



TOWN OF  
NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
MEETING MINUTES  
December 5, 2011**

**PRESENT:**

Mark Kaplan, Chair, Board of Selectmen  
Tina Helm, Selectman  
Peter Bianchi, Selectman  
Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Dave Seastrand, Police Chief  
Jay Lyon, Fire Chief  
Richard Lee, Public Works Director  
Chad Denning, Recreation Director  
Linda Hardy, Town Clerk & Tax Collector  
Amy Rankins, Benefits Administrator  
Stephen Ensign, Fireward  
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer  
Doug Homan, Budget Committee Member  
Merri Armentrout, reporter for The Intertown Record (? – I thought I heard her recorder beeping?)

Chair Kaplan called the meeting to order at 8:00am. The first item of business was to approve the minutes of the last two meetings in November.

**IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Peter Bianchi) to approve the minutes of November 28, 2011, as circulated. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Peter Bianchi) to approve the minutes of the CAC meeting of November 19, 2011, as amended. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED.** Mr. Bianchi abstained from voting as he was not present at the meeting.

On page 7 it says “CAV” and should be “CAC.”

On page 5, Ms. Helm asked Ms. Hallquist to move one paragraph.

Renewal of Health Insurance Policy for 2012

**IT WAS MOVED (Peter Bianchi) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to adopt LGC option #2 as shown on the chart prepared by Wendy Johnson.**

Mr. Bianchi clarified that the Board is approving \$517,000, which is the cost of the plan, not \$555,000 which includes an amount for the town to pay towards the deductible. (The Plan will raise the deductible for the HMO plan from \$250/\$750 to \$1,000/\$3,000)

Chair Kaplan said they would not be discussing the details of the plans and the responsibility of the employees for their policies at this meeting. They were only going to choose a plan. Mr. Bianchi noted that the option they have moved to adopt would be saving the town about \$92,000.00. Chair Kaplan said that out of \$23,000 they had set aside for deductibles last year, they only expended a few thousand dollars. He felt they should keep enough money in the deductible line item to pay for the worst case scenario. Anything not spent out of the account would go into surplus and would eventually be returned to the taxpayer. Mr. Bianchi and Ms. Helm agreed that getting into these details was not their charge for this particular meeting, but rather once the budgets had come together. Ms. Hallquist said that she would provide various scenarios for the selectmen to review before making any decisions beyond choosing the health plan for the employees.

Chair Kaplan called for a vote on the aforementioned motion.  
**THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Rankins wondered if they would once again offer to give employees a choice of an HMO or a POS policy through Blue Choice. If people choose a more expensive plan, they would pay the difference. Ms. Hallquist said that these numbers include this choice. The Board agreed as the POS does not cost the Town additional funds.

#### Police Cell Doors

Chair Kaplan said there was a quote for \$25,718.52 and would come from the CRF as approved at the last Town Meeting. Chief Seastrand said that four or five years ago someone broke the doors in the trap area. They had replaced the trap doors but that this was a continuation of the ongoing project. They currently have three flexible, lightweight doors that should not be used in cells. Ms. Hallquist said that \$55,000 was appropriated to fix the cell doors and the roof of the Academy Building. The cell doors are custom made, which is why they are expensive. Chief Seastrand said that they are made in Canada and take about 6-8 weeks to arrive to their distributor in the United States. The first three doors were replaced immediately, as it was necessary, but this is a continuation of the project.

**IT WAS MOVED (Peter Bianchi) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to expend \$25,718.52 to replace three cell doors at the Police Station, as was appropriated at the 2011 Town Meeting.  
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### Merrimack County Budget

The Board noted receipt of the proposed Merrimack County budget for 2012. The County estimate that the proposed budget would result in a 3.26% increase in the amount to be raised by taxes. The Town paid \$3.2 million dollars for 2011 and anticipated it would be at least this amount for 2012. Ms. Hallquist will make copies for the Board to review.

#### Elkins Project Tour

Ms. Hallquist reported that 16 prospective engineers showed up for the tour of the Elkins area on November 30th. Ms. Hallquist and Mr. Lee, along with Elkins Committee Members Maureen Prohl and Rick Kloeppel, conducted the tour. Those engineers who are still interested will be able to submit their qualifications on December 28<sup>th</sup>. Several engineers saw the ad in the Union Leader and contacted the office for details on the tour and RFQ submittal requirements.

