

TOWN OF NEW LONDON
BUDGET COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 15, 2006

PRESENT: Barry Wright (Chairman), Connie Appel, Pat Blanchard, Jack Diemar, Carol Fraley (Finance Officer), Mark Kaplan (Selectman *ex officio*), Jessie Levine (Town Administrator), Bob Meck, Noel Weinstein, Jim Wheeler, John Wilson.

ABSENT: Doug Baxter

ALSO PRESENT: Police Chief David Seastrand, Police Sergeant Ed Andersen, Police Officers Rob Thorp and Marshall Osgood, Hillsboro Police Officer Derek Brown, Risk Management Representative Butch Burbank (Local Government Center); from Council on Aging: Hugh Chapin, Nancy Friese, Hardy Hasenfuss, and Jean LaChance

Prior to the meeting, Budget Committee members received print-outs of the year-to-date expenditures and proposed budget for 2007, draft of the Budget Public Hearing hand-out, tax rate calculation, list of over-expended accounts to date, memo dated November 15 from Road Agent Richard Lee regarding material hauling by the Highway Department, updated budget proposal from the Fire Department, data sheet of health insurances provided by Towns similar in size to New London (2000-4999 population), copies of allocation requests from six non-profit organizations including New London Hospital, Council on Aging, Visiting Nurses Association, Chamber of Commerce, NH Association for the Blind, Community Garden Committee of Tracy Library. During the meeting, Carol Fraley informed the Budget Committee that a seventh request in the amount of \$500 from non-profit organization CASA, will be forthcoming.

Barry Wright opened the meeting at 7 p.m., and the Budget Committee proceeded to address four areas of business this evening.

1. Minutes – October 18, 2006

Connie Appel referred to paragraph four on page two, and said that Barry Wright, John Wilson, and Noel Weinstein also attended the Budget & Finance Seminar. She referred to paragraph two on page five, and clarified that she would be more inclined to favor purchase of tasers for a Police Department of very high standards as New London's Police Department is.

Noel Weinstein referred to paragraph two on page one, under "September 20 Discussions Cont'd," and asked to clarify the amount encumbered for Disease Prevention, specifically, for the mosquito control program. Response: the amount budgeted and encumbered is \$33,200.

John Wilson opened some discussion on the statement in that paragraph referring to the species of mosquitoes. Jessie Levine said New London does host the species of mosquitoes that carry West Nile Virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis, but tests of those mosquitoes were negative for the actual diseases.

Noel Weinstein corrected a typographical error in the first line on page six: "serves" should read "services."

John Wilson referred to paragraph eight on page five. Jessie Levine confirmed that \$20,000 will be put into a capital reserve each year for two years, for the Elkins Dam, and the dam will be put into place in 2008.

Pat Blanchard corrected the last paragraph on page two to reflect that she was speaking for herself, not necessarily for the subcommittee when she expressed this reservation.

John Wilson asked if the proposed purchase of a Recreation Department van has been put into the CIP. Response: the 2007 budget proposal includes a deposit of \$12,000 to open the capital reserve for Recreation Department van.

2. Tasers

New London Police Chief David Seastrand said that if the Department were to purchase tasers, their use will be strictly according to the Department's policy. The policy will reflect when this device can be used; there will be a clear written directive. Right now, he is in the process of reviewing sample policies used by other police departments.

He reviewed the Police Department's force continuum:

1. Police presence, often adequate to diffuse a situation.
2. Verbal command, in conjunction with...
3. Empty hand technique.
4. Hand cuffing.
5. Pepper Spray (OC) which can be used when the officer is 7 to 15 feet away, but is subject to outside influences such as wind.
6. Tasers would fit into this position within the force continuum. He pointed out that the type of situation that would justify OC is the type that would justify use of tasers, and the latter has several advantages over OC.
7. Closed hand, striking.
8. Impact weapon, metal baton.
(He noted that between pepper spray and deadly force, they only have impact techniques.)
9. Deadly force.

In New London, the night car is the only one out there at that time, and often back up can be 15-20 minutes away. This year, so far, the Department has made over 2000 motor vehicle stops, and they never know who they are stopping. Furthermore, conditions at each stop vary. It may be difficult to get handcuffs on a person, or it may be windy, ruling out the use of OC. Yet those stops are not deadly force situations. The taser would give them another tool to use. He said that the Hillsboro Police Department has had tasers for over a year, not one deployment until recently. Like Hillsboro, New London would engage in a positive educational campaign, with demonstrations and presentations.

