

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES**

October 24, 2005

PRESENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT:

Dan Allen, Conservation Commission
Bob & DJ Lavoie, New London residents
Laurie DiClerico, President, Little Sunapee Protective Association
Jack Sheehan, Little Sunapee Protective Association
Virginia Johnson, Little Sunapee Protective Association
Don Garlock, Little Sunapee Protective Association
George Waring, Little Sunapee Protective Association
Ron & Vicki Koron, Little Sunapee Protective Association
Dave McMillen, Little Sunapee Protective Association
Richard Lee, Road Agent
David Seastrand, Chief of Police
Peter Stanley, Fire Chief
Alan Hanscom, District 2 Engineer, State of NH Department of Transportation
Mark Hemmerlein, Environmentalist, State of NH Department of Transportation
Debbie Cross, Intertown Record
Carolyn Dube, Argus Champion

Chair Kaplan called the meeting to order at 8:05 AM.

Conservation Commission: Dan Allen, a member of the New London Conservation Commission, joined the Board of Selectmen's meeting. He referred to a draft agreement between the Conservation Commission and New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) for the maintenance and use of trails on NEFF land near Little Sunapee. Ms. Levine said she had faxed the agreement to town counsel but they had not had a chance to speak. Mr. Allen said the Conservation Commission would like to expand their trail system to include this property and would add the trails to their printed map. Chair Kaplan asked if this would be a partnership between NLCC and NEFF, and Mr. Allen replied in the affirmative. Ms. Clough asked if NEFF received a charitable tax exemption on their property taxes, and Ms. Levine replied they did not as NEFF did not actually use the land that it owned for charitable purposes.

Mr. Lyon moved to approve the draft agreement subject to town counsel's input. Ms. Clough seconded the motion and suggested that the land be better identified in the agreement to be clear which parcels were being discussed. Chair Kaplan asked if the land crossed the town boundary into Springfield, and Mr. Allen said he believes the land is entirely within New London. Ms. Lavoie asked if the agreement included snowshoeing (it listed hiking and cross-country skiing), and Mr. Allen replied that it would. The Board of Selectmen unanimously approved the agreement.

Mr. Allen said the second item he wanted to discuss this morning is Japanese knotweed, and invasive species that is present along many state and town roadsides. In particular, on a three-mile stretch of King

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Hill Road there are 12 stands of knotweed of more than 100 square feet in area. The Conservation Commission is drafting a letter to the state Department of Transportation to ask for permission to reduce the knotweed, most likely by using Round-Up. Mr. Allen questioned whether that was the only successful chemical for use against knotweed, and Ms. Clough said that there has been very little success eradicating the weed, and even with Round-Up one has to dig up the root structure. She suggested that the Conservation Commission contact the Little Sunapee Protective Association, which has identified knotweed as noxious.

Mr. Allen said that the Conservation Commission would like the Town's permission to apply Round-Up or otherwise attempt to eradicate the weed. If they are successful on the state roadsides, they may ask to do the town roads next. Mr. Allen will give the Selectmen a copy of the Conservation Commission's letter to the state DOT.

Mr. Allen said that the third thing he would like to communicate to the Selectmen is that the Conservation Commission has cleared a path from County Road to Messer Pond on town property. Walkers can enter at the gate on County Road (near the "flats"). There is an old car chassis that the Commission has asked the Highway Department to remove, and the Commission may build a boardwalk over the wet areas.

The Selectmen thanked Mr. Allen for the updates, and he departed at 8:20 AM.

Meeting Minutes: Mr. Lyon moved to approve the minutes of October 17. Second Ms. Clough. Mr. Lavoie corrected his statement in the first paragraph, saying that he did not think the School Board's methodologies were erroneous, but that the Board could have used better methods. The Selectmen approved the minutes as amended.

Citizen's Advisory Committee: Mr. Lyon suggested that Norm Bernaiche be invited to attend Saturday's CAC meeting to be introduced and to discuss the new assessments. All agreed.