#### Planning Board Meeting – Master Plan Hearing

Ms. Helm said that only three board members showed up, along with Michael McCrory from the Upper Valley Regional Planning Commission. There were no votes taken because they did not have a quorum.

The next public meeting regarding the Master Plan adoption has been noticed and will be held December 13<sup>th</sup> at 7pm. The final hearing/vote will be on December 27<sup>th</sup>.

#### Department Head Budgets

Ms. Hallquist said that the selectmen have been provided with preliminary budgets from the Department Heads. She noted that she asked the Department Heads to attend the meeting this morning to briefly make comments on their budget requests and to see if the Selectmen had any areas they wanted more focus on before the next meeting for more intensive review of individual budgets.

#### *Police Department*

Chief Seastrand began with his budget explanation by saying that he tried to reduce his budget as much as he could while still maintaining a valuable service to the Town. He said they are having issues with computers and don't know what the cost will be. Overall he has not asked for any increases and has tried to decrease it from last year. He thought it was just about as tight as it could get. He pointed out that unforeseen costs do come up, such as the towing costs of the vehicle(s) involved in the October 31<sup>st</sup> break-in, which came to over \$700.00 which had to come from his budget.

Chief Seastrand noted that the laptops they have in the cars are 6-7 years old and are maxed out on memory. They have tried hard to keep them going by removing things on them that are not needed in the cars.

Mr. Bianchi said that July-June 2011 they had \$87,325 budgeted. The 2013 fiscal year is listed as \$95,025, which is an 8% increase. Chief Seastrand was unaware of this percentage and said he would have to look back at his budget. Ms. Johnson suggested that due to the 6 month/12 month budget requirements, there have been some issues with figures incorrectly being placed in one or the other budget.

For the dispatch budget, Mr. Bianchi noted that they went up 1.9%. He said that was closer to what they were looking for. There were no further questions at that time for Chief Seastrand.

#### *Fire Department*

Chief Lyon explained that when he looked at the numbers they had for 2011, he noted that their wants and needs were different because of the business they are in. The needs come from the town budgetary process. Last year \$64,550 was asked for the non-labor operating portion and it would remain the same for this year. In the past they have done things to offset costs, such as seeking grants. He does this with the intent to diminish the contributions made in Capital Reserves. In 2004 they received a \$49,500 grant to replace their air filling station. They had been putting \$12,000 into Capital Reserves each year for three years to pay for this. Upon receiving the grant, they only had to spend just over \$4,000. This year they received a grant for \$123,000 for their air packs. The town's contribution was about \$10,000. They have also received a forestry grant this year which was a 50/50 match. This will include protective clothing for use in forest fires, which differs from structural fire clothing. The grant will enable them to double the product they had been approved to purchase. Over the last 10 years they have used \$280,000 in grants, and additional monies donated by the Fire Fighter's Association and other benefactors. In the last 20 years there has been \$222,000 privately raised to off-set the budget. He said it has been phenomenal the amount of support the fire department has received.

Ms. Helm wanted to highlight the fact that Chief Lyon has gone for so many grants, and felt that his efforts should be recognized. Chief Lyon said that the key is to try and get things that won't necessarily need immediate replacement or grow the size of town government. Ms. Helm asked Chief Seastrand if

similar grants are available in the Police Departments. Chief Seastrand said that they do make use of grants, such as their laptops, light bars and other programs, but it is not to the extent of the fire department's equipment grants.

#### *Cemeteries*

Mr. Lee said that they have one person who takes care of the cemeteries each year. It is a full-time job to take care of the town cemeteries. Mr. Bianchi asked if they subcontract for grave digging. Mr. Lee said that the cemetery commissioners decide who digs the graves, but that generally the town does the work unless a smaller machine is needed because it is too wet to use the town's large backhoe.

