

Town of New London  
Budget Committee Meeting  
October 5, 2009

Present: John Wilson (Chair), Jack Sheehan, Jim Wheeler, Celeste Cook, Kathy Bianchi, Doug Baxter, Connie Appel, Ann Bedard, Larry Ballin (Selectman), Tina Helm (Selectman), Mark Kaplan (Selectmen)

Absent: Bob Meck

Staff Present: Jessie Levine (Town Administrator), Carol Fraley (Finance Officer), Jay Lyon (Fire Chief), Sandra Licks (Library Director), Chad Denning (Recreation Director), Dave Seastrand (Police Chief), Linda Hardy (Town Clerk/Tax Collector)

Public Present: Peter Bianchi, Bob and DJ Lavoie, Doug MacMichael

John Wilson called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. The first order of business was to review the minutes from the meeting dated September 21, 2009. He mentioned that the previous minutes from May 18 had been approved at the meeting on September 21, but that he found there needed to be a change. This change was to replace the name "Frank Anzalone" with "Jim Wheeler" throughout the entire minutes.

IT WAS MOVED, (Jim Wheeler) AND SECONDED (Connie Appel) to approve the minutes of May 18, 2009 as amended. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Regarding the minutes from September 21, 2009, it was noted that the word "do" on page 3 should be replaced with "due." On page four, there was an extra period before the last sentence in the third paragraph that should be removed. Also on page four, where it begins "Chair Wilson said that it has been persistence from Budget Committee" through until the second to last sentence of the paragraph, it was noted by Chair Wilson that it should say "Chair Wilson said that it has been perseverance and conversions. He added that people are growing to like the idea of doing business going forward instead of backwards. Also, with the concern over diminishing Town surplus, there could be a chance that we may have to borrow funds to meet current obligations."

IT WAS MOVED (Larry Ballin) AND SECONDED (Kathy Bianchi) to approve the minutes as amended from September 21, 2009. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Subcommittee Reports:

*Administration, Recreation & Library:* This subcommittee of Doug Baxter, Ann Bedard, and John Wilson met earlier this afternoon. Chair Wilson asked if there was anyone at that meeting who would like to comment on what was discussed. Doug Baxter said that he would report. He noted that Linda Hardy (Town Clerk/Tax Collector) joined them and they spoke of the budget. One item that they discussed was an upgrade to the Munismart auto registration software. Ms. Hardy had said that this request was a want, not a need. That being said, many residents in New London have become accustomed to the auto registration renewal letters that they receive from the Town. Unless they switch to the Munismart software, the letters will not be available as easily due to the fact that Ms. Hardy would have to do that by hand. The use of credit cards for town fees would be made simpler with this software upgrade as well. Ms. Hardy explained that certain efficiencies within her office will be lost if she has to continue doing the letters by hand. The cost for the software upgrades is \$6,000 with a \$975 annual fee for an upgrade each year.

The other item that was discussed was the server to which all of the computers in the Town Office are connected. It is a five year old DELL server and has been operating 24/7 the entire time. It has been reliable but they feel that they may be getting close to the end of the unit's life. Mr. Baxter said that the server would have a use in other parts of the Town. For example, it could run the printers or some special software that is used by the Recreation Department. It was felt that possibly they could get by another year, but if it goes down, the offices would be down for at least a week. Ms. Bedard asked if it was possible to not get the new server right away, but to put money aside to purchase one a little later on. Ms. Levine was concerned that if they wait until the server fails to replace it, the office would be down for at least a week and closer to two weeks. The Town cannot afford to wait until the server fails, to replace it.

Mr. Baxter commented that there was a proposal to increase the hours allotted for another part-time recording secretary. Ms. Levine, Town Administrator, has been taking minutes for some of the meetings. The increase in the part-time position went from \$4,000/year to \$8,000/year.

