



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES June 16, 2009

PRESENT:

Larry Ballin, Chair
Mark Kaplan, Selectman
Tina Helm, Selectman
Jessie Levine, Town Administrator

ALSO PRESENT:

Norm Bernaiche, Assessor
Richard Lee, Director of Public Works

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

Minutes:

- June 2, 2009 (public hearing): Mr. Kaplan moved to approve, seconded by Tina Helm. Ms. Helm noted that Paul Bradicich was not listed as present. Minor edits were also made and minutes were approved as amended 3-0.
- June 3, 2009 (with Conservation Commission): Tina Helm moved to approve, seconded by Mark Kaplan, and approved 3-0.
- June 8, 2009 (in advance of Special Town Meeting): Tina Helm moved to approve, seconded by Mark Kaplan, and approved 3-0.

Ledyard Tree Planting: Ms. Levine said that Ledyard Bank has proposed a promotion to its customers in which Ledyard would donate a sapling tree for every customer who converted from printed to electronic bank statements. Hanover is intending to accept the saplings and plant them in the Town's existing nursery, but New London does not have the resource. Ledyard has instead proposed donate \$1.00 to the Town for every conversion, and the money can be put in a special fund to be used for tree planting in Town. Larry Ballin agreed that it was a nice idea and the Selectmen were generally supportive.

Hospital Van Lease: With respect to the proposed lease of New London Hospital's former shuttle van by the Recreation Department for this summer, Jessie Levine reviewed the proposed lease with the Selectmen. Chair Ballin asked for confirmation that anyone who drives this van on behalf of the Town will have taken the driver training program through LGC, and Ms. Levine confirmed. The Board of Selectmen approved the van lease at \$250 per month until October 1, 2009.

Elkins TE Grant: Jessie Levine updated the Board of Selectmen on the Federal Highway Transportation Enhancement grant opportunity that is being administered through the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission. Ms. Levine said that she and Richard Lee attended the meeting of the UVLSRPC Transportation Advisory Committee on June 9, at which the revised grant process was reviewed. Ms. Levine reminded the Selectmen that this is the same grant that constructed the 2003 sidewalk on Newport Road and the roundabout and sidewalks that were completed in 2008. She thinks this is the perfect program for Elkins, although it is a competitive bid process with limited money

available statewide. However, she asked for permission to work on the grant, which has an application deadline of September 15, 2009.

Mark Kaplan asked Larry Ballin whether he thought the people of Elkins would want this kind of sweeping change. Chair Ballin said that during the first charrette there was the attitude of “why are you here and what are you trying to do?” and the time the second charrette came, people realized that there was the need for intervention because of the deteriorating condition of the properties, and now they would like someone to pay attention to them. Mr. Kaplan agreed that now there’s a feeling of neglect, but that in the past was offset by the feeling that they wanted to be left alone. Mr. Kaplan expressed his concern that if we go in and change the beach and streets, will it be accepted? Chair Ballin said that as long as the process is transparent and improvements are made, people will be happy with it, although summer time would be the worst time to make any physical changes.

Jessie Levine added that the primary objection during the first charrette was to relocating the Post Office and addressing the parking at Elkins Beach. Other than that, there was support for making improvements to sidewalks, traffic control, and other safety measures. Now, due to the condition of the village, there is a historic preservation and economic development aspect as well. She also said that there would be public involvement in the process of developing and/or accepting the grant, so there would be time to back out if citizens did not want it. Tina Helm agreed that as long as we are transparent, there will be little opposition.

This led to a discussion about status of the Mesa building, owned by Ken Miller & Ralph Lapham. Ms. Levine proposed that the owners be engaged in the project because it would be great if their contribution could be considered part of the matching funds for the grant. Larry Ballin said that if we include the Mesa building, we need to have a plan for how it would be used. Jessie Levine agreed that would be necessary to know going into the grant application process.

