossers had run Norsk for 29 years. Mr. Chiarella said that he has lost money during those five years and cannot afford to continue operating the business at a loss. He said that he and the Schlossers and several other people have come together to talk about what to do to keep a cross-country ski center in New London, because the Town benefits from the winter business. He said that it is hard to quantify, but that based on state estimates, if Norsk grosses \$150,000, then businesses in town gross anywhere from \$600,000 to \$2 million.

Mr. Chiarella said that he cannot run Norsk for a profit at the Lake Sunapee Country Club and has looked into alternatives, such as creating a non-profit foundation to run the ski center. However, the ski center needs a different location, and there are not too many options. He would like to see Norsk continue with some semblance of its former self. There would be equipment rentals, but no retail ski shop. He said that the only site where the landowner will allow access without asking for a million dollars was the Kidder-Cleveland property on Mountain Road, next to the Town's Shepard Pit. The land is zoned Agricultural Rural Residential (ARR), and he has spoken to Jessie Levine about the stumbling blocks for running a business in a residential zone.

He said that the State of NH will approve having Norsk's name on the state's signs on Route 11, but he will need signs on Shaker Street directing drivers to the new location, and would need a sign at the new site. He understands that he would need a major exception from the Town for those signs, and also for buildings. He said that there is nowhere on the Kidder-Cleveland property to park, so he wanted to talk to the Selectmen and Richard Lee about parking at the near end of the Shepard Pit. He said that the Kidders and Clevelands are amenable to a solution involving their land if Norsk can get by the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment.

In addition, the foundation will have to do some fundraising. He said that basic plans have been prepared, but it is difficult to do more without a clear idea of whether Norsk can use the Pit, have the signs and the facilities to run the ski center from a new location. If those are turned down, then there is no use in going

forward with the foundation. He added that there are options to move Norsk out of New London, but he would like to keep it here, in the community in which he grew up. So, he is looking to the Selectmen for a discussion on what the Town can do to help, especially with signs and parking.

Chair Kaplan asked why Norsk wants to leave LSCC. Mr. Chiarella said that it was a combination of finances and personalities. Running the ski center at LSCC is more expensive. Norsk met its costs in the first year but not after 9/11 and the bad winters that followed. He said that Norsk must compete against other ski centers in the state that receive support from the state, towns, and businesses. Chair Kaplan said that given the facilities at Norsk, it would seem less expensive to make a deal with Doug Homan or sell the business to him. Mr. Chiarella said that Mr. Homan had the right of first refusal to purchase Norsk and opted not to. Mr. Lyon said that he is running his own business. Ms. Clough said that she is sensitive to talking about people and their motivations in their absence, and does not want to prejudge Mr. Homan's decision. Chair Kaplan agreed that Mr. Homan is entitled to his business decisions.

Mr. Lyon asked if the proposed foundation would be a 501(c)(3). Mr. Chiarella said that it would and that its mission is to provide the opportunity for cross-country skiing on the existing Norsk trail system, and also to have walking trails available to hikers in the summer that are connected to Low Plains. The land could also be used for nature camps. He is getting assistance from other ski centers about setting up a foundation. He said that he would like to build a lasting foundation, because in 100 years, we would still want the land available to use recreationally.

Bob Lavoie asked if there would be a long-term land use agreement. Mr. Chiarella said that Mrs. Cleveland has been great and understands the financial situation. She has proposed a long-term lease to make the prospect viable, with the possibility that the foundation could purchase the land in the future.

Ms. Levine said that with respect to Norsk's requests of the Town, it is a bit of a chicken and egg, because the Planning Board will want to know whether the Selectmen have agreed to lease the land, and the Selectmen will want Norsk to go through the planning and zoning process. Ms. Clough said that it will also be important to talk to the Highway and Police Departments regarding use of the Pit. Ms. Levine asked Mr. Chiarella what he meant by "cleaning the Pit area for presentation," which was #8 on his list of requests. She asked whether that meant that the Pit could not be used for its usual purposes. Mr. Chiarella said that he envisions parking at the front of the Pit and entirely separating the Town functions from the Norsk operations. He said that he would like to reroute the trails around the Pit, so it would not matter what the interior looks like. He would like to put a small screen of trees at the end, which he will talk to Richard Lee about on-site. For the most part, he'd just like to clean up the area so that people are unaware that they are skiing around the Town Pit.