It was reported that the legal needs of the Town have been reduced. Last year the total budgeted was \$25,000 and this has been reduced to \$20,000 for next year. The Planning Board had requested an increase in the Town Planner's hours for 2010. This was discussed at length and the fact that part of making Peter Stanley's position full-time was to reduce the cost for the Town Planner. The Budget Committee felt that the increase was something they should ask Planning Board to review.

Mr. Baxter was happy to find that heating fuel prices had decreased significantly. Ms. Fraley was able to secure a price of \$1.30/gallon for propane, which is down from \$2.14/gallon during the last heating season.

There was a review of the septic pumping fees necessary for Bucklin Beach this summer. During peak season, the tanks have to be pumped every other week. Mr. Ballin said that there was some discussion regarding pumping and transferring the sewage into the Town's sewer system. Carol Fraley has asked for bids from five septic companies to see if they can get a lower rate for 2010.

Mr. Baxter noted that the proposed re-shingling of some of the buildings at the Transfer Station would come out of CIP portion of the budget.

Mr. Baxter also noted that there was currently a proposal to replace the Old Main Street Cemetery fence with the same style as was done with the other, newer half of the fence that is there presently. This is being reviewed and may affect the budget.

Chad Denning, Recreation Director, joined the discussion regarding his department's budget. Not included in the budget yet was the purchase of two Sunfish sailboats. There were two that were being used as salvage boats, which were donated from residents in the past. Some of the vessels have become a safety hazard. The cost of a new Sunfish is about \$4,000. The Budget Subcommittee recommended putting an ad in the Kearsarge Shopper for donations of sailboats in good, working order. It was noted that this was one thing they need to discuss more. It would be a \$9,000 addition to the budget to add two new boats. One thought Mr. Baxter shared was that the ad in the Shopper should come from the Budget Committee and not the Recreation Department. Several on the committee agreed.

Mr. Baxter went on to say that in the meeting they talked about the revolving account that the Recreation Department utilizes. There is a \$23,000 balance in the fund to enable the department to make purchases up front and then bring the money back into the fund when things are paid for. Ms. Levine said that by using the account in this way, the amount of programming that could be generated was endless. However,

the fund was not set up for major purchases, such as the sailboats, which would diminish the fund and not provide any offsetting revenue.

Mr. Baxter said there was discussion about using facilities money in the CIP to buy boats. He wondered if equipment like that could be considered part of the facilities. Ms. Levine said that she does not believe that would be consistent with the intent of the capital reserve fund, as "equipment" and "facilities" are not interchangeable. She said that the other departments have both equipment funds and facilities funds. Ms. Levine said the only way they could pay for boats in this way was to go to Town Meeting to have the fund's designation changed.

Mr. Baxter reported that the subcommittee also talked about requiring people to pay for the use of the boats or the kayaks at the beaches. They thought perhaps a seasonal pass would work well. They commented that this would be a continuing discussion, as the boats do need replacing or repairs every so often and currently, they do not charge anything for people to use them.

Mr. Baxter noted that the elevator in the Town Office needs repair, or would be at risk of not getting its operation certificate. During the annual maintenance, it was found that the elevator needed attention to the tune of \$6,400. Carol Fraley noted that the elevator is inspected and maintained monthly but that the problem is with something in the elevator that was deteriorating and needed repair. Ms. Bedard suggested checking with other elevator maintenance companies, as they are not obligated to use the same company that installed the elevator for service or maintenance. She said that in her experience, she was able to get a much lower bid for service by using a company other than the one that installed the elevator.

The Planning Board had requested \$1,700 for a fire proof lateral filing cabinet. Mr. Baxter explained that the Planning Board's records are not kept electronically and there are a lot of older files that are kept. He wondered if there were any other fireproof cabinets available in the building that could be utilized. Ms. Fraley said that there were none. Chief Seastrand said that he may have an old one available in the basement of the Police Station and that if it suited the Planning Board, they could certainly have it.