Ms Levine said that this is an 80% grant, so it is worth going for, especially for a project like Elkins, which could cost close to \$1 million.

Chair Ballin asked for a motion to authorize Jessie Levine to move forward on the TE grant for Elkins. Mark Kaplan made the motion, seconded by Tina Helm. Tina Helm asked if there could be any connection going forward with the Elkins area and Scenic Byways. Jessie Levine said that it was discussed at a previous Byways meeting but there was not enthusiastic support for the idea.

Abatement Recommendations: Chair Ballin thanked Norm Bernaiche for joining the Selectmen to discuss abatement recommendations and asked him to present a summary. Mr. Bernaiche said that there are a few straightforward abatement recommendations that followed taxpayer requests for a review or that were generated during the inspection process. He said that there is one example of a home on Quail Run that is of a style that is not desirable in this day and age – outdated homes that are not as desirable because the materials have changed and the homes have not been updated.

Mr. Bernaiche said that the bigger issues related to the four lakefront properties that are in this year’s abatement packet. The assessors have spent a lot of time getting to know the lake properties, and the grading system of 1-20 is pretty consistent across the three communities. The assessors are familiar with the various builders and the quality of homes, such as Paddock, McGray & Nichols, Northcape – and have been able to pin down what people are paying for what kind of home. He said that believe it or not, some of the high end homes are “cookie cutter,” 2800-3400 SF homes with a large central hallway, great room, bedrooms upstairs, etc.

Mr. Bernaiche said that the waterfront abatements addressed here are Doyle, Wilson, Joan Broom, and James Broom.

Mr. Bernaiche distributed a spreadsheet showing sales in the higher end waterfront properties in the three towns, pointing to the sale at 836 Route 103A for \$2,950,000, which sets the high end threshold for that neighborhood. He also noted the \$3.5M sale in Burkehaven in Sunapee and a \$4.7M sale of Coleman/Cressy Point in Newbury (now the highest sale on the lake). These set the high end bar for sales – there are houses that are more spectacular but there are not as many places that have the benefit of a peninsula -- totally open but totally private at the same time (the example in New London is the Miles property – formerly the Feins property – on Poor Road). Mr. Bernaiche walked the Selectmen through the spreadsheet that compared the subject abatement properties to the comparable sales, showing the mean and median price per effective square foot.

The issue with Doyle is that the house is constructed to address the grade change of the property, with a step down in the center of the house. For Doyle, Mr. Bernaiche is proposing a change in value per effective square foot from \$616 to \$541, bringing that property closer to the mean of \$534 and median of \$541, which lowers the assessment from \$3,231,500 to \$2,839,300. He led the Selectmen through similar discussions on Wilson and the Joan Broom properties.

Finally, Mr. Bernaiche reviewed the James Broom property, which is unique because it has a lot of acreage on the lake but no view of the water. It sits behind the main house, which was sold off. He said that most of the property does not have water access, except for a point where a dock could go. If the property is subdivided, at the current value someone would have to obtain \$1.7M for each of two properties, even without the water view. He said that Mr. Broom bought it at \$3 million. It was originally on the market for \$4.5 million, then went down to \$3.9 m, and has an appraisal at \$3.4 and a second appraisal at \$3 million. Mr. Bernaiche proposes \$3.4 million.

Chair Ballin asked Norm Bernaiche to quantify the effect of the State's shoreland regulations, and whether there would be more abatement applications since people cannot use the property as they had hoped when they purchased it. Mr. Bernaiche said that they are starting to see the effects of that in Sunapee, where there are smaller cottages with a small footprint that are selling for about \$650,000. There is no data in New London at this point because the lots are bigger and the house footprints are bigger. Chair Ballin summarized that New London does not have as many small cottages as Sunapee and Newbury, so our impact will not be as great. Mr. Bernaiche agreed and said that we are trying to be in tune with that and are noticing the effect in a certain sub-market, but it does not affect larger acreages or significant footprints. In fact, he opined that it could go the other way where the larger properties will hold their value quite well because there is no risk to the property owner.