Budget Subcommittee: Ms. Levine said that the three subcommittees of the Budget Committee had met during the previous week. On Tuesday, October 18, the Highway Department subcommittee, consisting of Barry Wright, John Wilson, and Clayton Shedd, had met with Richard Lee. The discussion primarily focused on the proposed conversion to biodiesel and the proposed purchase of a 10-wheel dump truck in 2007. The Police Department subcommittee – Jack Diemar, Jim Wheeler, and Bob Meck – had met with Chief Seastrand on Thursday and discussed the proposed increase to part-time officer hours, the replacement detective vehicle, and the allocation of computer and investigative equipment budgets. The General Government subcommittee – Doug Baxter, Connie Appel, and Pat Blanchard – had met with Ms. Levine on Thursday evening and the discussion primarily focused on the assessing budget.

Street Lighting Update: Ms. Clough said that the Street Lighting Committee had held a public information session on Tuesday, October 18, and in addition to the members of the committee, about four members of the public attended the meeting. Those present had agreed to the conversion, but one resident strongly preferred the metal halide (white) lights over the high pressure sodium (yellow) lights. The metal halide lights are almost 50% more expensive than the HPS lights, so Ms. Levine has asked PSNH to put up two sample lights on Gould Road so that residents can make a determination as to which is preferred. She has not heard from PSNH as to when the sample lights will be up.

Little Cove/Fieldstone Lane: Ms. Levine said that now that Fieldstone Lane and Little Cove Road have been paved, Bob Bell plans to renew his request to the Board of Selectmen to take over the road. Ms. Levine said that she and Richard Lee have received feedback about the narrowness of the paved roadway. The tentative date for the public hearing is November 14.

Reduced Winter Maintenance on Little Sunapee Road: At 9:00 AM, Chair Kaplan opened a meeting with representatives of the Little Sunapee Protective Association and state Department of Transportation

regarding the protective association's request for reduced winter maintenance along Lake Sunapee Road. Laurie DiClerico introduced herself as president of the Little Sunapee Protective Association, and said that the Board of Directors of the protective association had voted to pursue the option of designating Little Sunapee Road a low salt zone. Ms. DiClerico said that although the board is mindful of the public safety issues involved with reduced winter maintenance, there has been an alarming trend of decreasing quality of Little Lake Sunapee, including an almost 50% increase in conductivity in recent years (it is now twice the state average and much higher than comparable lakes). Little Sunapee is a class A lake and the board strives to keep it that way. As a shallow lake, however, it is more susceptible to pollution. It is also the water supply for the town and is surrounded on three of its four sides by state highways.

Jack Sheehan distributed slides to the Board of Selectmen and DOT representatives. He reminded the Selectmen that they had all met about 18 months ago, when the protective association expressed concern about the deteriorating water quality of the lake. At the time, they felt that road salt contributed to the problem, although they did not have any data to support their conclusions. Since then, the protective association has collected additional data, including from a study performed by a student of Bates College on the impact of road salt on the lakes. The purpose of today's meeting is to update the Selectmen and share the results of that study.

Jack Sheehan referred to Table 1, which shows Little Sunapee's water quality over the past ten years. He highlighted the phosphorus and conductivity readings, which are usually the first to reflect human impact. Phosphorus is a nutrient that feeds algae and weeds that decrease water quality. Conductivity measures the ability of water to conduct electricity. He pointed out that water is not actually a good conductor; a recent experiment at Colby-Sawyer College measured the conductivity of distilled water at 5 parts per million. The addition of salt improves water's ability to conduct electricity. Over the past ten years, Little Sunapee's conductivity increased from 64 to 106, and the statewide average is 59.4. Mr. Sheehan said the conductivity varies slightly from year to year depending on precipitation. The same trend is visible in Lake Sunapee and Pleasant Lake, although the increase is not as significant because these lakes are larger and deeper and with a higher volume of water can absorb the salt with no dramatic effect. Little Sunapee is 43 feet at its deepest, so contaminants show up quickly.

The Little Sunapee Board of Directors would like to get a better handle on the lake's salt content and sodium chloride levels, which is not easy. Salt does not stay intact in the water but splits into different ions. Little Sunapee's sodium chloride levels were 22.3 (parts per million) in 2004 and 23 parts in 2005. The Colby-Sawyer experiment added 22 parts of chloride to the distilled water and then measured conductivity, which was 90. Mr. Sheehan said he thinks it is pure luck that the numbers came that close, because it's hard to believe that all of the conductivity in Little Sunapee is caused by sodium chloride. The experiment suggests the root of the problem but is not conclusive. The Bates student and a Lake Sunapee Protective Association (LSPA) researcher took multiple samples in 2004-2005 of lakes and tributaries in the Lake Sunapee watershed, including Little Sunapee. He referred to a chart that summarizes their findings. The lowest conductivity readings were found in upper and lower Kidder Brook leading into Little Sunapee. The mid-range points included the outlet of Little Sunapee, which showed higher conductivity than the inlet. Among the three highest in conductivity was Bucklin Brook, which feeds into Little Sunapee. The three highest readings were found at points close to major roads: Eagle Rock Brook, near Route 11 in Georges Mills; Herrick Cove, near Route 103A and I89; and Bucklin Brook. This would indicate a significant contribution of contaminants from state highways.

