

**New London Planning Board
April 14, 2009
Work Session**

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Tilley (alternate), Tina Helm (Selectmen's representative), Diedre Sheerr-Gross, Michael Doheny, Jeff Hollinger, Karen Ebel (Chair), Tom Cottrill, Michele Holton

Chair Ebel called the meeting to order at 7pm.

1. ELECTION OF PLANNING BOARD OFFICERS

Chair Ebel opened the meeting by announcing that she would be nominating a new Chairman to the Planning Board. She would be stepping down from her duties of Chair after 11 years but will remain on the board for 1 more year.

Chair Ebel asked for a motion to nominate the Vice-Chair of the Planning Board, Tom Cottrill as Chair. Motion was MOVED by Diedre Sheerr-Gross and SECONDED by Michael Doheny. The MOTION was APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chair Cottrill asked for a motion to nominate Planning Board Member, Jeff Hollinger, as Vice Chair. Motion was MOVED by Michael Doheny and SECONDED by Jeff Hollinger. The MOTION was APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chair Cottrill asked for a motion to nominate Planning Board Member Michael Doheny as Planning Board Secretary. Motion was MOVED by Michael Doheny and SECONDED by Jeff Hollinger. The MOTION was APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

2. LINDSAY C. WHITE – 353 MAIN STREET – CHANGE OF USE

Chair Cottrill called attention to Lindsay White's letter regarding a change of use for the space that occupies 353 Main Street, beneath the New London Inn. It was her hope to open an antiques, artwork & vintage clothing store in the space. Ken McWilliams, having more knowledge of the situation at this time, explained that with the new business, there would be no changes in the layout of the space or parking requirements. The only change would be from a "retail service" (previously housed "Writer's Workshop") to a change of "retail space." Ms. White wrote the letter to the board to ask that a Site Plan Review be waived.

Mr. Cottrill believed that there would not be a need for a new Site Plan Review considering the explanation from Mr. McWilliams.

Chair Cottrill asked for a motion that would waive the need for a Site Plan Review for Lindsay White with regards to the space at 353 MAIN STREET. Motion was MOVED by Jeff Hollinger and SECONDED by Michele Holton. The MOTION was APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Tina Helm, selectman's representative, asked if the Conservation Commission representative should be nominated at this time. Karen Ebel and Ken McWilliams shared that the nomination of that position is done by the Conservation Commission and appointed by the selectmen. The nominee would also need to be sworn in by the Town Clerk.

3.CHAPTER VI – ECONOMIC BASE

Chair Cottrill noted that he would prefer to go through each document page by page and bring up any questions/concerns in that manner.

Before the document review had begun, Karen Ebel noted that there should be a note somewhere within the Economic Base section that brings to light the current economic crisis. Ms. Sheerr-Gross agreed that the economic climate should be included due to the fact that the Master Plan could, one day, be used as a historical reference and it is an important piece of information.

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Page 2. Ms. Ebel asked Mr. McWilliams if the tables would be printed in full in the final plan because they are shown as being chopped off in the current copy. He agreed that they would be represented in their entirety in the final copy.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Page 14. Ms. Ebel suggested that the table should include a statement about the current economic crisis. The numbers represent a different predictability because they precede the current economic crisis. Mr. Cottrill also asked if the census tables could be labeled with a note about when the census is taken and when the information from the census is available for use. This would help the readers of the plan understand the information a bit better and recognize how current the data was. Peter Stanley asked why the census even needed to be included. Chair Cottrill mentioned that the census is mentioned throughout the plan. Mr. McWilliams noted that the census information is only available at the county and state level but not the national level. It was noted that this question about the census had come up previously in work-session discussions and it was decided that a paragraph would be inserted at the beginning of the Plan to alert its readers about how the census works and about how the most recent data available was used to draw conclusions and proceed with the plan of the town.

Jeff Hollinger had a question about the graph on page 13. He commented that it was difficult to figure out which town goes with which bar on the graph. He suggested labeling each town's bar with its name instead of a design or pattern. Several people agreed and Ken said that it would be fixed.

Referencing the table on page 14, Ms. Sheerr-Gross asked if anyone had any ideas about or concerns regarding the high number of unemployment in the town.

