

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES**

**October 10, 2005  
New London Fire Station**

**PRESENT:**

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Dan Wolf, Chair, Kearsarge Regional School Board (Newbury)  
Thomas Brennan, Jr., Superintendent, Kearsarge Regional School District  
Kim Giles, Kearsarge Regional School Board (New London)  
John O'Connor, Kearsarge Regional School Board (Wilmot)  
Emilio Cancio-Bello, Kearsarge Regional School Board (Sutton)  
Bob Andrews, New London resident  
Karen Bonewald, New London resident  
Kevin Donovan, New London resident  
Michele Holton, New London resident  
DJ and Bob Lavoie, New London residents  
Carolyn Dube, Argus Champion

Chair Kaplan opened the Board of Selectmen's meeting at 7:35 PM and welcomed members of the School Board and New London residents (some members of KARMA) to the meeting.

School District Student Population Projections: Chair Kaplan gave the floor to Dan Wolf, chair of the Kearsarge Regional School Board. Mr. Wolf thanked the Selectmen for this opportunity to meet with them. Following a public hearing in May, the School Board voted to reevaluate various studies that it had performed in the last five years: 1) the School Board has asked HL Turner Group of Concord to review the budget and projected pricing for the proposed middle school in Sutton; 2) it has also asked the Turner Group to reevaluate the condition of the existing middle school and possibilities for future use; and 3) it has re-examined the projected student population, which the School Board members here tonight will present.

Mr. Wolf said that School Board saw this presentation a few weeks ago and ratified the findings. The Board has chosen to look at a 25-year projection on the assumption that the district will take out a 20-year bond for construction and that there will be five subsequent years of "free" use of a new middle school.

Mr. Wolf introduced John O'Connor, the School Board representative from Wilmot, to present the projection report. Mr. O'Connor said that this presentation summarizes the work of a committee consisting of himself, Kevin Donovan, Emilio Cancio-Bellow, Dan Wolf, and Joe Conway. The committee was also joined by Karen Bonewald. Mr. O'Connor started a PowerPoint presentation. The first slide showed that the committee took the data from the 2002 study that looked at births within the School District and the first grade enrollments corresponding to those births. For example, there were 196 first graders in 1992, but six years earlier there were 125 births, showing that there was a "net move-in" of 71 students during that time. Mr. O'Connor said that most of this data was kept pre-computer and

some years were missing information. In addition, the MAP (multi-age program) confused the move-in figures.

The next thing the committee did, shown on slide 2, was look at student population by cohorts: a group during elementary school (grades 1-3) and the same group in middle school (grades 6-8) five years later. The data for this study is fairly recent, and from 1998-2004 the data showed net move-ins every year. The numbers fluctuated, however, and there was not enough data to indicate a trend other than net move-ins.

Slide 3 showed the average move-ins from both sets of data. The average move-in looking at births to first grade 37 (high was 71 and low was 11 with a standard deviation of 20). The average move-in for the grade school to middle school comparison was 51 net move-ins. Slide 4 listed the committee's operating assumptions. Among these were: the school district attracts people at later stages of their lives with older children (possibly due to real estate values); the district must consider the move-in factor and move-ins are expected to continue; there is a wide standard of deviation that indicates greater uncertainty; and eventually housing stock becomes an issue (the committee would have liked to do more analysis of the housing stock but did not have enough time).

Slide 5 summarized building permit data from the seven towns in the school district. The data are not 100% accurate (one town was missing 2003 building permit information). The data tracked only the number of new homes and not additions or other building permits. The majority of recent permits indicate 3-4 bedroom housing, and it is not clear whether 3-4 bedroom houses are purchased by families or retirees. As of this summer, there were 101 new building permits issued within the school district. Slide 6 showed a graph of the middle school student population, although there are no data from some years, since as 1985. The trend shows that the population has gone up and down.

Slide 7 introduced the approaches considered by the committee. The committee first had to determine which bias it would place on the projection models: a bias for growth, a bias for neutrality, or a bias towards declining population. The committee chose a growth bias, because 1) the state is growing; 2) the I89 corridor is growing; and 3) building permits in the district have shown growth. The committee did not want to rely solely on one model, so it developed different models and tested those against historical data. Mr. O'Connor said he can guarantee one thing: that the committee's numbers are wrong and anyone else's numbers are wrong as well. One cannot guarantee the student population on 10/1/2006 with any certainty. This is a "best guess."

Slide 8 summarized the three models: the population growth model (using census data for students under 18 from 1990-2000); a model that projected historical school data into the future; and the "cohort" model adjusted for move-ins and first grade growth.