Butch Burbank, Risk Management Representative from the Local Government Center, said they recommend tasers if used by trained officers who are following policy. He referred to a panel of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), which is constantly looking at the issue of use of force, and it highly recommends tasers if they are used by properly trained officers working within the policies and procedures. Tasers can bring a confrontation under control more quickly and more safely for the officer and arrestee. In addition, the taser's reduced risk to officers also reduces potential for workers comp claims. The recommendation is to give the Police Department as much range as possible, so they do not have to go to deadly force.

Responding to the question raised at the October 18th Budget Committee meeting about events occurring in New London for which the tasers would have been helpful, New London Police Sergeant Ed Andersen cited three recent incidents to which he responded, and for which he felt a taser would have been an advantageous tool.

Budget Committee members asked the following questions:

- o Would the tasers be as effective in a crowd situation? No, a taser is useful when dealing with a single individual. The New London Police Department would not eliminate OC from their belts.
- o What about the expandable metal batons? The New London Police Department would no longer carry the batons on their belt, but would keep them in the car. Hillsboro Police Officer Derek Brown said his Department no longer carries or trains with sticks.
- o What about a subject who has a heart pacemaker or other condition that the officer cannot be aware of; would the taser do significant damage that would not be done with the pepper spray? Derek Brown said there would be no effect on a pacemaker. He explained that pacemakers are designed to be shocked by defibrillators which put out 100 times the amperage of tasers. He added that a taser is designed to go only through the area of the body where it is deployed.

- o Have there been any medical studies comparing the safety of OC versus tasers? Derek Brown said that pepper spray affects the mucous membranes, and its effects are felt in the eyes and respiratory system for some time after it is deployed. A taser is a five-second electrical stimulus, with no residual effects. Chief Seastrand noted that he has a letter from one hospital specifically requesting that police not use pepper spray in the hospital, as it can even get into the HVAC. Derek Brown went on to say that as far as safety is concerned, things could happen with both. With OC, there are more risks to the officer.
- o Will there be annual training with tasers? Does the cost include training? Butch Burbank said they recommend annual training, including discharge of the taser (\$16.95 per cartridge). He acknowledged that there would be a cost to that, but pointed out that the benefits far outweigh the cost. Dave Seastrand said the cost would be a separate item. He estimated that it would be about \$900 the first year. The entire department would be included in the training. He would not anticipate taser training being a large amount, annually.
- o Would training in tasers be included in the simunitions exercise? Butch Burbank said they do not include that as a rule, but that would be up to the Department.
- o Is there any evidence that liability would increase because of the tasers, particularly in light of the fact that many calls are to the college? Butch Burbank said the IACP has not seen an upsurge in lawsuits regarding use of tasers. He said there is not much difference in the number of lawsuits regarding use of OC versus tasers. Derek Brown said that initially, when tasers were a brand new tool, there were more lawsuits, but that has leveled off. He said that the company provides a \$10 million rider and sends out a team if a police department faces a lawsuit as a result of its using a taser. He agreed that he doesn't think there are more lawsuits with tasers than with pepper spray. Butch Burbank said he can only think of two instances when lawsuits regarding use of tasers have been successful: when it was used in a hazardous environment contrary to policy, and when it was used as a compliance tool, contrary to policy.
- o What is the numbers comparison between use of tasers versus use of pepper spray in Hillsboro? Derek Brown said their Department no longer carries or trains on pepper spray. The Department has made 400 arrests this year. He estimated that they have taken out the taser 10-15 times, but used it in full capacity only once, and used it once as a "dry stun."
- o The taser is a two-part probe. What if one is blocked by a belt buckle or something? Derek Brown said if only one probe hits the subject, there will be no electrical circuit, but he explained how the weapon can work in two modes. On Hillsboro, they each carry two cartridges.
- o Does every officer carry one? In Hillsboro, each of the 11 full time officers carries a taser. This year, the part time officers have shared one, but for 2007, they are budgeting for each of the part-timers to have his own.
- o Do any of the officers in Hillsboro decline to carry them? Derek Brown said that some had some initial reluctance, but no longer, after training and seeing how they work.
- o Would it be better to move into the program slowly? Dave Seastrand said his preference would be that if they are going to purchase tasers, everyone should train on them and be outfitted with one. He'd rather not transition into it, but will if that is the Town's decision. Jessie Levine added that she feels that if the Town is going to make this purchase, it should include outfitting the part timers as well, particularly as part-time officers are used to augment the police force on evenings and weekends, when the most activity occurs. She added that most of the part-time officers are fully-trained full-time officers in other police departments.
- o Total bottom line cost? Dave Seastrand that he put \$12,000 for tasers in his proposed 2007 budget. That would purchase eight tasers, or one for each full-time officer. He would like to get 12 but is reluctant to ask the Budget Committee for more money, so he will be speaking with another company "Stinger" to get more precise figures. Derek Brown said that because "Stinger" is another name brand, like "Taser," and because it is the "new kid on the block," it may initially be tested with lawsuits just as Taser was when it was new.