Audience member Bob Crane asked how retired people are handled and where they sit on the graph on page 15. Mr. McWilliams said that he was not sure but that he did not believe that "seniors" were considered unemployed. Chair Cottrill suggested that the question that should be addressed is "what the definition of *unemployed*" taking into account the retired members of the community, as well as the students in town attending the college. Mr. McWilliams said that he would look up the information in the census. John Tilley commented that there has to be some reason why the unemployment rate is so high in the town of New London. Mr. Lavoie noted that the rationale for the high number of unemployment in the town should be stated somewhere in the Plan.

On pages 15 and 16 it was noted that the bar graphs should not be labeled with percentages. Mr. McWilliams said that he would fix this.

Mr. Lavoie asked if there was a reason why there are numerical tables followed by graphical representations. He asked if both were needed. Mr. Hollinger said that both were not needed. Karen Ebel noted that she didn't think having both a table and a graph added anything to the data. It was suggested to take away graphs # 6-1 (p.11) 6-2 (p.13) and 6-3 (p.15). Mr. McWilliams agreed and said he would remove said graphs.

WAGE AND INCOME INFORMATION

On page 16, Chair Cottrill asked if the size of the graph on this page would remain as-is or if it would be represented as larger in the Plan. Mr. McWilliams noted that the graph would enlarge when all the formatting notes in the margins were deleted.

Peter Stanley asked why Springfield's weekly wages were represented as so much higher than other towns. John Tilley noted that the high marks for Springfield is explained in the paragraphs below the graph. The graph was comparing strictly wages and did not take into account things such as interest, and dividend and rental income, which are common factors within properties in New London.

Page 17. Karen Ebel mentioned figure VI-5 and that it's key is very hard to see. Mr. McWilliams made a note to enlarge it. Mr. Lavoie noted that the title was confusing. He suggested changing it from "Comparison of 1999 Income" to "Comparison of 1999 Income by Town."

Page 18. Karen Ebel brought attention to the key in figure VI-6 being very small. Mr. McWilliams made a note to enlarge it.

POVERTY LEVEL

Page 19. In the title of the table, "Tale" should be replaced with "Table" and also should be put in bold print. Karen Ebel asked if the key was needed in figure VI-7 since there is only one bar. The same idea was put forth for Page 20, figure VI-8, and Page 21, figure VI-9. These keys will be removed by Mr. McWilliams.

PROPERTY TAX BASE

On page 20, Mr. Lavoie asked if there was any more current data from the Department of Revenue than what was listed from 2007. Mr. McWilliams answered in the negative. Chair Cottrill asked when Mr. McWilliams thought that the master plan would be completed. It was thought that it would be completed in approximately one year. There was discussion as to whether the numbers in the tables could be updated once the 2008 Dept of Revenue numbers were revealed. Mr. McWilliams said that it *could* be done but he wasn't sure it was in the contract to go through and update all of the information. He noted that it is a large undertaking and would take significant time. The board decided that the information that is available now is fine to use and that these numbers are essentially always going to be "moving targets" and will always be changing.

On Page 21, it was decided figure VI-9 could be removed. John Tilley asked about the figure VI-8 and whether the numbers represented was for the average home cost per person. Mr. McWilliams noted that it was a total assessed valuation, divided by the population. It is an evaluation of per capita per person. Mr. Tilley noted that this table was unclear. Karen Ebel asked if it would be helpful to put another sentence in the table to help it make sense. Mr. Tilley suggested using simpler language and moving the tax rate in the table to the first column. He remarked that it is interesting data but it just seemed confusing in the way it was presented.

Mr. Lavoie asked if the evaluation included Colby-Sawyer College. Ken answered in the affirmative and said that it encompassed all the taxable portions of the town. Diedre Sheerr-Gross noted that it would be helpful to have the tax base listed for each town.

Mr. Lavoie believed that per capita listed in the manner it is in the figure VI-8 didn't make sense. A total evaluation per town should be listed in place of the per capita information. Jeff Hollinger said that the information is useful because it shows that the same home in a different town would cost much less in taxes. John Tilley asked if a breakdown of house size and cost per town would make a better graph. Mr. McWilliams noted that this information is already in the housing section. Peter Stanley noted that a house of the same style and size in New London would cost much more in taxes than in other surrounding towns. It was determined that the graph on page 20 should be replaced with the total evaluation of the town in 2007. Mr. McWilliams asked if the information should include the comparative tax rates and property evaluation by town and in which order first. Chair Cottrill noted that it would be helpful to have both the table and chart on the same page, reflecting this information. Mr. McWilliams noted that this would take up a lot of space in the Plan. Mr. Hollinger explained that the tax rate does not show the tax revenue for the town but it doesn't tell what the average homeowner is paying for taxes. One shows total revenue but people want to see what the taxes will be in the town the house is in. Diedre noted that a comment should

be put in this section that says “For more information on this, please see the chapter on Housing.” She also wanted to remind everyone that this is a chapter on property tax base, not individual housing. She asked if the information on housing could be cross-referenced here? Mr. McWilliams noted that a table can be put in the Plan in two different places. Peter Stanley said that the issue is that there is a total evaluation of the housing. Tom Cottrill suggested providing a number that represents the entire area without becoming too detailed.