Chief Lyon noted that the windows in the Fire Station needed to be replaced. Currently they are single pane windows and were not very efficient from an energy standpoint. He opined that if \$1000/year was set aside to replace the windows, he could replace them over time until they were all upgraded. He noted that there were four on one side of the building and five on the other.

Kathy Bianchi asked about the Elkins Post Office and the proposed repairs. She noticed that the budgeted amount had gone up from \$500 in 2009 to a requested amount of \$2,000 in 2010. Ms. Levine said that they were work on the front walkway and the ramp. Mr. Wheeler asked if it could not be held off. Ms. Levine said it has already been held off and should not wait beyond 2010. She noted that the tenant and users of the Post Office have been complaining about it, so they would like to fix the situation as soon as possible.

Ms. Bianchi also asked why the pumping of the tank at Bucklin Beach was not being taken out of the recreation budget. Ms. Levine said that it falls under building expenses, which is consistent with all other sewer-related charges in the Town.

Mr. Sheehan asked, regarding the computer server, why it came across that they were replacing it because of time as opposed to it continually failing or not giving good service. He wondered if time was the best criteria. Ms. Levine said for a server, yes, time is the best criteria. For individual computers she said that she would be able to wait and if needed, they could find \$800 in the budget to replace it if there were an emergency. That delay would affect only the individual user, and other computers could be used in the

meantime. For a server, however, considering that the whole building relies on it, coupled with the fact that it costs \$8,000, she would like to have it replaced sooner than later. She went on to say that if the server went down, it would be a day to call the computer vender to get a quote and to buy it. It generally takes a week for delivery and another 2-3 days to format the server with the programs that are used by the Town. She said that it would make her nervous to wait much longer before getting a replacement. Mr. Wheeler asked why five years gives cause to replace the server. Ms. Levine shared that the professional consultant who works on the Town's computer had recommended that a new server should be purchased in the next budget cycle. She noted that the consultant was in no way affiliated with DELL and was just expressing his professional opinion.

Mr. Sheehan asked how much effort it took to complete the automobile renewal letters by hand. Ms. Hardy said that in November alone, she has 45 pages of vehicle renewals and has spent a portion of three days entering the information and is only half-way through. She estimated that there were 10 vehicles listed on each page. Ms. Bedard noted that the letters were not mandatory but a service the Town provides. Mr. Sheehan also said that it sounded like the software would help the credit card transactions to be easier. He said that he was told the cost of using credit cards would not be imposed on the Town, and now he is hearing that they would need the software upgrade to make this process easier. Ms. Hardy agreed that it would make it easier but was not a need, it was a want. She opined that the upgrade would make many facets of her job easier and would increase the efficiency with which she is able to work with the public.

Mr. Sheehan asked if all of the roofs at the Transfer Station needed to be re-shingled all at once. Ms. Levine said that she thinks it is more efficient to do it that way. She said that the funds would be coming out a capital reserve fund and that perhaps they would get a better rate doing all three at once rather than spreading it out over a period of time. Mr. Baxter said the cottage building was the worst one that needed to be done. Ms. Appel said she heard some talk of standing seam roof on one section of the buildings to aid in snow removal.

Mr. Wheeler said it sounded like a lot of time for Ms. Hardy to generate the letters by hand and wondered if she was able to add it into her regular work week or if it was causing her to have to work overtime. She said that she doesn't get overtime but, as long as there are two of them in the office, they have been getting it done. She noted that during tax collection time the letters are going to take the back seat. Ms. Levine pointed out that with one person doing the letters and one person waiting on customers, only half the attention is being paid to the taxpayer. She shared that the town used to use Munismart automobile registration software and the information would be sent into the state at the end of the day. Renewal notices were also created through this software. Because the Munismart software wasn't compatible with the State's website, New London dropped the Munismart software and became a "browser town" which enabled them to go onto the website to register a car and then they have to go into the Town's records to enter the money. Now that the Town has decided to be able to require just one check from the taxpayer come automobile registration time, the State can no longer generate the automobile renewal letters for the Town. She reiterated that the upgrade is a want, not a need, but that it would make the office run more efficiently. Ms. Levine stated that three days of work times 12 months is almost a month lost to sending the courtesy letters.

