

**Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**August 22, 2009**  
**7:30am**

**Meeting Attendees:**

Larry Ballin (Chair), Mark Kaplan (Selectman), Tina Helm (Selectman), Peter Messer, Peter Bianchi, Bob MacMichael, Noel Weinstein, David Harrison, Robert Lavoie, DJ Lavoie, Jack Harrod, Rick Anderson, Gary Lineberry, David Dunning, Hardy Hasenfuss, Rip Cross, Paul Gorman, Bill Clough, Marilyn Kidder, Gary Markoff, Howard Hoke, David Dunning, Bob MacMichael, Anne Loeffler

Chair Ballin called the MEETING TO ORDER at 7:33 AM.

He noted that there was no specific agenda planned for the meeting and was hoping for a free-flow discussion. He mentioned some items that have been going on in the town:

He noted that the Town has a grant proposal in the process to get some work done in Elkins. They have postponed the "Safe Routes to School" sidewalk project. It will happen, but just not at this time. The fiber optics project is still going on. There may be some stimulus money and possible grant money available. They have renegotiated the flow count with Sunapee for the sewer system.

He mentioned that Bob Odell's wife, Sandy, passed away last week. She had been a prominent businessperson in town for many years. She was the owner of CB Coburn, was one of the first women in the Rotary Club, was active in the First Baptist Church, the Hospital, and was a graduate of Colby Sawyer College. Mr. Ballin extended his condolences on behalf of the Town with regards to the death.

Bob Lavoie asked what the grant in Elkins was for. Ms. Levine said that it was the Transportation Enhancement grant, which is a federal highway grant administered by the state. The State has changed the criteria and Elkins seems like a very good fit for the specifications of the grant, which is meant to improve modes of transportation other than vehicle (marine, rail, historic preservation (especially where there is a transportation link), biking, pedestrian, etc.). the proposal is to build a sidewalk from the Post Office all the way down Elkins Road to the town line, and a trail up the back side of the Mill Pond, creating a loop. The Elkins Subcommittee thought the back side trail would be difficult to accomplish and they preferred to restore the Mesa building and create more parking. She is looking to see if a parking lot would work within the grant. The grant requires that if buildings are purchased they be used for a transportation or some sort of museum or welcome center. If the town bought the building, part of it may not be able to be used for commercial enterprises. She said that there is \$6 million available for the entire state, and she is trying to keep the grant to \$700,000.

David Dunning asked about the Mesa building and what would happen with the dam that comes with it. Ms. Levine said that there was a Town Meeting vote to accept the dam as a gift and restore it, but the reason it has not been completed yet is that the building sits on the dam structure and the Town doesn't want to work on it due to liability. Noel Weinstein asked if the Conservation Commission was involved with the trail, and Ms. Levine said that they were not.

In response to a question, Stephanie Wheeler said that the Mesa building is on the market for \$199,000. Bob MacMichael said that Mr. Miller would probably give the building to the town in a second if it would help the town and that he was a very generous individual.

David Dunning noted that some of the paving of some dirt roads was not going to be done because of the economy, and he asked if the paving would continue. Mr. Ballin said that gravel road paving had been

put off from last year because paving was very expensive last year, but this year it is cheaper and they actually saved money. The program will continue but has been spread out over a longer timeline.

Bob MacMichael asked to publicly thank the Kidders for saving the original Information Booth that was donated to the Ice House.

Howard Hoke noted that Jessie had been after him to bring his recycling to the Town, and he had been thinking of how he and the Town could both benefit from recycling these materials. He currently pays someone to pick it up. When they sell it, they take 25% of the proceeds and send a check to him. He suggested that money could be saved right away if the town took the material and could sell it at a comparative value, the Town would get the cash and he might receive a tax credit. That makes it so there is no cash exchange. He said he is not looking for a personal gain at all, but thinks that something is possible and he wanted to say from a business standpoint, he isn't going to give the town his \$5,000 of revenue. He said that there must be some way to work it out so the material can go through the Town recycling program. The idea could possibly be applied to Hannaford, Colby-Sawyer College, etc. There could be a substantial amount of benefit if this was done.

