

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES**

March 14, 2005

PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Robert and DJ Lavoie, New London residents
Noel Weinstein, New London resident

Chair Clough called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Lyon moved to accept the minutes of March 7, 2005. Second Mr. Kaplan – approved 3-0.

Town Meeting Recap: Mr. Weinstein said that he had a few thoughts on Town Meeting that he wanted to share with the Selectmen. His first point, he said, is that the Selectmen should not make assumptions about what voters know. He said that having more information is better than not having enough, and thought that since there are newcomers to Town Meeting every year, it would be wise to explain the process of town Meeting. He also thought it would be worthwhile to explain the opportunities to be involved and have an impact before Town Meeting, such as public hearings at which decisions are made. Chair Clough said that it was evident that the Selectmen need to know more leading up to Town Meeting, especially with respect to capital reserve funds, and the Selectmen should not only rely on department heads to know the answers.

Mr. Lyon agreed that the Selectmen assume that others know the answers, and Mr. Kaplan agreed that some information is worth repeating, such as how the town handles competitive bids. Mr. Weinstein said that most voters trust the Selectmen, and Chair Clough said that the Selectmen do not want to lose that trust. She added that she was embarrassed that she did not know the information and by her inability to reassure people that the truck purchase was not extravagant. Ms. Levine said that she feels responsible for not having a backup plan, and has certainly learned the hard way about being better prepared.

Mr. Lyon said that he and Ms. Levine had met with Richard Lee that morning to go over the questions that could not be answered at town Meeting, and Mr. Lyon will draft an explanation to send in a *Quicklink* newsletter. He said that one notable piece of information is that the price of the equipment does not include the trade-in, as Richard Lee is never sure if the trade-in will be in good condition by Town Meeting time. So, the cost could very well be lower than approved at Town Meeting. Chair Clough said that if the cost is lower, the funds will remain in capital reserves to be used in a later year. Mr. Weinstein said that this would be good information to give to the public as well, especially if the vehicles come in under budget.

Mr. Weinstein said another suggestion would be to put ads in the Shopper before some of the public meetings to let people know what is on the agenda. He said that meetings of significance should be announced and people should feel welcome to attend.

Mr. Weinstein said that a number of questions were raised about "small" capital reserve funds, and he asked what the definition of "small" is. He asked if there were a way to amalgamate the smaller funds into one large fund, such as office equipment. He said, for example, that the Police Department budget is \$652,000 in 2005, but no one asked how many bullets were being purchased. Mr. Kaplan said that the theory behind small deposits into capital reserves is that it levels out the impact of making larger purchases. Ms. Levine said that anything can be included in the operating budget, but the idea behind the Police Department copier fund was to put aside money leading up to a purchase instead of paying the full purchase price in one year. Mr. Kaplan said that it is cheaper to own than to lease, and Mr. Lyon explained that there used to be an advantage to leasing for for-profit companies that could deduct the expense, but that no longer exists. In any event, the Town does not file taxes, so there is no tax advantage to leasing and instead the Town would pay interest costs. Mr. Weinstein asked if that were still true with upgrades in technology, and Mr. Kaplan said that the copiers would only be replaced when needed, at which time they would upgrade.

Mr. Weinstein asked if there were a methodology to the sequence of warrant articles, and Ms. Levine said that the operating articles come first, followed by the capital reserves, and then non-budgetary items. Mr. Weinstein suggested that Article 12, which lists contributions to capital reserve funds, be organized in order of size. Ms. Levine agreed to look at that in 2006, and said that currently the most recently opened fund is at the bottom of the list. She said that she had received suggestions following Town Meeting to include the capital reserve activity handout and the warrant explanation handout in Town Report, which she will do next year.

Mr. Weinstein suggested that the Selectmen or CIP committee establish a minimum amount that could be placed into capital reserves, and repeated his suggestion that a larger reserve fund be opened for purchasing smaller items. Chair Clough asked if that would be preferable to Town Meeting approving exactly what is going to be purchased. Ms. Levine said that she would be concerned that departments would be competing for the same funds, and it would pit a planned purchase against an unplanned purchase. Mr. Lavoie said that it could become a slush fund if unmanaged.

Mr. Weinstein asked if bigger topics, such as the veterans' credit questions, could be placed earlier in the warrant. Ms. Levine said that the order of warrant articles is recommended by the state, and petitioned articles are generally placed at the end of the warrant. However, voters can move to take articles out of order, and Chair Clough said that voters can also call the question on earlier articles if discussion seems to be moving slowly.

