

Budget Committee
Meeting Minutes
January 2, 2008

Present:

Budget Committee Members: John Wilson (Chair), Connie Appel, Larry Ballin (Selectman), Doug Baxter, Pat Blanchard, Carol Fraley (Finance Officer), Mark Kaplan (Selectman *ex officio*), Jessie Levine (Town Administrator), Bob Meck, Noel Weinstein, Jim Wheeler, Barry Wright.

Representing Town Departments: Les Norman and Ruth White (Conservation Commission), Sandra Licks (Tracy Library), David Seastrand (Police Department), Jay Lyon (Fire Department), Peter Stanley (Zoning Administrator), Richard Lee (Highway Department), Chad Denning (Recreation Department).

Also: Brian Prescott (New London resident), Jana Marx (*Argus Champion*).

Chairman John Wilson opened the meeting at 7 p.m., and reviewed the order of procedure for this meeting, noting that although this is a public meeting, the Budget Committee will not receive comments until the conclusion of its own discussions. The Committee will go through the December 20 print-out of proposed 2008 Appropriations line by line, stopping when any member wishes to open discussion on a line or amend a line. The Budget Committee will vote at that time whether or not to adopt the proposed amendment. Personnel policies, salary and pay scales will be discussed at the end of the line by line review. Jessie Levine asked to clarify if his intention is for the Committee to vote on the items tonight before hearing from Department Heads. John Wilson said yes, the Committee will vote tonight, and take comments at its meeting of January 16.

On page 1, Pat Blanchard referred to the line item for Executive Department-Full Time wages. The 2008 request is for \$138,174, and she asked how much of that is for new positions or for additional hours for existing positions. Jessie Levine explained that they have placed salaries for the three full time positions together in one line (note the 2008 request column reflects zero for Zoning Administrator, Administrative Assistant, and Land Use Coordinator). Only the Zoning Administrator position has changed from part-time to full (36 hours). Jim Wheeler pointed out that using the pay schedule developed by the Personnel Subcommittee, these three full time salaries would come to \$131,607 (rather than \$138,174). He questioned the \$7000 difference. Pat Blanchard concluded remarks on this line item by suggesting that the Budget Committee is going to have to consider whether or not it should cut some of the additional people.

On page 4, Jim Wheeler pointed out that the auditor's budget has gone up more than 50%. Jessie Levine said they must meet greater reporting requirements for GASB now. She noted that for 2007 the Town under-budgeted for auditing (\$10,000 budgeted; \$15,787 spent). Carol Fraley added that the Finance Office used some outside help in setting up the sewer accounts, and also in closing out some accounts. The auditors are requesting a 40% increase in their operating budget. In response to question from the Committee, Jessie Levine said they can go out to bid for auditing, but she would not anticipate much variation.

John Wilson questioned the budgeting of \$12,000 for fly-over surveys for the Town's GIS mapping the same year it proposes budgeting \$10,254 for a zoning boundary study. Bob Meck asked if there is some other way than fly-over photography to obtain this information, perhaps GoogleEarth, for example. Peter Stanley said GoogleEarth does not have good enough resolution. It uses 5000-scale; the Town needs 100-scale for its purpose of rectifying with the Town's tax maps. Pat Blanchard asked how often flyovers like this would be done. Peter Stanley said it is accepted practice to do the fly-over photos every five years. The zoning boundary study need be done only once. Noel Weinstein questioned whether this needs to be

done in 2008. Peter Stanley said it would reduce the number of zoning questions that arise. Noel Weinstein asked if this should come out of the capital budget. Jessie Levine said they are getting a better price for this by having it done the same year as Sunapee.

Connie Appel added that pushing a project to a subsequent year does not reduce costs; the budget will be in the same situation the following year. She opined that that is due in part to the veterans' credit approved by Town Meeting two years ago, which is a \$200,000 annual expense.

John Wilson called for a vote on the request for \$12,000 to do the fly-over photography. The vote to keep this in the 2008 budget was unanimous.

Jim Wheeler asked about telephone cost (\$7750 requested for Finance). Jessie Levine and Carol Fraley pointed out that this line does cover twelve phone lines, internet and two blackberries (half of which is paid by the Zoning Administrator and Town Administrator).