Mr. Sheehan referred to the last page of the handout, which compares the inlet and outlet of Little Sunapee. The chloride level at the inlet is 20%, while at the outlet it is about 60%. Chloride is a significant contributor to increasing conductivity, and it is not a naturally occurring mineral. Mr. Sheehan added that many factors contribute to deterioration of water quality: development within the watershed, paving, clearing, etc. He said that reduced road salt would not solve the entire problem, but it would

hopefully slow the process down. He asked the town and the state to give serious consideration to reducing the impact of this component on the lake.

Chair Kaplan thanked Mr. Sheehan for presenting this information in such an understandable manner, and said that although the Selectmen share his concerns about the quality of the lake, they are also concerned about safety and traffic. He turned the floor over to Alan Hanscom of the state Department of Transportation (DOT).

Mr. Hanscom said it is difficult for DOT to take the blame based on one water sample per year, which could be different depending on whether it was a drought or flood year. He would be interested in knowing the levels throughout the lake throughout the year. Bucklin Brook passes through the DOT highway facility off Dump Road and there may be more contribution from the facility itself than from the highway. DOT has had multiple visits by LSPA and others to inspect the upkeep of the yard, the kind of sand used, etc.

Mr. Hanscom said this district's patrol crew is responsible for Route 11 from King Hill Road to Route 4A/Andover, and Route 114 from Sutton to Grantham, including Main Street and Newport Road. The DOT does not breakdown salt use by route, but when all use is added together it is average in some areas and above average in others depending on elevation. He can guess that compared to the care and feeding required on Newport Road and Main Street, there is probably less [salt] put on Little Sunapee Road and Route 114. However, three trucks that leave the shed go up Little Sunapee Road to County Road, and he wonders if all three are treating the hill if they cannot get up the hill. This would contribute to the problem.

With respect to conductivity, the state replaces dozens of wells per year because of contamination with road salt and chloride, at a cost of about \$100,000 per year. The level of chloride that must be present to require replacement is 230 parts per million, as compared to 22-23 parts in Little Sunapee. He said that the Volunteer Lake Assessment Project (VLAP) booklet reports that conductivity could be caused by road salt and could also be caused by faulty septic systems and urban or agricultural runoff. Little Sunapee has a state highway on all four sides. He thinks that samples should be taken in January and again in July/August to see who contributes to the conductivity problem. He noted that there are summer camps on the lake, as well as a golf course and Hilltop Place above the lake.

Putting that aside, Mr. Hanscom said there is a portion of the DOT winter road maintenance policy that deals with requests for reduced winter maintenance. After their last meeting 18 months ago, DOT examined the amount of traffic on Newport Road and Little Sunapee and determined that Newport Road received 7000 vehicles per day, which is too high a count for reduced maintenance. Little Sunapee/Route 114, however, would fall in the 1000-2500 vehicles per day category, so it could qualify for low salt but not no salt. The back side of Little Sunapee Road would probably qualify for no salt, but he does not have number counts for that portion of the road. After various studies and experiments, no salt is no longer done around the state. Mr. Hanscom said the method required by the program is to have the municipal government sign off on the request, including selectmen, public safety officials, and school officials. He then asked his environmentalist, Mark Hemmerlein, if he had any comments.

Mr. Hemmerlein said that it is important when embarking on a low or no salt discussion to consider the alternatives. The DOT ratio of 10-to-1 sand to salt is fairly detrimental to the lake. Sand gets blow off the road and needs to be reapplied to stay on the road. It gets pulverized by motor vehicle tires and washes downstream into the lakes, where it coats the bottom of the lakes and increases turbidity. Massachusetts is starting to pull away from sand because the fines get into the rivers and lakes. If the first 20 feet of shore, which gets the most light, is covered with sand this could have an implication on the ecological balance of the lake. Mr. Hanscom said that DOT has had discussions with LSPA and has done work about what kind of sand to buy, and DOT purchases washed sand. DOT has also worked to create

diversion ponds, level spreaders, and catch basins to catch sediment prior to getting into the lakes. When no salt is used, it requires the use of more sand. Sand can be expensive because it requires additional labor to be cleaned from the roads and catch basins.