Mr. Baxter asked when the letters are sent out, how many taxpayers renew by mail rather than by coming in. Ms. Hardy said that at least one-third to one-half of the people renew by mail. She said that if the Town didn't send out the letters, people would be coming in and calling a lot more with questions about their renewals.

Mr. Lavoie asked if the Town continues requiring taxpayers to write two checks instead of one would they need the new software. Ms. Hardy answered in the negative and said that they wouldn't be able to go forward with using credit/debit cards for automotive transactions. She said that they can't do a direct credit transaction for the state, just the town. Ms. Hardy said they are trying to do what the people have asked them to do by allowing them to use plastic. Ms. Bedard asked if this was a new Munismart program. Ms. Levine said no and that they've had it in the past but that almost two years ago they were ready to go online with the state and Munismart hadn't developed their software to that point yet. So they gave up the software, which meant extra work in the office for the double entry. Now they have upgraded and are able to mesh with the state. While it is more expensive there are advantages to having it. Ms. Hardy indicated that the \$6,000 price tag for Munismart is an estimate for the software, installation, and training. DJ Lavoie asked if once they enter into using the software, would they have to enter the vehicle information every year or if it would update itself. Ms. Hardy indicated that the information regarding the vehicles comes from the State and with changing rates and amounts, they enter the new information each year (this is done as an automatic software upgrade).

Ms. Bianchi had a question regarding the recreation budget. She said that the health and dental insurance for the one employee was \$19,951. She wanted to know how many people were included in that figure. Ms. Levine responded that it was for one employee and his family. Ms. Bianchi said that the number seemed high compared with other departments. Ms. Levine explained that this was the cost for a family plan and it only looked high because it was the only plan in the department.

Chief Lyon made a comment that if the roof structure on the Transfer Station buildings were to be metal on one side and not on the other, with lightweight truss construction, it may be uneven load bearing. He opined that that idea may not be a good one and the plans for re-shingling the entire roof should be checked out.

Mr. Baxter said that the Library budget was also part of this segment. He shared that salaries were basically the same as last year, which brings the total budget to \$446,550. It is only about \$3,000 different from the previous year. There were a few things they talked about that were small differences of \$1,000 - \$2,000. One of these things was the fact that Sodexo was going to be doing some shoveling of the grounds instead of the maintenance person from last year. Sandra Licks, Library Chair, said that this was in the budget last year, but for only half the year. There was an expense for spring cleaning of the whole building, which came in at \$2,000. They also had to increase in audit price of \$1,500. Mr. Baxter commented that they were pretty much in line with what they had talked about last year, regarding their plans for 2010.

Mr. Lavoie asked if the Library was funded by an endowment or if it was supported only by taxes. Ms. Licks said that it is funded approximately 90% from taxes and 10% from interest from a trust fund and other gifts. They are not allowed to touch the principal of the trust fund.

*Police & Fire Departments:* The members of this subcommittee are Jack Sheehan, Kathy Bianchi, and Celeste Cook. Mr. Sheehan commented that he thought the budgets presented were conservative. The Fire Department was up about 2% and the Police Department was up less than .5%. Dispatch was up 2%. He did not see any obvious areas for concern or reduction.

He said the Fire Department deferred a fair amount of planned maintenance in 2009 because of a \$7-10,000 pump repair on one of the engines. Mr. Sheehan shared that there were two extraordinary (as in out of the ordinary) items requested within the Fire Department budget in 2009. One item was vehicle stabilization equipment at a price of \$4,500. The second was a thermal imaging camera upgrade for

\$4,000. Mr. Sheehan opined that both items appeared to be important and probably justified. The Fire Department did not assign a priority of one of the items over the other.