Ms. Johnson said that the cemetery trustees get money for the purchase of cemetery plots and there is a fee for grave opening. Ms. Hallquist said that some towns vote to have the town, through the highway department, do the maintenance, otherwise the cemeteries are under control of the Cemetery Trustees who may appoint a sexton to handle the maintenance. The town pays \$19,500 per year for the part-time help for the cemetery, as well as equipment and materials. There are three cemeteries that the town maintains. Mr. Lee said that they do not send the cemetery trustees a bill when a grave is dug. It was determined that more details were needed to find out how the trustees maintain the cemeteries, and who and how much is paid for a grave being dug when the town doesn't do it.

#### *Highway Department*

Mr. Bianchi said that the highway administration total was up 2.7% and the total highway budget was up just under 1%. Mr. Lee said that they were asked to put together a budget last year for 12 months and then another budget for six months. This ended up being switched and so some expenditure had to be switched. This kept the total at the bottom of the budgets the same. It was felt that this is what happened with Chief Seastrand's budget as well. Mr. Bianchi agreed but said they need to sift through these details to come up with their budgets for this year.

Mr. Lee said that when the college went to the zero sort method, they have had to increase their trucking costs for the trash. It used to be hauled by their old contractor, but now New London is hauling it. They are making three trips instead of two per week. Mr. Lee said he'd like to keep an eye on this before making a final decision on his budget request.

Mr. Lee thought that the hauling fees would go up a bit. Fuel prices are what would drive this increase. The hauler has not increased his fees even though the prices have gone up. Mr. Bianchi said the hauler has a fuel clause in his contract but that he has never used it. It was believed that the hauler is happy with the arrangement he has hauling for New London and Meredith.

#### *Recreation*

Mr. Denning was happy to report that this year their budget will be going down by 7%. Last year they were up 7% to get the sail boats, which they did purchase. Instead of just two boats, they were able to get four.

Mr. Bianchi asked about the revolving fund. Mr. Denning said there is about \$30,000 in the fund at this time. Mr. Bianchi questioned using the revolving fund to operate the Farmers Market. He read from the 2004 town meeting article that established the fund. He didn't think that the Farmers Market was a "recreational" activity. Mr. Denning said that Lebanon and Hanover both have had this question come before their recreation departments, who also run their town's Farmers Markets. Both of these towns' select boards have deemed the Farmers Market to be a recreational activity.

Mr. Bianchi said he was all for the Farmers Market but thought it should be done by the Chamber of Commerce or some other non-profit. Mr. Denning said the definition of recreation is very broad and felt that this activity fell under recreational programming. Chair Kaplan asked what would be the advantage to not allowing the Recreation Department to do this. Other towns allow it to be put under the aegis of the recreation department. They are now approaching that same decision. He wondered why they should take it away from the Recreation Department. Why not just let them do it? If they have a revolving fund, it doesn't affect the tax rate or expenditures, so why not let them do it? He thought it was a perfect way to handle the Farmers Market and keep it in Town.

Mr. Bianchi said he was questioning whether a Farmers Market would or should be considered recreation. Just because other towns allow it doesn't mean they have to or should do it. He felt that \$30,000 was too much for the revolving fund.

Mr. Homan didn't think that New London Recreation should do what Hanover does and didn't think it was a sound argument with regards to the Farmers Market. He said he agreed with Mr. Bianchi and didn't see how the Farmers Market could be considered "recreation." He thought it should be run by a non-profit. Mr. Homan thought it would eventually need more work and management and would take on a life of its own. He thought they should be prepared that it would cost the town more money and the appropriate place for it would be under a non-profit or volunteer group. Mr. Denning commented that the Farmers Market was originally handled by the Recreation Department, and it is now coming back to them because the non-profit couldn't do it anymore.

Chair Kaplan said that the Recreation Department, which has a revolving fund, is an appropriate vehicle to keep the Farmers Market going. He felt Mr. Homan and Mr. Bianchi were twisting this issue around and making it into a problem that it wasn't. The Farmers Market is a good thing for the town and the people like it. He didn't see the problem.

Mr. Homan said that the Wilmot Farmers Market is one of the most successful ones in the area and is done strictly by volunteers. He thought New London should follow this model.

