

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES**

September 12, 2005

PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Norm Bernaiche, Assessor
Bob Lavoie, New London resident
Carolyn Dube, Argus Champion
Debbie Cross, Intertown Record

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

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Lyon moved to approve the minutes of August 29, 2005. Second Ms. Clough and approved 3-0.

Sealed Bid Process: Ms. Levine described the current process for selling surplus equipment, in which the town invites sealed bids and awards the item to the highest bidder. She said that an employee had asked whether the town would allow a bidder to submit a bid of \$100 higher than the highest bid. Mr. Lyon said his concern would be that there would be no limit to the bidding if two bidders took the same approach. Ms. Levine said her primary concern was that the town had not advertised that option, and she did not want employees to have inside information that was not available to the public. After a short discussion, the Selectmen decided that they would not accept bids that are not specific in value. Mr. Lyon suggested that in future years the Town list a minimum bid or original value of the item to assist the bidders.

Joint Assessor: At 8:05 AM, the Selectmen were joined by Norm Bernaiche, the new assessor for the towns of New London, Newbury and Sunapee. Chair Kaplan welcomed Mr. Bernaiche to New London and asked him how he liked his first week on the job. Mr. Bernaiche said he has had a chance to spend time in each town and get a sense of their different needs, and he is working on establishing a method of communication and scheduling among the towns. Ms. Levine said that the Joint Board was meeting with Norm this afternoon to go over scheduling, staffing, and budgeting for 2006.

Ms. Clough asked if Mr. Bernaiche had a windshield tour of New London yet, and Mr. Bernaiche replied that he has spoken with a resident in Great Pines and will prepare some information relating to the property in that neighborhood and would like to do the same for all neighborhoods. Ms. Levine said that Vision had created primarily waterfront and view neighborhoods in the 2003 revaluation, that the remainder of town was considered one neighborhood, and Mr. Bernaiche will refine that during the statistical update. Mr. Bernaiche said he spent time last week looking at the town's data and making corrections. Going forward, he would like to inspect the sales monthly to see the data as close as possible to the sale date and before the property changes. Chair Kaplan asked how Mr. Bernaiche would assess a property that sold for \$500,000 and received \$100,000 in improvements following the sale. Mr. Bernaiche said that he would not change the property value simply based on a sale, and that some improvements may change the value of a property while others may have no effect. He said a kitchen

may receive \$30,000 worth of improvements, but that does not necessarily increase the value of a house by \$30,000. He added that one sale does not make a market, and that the town cannot "chase" sale price. He said that the assessors are not after the highs and lows but trying to establish the middle ground of property. If something is unique about a property it will be noted so the assessors can determine what people are paying for and establish a file that keeps track of such data.

Mr. Bernaiche said he had bumped into Paul Franklin, chair of the Board of Tax and Land Appeals, and that Mr. Franklin was positive about the towns' decision to share an assessor and to hire Mr. Bernaiche.

Ms. Levine said that since Mr. Bernaiche will conduct the statistical update in-house, the town may need to contract with individuals to assist in the process. This will be a discussion for the Joint Board today. Mr. Bernaiche said that his assistant in Lebanon had given notice and will be a "free agent" to work with New London.

Mr. Lyon said that he would draft a *Link* to talk about the statistical update that Mr. Bernaiche is conducting. Mr. Lyon said his goal is to get people to understand that revaluation is an annual process and that the town will look at changes in the market every year and conduct inspections annually. He is concerned that people focus on inspections as the issue when really it's the sales analysis that drives any change in value. Mr. Bernaiche agreed and said he had language written up that he will give to Mr. Lyon for use in the article. He sees two processes – valuation and inspection – that happen simultaneously but have different focuses. One verifies the data to ensure accuracy and the second keeps track of market changes; if the market flattens out then there may be no need to change anything. Mr. Lyon said that from the Selectmen's standpoint, it is disproportionality that drives the need for change. Ms. Levine added that the state's certification requirements also require updates to market value.