Mr. Sheehan shared that the Police Department's budget was up only .5%. This was due to the fact that they had shifted \$4,500 to the Dispatch budget for computer services. He reminded the committee that 35% of dispatch costs are shared with other towns they service. He commented that there was a deferred replacement of one cruiser in 2009. That vehicle would be at about 120,000 miles when they are to replace it. The transfer of the District Court from New London to Newport would have an impact on manpower, and Ms. Appel said she had read in the Valley News that the Newport court may be closing as well. Mr. Sheehan said he would support the budgets as proposed but understood that their budgets need to be considered within the context of the entire town budget.

Mr. Wilson said he was looking at the cruiser the same way he viewed the computer server. He wondered if 120,000 miles on the vehicle meant that it should be replaced. Chief Seastrand said that he was concerned with having a vehicle with over 100,000 miles. He said that they deferred one vehicle in 2008, and had to do it again last year as well. Ms. Levine said she didn't feel that another full year using the cruiser would be safe. She also added that the last time they were asked to research the question with the other towns, three years was the consistent amount of time considered for cruiser replacement. Ms. Cook noted that there was no contingency fund for when there is a problem or something breaks down. There was no extra money available. With the budgets being so tight, there may be a need to have a contingency fund created. Ms. Levine suggested an expendable trust fund for vehicle and equipment maintenance. They would have to look back to see what was planned maintenance and what was emergency service. The money wouldn't have to be spent if there were no emergencies and also wouldn't have to be appropriated for that following year. Ms. Levine said that the flip side of the issue is having budgets being estimated high to allot money for emergencies. She noted that the Public Works Department overspends their maintenance budget every year. She thought that perhaps combining the three departments, they would be looking at about \$60,000 per year in maintenance fees.

*Public Works Department:* The Public Works Subcommittee are Connie Appel, Jim Wheeler, and Bob Meck. Ms. Appel said that they started out with a conversation asking specifically how the ten-wheeler was working out and, given the proposed figures, and if they thought it would hold up. Mr. Lee had reported that the ten-wheeler was helping out in lots of ways and was already showing its worth. They also talked about whether or not the use of Stearns Septic Company to clean sewer manholes was cost effective. Apparently there had been some conversation that there were other companies who could do the same job for less. Ms. Appel noted that Stearns had flushing and decontaminating equipment that were necessary components for the jobs the Town needed to have done. She opined that the less expensive operators may not have the ability to do the same service as Stearns.

Road shimming will continue on a cycle for the next 12-15 years, and eventually, because the baseline of roads around town would rise, they will be able to move more funds out of paving and into shimming. The sidewalk account was planned to be used to build from Colby Sawyer to the Cleveland's house. Mr. Wheeler said that the \$8,000 expense for this project may be able to be put aside, and he added that this was only the first part of a several year project. Many on the board commented that that part of the sidewalk is used a lot and that there were some dangerous parts to it. With respect to regionalizing, Mr. Lee had reported on a meeting with other area road agents. They have found some things that could be cost-effective to purchase and share. Mr. Wheeler commented that one of the issues in towns sharing things is that if they buy a piece of equipment, and Sunapee rents it, when the money comes in from the rental fee, it would go into the general fund and not a public works fund. There would not be an immediate, obvious savings seen. It was felt that this can be worked around to change how the money is reflected. Mr. Wheeler noted that the replacement of the trucks was following the capital improvements

plan. He commented that the ten-wheeler was paying for itself beautifully and is efficient. When asked if he thought they could extend the life expectancy of the vehicle, Mr. Lee had said that he believed it could be increased by a couple of years.

It was reported that Mr. Lee had shared that there had been 18 less trips hauling trash away with the trailer, with a savings of \$480 per trip. On wastewater, Mr. Wheeler noted that they have cut the flow by 11% in the past two years. This reduction came as a result of repairing leaking pipes and by performing smoke tests. Inspecting grease traps also helps keep problems with the sewer at bay. The department seemed to be aggressive about reducing problems. Due to the rain this summer the painting of lines on the roads was put off and it wasn't until August before any painting could be done. By that time, Mr. Lee felt that the paint would be scraped off by the impending plow trucks.