Mr. Lavoie said that since this is an economic chapter, it might be a good idea to show how house prices are comparable when the tax rate of the town is taken into consideration. Peter noted that it would be useful to find out what it costs to live in each town. Over time, the total that a homeowner would pay overall would probably be quite similar between the towns.

It was decided that on pages 21 and Table VI-9 should be removed but keep figure VI-9, VI-10, which appears on page 22.

BENEFITS OF SHOPPING LOCALLY

On page 22, the wording “Benefits of shopping locally” should be replaced with “Benefits of Shopping in New London.” The first sentence of the paragraph should mention “New London.”

On page 23, *Product Diversity* is actually # 10 on the reasons to shop in New London. It was currently buried within #9 in the list. Ken said that he would fix this.

Mr. Lavoie asked how increased income from local businesses directly benefits the town’s property values. He believed that a business in town is an *indirect* tax benefit to the town, not a direct benefit. Jeff Hollinger used an example of a building with a high occupancy rate being worth more than one that is empty or surrounded by foreclosures.

Peter Stanley added that commercial real-estate laden towns have the lowest tax rate. And, that taxes from residential growth are nil because more services are demanded. It is essential to have a good balance between open space, residential and commercial properties. It is good to have some commercial properties, some open space (causing no cost to the town), and then some residential properties, where most of the costs go to the community. Diedre Sheerr-Gross felt that the commercial aspect in New London is a healthy piece of it and should be promoted. Jeff suggested adding a sentence in the “shopping locally” paragraph that reads “indirectly a balance between a vibrant business community and a residential community improves the tax rate of the town.”

ECONOMIC ASSETS

On page 23, it was suggested to insert a specific year that I-89 was created instead of saying “some thirty years ago.”

On page 24, #3 should read “Retirees’ Market” instead of “Retirees” Also, at the top of the page, “bringing” should replace “brining.”

On page 25, Mr. Lavoie remarked that the last paragraph in #9 did not sound correct. Mr. McWilliams noted that this information came from Richard Lee and should be correct. Mr. Doheny suggested taking out the term “full allotment” with regards to the gallons per day available within the Sunapee treatment plant. Mr. Lavoie suggested that this statement implies a moratorium on the housing construction. Karen Ebel said that this will be covered more extensively in the utilities section of the Master Plan. Ms. Ebel asked if there was a vision statement about the sewer. Mr. McWilliams answered in the negative. There was some remaining confusion as to the numbers represented for “full allotment” and whether the section should be removed and revisited in the utilities section. “Limited capacity” should be used in this instance to recognize the fact that the town may be reaching its limitation.

On page 25 it was noted that item #7 mentioning the “Ausbon Sargent Bandstand” should be changed to “The Mary Haddad and Elkins Bandstand.” Also, the reference to AIL, (Adventures in Learning) should be deleted.

Karen Ebel addressed #9: Karen said that it should say “The Water Precinct Commissioners have consistently taken the position” instead of “The Water Precinct Commissioners have taken the position.” This asset was also moved to the limitations section.

#6 in this section mentions the Mountainside Racquet Club, which resides in Sutton, not in New London. Thus, the wording should be changed to “the nearby Mountainside Racquet Club.”

On page 26, item #17, it was decided that the words “numerous reasons” should be deleted.

ECONOMIC LIMITATIONS

On page 27 #5 should say “lack of mixed population” instead of “Lack Mixed Population.” It was noted that “mixed population” could be seen as many different things, including age, race, financial, etc. Age is not seen to be the only issue, and so taking the word “age” out of the sentence helps to make it a broader statement.

Chair Cottrill suggested the addition of another item (to be called #7) to comment on the sewer and water systems. The current situation is that the town is reaching capacity and needs to expand its management system(s) and work with our neighboring towns to come up with solutions to water management obstacles.