Mr. Weinstein said that two of the articles asked for approval of studies, and he asked the Selectmen if we were seeing "paralysis of analysis," in that we know we need something but don't know what it is we need. Chair Clough said that the studies are a method of getting the information we need so we know what to do next. Mr. Lyon said that he sees studies as a way of saving the Town money by doing part of the work in advance. Mr. Kaplan added that they also contribute a disinterested professional opinion. Mr. Lavoie said that with the request for funds to study the basement of the Police Department, it would have been helpful to have an outline of what the Selectmen expect to find: cost estimate, ground survey, handicap access requirements, etc. Mr. Weinstein said that the Police Department study was confusing, and asked why the Selectmen needed funds for a study if one had just been done. Ms. Levine said that she was going to jump in at Town Meeting and explain that the first study was an organizational study of the Police Department, and one of the recommendations was that the Police Department needed more space, including a training/meeting room. The first study did not include its own analysis of the space.

The discussion returned to vehicles, and Mr. Lyon shared some of the information he had learned that morning while meeting with Richard Lee. He said that first of all, construction companies can replace

broken down vehicles as they need to, unlike municipalities that have to wait for Town Meeting to appropriate the funds. He said that at Town Meeting, the Selectmen were criticized for not getting more life out of the vehicles, when the highway garage had been approved on the promise that there would be longer vehicle life. He said that the current vehicles and equipment being replaced had not had the benefit of being kept indoors, so it is premature to expect that. However, prior to having two one-ton trucks, we replaced a single one-ton every 3 years. Now that we have two trucks, the useful life was pushed to four years, and the last truck lasted five years. Ms. Levine explained that the oldest truck goes to the Transfer Station, and the Town will trade in the truck at the Transfer Station. She explained that the Town currently has three one-ton trucks: two at the Highway Department and one at the Transfer Station. When the 2000 truck is replaced this year, the 2000 truck will go to the Highway Department and the older truck there will be traded in. Next year, the 2001 truck will be replaced, and the 2001 truck will go to the Highway Department. The next truck replacement will take place in 2010 or 2011, so the Transfer Station truck will have to last that long before being replaced by the 2005 truck, and so on.

Mr. Lyon said that the extra plow truck in the Highway Department that was added two years ago has saved three to four hours of clean up time per storm. He said that last week, each employee worked 38 hours of overtime. Mr. Kaplan added that having the vehicles in the garage saved employee time in cleaning off and warming up the truck, and the town would have paid more overtime without the building.

Mr. Lavoie asked if the Selectmen had given any consideration to a hybrid vehicle for the Police Department. Chair Clough said that she has a friend who is also concerned about the gas consumption of the Ford Expedition, and who questioned the need for a larger 4x4 when one had never previously been needed. She said that when the Expedition was purchased, the Budget Committee had done a thorough comparison of the Explorer vs. Expedition, and the gas consumption was similar but the clear advantage to the Expedition was the ability to put in a "cage" to separate the bad guys from the good guys. Ms. Levine said that she would not rule out the purchase of a hybrid vehicle for the detective car. Mr. Lyon said that he has done some research on hybrid vehicles, and while they cost about \$5,000 more, that money is not earned back in gas savings for a long time. He added that for a four-wheel drive hybrid, the vehicle actually has three motors. Chair Clough said that the purchase would then have to be looked at from an entirely ecological standpoint, such as the cost of recycling vs. the tipping fee.

Chair Clough asked the other two Selectmen how they felt about standing up at Town Meeting while presenting each warrant article. She said that she would feel more comfortable standing. The other two Selectmen were neutral about the idea.

Ms. Levine said that she had received some negative feedback about the lighted sign at Town Hall, and asked Mr. Weinstein and the Lavoies what they thought. Mr. Weinstein said he loved it, and the Selectmen thought that it was a great reminder to people to vote. Chair Clough asked how they would feel about videotaping Town Meeting, and Mr. Weinstein said he thought it would be great. Mr. Kaplan asked if the video would bother him, and Mr. Weinstein replied that it might make some people think more before talking and might give others more of an opportunity to grandstand, but he still thinks it's a good idea. Chair Clough asked if it would impede people from speaking at Town Meeting, and DJ Lavoie said that it would not stop people who really questioned what was going on.

Bob Lavoie said that in the Town Report, it might be helpful to list the primary contractors the Town hires, such as assessors, lawyers, etc. He also suggested that the Town Officials list be revised to reflect the difference between volunteer positions and staff positions.

The Selectmen thanked Mr. Weinstein and the Lavoies for their feedback.

Volunteer Application Process: Ms. Levine referred to copies of the volunteer applications received this year and last year, and asked the Selectmen how they wanted to proceed with the volunteer appointment process. She referred to the Town Report, which listed volunteer positions for which the term ends in 2005. She said that all of the current members who she has heard from want to be reappointed; she has not heard from one member of the Zoning Board.