Mr. Wheeler said that they are looking to increase the parking at the town office with low impact parking lot. Mr. Lee had said to the subcommittee that if the Town was going to require the Hospital and College to create "green" parking lots, then the Town should lead the way by example. Currently, Knit-Pak is being used as a surface material. Crushed glass is being used under pavement in place of sand. Some areas of the Public Works Department budget can still be adjusted before their budget is finalized. Mr. Wheeler said that the roads paved this year were Tracy and Page. Shimming was done on Seamans Road and Shaker Street and will be done on Hastings Landing. He explained that the difference between paving and shimming was that less asphalt is put down when shimming, but that even this would extend the life of the road by 15 years. Ms. Bianchi said that she assumed there was a plan in mind for areas to pave and shim for next year. Mr. Wheeler agreed that there was. Dirt roads to be paved for the first time are Rowell Hill and Ridge Road. Mr. Wheeler said they talked about salt and calcium chloride, which were budget items that could come down for next year because prices are coming down.

With regards to the highway administration part time wages, Mr. Lee had said that he wanted to add funds for John Wiltshire to work at the Brush & Metal Disposal Center in the wintertime to avoid having to pay him overtime. Ms. Appel said that during the rainy time this summer, the Public Works Department was able to scrape and hand paint the dump trucks. She found the meeting to be incredibly helpful and felt it was really helpful to go line by line with the department heads to learn about what they do and need.

Mr. Bianchi said he had some questions about Public Works. He asked if the Public Works Department did the shimming or if they subcontracted it out. Ms. Levine said that it was done by a subcontractor. He said that shimming today is different than it was years ago. Shimming used to be done before putting finished asphalt on the road. He said that they are now doing a thin coat of pavement rather than shimming with a grader. In Mr. Lee's absence, it was agreed that perhaps there are different definitions for shimming.

Mr. Bianchi also had some comments about using Stearns for the Town's septic needs. He noted that the Town purchased a "jetter" to do this work, and in conversations with various people in the area, he had heard that Stearns felt it was funny that the Town hired him to do things with their jetter instead of using their own. Mr. Wheeler said they asked Mr. Lee about that and he commented that they use their catch-basin cleaner for all culverts and catch basins, but when there is anything to do with sewer, they use Stearns because they have equipment that can catch and filter the material coming out of the sewer manholes. Stearns is only used when there are sewer issues.

Mr. Bianchi brought up the fact that there was some money appropriated for sidewalks to be built. He said that there was \$180,000 in the budget; \$100,000 of it was from a grant, and \$80,000 was from the capital reserve. He noted that the sidewalks had not yet been installed. Ms. Levine said that they would be done next spring and it would be Pleasant Street only and so they would not need to use all the \$80,000

from the reserve. She added that part of the reason she did not want to tap into the capital reserve funds for the sidewalk project was because she anticipated needing those funds for the Elkins work, if they are awarded a grant to improve non-motorized transportation.

Mr. Bianchi also had a question regarding the stump dump. Currently, when they take their brush to the stump dump they pile it up and have a dump truck bring it to Durgin & Crowell's mill. He said that he would be interested to find out the cost effectiveness of this procedure. He said that it costs fuel, man power, and wear and tear of the vehicles. Mr. Bianchi noted that brush was a hard thing to haul because you can't get that much in one load. He was curious to find out how much was spent on hauling versus burning. Ms. Appel said that it had been a real issue to burn in the past, even when they would do it on the best possible days. She noted that some houses on Morgan Hill would become filled with smoke for several days after the Town would burn. Mr. Bianchi said that he had heard that there were complaints about this, but was interested in how many trips they take and how much it was costing. Ms. Appel said that she hadn't written down the answers to these questions, but that it was talked about. Mr. Wheeler said that the problem is that they have to deal with the ash. Ms. Levine said they would do a cost analysis on the comparison between hauling and burning.