SUMMARY AND VISION FOR THE NEW LONDON ECONOMY

Karen Ebel brought to attention the new paragraph on page 27, represented as underlined text. She wanted to make sure that the focus was on the master plan and not on the current economy and how it is impacting the town. She said that she feels the document is being prepared without taking the current economic crisis into consideration. John Tilley asked if the Master Plan was being written too tightly so that its success would depend on the economic climate. Ms. Ebel noted that the plan encompasses worthwhile principals and would still be effective in a poor or successful economic climate. She said that she just doesn’t want to “merrily” plan for “after the economy turns around” but rather plan for the future, whatever it may hold. Ms. Ebel suggested including the text: “The success of the economic plan will depend on the economy.” It was noted that regardless of the national economy, New London weathers changes in the economic climate very well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Page 28, item #2 says “needs an Economic Development Committee.” It was suggested to change this to “should have an active economic development committee.” Also the last sentence in this item should be deleted to make it more general and not so detailed. Suggested text to replace this sentence was “A diverse group representative of the town to provide economic direction to the community.”

In item #3 it was suggested to delete the word “already” in the 1st sentence. Also change the word “will” to “may.”

On page 29, item #8 should say “should continue” instead of “needs to continue.”

On page 30, the word “will” should be changed to “may.”

#11 needs to say “should” instead of “needs to.”

#14 need to change “will” to “may.” Also, Ms. Ebel noted that it should read “land use is considered” instead of “land use will be considered.”

#18 needs to read “These land use issues *are* considered.”

#19 needs to read “These land use issues *are* considered.”

#20 “t” should be changed to “to”

#22 “need” should be changed to “should.” Also, instead of just “Former Middle School” it should read “Former Middle School and/or site.”

4. CHAPTER VIII - TRANSPORTATION

COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Chair Cottrill noted that there should be a “:” after the word “following.” Also, the wording “tenth highest attribute” should be changed. Ken said he would adjust the text.

Page 3, under question #28 should read the “don’t know” responses instead of the “do not know” responses to comply with what the chart says. Also, the first two lines of the Land Use Transportation Dynamics paragraph had some redundancy, which Mr. McWilliams agreed to adjust.

Page 4: the last sentence 2nd paragraph. “should resonate well” should be changed to reflect a more positive belief in the outcome of the resident’s of New London towards it’s transportation planning.

Chair Cottrill asked if the miles mentioned in New London were state and local. Mr. McWilliams answered in the affirmative.

Chair Cottrill asked about the classification of roads on Page 5. He opined that the road classifications should be explained a bit better. Karen Ebel suggested adding a note saying that the town is responsible for maintaining 54.88 miles of its roads and that the remainder is maintained by the State.

Mr.Lavoie noticed that the road conditions are listed as “good.” He explained that in 1996 that may have been true, but they are not in good condition now. Chair Cottrill opined that the frost heaves keep the speed of traffic down. When the roads are fixed, people complain about others driving too fast.

It was suggested that “Appendix VIII-1” be taken out and the words “see below” or “see next chart” for further illustration of the information.

Karen Ebel asked Mr. McWilliams if Richard Lee (Road Agent) could look at the information on this section (page 6) to see what he thinks and if the information is meaningful. Ken said he would send this section to Mr. Lee to have him make comments about the roads. He will also ask Mr. Lee about the bridges included in this section as well.

Page 7 covers Scenic Roads. Chair Cottrill asked who or what committee makes recommendations on what roads are to be considered for the scenic road designation. It was noted that recommendations need to be voted on at Town Meeting. If recommendations come from the planning board, Chair Cottrill suggested adding Tracy Road to the list. If it is up to the planning board to nominate roads, members of the planning board should think of roads for consideration. A benefit of having a road considered “Scenic” is that companies like PSNH need to come before the Planning Board before cutting trees.

Page 9 Under the “Main Street” bullet, it should read: “Most of the sidewalks on the *South Side*”and also delete “previously in poor condition, in recent years.”

Under the “Newport Road” bullet, it was suggested to take out “was funded in 2003”

Under the “North pleasant Street” bullet, it was suggested to add “on the South Side” after the Gould Road reference. Also, the words “previously in poor repair” should be deleted.

Chair Cottrill asked about the sidewalk committee and if it was still active. No one thought they were currently active.

Page 10 The text that includes “New London has adopted driveway regulations” should have the text “allowed from one site” to complete the sentence.

TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Dave Seastrand is still working on getting the 2008 information on traffic results.