Chair Ballin said that if his quick math is accurate, the abatement recommendations total \$1.6 million, and asked if we are going to see more downward pressure on valuations. Mr. Bernaiche said that there may be specific issues, but overall he does not expect to see downward movement. Chair Ballin asked if the applicants had seen the final decisions yet, and asked if there would be litigation coming out of any of these. Mr. Bernaiche said that perhaps Broom, even at \$3.4 million, but Broom is aware of the recommendation (Broom wants \$3.2 million).

Jessie Levine noted that most of the abatements here relate to actual corrections in data, not value issues related to properties not selling. She thinks that the data corrections will be ongoing as the inspections continue. Mr. Bernaiche did say that he wanted to spend some time reviewing the older, antique homes, which have some high values but people may be shying away from at this point due to the expense to maintain and improve these homes.

Mr. Kaplan asked if these abatements are all granted, that reduces the grand list by about \$1.5M, which automatically increases the tax rate. Ms. Levine said that is not definite, because the assessors are also picking up the new values related to building permits, which will offset the abatement decreases. She added that in the estimated tax rate, there is a component called “overlay” which is intended to cover abatements without impacting the tax rate.

Mr. Bernaiche noted that there are three remaining abatements at Hilltop which are being reviewed. This led to a discussion about the difference between subterranean units, units with detached garages, and the more standard units at Hilltop. There will in the end be an overall review of Hilltop to address the diversity of units.

High Pine Project – ARRA Funds: Jessie Levine said that she and Richard Lee wanted to meet with the Selectmen to discuss the High Pine Project, which had received federal stimulus funding. However, the cost to the Town will be about the same with or without the funding, due to the additional requirements of the ARRA program, so Ms. Levine wanted the Selectmen’s approval to forego the stimulus funds and proceed to construction. Mr. Kaplan asked for an explanation of the High Pine Pump Station. Richard Lee explained that the pump station pumps out the 12-14 units on High Pine Lane and sends it directly to the gravity line to Georges Mills. Ms. Levine explained the background on this project: the pumps were originally purchased over ten years ago but never installed, so when we took over the sewer system we discovered that the pumps and controls were outdated and inadequate, but the pumps had never been replaced and the generator was insufficient. The generator has been purchased but not installed while the engineering, design, and now funding for the remainder of the pump station were sorted out.

Richard Lee said that the construction of the High Pine pump station, without engineering costs but including material, would be about \$89,000. Mark Kaplan said that he is always comfortable having engineer oversight during construction, for two reasons: 1) they are professionally qualified; and 2) they take the load off of Richard Lee. He asked Richard Lee if he has the time and feels he’s competent to oversee. Richard Lee said he does not think that he needs the engineer to be there constantly during construction, but he does think that an engineer should be on board in case we run into questions on the plans or in case something needs to be changed during the course of construction. He would rather work with an engineer who has a relationship with DES and could make contact if necessary. Larry Ballin asked if we could engage the engineer who had done the original design, and Ms. Levine indicated that was not desirable.

Tina Helm asked about the status of the old pumps. Richard Lee said that those have been returned to the vendor and we will get some credit for those. He explained that there are two levels at High Pine, with the controls on one level and the pumps at a lower level in a confined space. He said that the design is to put in a different kind of submersible pump so that no one has to go two floors down into the ground anymore.

Ms. Levine said that she thinks we’re lucky to get any sort of credit from Flygt, given the age of the pumps.

Chair Ballin asked for an explanation of where the funds will come from. Ms. Levine explained that there is about \$380,000 in the sewer operating account. She noted the original estimate for this project in 2005 was \$20,000, which is what the generator alone cost.

Mark Kaplan said he thinks the project should go forward, and he does think there should be an engineer engaged during construction. Larry Ballin asked how long the project would last, and Richard Lee estimated 3-4 weeks.