Jack Sheehan asked if the Town still had a permit to burn. Ms. Levine said that they are still allowed to burn. Mr. Ballin added that they are only allowed to burn clean brush.

*Review first draft of 2009 budget and current year expenditures-to-date:* Mr. Wilson said that on the May 16, 2009 meeting they had made a request without a motion that no one on the Budget Committee objected to, and that is not including a pay increase in the budget at this stage. However, a 1.5% increase was added to all positions except those in the library. He said that he would personally like to take that out and get back to the zero so they aren't committed one way or another. Ms. Levine apologized to the Budget Committee because she had not looked over the minutes since June and had forgotten that request had been made. The Budget Committee then made a request to take out the 1.5% increase in pay. Ms. Levine said that she reserves the right to return with a merit raise request based on personnel evaluations. She said that they generally wait until January to discuss COLA but does not anticipate that there will be an increase in cost-of-living. Mr. Sheehan asked if they evaluated other towns to see what the averages for salaries were. Ms. Levine said that they had evaluated similar towns about three times in the last five years with regard to the range in pay, and towns also communicate regarding merit and cost-of-living increases.

At this time, Mr. Wheeler made a request of Ms. Fraley. He said that he had made the same request last year as well. He shared that he would like to see a second line item on page one broken out as to the separate positions and what each position was being paid. He said that he has been asked who gets paid what by citizens who know that he is on the Budget Committee. They are interested in knowing what the zoning, land use, and administrative assistant positions are paid. Ms. Levine asked why there wasn't an interest like this for the other 35 employees in the Town's budget. She noted that there are several other departments that have positions lumped together. Mr. Wheeler said that it was because the positions he is talking about were full time and salaried executive branch positions. Ms. Levine commented that only one of the positions is salaried, and the others were hourly. Mr. Wilson said that the people would want to see the change in salaries from when the Zoning Administrator went from part time to full-time when the position of the Town Planner had decreased. He believed they were interested in the breakdown.

Mr. Wilson asked if it was proper to comingle both salaries and hourly paid employees. Ms. Levine said that a full time wage line is proper but that the request was inconsistent with the rest of how the budget is represented. Mr. Kaplan asked if it was legal for people to come into the Town office and ask what a particular individual gets paid. Ms. Levine said that it is legal and that people do it and the information is

available upon request. Mr. Wilson said that he gets questions from people who think that the Town may be trying to hide things. Ms. Levine said there is a reason for the way the budget is constructed. The Zoning Administrator used to have its own line because it was part time. She opined that this request was inconsistent and targeted. Mr. Wheeler said that it wasn't targeted and that he just thought the information should be more transparent. Ms. Fraley felt that it was targeted at Mr. Stanley's salary. Ms. Levine said that information is available in the office, and interested parties are welcome to come in to get it.

Ms. Bianchi said that there were jobs that are apparent as to what they do (highway dept, police, fire) and then there were other, less specific jobs that should be separated out so that people can track and be able to understand that they have a Zoning Administrator. She felt it would be helpful to have some sort of job description so that they could see if that job description and the salary made sense. She agreed that anyone could come to the Town and ask about salaries, but opined that when you do go ask about what people make, they appear to be a "squeaky wheel." There may be no agenda, but people are just curious. Ms. Bianchi said that they are talking in terms of transparency. The budget is very transparent, but she doesn't think that it hurts to state the salaries. Ms. Bianchi asked if there was anywhere that said where the Police or Fire Department employees' salaries are stated. Ms. Bedard said that the report was available to the public, and wondered if it could be made available to the Budget Committee, as perhaps this would help with the questions about salaries. Ms. Levine said that it has been provided to the Budget Committee every year at the point that salaries are discussed, and is available at any time. Mr. Wheeler said that the report is comprehensive and comes once a year. He added that he was only reacting to what people in Town have asked him about, regarding salaries. Ms. Levine said that it seemed inconsistent from the Budget Committee to request the salary information for one employee.