Chair Kaplan asked if the same were true for reduced salt – is more sand needed? Mr. Hanscom said snow turns to ice and sand doesn't melt ice unless it attracts sunlight and absorbs heat. Sand does not stick to ice and every year more and more studies conclude that sand does not do anything once traffic travels over it. A lot of localities are doing away with sand, but if no salt is used, sand is the only affordable option. There are other treatments -- potassium acetate and calcium magnesium acetate – but these are more costly by orders of magnitude and the state is not equipped to use them.

Mr. Lyon said that Mr. Hanscom's letter refers to changing the salt/sand mix depending on conditions, and asked overall what is the proportion of sand to salt used by the state. Mr. Hanscom said that in business-as-usual situations, some sections are almost 50/50 (about 2000 tons of salt to 2000 yards of sand). The trucks will put out about two tons of salt per yard of sand (though not at the same time). The trucks will vary what they put out during a storm. Sand costs \$3-5 per yard while salt costs \$43 per ton. Sand is cheaper to put out but more costly to clean up (making the price about \$30/yard).

Chair Kaplan asked the department heads to comment on what they have heard so far. Police Chief David Seastrand said that the Police Department looked for statistical data regarding car accidents around Little Sunapee. Most accidents in the vicinity of the lake are on Newport Road, there are no recorded accidents on the back side of Little Sunapee Road, and a few on Route 114, mostly at the sharp corner by Mrs. Shovan's house (one person crashed twice in this area). Chief Seastrand is concerned that reduced treatment would cause increased accidents, but he is not sure what the result would be.

Richard Lee said that the Highway Department maintains South Cove Road and Camp Sunapee Road, two gravel roads along Little Sunapee. They do not use straight salt on those roads, but use about 1½ yards of salt to 14 yards of sand, which is the minimum that can still melt ice. In the summer the gravel roads are treated with magnesium chloride to keep the dust down. He cut back on Camp Sunapee Road upon request, and is trying to find the right level to keep the dust down but not over treat the roads (even though silt is just as detrimental for the lake as salt). In the winter, he must strike a balance between use of salt and public safety, and he is not sure where the tradeoff should be. The Highway Department needs chlorides to fight snow and ice and dust. Before magnesium chloride was used, road dust would accumulate on road sides and leaves and eventually wash into the lake. He is trying to cut back while still maintaining the roads, and his phone rings either way.

Fire Chief Peter Stanley echoed Chief Seastrand's comments that Newport Road is the primary issue, and even then it's a function of timing. If there is black ice there could be a lot of accidents in a short time. There are more accidents on the back side of the lake in the summer when people drive faster; in the winter the conditions are self-regulating so people do not drive as fast.

Chair Kaplan asked if there were any comments from those gathered. Dave McMillen said the highest chloride levels were found at Bucklin Brook, and asked what's being done by the state to reduce or prevent impact from the state highway facility. Mr. Hanscom said the salt and sand are stored undercover, although there could be better housekeeping to prevent spillage during a storm. The bulk of material is kept undercover year round, but runoff from the yard gets into the brook, which runs right through the facility.

Mr. Lyon asked if the decision were made to go to low salt maintenance on Little Sunapee Road, what that would mean. How would the road be treated at that point? Mr. Hanscom said that it will be difficult because the truck that is responsible for that three miles of road is also required to go to Grantham and to

Route 4A via Bowman Road. To treat these three miles with the same truck or any of the trucks is going to be awkward at best, and they would have to make it work somehow.

Jack Sheehan raised two points. First, as they talk about the chloride levels and Bucklin Brook it is not clear that the DOT facility is the source of chloride. The town brush & metal disposal facility, which is the old landfill, has material buried that could contribute. He is not pointing solely to the DOT. Second, he reviewed the state's reduced winter maintenance program and summarized the difference between regular and reduced winter maintenance. He distributed this to the Selectmen.