On page 6, John Wilson suggested that the employee tuition reimbursement be reviewed (\$10,000 is requested). He noted that most departments also have a budget for conferences and training. Connie Appel pointed out that conferences are different than degree programs. She strongly supports keeping this line in. Jessie Levine reminded the Committee that the Board of Selectmen adopted the tuition reimbursement under the Town's Personnel Policy, and formerly it had been paid out of the Selectmen's discretionary fund. They have found, however, that enough employees have qualified for and taken advantage of this benefit, that it merits its own line in the budget. Selectmen feel it should be a noticeable part of the Town's operating budget.

Doug Baxter expressed concern about the increase in health and dental benefits, as well as retirement and workers' comp. Whether or not a benefit is worthwhile (and he feels the tuition reimbursement is) is not the point, he said. The Budget Committee is charged with exercising some control. They must also remember that the Town has a county and state budget to cover. He feels they cannot say yes to everything.

Mark Kaplan said he supports this \$10,000. More education makes better employees serving the Town. He pointed out that this department—Personnel Administration, is requesting less for 2008 (\$171,898) than it did for 2007 (\$174,226). And that reduction takes into account the additional line of \$10,000 for the tuition reimbursement.

Jim Wheeler asked if the tuition reimbursement benefit is finite. Jessie Levine said the Town will cover up to 80% of an employee's tuition—depending on grade achieved in its course -- and the policy caps the benefit at \$2000 per employee, per year. The policy includes a clause stating that an employee who receives the benefit and leaves Town employment within a stipulated time must pay back the tuition reimbursement. Budget Committee members noted that in a "worst case scenario"; that is if every qualified employee took advantage of the benefit, that would be \$75,000 per year.

Pat Blanchard agreed that it is a wonderful benefit, but questioned whether or not it is fair across the board. She said some employees are more likely to benefit from this than others. Connie Appel disagreed, saying that the opportunity is there for everyone.

John Wilson called for a vote on this line item, and Budget Committee members voted to retain the \$10,000 request for employee tuition reimbursement in the 2008 budget in a vote of 7 to 1.

Connie Appel made the observation that a number of lines reflect no actual expenditure for 2007, but the requests for 2008 have increased. She asked if the 2007 allocations could just be encumbered. Carol Fraley said unless there is a purchase order or contract outstanding, the funds for 2007 would go into the surplus. Connie Appel agreed that as surplus is used to offset taxes, that is just as good.

Referring to the Planning Board's increased request for Office Supplies (including \$3000 for a 3-drawer fire proof file cabinet) on page 7, Doug Baxter suggested that there is always good used office furniture available.

Barry Wright said he would like more information on why the boundary study is so necessary. Peter Stanley said they are going with the lowest of three bids (\$10,000, \$35,000, and \$95,000). They will end up with known points in space, and be able to use it with GPS and GIS. John Wilson asked if the contract will be for this year only, and the answer is yes.

John Wilson asked for a vote on this item. The Committee voted to retain this line item in the 2008 budget in a vote of 6 to 2.

Referring to the \$14,000 request for Academy Building Repairs and Maintenance, Doug Baxter opened some discussion on the proposed handicapped accessibility for the entrance and Jim Wheeler suggested alternatives could be explored for the energy testing, and until then perhaps the new entrances could be deferred. He proposed reducing this line to \$6000.

Connie Appel asked if they would be putting off the energy testing for all three buildings for which it is proposed. That is \$2145 for the Town Hall, \$1720 for the Academy building, and \$2725 for the Library. John Wilson said the Town's new Energy Committee could look at some other options. Connie Appel moved to defer the \$2145 energy testing for the Town Hall until further information is obtained, and that was unanimously approved with no further discussion. She moved to also delay the energy testing for the Academy building, priced at \$1720.

John Wilson clarified that the increased request includes a higher cost for elevator maintenance. He moved to cut Repairs and Maintenance for the Academy Building to \$7000. Carol Fraley pointed out that this year they have had good luck with the air conditioning, but that is not always the case. The motion was thus amended to reduce the line to \$8000, and unanimously approved.

There was some discussion about the \$2370 requested for Energy Committee meetings and expenses (p. 23). (See p. 7 of these minutes.)

Noel Weinstein noted that page 8 reflects some sewer expenses for each of the buildings, and he asked to confirm that those will be offset by user fees. Jessie Levine explained that those expenses are for those buildings' use of the sewer system and are not reimbursed by user fees.