Bob Lavoie asked if Mr. Bernaiche's contract dictated how he should spend this time. Ms. Levine said that the Intermunicipal Agreement among the three towns governs time under the oversight of the Joint Board. In 2005, the agreement allows Newbury and New London 40% each and Sunapee 20%, due to Sunapee's recent completion of its revaluation. In 2006 the time and cost will be allocated based on the percentage of parcels, which is roughly 1/3 per town. There is an assumption of good faith in the agreement, given that one town may need more attention at one time and that will cycle through the three towns. Mr. Bernaiche said there are many opportunities to communicate between communities and regular meetings of the Joint Board to discuss any concerns. Mr. Lyon said Mr. Bernaiche would know if anyone's nose is out of joint.

Mr. Bernaiche said his philosophy is to keep everyone happy. The taxpayers are the customers and they need to have good customer service. Mr. Lyon said the Selectmen have been enthusiastic about this venture for some time due to pain experienced during the revaluation process outside of the changes in value. If someone in town is available and the taxpayers are comfortable and confident with that person, that will help immensely. Vision did a competent revaluation, but fell down on the public process and informal hearings. He hopes Mr. Bernaiche can establish a new relationship with taxpayers since he will be available to them throughout the year. Chair Kaplan agreed that if the assessor is more convenient and provides information, people can relax and accept the process.

Ms. Levine said that Mr. Bernaiche also has ideas to improve the town's assessing web page. Mr. Bernaiche said he would like to provide as much information as possible and that Vision's mapping function will also be useful for spatially oriented people. At the end of the day, it is better to have the data out there and it will make better data, because people will bring mistakes to his attention. Ms. Clough said if his phone is quiet, it means he did a good job. Mr. Bernaiche replied "it's never quiet in our business."

Mr. Bernaiche said he hopes his position will bring down the level of anxiety relating to assessing. Ms. Clough welcomed him aboard and asked Ms. Levine if Mr. Bernaiche's contract required regular meetings with the Selectmen. Ms. Levine said the Joint Board will oversee staffing and budgeting issues and Ms. Levine will oversee day-to-day matters, and Mr. Bernaiche will meet with the Selectmen when he needs their decisions on assessing matters such as the statistical update.

Mr. Lyon wished him luck and said to let the Selectmen know if they can be of assistance. Mr. Bernaiche said he's looking forward to the job and will be in New London on Mondays, Newbury on Tuesdays, Sunapee on Fridays, and will "float" on Wednesdays and Thursdays between New London and Newbury, for now. He said he has one major change to recommend, and that is to notify property owners as soon as their assessment changes, such as after a building permit is completed or property changes. He does not recommend waiting until tax bills go out for people to see changes for the first time. This way, the assessors would have an opportunity to address any problems early in the process.

Ms. Levine asked if the Selectmen should consider requiring permits for interior changes, to track improvements that would affect value. Mr. Bernaiche said that the Selectmen could think about it, but that the idea didn't come from him. They could consider requiring permits for electrical or plumbing changes, which usually are required in improvements to the kitchen and bathrooms. The Selectmen will give it thought. Chair Kaplan thanked Mr. Bernaiche and Mr. Bernaiche departed at 8:45 AM.

Garden Club: Ms. Levine referred to a request from the Garden Club to serve alcohol at their annual party at Tracy Library on December 3. Mr. Lyon moved to approve the request pending their compliance with the town's Alcohol Ordinance. Second Chair Kaplan and approved 3-0.

Citizen's Advisory Committee: Ms. Levine said that Senator Bob Odell had agreed to meet with the CAC at their meeting on September 24. She said that would mean back-to-back meeting with the legislators, since Randy Foose and David Kidder had met with the committee in July. The Selectmen said that they would like to spend half an hour updating the committee on projects and asked if Senator Odell could come at 8:00 AM instead of 7:30 AM.

John Schlosser/Cross Country Skiing: Ms. Levine referred to a letter from John Schlosser regarding his interest in keeping the ski trails around the New London/Wilmot/Sutton line open even though Norsk has moved its operations to Sunapee for the winter. Mr. Schlosser and the Wilmot Community Association plan to sell memberships that will allow people to use the trails, and the cost of the membership will go towards the maintenance of the trails. Insurance will be provided by the WCA. Ms. Levine said she met with Mr. Schlosser on Friday and he asked if skiers could park at the Shepard Pit and members will be asked to patrol parking to make sure that only members used the area. Ms. Levine said that Richard Lee has agreed to clear an area for public parking. The Board of Selectmen approved the request.

