



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes October 22, 2007

Present:

Mark Kaplan, Selectman
Larry Ballin, Selectman
Jessie Levine, Town Administrator

Absent:

Sue Clough, Chair

Others Present:

Carol Fraley, Finance Director
Linda Hardy, Town Clerk/Tax Collector
Rob Ciandella, Donahue, Tucker & Ciandella -Cable Franchise Process
Phil Stake - Argus Champion
Debbie Cross - Intertown Record

Mark Kaplan opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m.

Tax Rate, Health Insurance: Ms. Levine explained that the Town has not heard from the Department of Revenue in regards to setting the tax rate. The school has been delayed with their filings and because of the Town's condo project the Town asked DRA for a month extension to submit the MS-1. Ms. Levine created a tax rate projection for the Selectmen's review. Ms. Levine explained that the Statewide Education Property Tax has gone down because the Town's valuation has gone up. Ms. Levine said when the state education grants are reduced, Kearsarge Regional School District receives less money which has increased the town's contribution by 21%. With some discussion the Selectmen decided to apply to the tax rate \$335,000 from surplus, the projected tax rate will be \$4.09 down from \$4.41. Ms. Levine explained that calculation uses \$60,000 for overlay which will cover abatement refunds that may be granted throughout the year.

Health insurance increased by 7.8% impacting the budget by \$32,469. Mr. Ballin confirmed that the rate increase is not specific to the town's claim record, which Ms. Levine said correct. For retirees the increase is 12.6%. Mr. Kaplan asked if there were other options to lower the cost for the town. Ms. Levine explained that the town is under contract with HealthTrust. The plan offered to the employees could be changed (currently the town participates in the Blue Choice 3 tier plan), and in the past the Selectmen have reviewed the options, consulted with employees, and voted to keep the existing plan. Currently for the family plan the Town pays \$1,800 a month per employee.

Mr. Ballin said last year, Budget Committee Chair John Wilson, in a letter to the Budget Committee, recommended looking into Health Savings Account's (HSAs) and other alternative health benefits. Ms. Levine explained that Carol Fraley and John Wilson attended a presentation from Anthem about HSAs offered through HealthTrust learning that the cost is about the same. Ms. Levine explained that the Budget Committee recommended that since the benefit costs are in line with other municipalities they do not have to be adjusted this year but should be reviewed annually. Ms. Levine noted that the increase is less than last year which was over \$50,000. Dental is increasing by 2.6%; the increase would have been

0% but the Local Government Center Board voted to adopt Delta Dental's recommendation to four cleanings a year.

October 15 Meeting Minutes: Mr. Kaplan motioned to approve meeting minutes dated October 15, 2007. Mr. Ballin seconded the motion. Mr. Ballin asked if there were any significant changes made after the email version. No significant changes were made. Motion passed.

Fire Department Letter of Merit: Pam Drewniak from New London Hospital and the Newbury Fire Department nominated the New London Fire Department for a Meritorious Service award. The Fire Department received a letter of commendation from Fire Standards & Training.

Fire Department Full Time Position: Ms. Levine reported that the Fire Department has received three applications for the full-time firefighter position. Fire Chief and Fire Wardens will be conducting interviews and testing in the near future.

Governors Advisory Counsel for Intermodal Transportation Report (GACIT): Ms. Levine and Richard Lee attended the Department of Transportation and GACIT hearing on the State's 10-year plan. This was the State's hearing on the fact that the 10-year plan is under funded and would take 35 years to complete. Ms. Levine explained that one of the things the State has done in reviewing the 10-year plan is to change the scope of the projects by either eliminating or reducing the projects. There are three projects in New London, two of which have to do with maintaining the bridges over I-89 and overlay on Route 11. The third is Main Street, which has been on the rebuild plan since the early 1990's and is affected by the change.

Main Street was in the original 10 year plan estimated at \$1.25 million, although the scope then was undefined. When the State was completing their recent analysis of the 10 year plan, they had a revised estimate for Main Street in the amount of \$4 million. Since the State has reduced the scope and working with the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission, it was suggested that Main Street is a candidate for a contact sensitive solution project (CSS). The revised estimate for the project was \$1.475 million.

Ms. Levine's point at the hearing was that the Town of New London has been putting away funds since 2001 in anticipation of working with the State. The State said that projects that were slated to be done before 2014 would happen. Ms. Levine said that aside from the fact that Main Street had been in the plans since the 1990s, there are only portions of Main Street under the revision that are under 2014. The remainder of the work has been pushed out again. All along there have been no discussions with the Town about what their priorities are and there many towns that may be willing to cost share in order to get the projects done rather than see the scope reduced or removed entirely. Ms. Levine encouraged the State to communicate with the Town.

At the hearing Peter Stanley brought forward a point about a project that was not on the 10-year plan -- the Park & Ride -- which has been funded and slated for construction even though it was not in the plan. DOT informed those present that the Park & Ride was coming out of "force account" funds.

The Selectmen recommended drafting a letter to the State explaining the Town's discouragement and inviting the legislative delegation to meet with the Selectmen.

Tax Deed: Ms. Hardy explained that the Town has deeded 2.4 acres of land belonging to Jamie Gould, located off Route I-89, Map 132 Lot 011-00. Ms. Hardy asked the Selectmen if they wish to move forward

Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes

October 22, 2007

Page 3 of 3

and offer the property for sale. The Selectmen agreed to move forward with the sale notifying the owner per statutory obligation.

Cable Franchise Process: Board of Selectmen adjourned the public meeting to meet with counsel regarding the cable franchise renegotiations.

Building Permits

- Delavan B. D. Cate, Cate Boathouse Realty Trust, 552 Route 103A, (Tax Map: 091-027-000); rehab boathouse & replace foundation along road, (all repair work, rot, vehicular damage etc.) – Approved (Permit #07-131)
- Robert & Laurie Anne Durkin, 485 Old Main Street, (Tax Map: 121-005-000); construct new firewood/tractor/storage shed, - Approved (Permit #07-132)
- Cynthia Berg, 510 Sugarhouse Road, (Tax Map: 022-005-000); erect LaValley's Hudson prefabricated, one floor, 26 x 26 foot garage, - Approved (Permit #07-133)

Other Items for Signature

- Disbursement voucher week of 10-19-07 – Approved
- Pine Hill Ski Club, request for permission to operate cross country ski trails and to maintain and groom as needed for use of Ski Club Members. -- Approved
- Tax Abatement Form, for Colby-Sawyer College, 541 Main St. (Map/Lot No. 096-003-000) We have abated the amount of \$6,500. Cause of Abatement: Land use change tax to be abated due to Selectmen's decision at Oct. 15, 2007 meeting -- Approved

Sign Permits

- Application for Temporary Sign Permit – First Baptist Church – Labyrinth Today 9:00 AM to 7:00 PM – the last Wednesday of every month, starting Oct. 31st 2007 through Dec. 31st, 2008 -- Approved
- Application for Temporary Sign Permit – Our Lady of Fatima – Holiday Fair, November 10th, 2007 – Saturday -- Approved
- Application for Permanent Sign Permit – J & F Realty, - 394 Main St. – repainting existing sign, same size & colors -- Approved

No further business meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Whalen
Recording Secretary