On page 9, Jim Wheeler asked about the increase in hydrant fees. Carol Fraley said the Town has no control over that. The Town owns the fire hydrants, but the Water Precinct has purview. Jessie Levine said that the Water Precinct made the case that they have been undercharging for years.

Connie Appel noted that money for maintaining the town clock was budgeted but not spent. Jessie Levine said she believes they did work on it this year, but the Town has not yet been billed.

On page 10, Doug Baxter asked about the cemetery maintenance project. Richard Lee said the West Part cemetery is getting filled, and they propose clearing a triangular piece in the back to provide more space.

Carol Fraley said they anticipate some revenues but those are earmarked for perpetual care, and they cannot say those funds would be used for expansion. She reported that the Trustees of the Trust funds are working on freeing up some funds for other purposes.

In response to question about the increase in property insurance, Jessie Levine pointed out that the increase is really from \$56,000 to \$64,000, not \$40,000 to \$64,000, because in 2006 they took insurance for the Police Department vehicle out of that department's budget and put it here. John Wilson asked to confirm that the workers' compensation insurance is based on payroll.

Bob Meck opened some discussion on the \$11,000 requested for the Town's support of the Chamber of Commerce booth. Jessie Levine said that \$10,000 is for operation of the booth, and \$1000 is a contribution toward future replacement of it. He asked if the information booth would close if the Town did not subsidize it, and Jessie said that it most likely would close down. Bob asked if this is something the Town would deem necessary if the Chamber stopped operating it? Can the business community figure out other ways to support the information booth? Connie Appel said the Town does benefit from having the information booth there. Bob Meck asked if other towns fund their information booths. Jessie Levine said it is pretty common. Bob Meck moved to remove this \$11,000. The motion was denied in a vote of 7 to 1.

On page 11, Barry Wright asked about the increase to \$17,000 for Police Department computer support and service. Jim Wheeler said this is the proverbial budget creep. On-going expenses go up for things the Budget Committee approved in the past. Connie Appel referred to the \$10,000 for the additional costs associated with the air cards in the cars, and Barry Wright asked if those are absolutely necessary. He observed also that the second detective position was started with grant money, and is now on-going. He asked if New London needs to have the most sophisticated technical system. .

David Seastrand said the air cards are already in the cars, and allows better communication. Bob Meck said improved communication like this is an important capability for the Town to have. David Seastrand indicated that it is due to improved communication capabilities that New London dispatch has picked up two more Towns, generating more revenue. He added that since this will be a government contract, it is less than it otherwise would be.

The \$2200 for Crimestar is the annual licensing fee. The \$4000 SQL server is something that should be replaced every few years.

Barry Wright asked about revenues. Jessie Levine said this year, the addition of Croydon to New London's dispatch generates \$12,000. Some of that must be shared (through lower fees) with other Towns, but it has a \$7000 or \$8000 positive impact on New London's budget. Altogether, New London's dispatch generates \$121,000 by serving other towns. Noel Weinstein asked if some of those revenues would go away if they did not have the air cards. David Seastrand thought that would affect those revenues. Barry Wright said he still has reservations about the air cards, but less so as long as they are generating revenue.

John Wilson asked if information can be provided by January 16th on how many other towns the size of New London have two detectives, and a review of what the detectives do.

Doug Baxter opened brief discussion of the \$2500 requested for Central NH Special Operations fee. Last year that was covered by forfeiture fees, and thus did not appear in the 2007 budget. Chief Seastrand explained the benefits of being a member of that multi-town group.

Barry Wright pointed out that \$4000 is being requested for Conferences and Training though only \$2523 was spent last year. He moved to reduce that request to \$3000, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Jim Wheeler asked about new employee expenses: \$3000 has been requested but nothing was spent. Jessie Levine suggested that Town Meeting could be asked to make that a non-lapsing fund. Carol Fraley said that could be taken out of surplus if needed. Connie Appel asked how it would be covered if making it a non-lapsing fund failed at Town meeting. Jim Wheeler moved to strike that line, and the motion was unanimously approved with no further discussion. *N.B. We will need to keep the \$3000 in the budget in order to make it a non-lapsing fund, but we will also show \$3,000 in revenues from surplus so it will have no impact on the tax rate.- JL*

On page 14, Connie Appel asked about the Reverse 911 requests under Emergency Management. Jessie Levine reported slow if any progress on that and suggested that it could be taken out for this year and that the 2007 expense of \$6000 could just be encumbered to keep it from going into surplus. She went on to say that the \$2300 requested for a base station and antenna on the Academy building could also be taken out.