OLD BUSINESS:

Elkins Workshop: Ms. Levine said that the Elkins workshop for Saturday was all set. The format will consist of an overview presented by Ms. Clough and Victoria Boundy of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC), followed by four break-out sessions to focus on each of the following topics: the future of the Post Office; commercial user and zoning; recreation and open space needs; and traffic, parking and pedestrian flow. There will be a moderator for each of the four discussions, which will be about half an hour each. The last hour will summarize the discussion and open up for any remaining discussion. The Elkins Subcommittee will then meet on September 21 at 4:00 to review the workshop, and the hearing on the draft plan will be on Thursday, October 27 at 7:00 PM.

Ms. Levine said there have been some rumblings about New London telling Elkins what to do, and she hopes that the Selectmen can communicate that they are holding the workshop to listen to Elkins

residents. Chair Kaplan agreed that as town officials, the Selectmen shouldn't find themselves in the position of telling residents that they have to do something as a result of this study. Ms. Clough said the Selectmen will be there to listen, not tell.

Colby-Sawyer College: Ms. Levine reminded the Selectmen of the tree-planting ceremony on Sunday at 3:00 PM to recognize President Anne Ponder and the Town's relationship with Colby-Sawyer.

Squires Lane: Ms. Levine said that she and Richard Lee had met with Dail Deming Mueller, daughter of Alice Deming on Squires Lane, on whose property the culvert will be reopened to reduce the flow of water to Balsam Acres. Richard Lee had addressed Ms. Mueller's concerns about the location of the outflow and the start of construction in the morning. The Highway Department will hold off until 10:00 AM to accommodate her mother's health needs. Ms. Levine said the Highway Department has completed the drainage work in Balsam Acres and is working its way up Squires Lane. Grinding and paving will begin in a few weeks.

Board of Firewards: The Board of Selectmen appointed Karen Hoglund to complete Barbara Green's term on the Board of Firewards.

There being no further public business, Chair Kaplan moved to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3(d) to discuss the resolution of litigation and 91-A:3(c) regarding tax deeding of property.

Upon returning to public session, the Selectmen reviewed and signed the items below.

SIGNATURES:

Building Permits:

- Thomas A. McKee Trust, 519 Burpee Hill Road (Map 070, Lot 016), permit to extend original permit and add a porch – Approved (Permit 03-112)
- Bettie Howard, 177 Sugarhouse Road, (Map 035, Lot 011), permit to change from original plan and add screened porch to newly heated area – Approved (Permit 05-069)
- Paul & Joanne Lazdowski, 40 Moyah's Lane (Map 103, Lot 015), permit to shore up/level house with a new frost wall – DENIED due to new foundation will not comply with Article XVI, Section H.1- must use existing foundation within 50 ft. setback (Permit 05-101)
- Richard L. Green, 848 County Road, (Map 093 Lot 017), permit to build a 40' x 26' carport, no walls only a roof – Approved (Permit 05-111)
- Edward William Burt, Jr. & Barbara Ann Burt, 201 Little Sunapee Road (Map 059, Lot 040), permit to build a ground-level outdoor deck adjacent to north side of home – Approved (Permit 05-112)
- Terry & Nancy Holtom, Westside Drive, (Map 055, Lot 012-001), permit to construct a 4-bedroom home with attached two-car garage and rear screened porch – Approved (Permit 05-113)

Sign Permit Applications:

- NONE

Other Items for Signature:

- Disbursement voucher for the week of September 12, 2005
- Application for use of Whipple Memorial Hall by Adventures in Learning for Thursdays for 8 Weeks Commencing January 19 - March 9, 2006 from 2:00-4:00 PM – Approved

Selectmen's Meeting Minutes

September 12, 2005

Page 5

- Appointment of Karen B. Hogle to Board of Firewards

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:55 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie Levine
Town Administrator