The reference to “a table” in the second paragraph on page 10 should be taken out, as the table has already been removed in a previous work session.

Page 12: Chair Cottrill opined that under the Intersections section, Route 11 and 114 should also include the name “Crocket’s Corner.”

Under the Traffic Impacts section, the last sentence includes the word “would” and should be changed to “could.” Also, the text “the town should work with the Upper Valley...” should be changed to “the town would work...”

Also, the paragraph on page 13 within this same section that reads “To address the impact of traffic” It reads that the town “needs to work” with Newbury...” but would be better written as “should work with Newbury....” And also add “if it becomes an issue.”

Main Street Road Project

It was suggested that the first sentence of this paragraph read “It is hoped that the NHDOT plans to reconstruct Main Street.” The part about utilities, landscaping, etc. should be removed.

Under the Winter Maintenance section, the text “This has been an effort” should include the addition of “surface and subsurface waters” to the end of the sentence. Also, it should be written “the town officials *should* continue to work” instead of “need to work.” One extra period should be deleted after the text “Stump Dump Road.” “Stump Dump Road should be changed to “Old Dump Road.”

Page 14 VIII-2 covers commuting, which is also included in the economic base section of the plan. It was decided to take the Commuting information out of the economic base section and leave it in the Transportation section. In the Economic Base section, the Transportation section should be referenced.

Also, the first sentence should read. “...other than “to” New London.”

Page #15 reviewed Parking. It was suggested that #4 should be amended to say “...was the increase in the use of Main Street Parking in September near Colby Sawyer College.”

ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION MODES

Page 16 mentioned Taxi service. Since the service is limited in the town, it was suggested that it be written: “New London lacks local public transportation, however, limited taxi services are available.”

Park & Ride

The word “tastefully” should be taken out and should say that it was “designed to protect the perimeter tree buffer.” Also, the last sentence, which reads “has been successful” should be changed to “helps to support ride share and mass transit.”

Ride Sharing

The text “gas prices have” should be changed to “when gas prices rise, it puts ridesharing back on the minds of...”

Community Action Rural Trans...

It was suggested to remove the last sentence starting with “They also provide”

Page 17 included the “Kearsarge Area Council On Aging Dial-A-Ride Program. It was suggested to call it the “Kearsarge Area Council On Agings’ Dial-A-Ride Program.” Also, the second to last sentence should read “...155 volunteer drivers who logged 56,000...”

ISSUES

1. This issue should include the text “at Crocket’s Corner” after “Routes 11 and 114.”

Also, it should read that a task force “has met to design safety improvements for this intersection.”

#2 The last sentence in this issue should say that “It *may* change again.”

#3 Before the list from a-g, the text should read: “should be considered” instead of needs to be considered and evaluated.” Also items C, E and F should be deleted from the list.

#8 Remove the word “Traffic” from the beginning of the sentence. Also change “will increase” to “may increase.”

#9 The board decided to remove this issue from the plan, as it was not clear what a transportation center was.

GOALS

On page 18, the word “to” after the word “support” in the first sentence of the Goals segment should be deleted. Also, the second bullet should begin with the text “to continue to improve...”

RECOMMENDATIONS

#1 add the name “Crocket’s Corner” after “the intersection of Routes 11 and 114...” and add after “the task force composed of state and local officials” it should read “should continue to encourage improvements to the intersection.”

On page 19, #9 should be removed.

#10 needs a period at the end of the sentence.

On page 20, Ken McWilliams noted that the bridge information will be reviewed by Richard Lee

Ken noted that he received some comments from Jerry Gold. Michael Doheny asked that Jerry’s email be sent to the board for the members to review for the next work session. A hard copy was handed out by Ken to the board and this will be discussed at the next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Review of the minutes from the March 24th meeting.

Chair Cottrill had several minor amendments to the minutes and gave a copy of his highlighted amendments to the recording secretary.

Chair Cottrill asked for a motion to be made to accept the minutes as amended from March 24, 2009 MOTION was MOVED by Michael Doheny and SECONDED by Jeff Hollinger. The MOTION was APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

With the change in Chairmanship, some discussion ensued regarding the importance each member of the board to carefully read through the minutes to be sure they are an accurate account of the meeting, as they will be considered legal documents. It was suggested that Ken should read through the minutes for situations that are non-conforming.

It was announced that the meeting on the April 28th will start at 7pm due to a lengthy agenda.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristy M. Heath – Recording Secretary
New London Planning Board

Date Approved: _____

Chairman: _____