Connie Appel moved to remove both items from the 2008 budget, and the motion was unanimously approved.

On page 15, Budget Committee members observed that there were no 2007 actuals for computer supplies and equipment in Dispatch. Chief Seastrand thinks that this is due to bills being paid out of the wrong line item.

Jim Wheeler asked about overtime for Dispatch. David Seastrand explained that that covers the time current staff must spend training new employees. That's time over and above their regular shifts. It also covers current employees who stay beyond their shift when the next staff member is unable to come in.

Question was raised about the increase, then decrease in the request for part-time wages in Dispatch. Jessie Levine explained that when the Town took on Sunapee's dispatching, they increased that line, but have found that not all of it has been needed.

The request for radio repair is \$7800 in consideration that the antenna that needed replacement in 2007 cost \$1400, and the others are similarly aged. This line also includes \$5800 for a repeater on Mt. Kearsarge. A question was asked about whether grants could be used to purchase repeaters. Jessie Levine explained that this repeater is Sunapee's old repeater, as Sunapee received a grant for a new one. The \$5800 is just for installation.

John Wilson observed that Highway Administration is up 15% including a 23% increase in full time wages, and 19% increase in health and dental. Jessie Levine reminded the Committee that the 2007 Town Meeting approved changing the part-time administrative assistant to full-time. She added that about 20% of that time is spent on sewer related work, thus 20% of the cost will be covered by sewer user fees. Also, she pointed out that the new salary scale accounts for some of the increase, too. Jim Wheeler observed that with the reduction in part-time wages and the increase in full-time, there is a net 41% increase in wages for Highway. Budget Committee members agreed that they should take a hard look at overtime.

On page 17, Connie Appel opened some discussion about gravel road upgrading. Jessie Levine referred to the request to use \$46,000 from the capital reserve for paving. If that line is eliminated this year, then

\$30,000 should be put back here in the operating budget for upgrading gravel roads. John Wilson asked if it can be eliminated in one place, why put it back in the other. Jessie Levine said that the Town really needs \$60,000 a year to maintain its gravel. However, the Department can only work on so many a year, and Richard Lee has offered to reduce that request in order to pave some of the roads. John Wilson asked if the \$10,500 being requested for a line-painting machine could come out of the reserve. Richard Lee replied that the purchase price is \$6500; the line item was increased by that amount to \$10,500.

On page 18, Jessie Levine reported that thanks to the switch to all energy-efficient street lights, \$4000 can be knocked off the request for Street Lighting. Budget Committee members voted unanimously to reduce the request for street lighting from \$18,000 to \$14,000.

Doug Baxter opened some discussion on the \$25,000 request for lagoon clean up (page 19). Jessie Levine said that at some point the State is going to require that, though they have not set a date yet. The engineer has given an estimate of between \$40,000 and \$50,000, but does not think it will stay that low. She proposed planning closure of the lagoon in 2009, and putting \$12,500 into a capital reserve each year, keeping in mind that the Town may need to add more in the year it is done.

Noel Weinstein noted that nothing is being requested for Disease Prevention under Health Administration. Carol Fraley said they do have \$5000 in a lapsing fund for emergencies.

On page 21, John Wilson asked about the \$5000 request for winter programs under Recreation. Chad Denning said this year they would like to continue working on the cross country trail between the middle school and Morgan Hill Road. Some of that may involve placing some culverts, and the entire project may cost between \$4700 and \$4800. He plans to encumber the unspent 2007 funds for that project. Pat Blanchard asked what he plans for the \$5000 in 2008. Chad Denning said work planned for 2008 will require at least \$2000, and he would not object to reducing the request to that. Budget Committee members unanimously approved that reduction.

Connie Appel asked about the \$10,000 request for Care of Trees on page 23. Jessie Levine said some of that is for plantings in front of the Hayward building. It could probably be reduced to \$5000. The Budget Committee unanimously approved that reduction.

Question was raised about the Energy Committee's meeting expense request of \$2370. Jessie Levine said that \$1870 of that amount related to studying Tracy Library; this could be reduced to \$500 for conferences, advertising, etc.

Connie Appel asked why \$25,000 is being requested to pay off the landfill bond, when nothing was spent last year. Carol Fraley explained that they never took the money out last year so payments did not begin until this year.