- o Does that figure include the audio-visual recording capability? Yes, it does and Derek Brown emphasized the benefit of having that, as it cuts down on potential for litigation.

In conclusion, Barry Wright said it is the task of the Budget Committee to recommend or not recommend the expenditure. The expenditure will have to be passed at Town Meeting. Jessie Levine said that part of the public relations for this will be discussion of it at the December 9th Citizens' Advisory Committee meeting. Response there will allow the Selectmen to calculate how to proceed (with the educational campaign on tasers). Speaking for himself, Barry Wright said that, subject to that review by the CAC and at Town Meeting, he feels comfortable with the arguments presented tonight in favor of purchasing the tasers, specifically, the increase in safety to both the officers and the subjects. Jessie Levine repeated that if tasers are purchased, they should be purchased for all full- and part-time officers and not just full-time.

3. Non-Profit Organizations

The Budget Committee agreed that it is helpful to have these requests come in on a standardized form. Barry Wright opened this discussion by reminding everyone that ultimately Town Meeting will make these decisions, but citizens rely on the Budget Committee's review.

The questions facing the Committee are:

- o Should the response to a request for funding for a non-profit be based on need? On type of service provided? On percentage of town's population served?
- o Does the organization provide a service the Town would otherwise have to provide, and provide at what cost (to the town)?
- o Should the Town be deciding how people spend their philanthropical money?
- o When a non-profit organization is making money and accumulating surplus (versus a non-profit which spends every penny it gets), should the Town step back? (Hugh Chapin pointed out that an organization could very quickly lose its 501C status, if it accumulates surplus.)
- o Even if a non-profit is running a deficit, does it have a means of attaching fees to its services? Could fees replace the amount being requested from the Town?
- o What is a fair way to come up with an amount of Town funding? Several Budget Committee members felt that basing Town allocation to a non-profit on use of that service, rather than per capita is more fair. On the other hand, some services, as those provided by Visiting Nurses would be difficult to calculate, as they cover such a broad range.

In conclusion, Budget committee members agreed that some look should be given at whether or not the organization is running its business in a responsible way. The entire budget should be subject to review by the Budget Committee, if an organization is requesting town funds. Members also agreed that the line on town funding of a non-profit organization can be drawn either by limiting town funding to those organizations that serve a large part of the town, or by limiting to those organizations that are taking care of a cost that the Town otherwise would have to.

*COA: Hugh Chapin, Jean LaChance, Hardy Hasenfuss and Nancy Friese representing Council on Aging, attended this meeting. COA is increasing its 2007 request to \$20,000 from the Town of New London, up from \$9600 in 2005 and 2006, and \$8000 in 2003 and 2004.

Budget Committee members observed that the VNA and CAP requests to the Town have been relatively stable, but COA's request shows an increase this year. Does COA anticipate doubling its request again in the future? Note made that its biggest expense was the building, and that is not going to go up in the future.

Hugh Chapin said they hope this year's increase will take care of the situation for some time to come. They are trying to do something about the deficit, and are trying to keep expenditures below \$100,000. He said the statistics provided in the application package justify COA's requesting more than half its town support from New London. New London has 1,691 residents over the age of 55, more than any of the other eight towns served. 56.2% of those over age 55 in New London are members of COA. Hardy Hasenfuss pointed out that in some towns and cities, the senior centers are totally funded by the town, and Nancy Friese added that New London's senior center (COA) is one of the largest, and unique in services provided.

Budget Committee members agreed that COA provides services not provided by the Town's Recreation Department, but asked if there is any concern about the Community Center competing with COA for dollars. (The Budget Committee noted that the Community Center has indicated that it will be entirely self-funded; however, the possibility that in the future they will be coming to the Town for ongoing needs, must be kept in mind.) Nancy Friese said she does not see a conflict between COA and the Community Center, and anticipates working together.

Budget Committee members recognized that COA's transportation program including cost of gas, is entirely volunteer, and that is door to door, in contrast to a bus service or other type which would require users to be able to meet a specific schedule and get themselves to a bus stop, so there is more in dollar value of services provided by COA than is reflected in the budget print-out. In addition, as Nancy Friese pointed out, statistics show the cost effectiveness when the types of services that COA provides are available, including reduced health care costs, and keeping people in their homes longer. Jessie Levine said that in addition to the transportation, COA -- particularly Nancy Friese -- works with people to help them navigate the system of community and emergency services, and that is invaluable. The Town would have to do all that if COA were not available, and would probably have to hire a full time welfare director.