The population growth model (slide 9) looked at student population from 1990-2000 and calculated an average annual growth of .008413, which was then compounded for 20 years. With a standard deviation of .0015, this model estimated a low 20-year population of 608, a "base" of 627 students, and a high of 646. Kevin Donovan pointed out that this model actual student population data from the school district, and Mr. O'Connor added that the difference between growth in Merrimack County (.0084) and the district (.008413) was minimal. Slide 20 showed the long-term trend model, which calculated the mean of annual growth rates using available data from 1981-2004. The high growth rate was 2% and the low was .0009, and the average was just over 1% (.0118) with a standard deviation of .006464. This model resulted in a 20-year projection of 662 (low end), 710 (middle) and 762 (high end). The third model (slide 11) looked at the cohorts and resulted in a rolling average. The first grade birth rate growth was .0084. The model then added move-ins in 5<sup>th</sup> grade (average of 35) and again in grades 6-7 (13 total). This resulted in a projected student population of 604 in 2025.

Mr. O'Connor noted that models are only as good as their assumptions, and the committee tried different sets of assumption to build a range of projections. Slide 12 showed what happened when the committee went back in time to test its three models against actual data. The first model – based on census growth – projected a 2004 middle school population of 521, when in fact there were 552 students (under projecting by 31). The second model based on actual growth projected 564 students, overshooting by 12. The third model projected 499 students, under projecting by 53 students.

The committee decided to average the three models to reach consensus numbers (slide 13). The average of the three models resulted in a projection of 647 students in 20 years, 683 students in 25 years, and 724 students in 30 years. Mr. O'Connor said that if the future looks like the past, the population will be in this range. The School Board adopted the 683 projected 25-year figure, since it planned to build the school to last at least until that time. The consensus was to be over rather than under, especially given that educationally, cramming students into a small school is less desirable than a large school with extra space. Mr. Donovan said that the committee agreed not to shoot for the low side on standard deviation which would limit what could fit in a school. Mr. O'Connor said that the committee is also biased pro-education, and another approach could have pushed the numbers in a different direction. This concluded the slide presentation.

Mr. Wolf said that the School Board met in Springfield on September 22 and decided to use the 25-year projection rounded up to 700 students, which is where they had been. The School Board accepted that population projection and will go forward with designing a middle school for 700 students. The number could be higher, and could be lower, but this is the best the group could achieve given the facts and the time in which they had to work (the School Board was pushing the project because the surveyor and architect need the projection figures in order to review the cost of the proposed middle school and the use of the existing building).

DJ Lavoie asked what is this year's middle school population, and Mr. Brennan replied that there are 527 students. Bob Lavoie suggested that with the uncertainties presented, the School Board should consider pre-planned incremental construction. Mr. O'Connor explained that the previous design included a "core size" using pods of classrooms. Additional pods could be added to increase from 700 to 900 students, and then the issue is funding. Mr. O'Connor said that delaying a portion of construction may mean that state reimbursement would not be available, and Mr. Brennan is looking into that now. Mr. O'Connor said that the School Board wants to take the best educational approach to building a middle school and is inclined to do it now with today's construction dollars. He has not looked at phased construction vs. inflationary costs.

Mr. Donovan said that he agrees with Mr. O'Connor's summary of the committee's work and appreciates being included in the process. He is a bit "antsy," however, by the School Board's decision to take the committee's recommendation and round up to 700 students. The three models resulted in an average project of 647 students in 20 years, and in his opinion the figure 647, not 700, should be used by the School Board. Karen Bonewald agreed and noted that the models were already conservative so the need to round upwards had already been taken into account. The committee had agreed to build those assumptions into the models, and it was disheartening that the committee agreed on 647 and then read in the papers about the School Board's adoption of 683 rounded up to 700. Mr. Wolf responded that he does not want to debate the School Board's decision, and said that the School Board agreed with the 20-year projection of 647 but opted to use the 25-year projection of 683 students. In doing so, the School Board did not feel that there was a major difference one way or another.

Emilio Cancio-Bello said that there has been no discussion tonight that the relationship between the population-at-large and student population had not changed dramatically. These numbers are conservative compared to the larger growth rates. The choice between 683 and 700 is a conservative

choice and is not a big difference. Mr. O'Connor explained that Mr. Cancio-Bello is referring to a model not used that shows that the school population is consistently 14-15% of the district population, and the problem with that model is projecting the growth of the overall population. Mr. Donovan pointed out that the committee also did not use the straight cohort model.

Chair Kaplan asked what significance the lower number of 647 had. Mr. Donovan replied that it is not the difference in cost or size, but in facts. The paper reported that the School Board had followed the committee's recommendation, when in fact the recommendation had been 647. Mr. Wolf said that the newspaper report is different from what actually happened at the meeting, where the School Board reviewed the results of the committee's work and picked a number to use. Mr. O'Connor added that he had never said that the committee recommended a number of 700; the committee said 647 in 20 years and 683 in 25 years.

Ms. Levine asked for clarification that the same assumptions and calculations had resulted in both figures, but that the School Board had decided to look out farther than the committee. This was confirmed. Ms. Levine said that she has also many times experienced newspaper reports that did not accurately reflect the discussion at a meeting.