Ms. Levine said that the Town currently gets Colby-Sawyer's recyclables, Hannaford's cardboard, the Hospital's recycling, etc. The Town has not traditionally paid a business for its recyclables. Mr. Ballin said the key is to get things out of the waste stream. Gary Markoff thought it was a very good, creative idea and should be searched out to see how it could be done without it being a burden or a loss. Mr. Kaplan said they need to be cautious as they move ahead with this. Ms. Helm said that this is the kind of "thinking outside the box" that towns need to do. She thought it was exciting and wasn't ruling it out at all.

Mr. Hoke said that he would be happy to work with them to make it work. Mr. Markoff said it should be brought up to Tom Galligan for a project at the college for internships and course credit. Ms. Levine asked Howard Hoke to send invoices so they can see more information on the volume and value that he was talking about.

Noel Weinstein asked about accident statistics at the new roundabout. Chair Ballin said it has been a remarkable success. There have been two accidents, both unrelated to the roundabout: one was a drunk driving and one was a medical issue. He noted that there is still a lot of stop and go as people get used to it, but from a safety standpoint, it is going better than before and accidents now would be less severe as they are going slower. Gary Markoff asked if there were signs letting people know that there was a roundabout coming up and how to drive through it. Ms. Levine said that there are.

Changing subjects, David Harrison said that he e-mailed the Selectmen with three subjects:

- 1) The Rowing Club's request of using the beach took up a lot of time and asked if there are other laws on the books that are unknown or outdated that the town could review to see if there were other items such as this. He felt embarrassed for the town that they had to spend all this time only to find a law on the books.
- 2) What is the relationship between the Town of New London and the State of New Hampshire? How could the Town be involved in the policies made by the state and how could be heard? for example, the only court that closed was New London's – why New London? As another example, the state representatives were invited to a meeting, only one showed up and the Selectmen were surprised that the other two did not.
- 3) We made budget decisions for New London at Town Meeting, and he asked where we are now that the state has come up with their own budget.

Jessie Levine said that one of the projects that arose out of the Rowing Club issue was the need for a comprehensive town code. That is a long term project that she wants to work on. Gary Markoff suggested that when it is done, it should be searchable on the web, and all agreed. Howard Hoke offered equipment to digitize the information at the outset of the process.

Chair Ballin said that he was surprised when Bob Odell was the only representative who showed up, but he feels like the Selectmen have a good relationship with all three representatives. It was embarrassing moment for both David Kidder and Randy Foose because they missed the meeting. He noted that the Selectmen spend a lot of time in Concord trying to lobby for their causes, and it is an uphill battle. Ms. Levine said that it is not just New London – it is all towns that do not have weight with the legislature.

Jessie said that it is representative of a system in that the people in the legislature and the senate focus on the state problems and not the local problems. By way of example, she said that the Town is part of a lawsuit that other towns are involved with, suing the State legislature over NH Retirement System. She said that the state was supposed to pay 35% of retirement fees for fire, police and teachers and they have decreased it to 30% in 2009 and 25% in 2010, which puts the cost on the towns and schools.

Mr. Kaplan said maintenance of the roads in New Hampshire is paid by the gas tax, and \$600 million is raised by the gas tax every year. If they decide to fix the road in New London, it only means they don't fix another road in another town in the state. Main Street isn't on the list to be fixed. This was once in the State's 10-year plan and there were many roads removed from the list because there were not enough available funds. Chair Ballin said that the road needs to be rebuilt, not just repaved, and we have to keep reminding them. Tina Helm said that the Town is fortunate that Jessie Levine is on the pulse of what is going on with the state.

Ms. Levine said that going into the state budget process, we were faced with losing the rooms & meals tax, which is substantial revenue for New London, \$60,000 in shared revenue, \$185,000 from the highway block grant, retirement system changes, sewer reimbursements. The Selectmen decided that the court benefits the town, but not really anyone else, and that we had bigger fish to fry with the budget process. In hindsight, had we known we would be the only cut, we should have fought harder, but we tried to focus on our energy on the bigger ticket items.

