

**New London  
Budget Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
October 24, 2007**

Present:

Barry Wright - Presiding  
Connie Appel  
Pat Blanchard  
Bob Meck  
Noel Weinstein  
Jim Wheeler  
Jack Diemar  
Doug Baxter  
Mark Kaplan – Selectmen’s Representative  
Jessie Levine - Town Administrator  
Carol Fraley - Finance Officer

Absent: John Wilson, Chair

**Meeting Minutes:** Motion was made to approve meeting minutes dated September 19, 2007. Noel Weinstein asked for clarification on 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph, 2<sup>nd</sup> page “by 15 days,” should it read “to 15 days”? Ms. Levine and members of the Personnel Subcommittee confirmed it should read “by 15 days.”

Third paragraph on page 2 add the word “employment” in front of “contract.”

Third page second paragraph change “\$400,000 year” to “\$400,000 every year for five years.”

After the stated amendments, a motion was made to approve. Motion seconded and passed.

**Public Safety Committee:** The Committee members met with Police Chief David Seastrand and then met with Steve Ensign, chair of the Board of Firewards, and Fire Chief Jay Lyon. The following are some highlights:

**Police Department Budget**

- There is an increase in computer support due to the wireless laptop communications in the vehicles.
- \$5,000 budgeted for repairs to the Expedition; these are known and anticipated repairs.
- \$2500 increase in the dues line due to dues for the Central NH Special Operation Unit (the dues were paid with forfeiture funds in 2007)
- \$4,000 was added to Dispatch. There will be a reduction in revenue for dispatch since the Town of Bradford has withdrawn.
- The shooting range was discussed; the range is under consideration for relocation. If the range is relocated the area may be fenced for liability reasons (not in the budget).
- Mr. Diemar asked to change the comment on the budget sheet regarding the \$2500 dues for Central NH Special Operations to read “The Police Department has joined Central NH Special Operations unit at a cost of \$2500 per year.” He questioned the manner in which the decision was made to use available funds to fund an off-budget item.

**Fire Department**

- New information was received for salary and benefits for the full-time Fire Chief and Firefighter.
- Other line items were discussed at a previous meeting.

**Capital Improvements Program Sub-Committee:** Ms. Levine reported in the absence of John Wilson and Larry Ballin. She explained that the subcommittee had recommended that the Recreation Land Capital Reserve Fund be renamed to allow the funds to be used for improvement of existing recreational facilities. Ms. Levine said there were two interpretations coming out of the meeting as to whether the fund should be increased by \$25,000. Ultimately, the Planning Board decided against including the appropriation in the Capital Improvements Plan, but the Budget Committee will meet with the Recreation Commission at the November meeting and can consider including the appropriations if it agrees with their proposed uses of the fund. Members agreed that the Recreation Land Capital Reserve Fund should be renamed.

Ms. Levine was asked how the lagoon cleanup will be funded. Ms. Levine explained the Town needs to coordinate with the State for one more drag test this fall; the Town is responsible for funding the cleanup. No plan can be formulated until the drag test is completed, which will reveal the extent of the contamination. Ms. Levine said there is an Environmental Protection Agency Brownfield grant that could be applied for in 2009; there is no other State funding available, as far as she knows.

### **2008 Draft Budget**

Highlighted changes:

- Energy Committee has budgeted \$500 for conferences and \$2500 stipend for a Colby-Sawyer internship. The intern will complete a review on wind turbines, including zoning, site options, and return on investment. The intern will also create a web-page and educational material. The library will be the first Town building reviewed for energy consumption.
- Health Insurance increased by 7.8% and Dental increased by 2.6% impacting the budget be approximately \$32,000.
- \$12,000 is budgeted for an aerial fly over, resulting in ortho photos and mapping, this is in the finance budget, not in the assessing budget.
- The assessing budget has increased due to the addition of a data collector to assist the assessors in the ongoing property inspections. The \$15,000 cost will be shared by the three towns.

**Non-Profit Organizations:** Non-profit organizations submitted their funding requests; most are level funded. The Budget Committee discussed the funding request submitted by Council of Aging which has increased from \$9600 in 2006 to \$20,000 in both 2007 and 2008. Although the Budget Committee recognizes the important service the COA provides it was decided after much debate in a motion to revert back to the 2006 contribution amount of \$9600 which will be increased by COA's 2006 and 2007 combined percentage budget increase (approximately 10%). Motion was seconded. The committee agreed that there needs to be a fixed method when funding non-profit organizations. Ms. Levine will obtain the 2007 revenues and 2008 projected COA revenues and will also draft a letter with an exact funding dollar amount. Vote taken on the motion. All were in favor with Pat Blanchard abstaining.

**Selectmen's Update:** Mr. Kaplan reported the following:

- 2007 Tax Rate is estimated to be \$13.89 using \$335,000 from surplus. Overlay is budgeted for \$60,000.
- The College has hired its own appraiser to review the Town's increased assessment, and will likely file an abatement.

Mr. Kaplan also reported that the Selectmen met with Department Heads on Monday. The Department Heads explained their primary objection to the Wage Study which is after 10 years of employment employees' salaries would be maxed, short of a COLA leaving no room for growth and increasing the

chances that employees will leave for a position in another town. Also the wage study did not allow flexibility for the Department Head in regards to wage increases; an employee would either receive a step increase or no wage increase. There was no discretion for employees who performed up to a point as well as others.

Ms. Levine spoke with Local Government Center explaining the Town is basically dissatisfied with the Wage Study they provided. There are some good points of the study such as comprehensive job descriptions and the grades for the positions. Ms. Levine asked LGC if there is some way the Wage Study information with information gathered by the Town could be combined to come up with a solution other than 20 steps with 3% between each step that will give flexibility in wage increases as well as taking in account the long-term employee.

Ms. Levine has created a spreadsheet showing a COLA for everyone as well as a pay raise that was an average of 2%. The Department Heads would have the discretion of giving anywhere from 0-4%; this would impact the budget by \$60,000. Comprehensive performance evaluations would be involved in this process. Ms. Levine will be meeting with LGC about these ideas.

Ms. Levine said that one thing that should be considered is whether the subcommittee made the right assumptions in establishing a range of 10% below the median to 10% above the median. She said New London has one of the highest median incomes in the State and expects high performance from its employees. Perhaps New London should start its salary range 10% above the competition to firmly establish itself as the employer of choice.

The Personnel Subcommittee will reconvene once Ms. Levine has met with LGC.

**Roundabout:** Bids are due on November 14, 2007.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Whalen  
Recording Secretary