Mr. Lyon said that there is more potential for conflict in the summer, but that the Pit is used less in the winter. Ms. Levine said that it is used to store glass and some snow in the winter. Chair Kaplan asked if the shooting range was used in the winter; Ms. Levine said that at the end of the year, the police officers have to re-certify and that has occasionally overlapped with Norsk's use. Mr. Chiarella said that Chief Seastrand was willing to move the recertification closer to Christmas and to weekday mornings, when there are fewer skiers. Chair Kaplan said that it sounds doable, with coordination. He asked if Mr. Chiarella should meet with Ms. Levine, Richard Lee, and Chief Seastrand. Ms. Levine said that if the Selectmen are in agreement, then they should meet but that she would also like to know the Planning Board's feeling before they spend too much time outlining a plan.

Chair Kaplan said that it sounds like the Selectmen are willing to help with the Pit, but Mr. Chiarella still has to form the foundation and raise money to get off the ground. Mr. Lyon said that this discussion is not a lot different from the discussions with the Community Center; the Selectmen are willing to do these things provided other things are accomplished. Chair Kaplan added that even though the Selectmen are

willing to help, it doesn't mean that approval from the Planning Board and ZBA is guaranteed. While the Selectmen would like to see it happen, the Selectmen have no authority over the other boards, and if they turn it down then the Selectmen cannot do anything. Each step will require additional work. Mr. Chiarella said that he understands.

Ms. Levine said that with respect to signs, Mr. Chiarella will have to receive permission from the property owner prior to applying for a variance. Mr. Chiarella said that there is a person on Shaker Street who has offered to have the sign on his property, and the other sign would be at the Pit, which is Town property and therefore the Selectmen can authorize it. Ms. Levine said that even though the Selectmen have that authority, they have typically gone through the formal planning and zoning process.

Mr. Lyon said that the other potential problem with a long-term operation is not knowing what will be the need of the Town facility at the Pit in the next 10-20 years. Mr. Chiarella said that if the plan is approved, there will be ways of working around the Pit in the future. He said that the Kidders and Clevelands have expressed a willingness to help keep Norsk open.

Ms. Clough said that she cannot think of a better concept than New London being a recreational center. If we can have established trails and enlarge the program, then that's looking to the future. Mr. Lyon said that New London also has a long history of public/private cooperation.

Ms. Levine said that Mr. Chiarella's next step should be to meet with Ken McWilliams to get on the Planning Board agenda, and then meet with Ms. Levine, Mr. Lee and Chief Seastrand. Ms. Clough said that she expects that there would be a lot of support for the foundation in New London.

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Lyon moved to approve the minutes of June 20, 2005. Second Ms. Clough and approved 3-0.

Non-Resident Taxpayers' Meeting: Ms. Levine said that the Non-Resident Taxpayers' Meeting was scheduled for the next Board of Selectmen's meeting on Monday, July 11 at 9:00 AM. She said that Department Heads are available to come to the meeting to answer any questions that may arise. Other suggestions for the agenda included an update on the cable franchise process, the joint assessor, and the latest school-funding bill. Chair Kaplan asked for more information regarding the school funding and the effect on the town's tax rate. He also thought that the slides from Town Meeting might be worthwhile to resurrect for the folks who were not at Town Meeting.

Planning Board: Ms. Levine said that at the Planning Board meeting on June 28, 2005, Peter Stanley will ask the Planning Board to review the zoning regulations regarding the keeping of animals. Ms. Levine said that the Selectmen's Office has received a number different complaints regarding residential keeping of animals – dogs, chickens, llamas, sheep – and the zoning ordinance does not adequately address the impact of keeping animals on smaller lots or lots with neighbors in close proximity. She said that with the next round of zoning amendments, she and Peter Stanley will ask the Planning Board to consider the size of the lots (or the size of the animals) in revising the regulations.

Elkins Planning Proposal: At 9:30 AM, the Board of Selectmen was joined by Planning Board Chair Karen Ebel. Chair Kaplan welcomed Ms. Ebel and said that the Selectmen wanted to talk to her about the proposal to study Elkins. Chair Kaplan said that the Selectmen's interest in Elkins goes back to concerns about the traffic and beach use, and that the study was precipitated by the fact that the Mesa building went up for sale. In reviewing the Town's options, there were varying opinions on whether the Town should a) purchase the building for a future post office site; b) purchase the property to return to a natural park; or c) not purchase the property at all. The Selectmen decided that the question warranted further review, and asked the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region Planning Commission to put forward a proposal for a planning study, in the hopes that the study could be incorporated into the Master Plan, which would be

important to have continuity and a concept for where Elkins is going. Ms. Ebel said that she would agree that the study would dovetail into the Master Plan.