Ms. Levine summarized the impact from the State's budget:

- Meals & Rooms – Frozen at its current levels - New London will still receive \$195,477 in Meals & Rooms Tax in FY 2010 (which starts next week) and FY 2011. We will not receive any increased revenue – the state is keeping the portion of the M&R tax that was increase.
- Revenue Sharing – Revenue sharing has been “suspended,” which means a loss of \$57,865 in 2010 and 2011
- Highway Block Grants are safe for now, but the failure to pass the gas tax to shore up the State highway fund means that when the state continues to fall short for its own projects, it may seek to suspend or terminate town sharing of gas tax revenue in the future.
- NH Retirement System – The state has historically paid 35% of retirement contributions for police & firefighters (and teachers). This match is being reduced to 30% in 2010 and 25% in 2011, and most likely will not be restored to previous levels.
- New London District Court

In total, the impact to us was about \$89,000 in 2009 and \$115,000 next year. It could have been \$400,000.

Gary Markoff asked if the impact will remain at \$115,000 every year or will it go back to normal afterwards. Ms. Levine said that towns have been told that what they lost they would get back, but there is not a lot of faith. She thinks the best case scenario is a flat revenue stream from the State.

Mr. Harrison asked if current expenditures could be curbed to help lessen the impact. Ms. Levine said that the good news is that the Budget Committee had lowered the budget by 5%, which resulted in projected tax rate decrease of 30 cents. With the state cuts, there should still be a decrease of about 22 cents, so local taxes are not expected to be higher than last year.

Bob Lavoie asked the status of changing fiscal year of the town. Ms. Levine said that she will be making a presentation to the Board of Selectmen and Budget Committee on Monday night. She explained that state law allows towns the option to change to a July – June 30 fiscal year and hold Town Meeting in May rather than March. There is a difficult transition period and Town Meeting has to pass an 18-month budget and that 18 months has to be collected in 12 months.

Peter Bianchi asked if the Town had set a date for setting the tax rate. Jessie said the town hadn't submitted its MS1 yet (value of town property), which is due September 1, and that the tax rate is usually set sometime in October. Rip Cross asked if total value was up or down, and Ms. Levine said that she believed it was up. Marilyn Kidder said that county-wide prices have declined 12-15%, and statewide 12.5%. She asked if any of our valuations were out of whack, but said she has not seen prices come down in New London. Ms. Levine confirmed that overall, properties in New London are still selling for higher than assessments.

Hardy Hasenfuss asked how it is decided which roads to pave, and questioned whether it was necessary to pave Tracy Road. Ms. Levine said that the Town spends \$185,000 per year on paving projects and there is not a capital improvements plan in place for that. Richard Lee has a long-term plan of what roads need to be addressed. There is also \$40,000 spent every year for shimming, which is a layer of pavement to keep a road together before it needs to be replaced.

Tina Helm read Mr. Lee's explanation for why Tracy and Page Roads were paved:

- 1- When we paved them the last time it was with a thin coat of asphalt just to hold them until we could get to grind and pave them.
- 2- We did drainage work on both sides of Page Road hill to stop the washing of the edge of the road.
- 3- The roads had bad wheel ruts and the water was running down the roads and not getting off into the ditches.
- 4- Both roads had areas that were broken up real bad and the water was getting in and making the base soft.
- 5- Both roads were out of shape we raised the edge of Tracy road by the field about 6 inches. We used about 60 yds. of stone in that area to stabilize the road base.

With all that work done we shouldn't need to pave these roads again for 15 years.

Mr. Hasenfuss wanted to know if it could have survived for another few years. Ms. Levine said that with the increase in paving costs over the past few years, we are already accomplishing less. The longer we wait, the more needs to be done to a road and the more it would cost. Richard Lee had noted that Tracy Road looked worse than he expected once the project started. The road had to be raised 6" in one area because it had fallen so much.

Mr. Dunning said that there is drop off in the shoulder of the road on Otterville Road near the beach and suggested that the Town should look at it.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary  
New London Planning Board