Ms. Helm commented that at the last CAC meeting there was a lengthy discussion regarding volunteerism in the town. It is difficult to get people to run things on a volunteer basis. The hospital and other non-profits are struggling with this. She suggested he read those meeting minutes to get an idea of the problem. She suggested having Mr. Homan viewing the glass as "half full" instead of "half empty." If the program gets larger that means more people will come into town and more revenue would come into the businesses. She thought it was perfectly fine to have the Recreation Department handle the Farmers Market. She recalled that when the market began, the Recreation Department offered games and activities for the families and children and felt that perhaps the reason it didn't catch on was because of where they had placed these activities. To get people outside, socializing with each other, etc., she felt it was absolutely a recreation activity.

Mr. Bianchi said he didn't think paying someone to run the Farmers Market was an appropriate expense for the revolving fund or for the Recreation Department. Ms. Helm said that Mr. Bianchi made some good points on other issues, but in this case, the warrant article in the 2004 report had no real definition of what recreation was. Everyone has a different interpretation of what recreation is.

Chair Kaplan said he has been to a Farmers Market and it was his observation that it resulted in getting people outside, people learning things, and socializing and as such felt it was a recreational activity. He was sure there were many people who come to the village green because people are there and they want to be social. Mr. Homan felt it was two different issues. He felt they should get the definition of

“Recreation” from Webster’s. Chief Lyon accessed the Internet and read a definition of recreation he found there: “*Refreshment of one’s mind or body after work through activity that amuses or stimulates; play.*”

Mr. Denning said that they hoped to have a warrant article at the next town meeting for the Recreation Department in an effort to update the Bucklin Beach bathhouse. Mr. Bianchi asked if the use of the building would be increased. Mr. Denning said it would not. They would be using upstairs space for storage and the bathrooms would be revamped. At one time they wanted to have a meeting space upstairs but were told by the State that they could not increase their programming at that site, due to the limitations of the existing septic system, so storage is the only option for them.

#### *Emergency Management*

Mr. Denning said in the past the EMD has been a non-employee of the town so there has been a stipend attached to it. Now that he has assumed the role of EMD, it is part of his job and does not take a stipend for it. Mr. Bianchi wondered how much was spent out of this fund. Mr. Lee said the generators would be being serviced this month so an expense would show up this month.

#### Schedule for Budget Planning

Mr. Bianchi thought they should prepare dates for discussion on each department. He suggested the next meeting they prepare to talk about health/dental benefits and employee compensation. On December 19<sup>th</sup> there is a hearing relative to the West Side acceptance. He wasn’t sure how long it would take. It was his suggestion to have something to discuss should the hearing portion be short.

Ms. Helm suggested asking the Police Department coming in on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December to discuss his budget. Chief Seastrand said he could participate. She also suggested getting a division of duties for the cemetery commission during this meeting.

Ms. Johnson said that a year from now they have no idea what the costs will be for health insurance as they are on a different fiscal year as the healthcare companies. There will be six months of 2013 that they will need to budget for, but they don’t know what the premiums will be. Down the road she would like to get the companies and the town on the same schedule.

The Board noted that it would take up the department budgets according to the following schedule: December 12<sup>th</sup>: Employee Insurance contributions, Police Department, and Town Administrator budgets; December 19<sup>th</sup>: Public Works and Recreation Department budgets; December 27 (Tuesday): Fire Department and Library budgets. The respective department heads will be asked to attend to explain their requests in more detail, and to answer any questions the Selectmen may have. The Selectmen’s Meeting on Wednesday, January 4<sup>th</sup> is reserved for setting of salaries. The Board noted that they will be handing over their completed budget to the Budget Committee on Monday January 9<sup>th</sup>.

Chief Lyon said his guess was that there would be more participants involved and the Syd Crook room seats a certain number. They will need to use a different location should they need more room.

The next Board of Selectmen’s meeting is scheduled for December 12 at 6pm.

Other items to be signed:

- Disbursement voucher.
- 2 Petitions & Pole Licenses – approved
- Notice of intent to cut – E. Gay, 1850 King Hill Road (Map & Lot 128-010-000) approved.
- Notice of intent to cut – Hanson, County Road (Map & Lot 117-005-000) approved.

**IT WAS MOVED (Peter Bianchi) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to adjourn the meeting.  
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:00am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary  
Town of New London