Peter Bianchi said that three years ago he went into Ms. Fraley's office and she provided him with a spreadsheet with each department, each employee name, and salary information and that he has never received any hassle. He said that the information is available if people want it. Mr. Wilson asked if there should be a motion made to separate out the line item in question into three different line items.

IT WAS MOVED (Jim Wheeler) AND SECONDED (Baxter) to break the second line in the budget into two, two-line items; one for full-time and one for the co-mingled hourly positions. The motion failed 5-2. Ms. Bedard abstained from the vote.

Ms. Appel said that there are ways for people to get the information and felt that they were messing with the budget and foresaw some difficulties with these kinds of inconsistencies. She opined that the budget was easy to follow, and was equal across the board and doesn't feel that this change was necessary. Mr. Sheehan went along with the thinking. He didn't think this subject should be addressed by a Budget Committee and fell under the purview of the administration.

*Review 2009 revenues-to-date:* Mr. Wilson asked for clarification on what had been eliminated from the state budget. Ms. Levine said that she has twice e-mailed a summary to the Budget Committee and she will send it again, but she did not have it with her. However, she said that in summary, the shared revenue block grant is zeroed out. The court revenue, included under rents of property, was lowered. Meals and rooms tax was safe for now but was expected to be lower. The highway block grant was safe for now. Ms. Levine agreed to re-send the email, as not everyone had a copy of it. She noted that she would have the tax rate projection ready for the next meeting.

*Selectmen's Update:* Mark Kaplan said they met with John Shea, the Executive Councilor who represents the district that New London lies within. He said that they spoke about the Wild Goose property and what was going to happen with Main Street. He advised that there would be a series of meetings (October

28, 2009 at 1pm at the Newbury Town Hall, and at 4pm in Andover) to discuss these issues. All three members of the Selectmen intend to be at those meetings and Mr. Kaplan noted that it is important to show up. Mr. Ballin said that these were State hearings that the Department of Transportation holds to help them create their 10 year plan. He said that they do recognize if there is a good turnout from the townspeople.

Mr. Kaplan said that even though he was not at the last meeting, he was in favor of making the change to the fiscal year. He believed it to promote better planning for the Town, and thought it would be ideal to be in line with the State and the school. He also felt that changing Town meeting to May, and going to quarterly billing was important. He noted that tax bills rise and even at the median of \$400,000 per house value, that comes to \$6,000/year in taxes. He felt that quarterly billing was a good way for people to manage their money. He applauded the Budget Committee for approving the change to fiscal year.

Mr. Kaplan also wanted to discuss the estimated 2009 tax rate. He said that the selectmen approved it this morning and that it still needed to go to Concord to be approved. He said that the Board of Selectmen discussed this and in 2008 after they had deducted a certain amount of surplus, they came up with a tax rate of \$15.18. This year it is figured at 15.31 before the use of surplus. It was the feeling of the Board of Selectmen that they would use \$200,000 of the surplus of \$854,000 to bring the town tax rate to \$4.10 and the total tax rate to \$15.13. They felt it was important to recognize that the Department Heads and the Budget Committee and the Board of Selectmen worked all summer long to get the rates down and to do their best to get to \$15.13. He said that they have shown that they have kept good faith with the townsfolk and the taxpayers and have reduced the tax rate. People are going to be able to see that their tax rate was reduced. It makes them believable when they got to Town Meeting and ask them for their money again. Ms. Levine said the projection in 2009 for the budget was \$4.23.

*Any other business:* Mr. Wilson said that he made an error. He wasn't able to be present at any meetings between January 18-31. After some discussion, it was decided that Ms. Levine would try to reschedule the January meeting by e-mail.

Chair Wilson asked if there was any further discussion. There being none, he asked for a motion to adjourn.

IT WAS MOVED (Kathy Bianchi) AND SECONDED (Connie Appel) to adjourn the Budget Committee Meeting of September 21, 2009. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary  
Town of New London