Bob Andrews asked whether the School Board had considered investing into the current middle school for the next ten years and then looking at the whole picture again in ten years. Mr. O'Connor said that's the role of the Facilities Committee but he would recommend against it. Mr. Wolf said that the figure of 700 students was given to the Facilities Committee, which has a meeting scheduled with the Turner Group. He added that they will look at ten years out but not at this point. Mr. O'Connor said he wants to spend his money only once to solve this problem; he does not want to repeat the mistake at the high school, which cost three times more than it would have cost at the time. He balances kids' needs with the needs of the voters.

Chair Kaplan asked if Mr. Andrews was asking how much it would cost to keep the middle school in New London for the next ten years, and Mr. Andrews concurred. Mr. Wolf said the Turner Group's students should bring about a conclusion and the School Board will report back. Based on these numbers, the School Board will design a school to fit given the circumstances. Mr. Lyon noted that solving a building problem for ten or 20 years makes no sense, and that construction costs do increase higher than inflation. This discussion concluded at 8:30 PM.

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

Portsmouth Coalition: Ms. Levine said that the Town had received a request from the Portsmouth Coalition to contribute to its legal costs and costs of lobbying for a change in the school funding law to eliminate donor towns. New London used to contribute to the Coalition but has not done so for three years since the goal of the Coalition seemed to be selfish: to eliminate donor towns without looking at a broader solution for education funding. Ms. Levine noted that the legal budget has been underspent this year and there are adequate funds for a contribution. Mr. Lavoie asked if the Coalition accounted for their time and how donations were spent, and Ms. Levine replied that they did so with careful accounts.

Chair Kaplan said that he would support a contribution of \$5000 because the Coalition's work saved New London a donor payment of over \$1 million. Mr. Lyon said that he would have no trouble with a \$5000 contribution given the significant savings for taxpayers due to the Coalition's work so far. Ms. Clough agreed.

Budget Committee Recap: Mr. Lyon reported that at their meeting last Wednesday, the Budget Committee reviewed the Department Head presentations and decided to appoint subcommittees of three

members to meet with the Police Department, Highway Department, and Town Administration. The purpose of these subcommittees is to investigate certain questions in greater detail in order to be better advocates for those departments. The Budget Committee appears to be supportive of the budget and wants to be prepared for questions at Town Meeting. Mr. Lyon commented that Department Heads seem to enjoy the opportunity to explain their operations in greater detail, and these meetings should be worthwhile.

Elkins Study: Ms. Levine said that Victoria Boundy, the planner from the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC), had indicated that she could use more time to prepare the draft conceptual plan for Elkins and to circulate the draft to the subcommittee prior to the public hearing scheduled for October 27. Ms. Levine asked if the public hearing could be moved to November 15, and the Board of Selectmen agreed.

Schedule November meetings: The Board of Selectmen added the following meetings to their schedule:

- Monday, November 7, 8:00 AM
- Monday, November 14, 8:00 AM
- Tuesday, November 15 at 7:00 PM (Elkins Public Hearing)
- Monday, November 21 at 8:00 AM
- Monday, November 28 at 8:00 AM
- Monday, December 5 at 8:00 AM
- Monday, December 12 at 8:00 AM
- Monday, December 19 at 8:00 AM

**Building Permits:**

- Stuart and Victoria Golker, 606 Wilmot Center Road (Map 053, Lot 004), permit to erect breezeway – Approved (Permit 05-072)
- Camp Wallula, Inc., 684 Little Sunapee Road (Map 033, Lot 016), permit to build a 12' x 22' deck – Approved (Permit 05-129)
- Parsons Family Trust, 76 Bog Road (Map 106, Lot 014), permit to build 1½ story storage barn – Approved (Permit 05-130)
- Scott Hollinger, 193 Knollwood Road (Map 035, Lot 032) permit to construct detached two-car garage – Approved (Permit 05-132)
- Colby-Sawyer College, Burpee Hall, 541 Main Street (Map 085, Lot 033), permit to build new stairs – Approved (Permit 05-133)
- Carlton F. Barton, 89 Main Street (Map 073, Lot 056), permit to build four-car garage – Approved (Permit 05-134)
- Howard Davis, 143 Lighthouse Road (Map 115, Lot 001), permit for asphalt, rubble removal, and landscaping, erosion control for protection of the 50' lake setback during construction – Approved (Permit 05-135)

**Sign Permit Applications:**

- First Colonial Leasing Corporation (Map 059, Lot 008), permit for 15 square foot permanent sign to be placed on top front of building “The Shoppes at Colonial Place”- Approved

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**Other Items for Signature:**

- Payroll & Disbursement Voucher for the week of October 10, 2005 – Approved
- Agreement with Daniel S. Fitzgerald for assessing services - Approved

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessie Levine  
Town Administrator