Jim Wheeler asked about the \$41,000 request for Master Plan Update. Jessie Levine reminded the Committee that the Planning Board did sign a three-year contract for this work, and this is year two. They have found that it is more expensive to do the planning this way than they'd originally thought.

Moving to Capital Outlay, Barry Wright opened discussion of the \$109,000 request for Recreation Facilities improvements. Specifically, he is concerned with the planned work at Bucklin Beach. He agrees that it is absolutely necessary to upgrade the septic system there, but is not sure if the building renovation needs to be done the same year. And, he asked if a second floor is really needed there. Connie Appel said there are both moral and legal issues with the building not being handicapped accessible.

Jim Wheeler asked if it is premature to budget for this when they have not yet decided on an optimal design. Chad Denning agreed that though they have gone a little further in the design phase, they are still getting estimates. It is not certain at this point whether they will raze the existing structure and start a new building, or renovate the existing structure. There would be a difference in cost. His next step will be to get more precise figures from the builder. Connie Appel suggested that money be transferred to a capital reserve in 2008, rather than show as a 2008 request for capital outlay. John Wilson said that the reserve for Recreation Facility Improvements already has a balance of \$105,000.

Bob Meck asked if he has figures for the septic system upgrade. Chad Denning said that Pierre Bedard has submitted three options to the State. One of those was a ten year old plan for capping the tank there. That would be the least expensive at \$5000. Perhaps the better option will be installation of a "Clean Solutions" system, at a cost of \$30,000 to \$35,000.

Several members said they agree that upgrading the septic system there is priority, but are unsure of the budgeting for the building in 2008. Jessie Levine suggested reducing that request for capital outlay to \$40,000 to cover the higher estimate for the septic at Bucklin and cover some repairs to the skating rink as well. That idea was unanimously approved by the Budget Committee.

Doug Baxter asked if they have a concrete plan for improvements to the Town Hall basement. Jessie Levine said they have a concrete plan, but no figures. She has budgeted for the floors, heating, windows, and storage space there in 2008. \$67,000 is in the reserve now.

Jim Wheeler asked if the \$50,000 budgeted for Improvements to Intersections is still a valid figure for the roundabout work. Jessie Levine said yes. It is to cover engineering oversight and utilities relocation.

Turning to page 26, she said the capital reserve for milfoil treatment has \$60,000 now, and they have learned that the cost of treating milfoil has gone down. She suggested the Committee might want to consider zero funding this line for Milfoil Prevention grants, and paying those out of the Treatment reserve. Or the Committee could recommend reducing grants awarded. In past years, LSPA has asked for \$5000, Little Sunapee has asked for \$6000, and Pleasant Lake has asked for \$7000. Les Norman said the Town should anticipate a request from Messer Pond as well. Budget Committee members agreed unanimously to zero out that line this year, and pay the grants out of the reserve.

Jessie Levine said the \$10,000 request for Main Street rebuilding can be taken out, as the State has removed it from its ten year plan. It would cost the Town significant funds to rebuild Main Street, and would most likely need to be a bond issue.

Jim Wheeler opened some discussion of the \$60,000 request for the Pleasant Lake Dam Repair. The original estimate for this work was \$40,000 and PLPA agreed to pay the \$8000 electrical work expenses, leaving \$32,000 for the Town to cover (entire amount has to be appropriated). Now, Richard Lee feels with ever increasing costs of material, that price is (either) \$60,000 total, or \$68,000 including PLPA's contribution. The exact figure will be determined by the 16th. The dam repair would be mainly to the steel gate inside the wood casing. As it is, a volunteer goes out there and closes the wood casing to the dam during storm events. There may or may not be some liability to the Town. Jessie Levine suggested that if the volunteer is paid something, he may fall under the Town's insurance.

Richard Lee said this repair work must be done when the lake is drawn down, and they have been telling people who wish to make repairs to their private docks for the last ten years that the draw down will occur in 2008. He said (reluctantly) they could be informed of a change in that date, but no doubt will be frustrated. Pat Blanchard pointed out that the Town will not be saving anything by postponing this year,

and there would be inconvenience to people who have planned on the draw down in 2008. Barry Wright moved to leave that line in. Motion unanimously approved.