Ms. Clough asked if other lakes in the state had asked for low salt treatment, such as Winnepesaukee or Squam? Mr. Hanscom said that Lake KOLELEMOOK in Springfield is interested, but he has not had the discussion with others in District 2. He can try to gather information from his counterparts, but as far as he is away there had been areas in District 5, below Concord, and near the Pennichuck Water District in Nashua that were low salt for two to three winters and have since gone back to standard practice. There had been another experiment in that area (Camp Sargent Road) that has since gone back to regular maintenance. He is not aware of any others. Mark Hemmerlein said there are a fair amount of requests but people do not always finish the process.

Ms. Levine asked if the process were followed, whose decision is it to eventually make the change? She said the state statutes give guidance regarding the application and implies that the public hearing is simply a formality for the DOT to follow. She noted that this intermediate meeting is not required by the process but she thought that the Selectmen and others could benefit from additional information before deciding whether to go forward with the request. Mr. Hanscom said the public hearing is required to reach a broader audience than is here this morning. Ultimately the DOT makes the decision.

Ron Koron asked what the risk to the lake would be if conductivity continued to increase. Mr. Sheehan said that increasing levels of salt affect lake life such as plants, fish, the number of minnows, and could eventually affect the drinking water (he said the water precinct most likely checks for chloride levels on a regular basis). The breaking points are hard to quantify, but eventually it could affect the public water supply (oftentimes the reduced salt areas are near public water supplies, such as in Massachusetts).

Mr. Lyon said there seems to be consensus that although there are indicators that road salt may be affecting the lake, there is no absolute evidence, and even if it does contribute it may not be the only source. DOT has expressed a willingness to accommodate a low salt request if it is the will of the public through this process. The only way to eliminate or determine the impact is to try. If the protective association is intrigued then he suggests going through the process and getting the required sign-offs. He does not hear arguments to the contrary from department heads, and suggested trying the reduced maintenance and measuring the results to see if it made a difference.

Mr. Sheehan said something's happening to the lake and the protective association is trying to get its head around it. Mr. Hemmerlein said that he works with many towns on water quality, and the DOT is just one contributor. He suggested that the association should also collect information from the residents around the lake on the amount of driveway salt and sand they use and the condition of their septic systems. He added that DOT will have to treat and plow the roads and asked how the protective association wants DOT to treat the road in lieu of more sand.

Ms. Clough said that if this process goes forward, the town and the protective association should do more public outreach regarding activity around the lake. Ms. Levine asked if the Town of Springfield needed to be involved in this process, since a segment of Little Sunapee Road is in Springfield. Mr. Hanscom said he had not considered that but Springfield should at least be informed.

Chair Kaplan asked if the road could be plowed and not treated with sand or salt. Mr. Hanscom said that would result in very slick conditions. Mr. Koron said that on Route 114 near Bucklin Beach the road needs to be plowed every ten minutes due to the snow drifts. Mr. Hanscom said DOT has tried a snow fence in the past but it has been difficult to maintain. It might have to be reinstated if low salt were used, but it is difficult to keep up.

Vicki Koron commended Richard Lee for being sensitive to the levels of salt on Camp Sunapee and South Cove roads and said that the residents appreciate his responsiveness. The Selectmen thanked Ms. Koron and Richard Lee.

Ms. Clough asked Mr. Hemmerlein if he had any suggestions for treatment of private walkways and driveways. Mr. Hemmerlein said that the lake association should survey the use of sodium pellets, the number of pets (which contribute nitrates and e-coli), where trash is stored, how much fertilizer is used, whether gray water goes into the septic systems, the condition of the tank and leach field, etc. Mr. Lyon asked if ice melt were preferable, and Mr. Hemmerlein replied that ice melt is magnesium chloride and potassium chloride, which is about \$4 per gallon. In response to a question he said kitty litter is not a good idea as it consists primarily of clay and dissolves when wet. He suggested that the lake association measure turbidity (level of silt) in addition to other water quality tests.

Chief Seastrand asked if the state sprayed the roads. Mr. Hanscom said that would come in a few years but even then they would be spraying with sodium chloride. Mr. Hemmerlein said the theory is to reduce the bond between road and ice but they need to start with a clean road. The sprayed chloride is a pre-treatment at the beginning of a storm and they would then return to conventional treatments. Mr. Hanscom said it is used at the start to reduce crashes and hopefully will reduce salt requirements overall.