The Selectmen reached consensus that we should not accept the ARRA funding and should get the project done on our own.

Construction Projects:

- Jessie brought the Selectmen up-to-date on the guarantee items on the roundabout project that are being addressed (weed infestation, lack of grass, shrubs at Hubert's). She also notified the Selectmen of Bill Faccone's request that the Town call the bond on the \$5,000 pipe repair at Colonial Pharmacy. Chair Ballin said that we should not get involved in this one at this time. Tina Helm agreed that the Town should not be responsible for this \$5,000. Ms. Levine will notify Mr. Faccone that the Town will not call the bond at this time.
- Crockett's Corner: Ms. Levine informed the Selectmen that there would be a pre-construction meeting relating to the Route 11/Crockett's Corner project on Wednesday, June 24, 2009. After that meeting, she will have a better idea as to when the project will start.
- Safe Routes to Schools: Jessie brought the Selectmen up-to-date on the grant requirements, especially with respect to engineering. This may delay the project but she still hopes it will be completed this summer.

Committee Meetings & Reports:

- Special Town Meeting, June 8: Ms. Levine reported that there were 88 voters present, and Chair Ballin noted that they overwhelmingly repealed the 1986 Town Meeting vote. Chair Ballin said that we owe a debt of gratitude to the Town employees and volunteers who helped put the event together and break it down. He especially thanked Bob Bowers for his presence. Mr. Kaplan added his congratulations.
- Planning Board, June 9: Tina Helm reported that there was a three-hour work session on the Master Plan, on Conservation and Land Use, and the audience included ASLPT and the Conservation Commission. She felt like there was a lot of wordsmithing on this first draft of the chapter. Tina Helm asked Chair Ballin to complete the loop on the Elkins portion of the Historical Resources draft. She also noted that there was a comment from the audience asking the Selectmen to restore the capital reserve deposits for conservation funding.
- Joint Board Meeting, June 11: Chair Ballin said that it was a good meeting and well attended, with the exception of Springfield. He said that Dan Wolf did a noble job representing the school and defending the budget process. Chair Ballin said that New London offered to host the next meeting, on September 10 at 6:00 PM. Ms. Levine said the meeting would be at Tracy Library because the Syd Crook Room is not available. Chair Ballin had suggested that Peter Stanley be asked to do a brief presentation on workforce housing. Tina Helm said she thinks these meetings are extremely important to get the towns onto the same page. Mark Kaplan suggested that if the seven towns ban together on certain subjects politically, there would be better weight in the legislature and perhaps have significant impact on the legislators. He suggested that we give this some thought over the next few weeks.
- Economic Development Committee: The EDC did not meet on Friday and is working on a new meeting date. The most recent suggestion is Friday, June 26 or Saturday, June 27.
- Municipal Advocacy Committee: Chair Ballin reported that MAC met on Friday at the Local Government Center. Discussion started about "rangeways," which were created when many towns were established and lots were created. A working group will be proposing legislation in the next session to assign ownership of these rangeways. Most of the discussion related to the State budget

and how to prioritize needs from the towns' standpoint. Ms. Levine also reported on Assessing Standards Board rules that would allow the suspension or revocation of assessors' licenses. Jessie Levine said that within the next few years, we are going to see serious cuts to our revenues received from the State, and that is what we have to prepare for.

Upcoming Meetings: The Selectmen reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule.