DJ Lavoie asked if there were term limits for appointed positions, and Ms. Levine said that there is no limit by state statute. The Selectmen had discussed recommending term limits in the past, but not had set a policy. Bob Lavoie asked if the Selectmen had decided on how many people would be on the Citizen's Advisory Committee, and Ms. Levine said that when they talked about the CAC earlier in the year, the Selectmen had decided to ask members who had served for two terms to step down, and they would appoint new members which would bring a total to 28.

Ms. Levine asked the Selectmen if they wanted to interview current members who wanted to be reappointed, as well as new applicants. Mr. Lyon said that he does not want to ask people to re-interview every year, but would like to meet with those they have not yet met. Chair Clough agreed that she would like to meet people who want to continue serving. Mr. Lyon said that he is reluctant to ask people to interview if the Selectmen are trying to determine how to ease long-time members off. He said that the Selectmen might have to "bite the bullet" and honor their responsibility to put new members on Town boards. Mr. Lyon said that somehow, the Selectmen are going to have to head in that direction, or they will end up reappointing over and over as long as people want to continue serving. Chair Clough said that she would like to have a face-to-face conversation with everyone.

Mr. Kaplan said that one important element is continuity. He suggested that the chairs of the committees be asked at the outset what they would like to see for the future, and if the chair is planning to leave in a year or two, the Selectmen should consider how that would affect the balance of a committee. For one thing, he said that there should be someone in line who could take over as chair. Ms. Levine said that ideally, everyone on a committee should be able to step in as chair. Chair Clough said that she would like to see the chair rotate, but she acknowledged that the committees must elect their own chair annually and the Selectmen cannot intervene in that process. Mr. Lyon said that the Selectmen should appoint people who would be able to contribute as chair. He suggested that the Selectmen could also set up workshops on leading meetings, such as those that Cotton Cleveland leads.

Chair Clough said that to summarize the discussion up to now, it sounds like the Selectmen want to interview interested volunteers, including those who have been serving. They do not need to interview people they met last year, but want to make sure that they are still interested in serving. Mr. Kaplan suggested inviting committee chairs to talk to the Selectmen about appointments to their boards and about rotating the chair position.

Apropos rotating chairs, Chair Clough asked if it was time for the Selectmen to rotate chairs. Mr. Kaplan asked if that was a nomination for him to serve as Chair, and Chair Clough said that it was. Mr. Kaplan accepted the nomination. Ms. Levine asked if Ms. Clough would move to the Planning Board position now that Mr. Kaplan was chair, and she said that she would. Mr. Lyon will continue to sit on the Budget Committee.

Ms. Levine asked the Selectmen if they wanted to continue the night meetings on the second Monday of the month. There has been no difference in public attendance at night as in the morning. After some discussion, they decided to move all meetings to 8:00 AM, and will notify any interested visitor that the Selectmen would be willing to meet at night to accommodate a visitor's schedule.

There being no further public business, Ms. Levine asked for a motion to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II(a) (disciplining a public employee) and (c) (matters if discussed in public would harm the reputation of a person or persons other than a member of this board). Mr. Kaplan moved, Mr. Lyon second. Roll call vote: Lyon – yes; Kaplan – yes; Clough – yes.

Upon returning from non-public session, the Selectmen signed the documents below.

SIGNATURES:

Building Permits:

- Clara and Patricia Cantor, 425 Lakeshore Drive (Map 37, Lot 8), permit to change closet in study to a built-in stereo cabinet – approved (Amendment to permit 04-056)
- Rosemary Salvatore, 46 Ridge Road (Map 122, Lot 7), permit to finish half of basement for a play/game room. Adding four windows, removing existing sliding door and insulating floor & walls – approved (Permit 05-019)
- Laura Kiefer, 35 Sparrowhawk Road (Map 52-19), permit to do various entry changes & roofs – approved (Permit 05-020)

Sign Permits:

- NONE

Other Items for Signature:

- Disbursement Voucher for the week of March 14, 2005
- Elderly Exemption Applications, Veterans' Credit Applications and Blind Exemption
- Abatement for Striped Bass Properties, Eagles Nest (Map 111, Lot 29-1) for 2004 – Approved
- Abatement for Ruth C. Singer, 40 Herrick Cove Lane (Map 91, Lot 24) for 2004 – Denied
- Application for Use of Town Office Conference Room by Adventures in Learning – Approved
- Contract with Vision Appraisal Technology for Web Hosting of Assessing Database
- Pole License Petition from Public Service & TDS Telecom for new light pole on Burnt Hill Road – Approved
- Audit contract with Plodzik & Sanderson
- MS-2 Report of Appropriations Actually Voted per RSA 21-J:34
- 2005 Salary Order

There being no further business, the Board of Selectmen voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie Levine
Town Administrator