Mr. Lyon said that when the Mesa property came up for sale, members of the Citizen's Advisory Committee and Budget Committee thought that Elkins had to be looked at as a whole, rather than one building at a time. He said that the Town has struggled with traffic at the Post Office and the boat launch, and the Selectmen thought this review would feed into the Master Plan process. Ms. Clough said that the Selectmen assumed that Elkins would have been part of the Master Plan anyway, and Ms. Ebel said that she understands why the Selectmen would want to jump start the process to focus on that area. Mr. Lyon said that the Selectmen do not want the Planning Board to think that they have stepped on anyone's toes. Ms. Levine suggested that one or two members of the Planning Board could be appointed to work on the study. Ms. Ebel agreed, and added that she hopes residents would be included as well. Ms. Levine said that the proposal includes a number of public discussions, and the Selectmen would by all means include residents in the process.

Ms. Clough said that the summer is the best time to review Elkins, given the increased traffic. Mr. Lavoie asked what would happen if Mesa sold in the mean time. Ms. Levine said that there is other property in Elkins, and Chair Kaplan said that the problems and conflicts in Mesa do not go away if the building sells, and the Town would still benefit from establishing planning guidelines.

Ms. Ebel said that there is the potential for growth in Elkins, partly because of growth in Wilmot. She suggested that Wilmot residents be included, or at least notified, of the study. Ms. Levine said that perhaps the study should begin with a "postal patron" mailing to the Elkins Post Office, which should cover some Wilmot residents who use the Elkins Post Office.

Ms. Ebel departed at 9:55 AM.

SIGNATURES:

Building Permits:

- Robert and Caroline Bossi, 387 Little Sunapee Road (Map 46, Lot 14), permit to build chicken coop and deck (after-the-fact) – Approved (Permit 05-062)
- Robert and Linda Ewing, Main Street (Map 96, Lot 015-004), permit to build 3 bedroom single-family home – Approved contingent on easements for driveway, sewer, and water lines; Planning Board review of subdivision changes; receipt of as-built plans (Permit 05-060)
- Allan, Myra, Jane Ferguson and Martha Campbell, 584 Lakeshore Drive (Map 50, Lot 7), permit to do landscaping and interior modifications – Approved (Permit 05-053)
- Richard Flint and Donna Forest, 200 Shaker Street (Map 99, Lot 19), permit to add front porch to house –Approved (Permit 05-061)
- William R and Linda M. Hardy, 1462 King Hill Road (Map 129, Lot 26), amendment to building permit 04-152 to add 8 x 8 screened deck to rear of approved addition – Approved (Permit 04-152)

Sign Permits:

- Application for Temporary Sign Permit by Women of P.E.O. for sign at Information Booth from July 2- July 9, 2005 for yard sale at 83 Squires Lane – Approved

- Application for Temporary Sign Permit by NL Hospital Auxiliary for sign at Information Booth from October 10-16, 2005 for NLH Rummage Sale – Approved

Other Items for Signature:

- Disbursement and Payroll Voucher for the week of June 27, 2005
- Application for Use of New London Town Commons by New London Garden Club for Garden Club Antiques Show (setup July 19-22, event July 23, 2006) – Approved
- Raffle Permit to New London Rotary Club for scholarship fundraiser (raffle to be drawn during BBQ on August 20, 2005) – Approved
- Contract in the amount of \$6,440 for Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region Planning Commission to perform conceptual land use plan for Elkins Village – Approved
- Application for Use of New London Town Commons by David DiLorenzo Band on July 10, 2005 – Approved

There being no further public business, Chair Kaplan asked for a motion to go into a non-public session to discuss a personnel matter and a poverty abatement pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (a) and (c). Motion Clough, Second Lyon. Roll call: Clough – yes; Lyon – yes; Kaplan – yes.

Upon returning to public session, the Board of Selectmen voted to seal the minutes of the non-public session. There being no further business, the Board of Selectmen voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie Levine
Town Administrator