Ms. Levine asked the Board of Selectmen if they were in agreement to go forward. Ms. Clough and Chair Kaplan said they are in agreement with Mr. Lyon that they won't know the effect unless they try it. Ms. Clough asked if the Little Sunapee Protective Association Board was convinced of its request, and Ms. DiClerico replied that they were unanimous in their vote. Ms. Levine suggested that the Town of Springfield be consulted, and Mr. Hanscom agreed.

Ms. Clough said she wanted to be clear about the area to which this would apply. She asked if it would start at Homan's Corner. Mr. Hanscom said if sodium chloride were the main culprit, then that is used more on hills than on flats. He suggested starting at County Road and going around the back side of the lake. It will be awkward, especially to start, and he asked that residents stick with them during the first snowstorm because these roads may still be covered while others are plowed.

Mr. Lyon thanked those present for keeping the discussion fact-based, and noted it is awkward when facts don't point in a particular direction but he appreciated the input from all sides. This portion of the meeting ended at 10:30 AM and the Selectmen took a short break.

Statistical Update: At 10:40 AM the Selectmen were joined by assessors Norm Bernaiche and Dan Fitzgerald to discuss the results of their statistical update of property assessments. Mr. Bernaiche said that the two had been very busy since September reviewing sale properties and the New London database, and up to last Friday they were still checking over data. He gave the Board of Selectmen a spreadsheet summarizing the sales analysis process. They looked at 125 sales between June 2004-July 2005, and properties in New London were adjusted to 95% of market value (they did not shoot for 100% this year). They did their best to learn the town in the last six weeks, although there were some things done during the 2003 revaluation and since then that they do not agree with and did not have time to review fully or change. They did not use August or September sales because they did not want that information to influence their analysis; however, they are now looking at those sales to check the trends that they used during the analysis.

Mr. Bernaiche referred to page 1 of his handout: taxable land increased 14% while taxable buildings increased 19%. The total taxable value in New London increased by 17%. Property on big Lake Sunapee did not move much; it was already close to 100%. In the future the assessors will have better numbers on direct vs. indirect water frontage. Direct water frontage makes up about 50% of New London's tax base. During the last two years, non-waterfront properties saw more of an increase in value than waterfront properties. For single family properties, there were 58 sales with a coefficient of dispersion (COD) of 10. There were 31 sales of condominiums and a COD of 6.49 (it is generally easier to appraise condominiums because they are more homogeneous and easier to analyze). The COD is the measure of fairness, or the distance from the average. The smaller the COD the less dispersion there is and the more consistent the appraisals will be.

Mr. Bernaiche referred to the attached list of sales used and noted that if the assessors had been "sales chasing," then the relationship of sale prices to assessment would be close. He pointed out that there are a number of sales that are still much higher than the new assessment – for instance, 606 Wilmot Center Road – and added that one sale does not make a market.

Mr. Bernaiche said that property values at Hilltop appear to be stagnating now. They will watch the sales, particularly on the big lake, because they may find that the big lake was affected by the revaluation and increased taxes. The total outlay for those properties was substantial and as things catch up they might level out and then increase again. He always thought that properties on Lake Winnepesaukee were more valuable, and he was surprised to learn recently that Lake Sunapee sales are higher than Winnepesaukee because there is more inventory on Winnepesaukee.

Mr. Bernaiche said that the price-related differential (PRD) has also improved as a result of their statistical update. The PRD measures whether high-valued properties and low-valued properties are being treated the same (as far as their assessments related to sale price). The PRD for residential improved properties is .996288, where 100% means that the properties are being treated the same.

Ms. Levine asked the Selectmen to review the draft letter to property owners informing them of their new property assessments. Accumail will handle the mailing. Mr. Bernaiche said that he will put the assessing data on the website and will work with Vision to update the web database as soon as possible. He said that people who call the Selectmen's Office will reach Amy Rankins, who will either be able to answer their questions or set them up with an appointment to speak with one of the two assessors. Mr. Bernaiche said that if there are errors, they want to know about them as their goal is to have the data be as accurate as possible. Mr. Bernaiche also hopes to create more neighborhoods in the future. Although the downside is that there may be fewer sales in each neighborhood, the upside is that they should be able to differentiate between the factors affecting different properties. He said that more than one neighborhood can be considered in an analysis where there are not enough sales. Currently there are only two neighborhoods classified for view factors: 98, which is partial view, and 99, which is full view. However, he said that there is more variation across town than those two factors. For example, there are properties on Burpee Hill with views and there are properties on Burpee Hill without views that still have a "Burpee Hill" factor. Ms. Levine said that Slope & Shore is another example, where there are properties affected by the shared water front and other properties with the shared waterfront that also have a view. Mr. Bernaiche said that he is not at a comfort level with the accuracy of this information and will take time over the next year to work on this. Mr. Lyon said that fortunately they will hear from property owners if the data is wrong, although Ms. Levine added that is generally only true if the assessment is too high.