Application for Building Permits:

- J & F Realty, John Souliotis, 394 Main St (084-001-000) ramp & deck to access new door – Permit #09-047 – after the fact– **Denied** – does not meet requirements Article VII section B.1.
- Jane & Arthur Boland, 1519 Little Sunapee Rd (030-005-000) trenching for above ground propane tank and generator – Permit #09-048 – **Denied** – does not comply with Article XVI section C.2.
- Mark & Donna Reed, 75 Goose Hole Road (042-016-000) difficult site work, economy & financing – Permit #08-074 – Extension – Approved
- Cahill Family Trust – 47 Ridge Road (122-006-000) add deck off back of house – Permit #09-049 – Approved
- Glenn Hoeft, 43 Woodland Trace (094-006-000) finish walkway, redo siding, trim, fix foundation frost heave, finish interior trim – Permit #09-050 – Approved
- Blanchard & Putnam, 154 Everett Park (073-011-001) rehab outbuilding – Permit #09-051 – Approved
- Peter Shanks & Julia Brisbane, 32 Sherman St. (078-004-000) deck platform addition – Permit #09-052 – Approved

Application for use of Town Offices:

- United Way of Merrimack County, Wednesday, June 24, 2009 4:00 PM-6:00PM – Approved
- Office of Senator Jeanne Shaheen (Sarah Sigel, caseworker) – Tuesday, August 4, 2009 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM – Approved

Application for Tax Abatement:

- Robar Family Trust, 51 Carter Road (Map & Lot -070-043-000) abated for the amount of \$615.76 – Approved.
- Angela Gallo Revocable Trust, 354 Hall Farm Road (Map & Lot 076-056-000) abated for the amount of \$652.74 – Approved.
- Timothy Poh Trust, 895 Main Street (Map & Lot 109-022-000) abated for the amount of \$1172.88 – Approved.
- Susan Nadeau Revocable Trust, 158 Quail Run (Map & Lot 108-009-000) abated for the amount of \$764.00 – Approved.
- Mary Doyle Family Trust, 133 Lighthouse View Road (Map & Lot 126-013-000) abated for the amount of \$5256.83 – Approved.
- Robert & Linda Friedlander, 64 Little Sunapee Road (Map & Lot 060-006-000) abated for the amount of \$1340.67 – Approved.
- James & Kristen Broom Trust, 314 Route 103A (Map & Lot 080-008-000) abated for the amount of \$8840.83 – Approved.
- Joan Broom, 168 Hasting Landing Road (Map & Lot 116-004-000) abated for the amount of \$1606.04 – Approved.
- William & Gabi Wilson, 89 Sunset Sores (Map & Lot 103-025-000) abated for the amount of \$1287.26 – Approved.
- Scott & Karen Slogic, 111 Shaker Street (Map & Lot 099-001-000) abated for the amount of \$1159.75 – Approved.

- Alan Gepfert, 236 Little Sunapee Road (Map & Lot 059-041-000) abated for the amount of \$617.39 – Approved.
- Lakeside Family Trust/Richard Hill, 123 Parkside Road (Map & Lot 073-008-000) abated for the amount of \$335.57 – Approved.
- John & Jody Diemar, 144 S. Pleasant Street (Map & Lot 073-008-000) abated for the amount of \$819.39 – Approved.
- Christopher & Grace Menzel, 53 Northwood Lane (Map & Lot 104-004-000) abated for the amount of \$276.28 – Approved.
- Audrey Perry, Fairway Lane (Map & Lot 123-016-000) abated for the amount of \$528.26 – Approved.

Application for Temporary and/or Permanent Sign Permit:

- Permanent Sign – First Colonial Leasing, 277 Newport Road (Map & Lot 059-008-000) – Nonni’s Italian Eatery – Approved.
- Temporary Sign – New London Garden Club, sign at Info Booth Antique Show July 25, 2009 9-4 – Approved.

Appointment Cards to be signed:

- Gary Markoff, Economic Development Committee
- Michael Doheny, Economic Development Committee
- Robert Bryant, Economic Development Committee
- Janet Hutchens, Economic Development Committee

Other:

- Disbursement voucher for the week of 6-15-09 - Approved.
- Vehicle Lease Agreement between the Town of New London and New London Hospital – Approved.
- Raffle Permit – Stuart Sidmore Scholarship Fund, August 15, 2009 50/50 Raffle in conjunction with silent auction at CSC on same day – approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie W. Levine
Town Administrator