John Wilson asked if COA anticipated asking for funding from the Town when it started? Hugh Chapin said he did not think so at first. At first, COA started out very small. John Wilson asked if COA intends to remain a privately run organization? Yes.

Noel Weinstein asked if COA could charge fees for its services? Hugh Chapin said COA does not charge fees except for trips, and those fees are just for the cost of the trips. A large percentage of COA users would not be able to afford fees, and COA feels it would be counterproductive from the standpoint of membership and participation, to start charging fees. They feel very strongly about that.

Several Budget Committee members said that COA is the only service organization that does not charge fees, and the transportation is self-sufficient (volunteers). The Recreation Department charges user fees, and the Community Center plans to, though members noted that the Recreation Department also has a Town budget of \$140,090. There was some suggestion that if COA requested a donation of \$20 from each of its 2400 members annually, that would cover the requests for town contributions. Accommodation could be made for individuals who cannot contribute that. No one would be driven away. If people paid a nominal fee, they may be more inclined to use an organization's services. Hugh Chapin said COA does send out an annual appeal, and those who can afford to donate, do.

Jack Diemar asked what percentage of COA's membership does donate? If it is a large percentage, then they are probably maxed out as far as number of potential donors. COA Treasurer Jean LaChance said about half of its membership donates. The Budget Committee observed that the actual revenues for last year (2005) were \$85,802, and all but \$21,260 was raised from sources other than Town contributions. COA is anticipating \$50,000 in donations in 2007.

*VNA: The Budget Committee reviewed the VNA's request for \$11,672, and agreed to request more information regarding their gains over losses, and to ask about the capital line.

*Chamber of Commerce: The Budget Committee reviewed the Chamber of Commerce request for \$10,000, level with last year's allocation. Jack Diemar explained that the towns in the Lake Sunapee Region Chamber of Commerce own and run their own booths. The allocation from the Town is earmarked for staffing of the Information Booth, not for projects.

*Ambulance: Budget Committee members reviewed the request from New London Hospital for \$79,050 for New London's share of ambulance support, based on number of runs, and for the first of five annual contributions of \$7863 toward purchase of a new ambulance. Budget Committee members asked if the hospital had been putting capital reserve away before this year, and why this wasn't brought up in initial discussions.

Jessie Levine said she has had some discussion with Jay Lyon, during which it was agreed that right now it is still less expensive to have the ambulance this way, but at some time in the future the Town may wish to run its own. Mark Kaplan agreed, every time the Town looks at the possibility of running its own ambulance, it finds that it just would not pay. For one thing, they would need six people to staff it 24/7.

*Community Action Program: Budget Committee reviewed CAP's request for \$3800 from New London, and agreed that that for the services provided, that is a good deal.

*NH Association for the Blind: The Budget Committee reviewed the request for \$1500 from the New Hampshire Association for the Blind, and agreed that it does not fall within the scope of what the Committee discussed tonight. Several members observed that the Lions Club does much fundraising for this association, and also that an appeal for funding might be more appropriately directed toward individuals in town. It was agreed that a letter to that effect will be sent to the Association for the Blind, and the letter will advise them of the process for submitting a request via petition warrant article to Town Meeting, if they so choose.

*Community Garden: The Budget Committee reviewed the Community Garden Committee's budget and request for level-funding, noting an increase in fundraising, and the large number of volunteer hours. After brief discussion, the Committee agreed to adhere to its decision to reduce the Town's allocation by \$1000 each year.

In conclusion:

- o The Budget Committee will suggest to COA that it canvas its membership regarding the idea of a nominal fee.
- o The VNA will be invited to meet with the Budget Committee to discuss its budget, particularly its accumulating capital reserve.
- o Request for a full ambulance budget will be made to New London Hospital.
- o An extra Budget Committee meeting was scheduled for November 29th to review that new information if it is available on that date, and to continue tonight's agenda.

4. Sewer

Mark Kaplan reported that the new sewer rate shows an increase of 66%, and the Sewer Commissioners recognize that they may have to raise rates again next year. This increase will still leave them short, but the Commissioners also decided to cut a couple of the proposed expenditures. Mark Kaplan said there is some disagreement between the Commissioners and the Selectmen about whether or not the people wearing the pagers should be paid. The Selectmen feel that they should be. Jessie Levine said the Sewer Commissioners decided to pull the \$150,000 reserve back into the operating funds, and will be starting a capital reserve from zero. The difference was about \$9,000 per year.

This meeting adjourned at 10 p.m. and was continued to November 29 at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

S.A. Denz
Recording Secretary