Ms. Levine said that the assessors spent some time analyzing the different properties at Hilltop Place. Mr. Bernaiche said that they were able to qualify the properties as average, good, and very good, whereas before the assessments did not distinguish among the varying conditions of those properties. Dan

Fitzgerald said that they have also noted whether the units are heated with gas or oil, which makes a difference.

Ms. Levine asked when the inspection program would begin. Mr. Bernaiche said that it will start with the phone calls resulting from this update, and will continue as pickups are done in the spring. The assessors will code a property to note if it has already been inspected. They do not want to inconvenience people if they do not have to and primarily want to focus on things that might change. Mr. Fitzgerald said that there are a lot of quality control issues; he found a few anomalies while inspecting sales.

Chair Kaplan noted that the grand list in New London is now over \$1 billion. Mr. Bernaiche explained the importance of remaining equalized rather than allowing the state to equalize property. It is fairer to property owners to stay up-to-date with assessments, even if other towns in the region are not doing so. Ms. Levine said that in fact property owners are being penalized if the town is not staying current. Mr. Bernaiche agreed.

Ms. Levine then referred to an estimated calculation of the tax rate. With the increased assessment, the Town tax rate is projected to go down from 4.16 (unsubsidized by surplus) to 3.81. The Selectmen discussed the use of surplus. They noted that historically the Budget Committee and Selectmen have agreed to leave 7.5% of the budget in surplus for cash flow reasons. This means that the Selectmen could use \$480,000 of surplus to offset the town tax rate and would leave a surplus balance of \$469,000. Mr. Lyon said that leaving this balance prevents the town from having to borrow funds between tax bill mailings. The use of \$480,000 of surplus would reduce the tax rate from 3.81 to 3.35. The Selectmen voted unanimously to do so. Ms. Levine said that she projects the total tax rate, including county, state school, and local school, to be under \$12. This is in part due to the increase in the grand list and in part due to the elimination of the donor town payment of about \$1.5 million. Ms. Levine pointed out that she has budgeted for \$400,000 of overlay, which are the funds set aside for repayment of property taxes on abatements appeals. She said that so far the Town has returned about \$240,000 in property taxes to waterfront property owners, and there are 12 or so lawsuits still pending. This statistical update confirmed that Lake Sunapee properties are still at market value but that properties off the waterfront increased since 2003. After this year she expects the overlay figure to go back down to its pre-revaluation numbers.

The Board of Selectmen approved the use of \$480,000 in surplus to offset the town tax rate. Ms. Levine said that with the signing of the MS-1 today, she hopes that the tax rate will be set within the next week or so.

Building Permits:

- Bothy Properties Limited, 104 Little Brook Road (Map 035, Lot 044), permit to repair existing deck and add small deck at back of sliding glass door – Approved (Permit 05-136)
- Thomas & Ann Townsend, 838 Route 103A Street (Map 103, Lot 018), permit to replace existing septic tank with pump station to new leach field and renovate existing lake cottage – DENIED due to cost of construction exceeding 50% of value (substantial improvement) therefore non-conforming use must comply with setbacks; also proposed disturbance within 50-foot of shoreline

Sign Permit Applications:

- NONE

Other Items for Signature:

- Disbursement Voucher for the week of October 24, 2005 – Approved

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- Application for use of Whipple Memorial Town Hall by Sunapee Kearsarge Intercommunity Theater (S.K.I.T.) for auditions on January 9, 10, 2006 and show time on February 16, 17, 18, 19, 2006 at 5:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. – Approved
- Application for use of the Town Office Archive Room by Kearsarge Valley Community Action Program on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month starting October 2005 through April 2006 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. – Approved
- MS-1 Valuation of Property
- Letter of commitment for Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission for August 2006 household hazardous waste collections - Approved

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 NOON.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie Levine
Town Administrator