The Budget Committee opened discussion of the \$76,000 request for Gravel Road Upgrades and Paving, noting that it costs \$68,000 to pave the first two roads. Noel Weinstein suggested stretching the ten-year program to 20. Richard Lee said that realistically that would really be 30 years, and he cautioned that the ten year plan he drew up includes only the highest priority roads, not all the roads in town.

Having said that, he agreed that he would be willing to stretch the plan out, take \$30,000 out of this line, and put half that amount back into the gravel road line in the operating budget. Budget Committee members agreed that though they'd anticipate comments and even complaints, the fact that there is a plan should suffice to answer those complaints.

Nevertheless, discussion on this was tabled to the January 16th meeting.

Members discussed the \$100,000 request for Tracy Library improvements. Sandra Licks said that as they have been working, they have discovered a good many unanticipated problems including mold.

Jim Wheeler said the idea was to assess all of the buildings in Town and he suggested deferring some of this until the list can be discussed, and then address funding for the priorities. Jessie Levine said the Library has already run over its project allocation. This \$100,000 request is to have a fund available. They don't want to misappropriate, but do want to be able to do the critical things. She said the Library Trustees have studied this and they gave the Budget Committee a list last time. She pointed out that the question, "Is this is a need or a want?" can be applied to everything in the budget. She questioned the focus on the Library.

Connie Appel objected to the word "largesse" when applied to the Library's request. This appropriation would be so the Library is not faced with a crisis in the future. She would anticipate that next year, they will put a smaller amount in. Pat Blanchard asked to confirm that they cannot spend this without voter approval. Jessie Levine said it depends on the wording of the fund. Last year, voters made the Library Trustees and the Selectmen agents to spend this money. Connie Appel reminded the Committee that Town Meeting was overwhelmingly supportive of the Library's request for improvements. Pat Blanchard said that a majority at Town Meeting is not a majority of the population. They can't rely on everyone at Town Meeting saying "yes" to things.

Bob Meck pointed out that the Trustees' list has a total cost of \$480,000. He asked if these 13 items are prioritized. Connie Appel said it is not the Budget Committee's job to micromanage. Jim Wheeler said he does not want to appropriate more than is needed. He suggested spending half that amount to get to an understanding of what is needed. He said the dilemma is if the Committee reduces this by \$50,000, that would lower the tax rate, but be a problem if the costs turn out to be \$60,000. Connie Appel said that allocating the funds doesn't mean the Library will spend them. Jim Wheeler said it doesn't mean they won't either.

Doug Baxter moved to reduce this request to \$68,000. Noel Weinstein seconded. No further discussion. The motion passed in a vote of 7 to 1.

Pat Blanchard asked why the request for deposit into the Police Department vehicle fund has gone up. Jessie Levine said they have combined the detective vehicle and regular cruiser replacement funds into this one line.

John Wilson suggested not funding improvements to the Recreation facilities before there is a plan. Jessie Levine said that at previous Budget Committee meetings, it had been agreed that if Town Meeting approves the change in the purpose of this fund, then \$25,000 would be asked to appropriate to that fund.

Note made that the Sewer Department budget is down by \$100,000.

John Wilson opened discussion of the pay scale, noting that each percentage adds two cents to the tax rate. If we follow the recommended pay raise of COLA (currently at 4%) plus 1.5% median, that is 5.5% overall raise. The current raise budget is \$76,000. Jessie Levine said they will use the COLA available in January that applies to the entire previous year. Connie Appel said when the Personnel Subcommittee agreed to use the CPI, it never considered that it would go as high as 4%, making the Town's increases between 4.5% and 7%. She said the Town cannot afford that. She suggested the Selectmen consider an average cap of 5% increases. John Wilson said he has taken a straw poll of businesses and found that the highest increase being given is 3.3%.

Jessie Levine said the Budget Committee needs to decide on a figure it would be comfortable with. It is the Board of Selectmen that makes the determination on how those funds should be distributed, whether it is through COLA or merit pay or something else. What dollar figure would the Committee want to bring to Town Meeting? Noel Weinstein suggested they make that decision when they find out what the COLA will be on January 15.

Connie Appel observed that in the comparison of towns in the Committee's packets, New London has the second lowest tax rate. Noel Weinstein said that the tax rate is meaningless when compared among towns.

In total, this evening's discussion eliminated \$108,815 from the proposed 2008 budget.

The public hearing on the budget was rescheduled for Monday, February 11.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m. The next meeting is Wednesday, January 16, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah A. Denz
Recording Secretary