



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES November 28, 2011

PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Linda Hardy, Town Clerk/Tax Collector
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer
Amy Rankins, Land Use Coordinator
Linda Jackman, Administrative Assistant
Richard Lee, Public Works Director
Chad Denning, Recreation Director
Jay Lyon, Fire Chief
Jim Wheeler, Budget Committee Chair
Doug Homan, Budget Committee member
Bill Green, Budget Committee member
Doug MacMichael, New London resident
Cicely Markoff, New London resident
Renate Kannler & Bruce Hudson, New London Residents
Greg and Nancy Barthol, Wilmot residents
Merrie Armentrout, reporter for the Intertown Record

Chair Kaplan called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. He began the meeting by asking Mr. Denning to speak about "Market Days," a farmers market that is held on Wednesday afternoons/evenings during the summer months on the Town Green.

Market on the Green

Mr. Denning said that Cicely Markoff was also there to speak on the topic. Ms. Markoff said that the last two summers the "Market on the Green" has been run by the Center for the Arts. This will be not the case next summer and the Recreation Department would like to take over the operation to ensure its continuation. It was noted that the market was originally started and run by the Recreation Department. They hoped to keep it vital and sustainable in the years to come. Mr. Denning said that he has had initial conversations with Annie Ballin, former Executive Director of Center for the Arts, and Ms. Markoff about what they need to do to keep the vendors they have, and how to attract even more in the future to keep it sustainable. They would like to hire a business manager to oversee the market planning and execution.

Ms. Helm asked how vendors pay to participate in the event. Ms. Markoff said that this year they required a flat fee for the whole summer season, which was \$100.00 per vendor. They had almost 40 vendors participate each week. Additionally, they always had live musicians, which were paid for performing. They also had a children's program each week, which was made possible through volunteers. Ms.

Markoff noted that there was an incredible amount of people in attendance each week, and it seemed as though "Market on the Green" was becoming an end destination for families in the area on Wednesday nights.

Mr. Denning said that they would like the permission of the Board of Selectmen to hire someone as a business manager to take over the role of organizing and keeping track of this event. Ms. Markoff said that there is a large business management component to putting on an event of this sort. In the past, Annie Ballin, who was the executive director for Center for the Arts, took care of these duties. Unfortunately, Center for the Arts no longer has the man-power to provide this assistance.

Mr. Denning said that they need to begin work preparing for the summer of 2012 in January, inviting new and old vendors, lining up advertising. Additionally, the market should be managed from 12-7 on the day of the event. The position would be paid and it was Mr. Denning and Ms. Markoff's belief that the pay should be \$3,500 for the year, paid from the funds generated by the vendor fees. Ms. Markoff said they hope to look for sponsors for the children's programs and the musicians. She believed that there was also grant opportunities they could take advantage of. Ms. Markoff added that the event had some donated advertising last year and she hoped that the same would happen in 2012. Mr. Denning noted that this program would be run through the Recreation Department's revolving account.

Mr. Bianchi wondered if this event would put too much pressure on Mr. Denning as the summer is his busy time. Ms. Markoff answered that it would not add to Mr. Denning's work load. That is why they want to hire someone to manage it. There is also a group of committed volunteers, consisting of about 12 people, called "Friends of the Market" who help with everything that is needed. Mr. Denning added that he has two interns (un-paid) from Colby-Sawyer College lined up to help with the market this summer. Ms. Markoff commented that other than Ms. Ballin's time (hopefully to be replaced by a business manager's time), no other people from Center for the Arts were burdened with any work to make this event happen.

Ms. Helm said she loved the Wednesday evening event as it brought people into the center of town. She hoped it benefited area retailers as well.

Ms. Markoff said the first year they had the market under the auspice of Center for the Arts, they required all the vendors to be "agricultural" which had strict guidelines. For example, someone selling a sweater must have raised the sheep, sheared it, made the yarn themselves, and then knitted the sweater. They have loosened these requirements now, to allow for more vendors to be able to participate.

Chair Kaplan asked if they hire this person for \$3,500.00 would they be considered an employee of the town who would also be entitled to benefits. Mr. Denning noted that the person would not be a town employee but treated the same as most of the people who put on recreation programs for the town. Ms. Hallquist noted that if they could hire someone as an independent contractor, the person would not be considered a town employee. This would be made clear up front to the individual.

Ms. Markoff said that they want to keep the name "Market on the Green" as it is the only one of that name in the country and it fits the town well. Mr. Denning said the website for "Market on the Green" would remain the same but that they would add/remove content as needed.

After questioning the past revenue and expenditures related to the event, Ms. Markoff said that she could show Mr. Bianchi the balance sheet from the first and second years. They were in the red about \$14.00 the first year, and actually made about \$50 the second year.

Mr. Homan wondered if contract employees held their own insurance and wondered if they had to provide this proof of insurance to the town. Mr. Denning answered in the affirmative and added that even the vendors who participate are all required to have proof of insurance. Mr. Homan said he hated the idea of adding anything more to the town's responsibility and would be much happier if it was run by a non-profit or volunteer group. Mr. Denning and Ms. Markoff agreed that they would prefer it to be that way too. Mr. Homan opined that sometimes these kinds of things can take on a life of their own and get out of hand. He asked how many other things would be coming from Center for the Arts that they can no longer do. Ms. Markoff explained that she stepped down from the Center for the Arts board before this change was made and did not want to speculate. She added that about half the farmer's markets around the east coast are run by the respective towns' Recreation Departments and that they don't get out of hand.

Ms. Hallquist said she would be involved in the hiring process for the business manager to ensure that the person does meet the definition of independent contractor. Ms. Helm said that she supported the Recreation Department in this endeavor 100%. She also noted that she would be happy to do some volunteering at the event. Chair Kaplan thanked Ms. Markoff and Mr. Denning for all their work.

November 14, 2011 Minutes

IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Peter Bianchi) to approve the minutes of November 14, 2011, as amended. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mr. Bianchi noted that on page 11, it should read "EPA" and not "EAP."

November 23, 2011 Minutes

IT WAS MOVED (Peter Bianchi) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to accept the minutes of November 23, 2011, as circulated. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

It was decided that the CAC minutes would be reviewed at the next meeting as not everyone had had a chance to review them.

Discussion on Board of Selectmen's decision from November 14, 2011 to fill the vacant highway position

Chair Kaplan said that the request came to him from Mr. Bianchi and Mr. Wheeler. Mr. Bianchi explained that this was something that was discussed at the last Board of Selectmen's meeting in open session, but before it was discussed, they had gone into a non-public session. As a result, there wasn't anyone there after the non-public session, as the meeting had run late into the night. He felt the issue should be aired in a meeting where more input was possible. He wanted to reconsider the filling of the newly vacant highway position.

IT WAS MOVED (Peter Bianchi) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to reconsider the actions of November 14, 2011 to fill the vacant highway position.

Ms. Helm said that she voted to fill the position because she felt they should discuss it proactively, not retroactively. She would not rescind her vote. She felt going forward, it would make sense in these economic times to sit down with each department head and go through it with them to see if it would be possible to eliminate a position here or there. They should come to a consensus so that they can all plan ahead and not be surprised if there was a decision made to not fill a position should it become vacant. They should create a policy going forward, not when they are forced to make a decision quickly.

Mr. Bianchi said this was the third vacant position that they filled. He didn't think the idea of not filling vacant positions snuck up on anyone. He has been an advocate that he would not cut or fire anyone, but if a position became vacant, he would not vote to fill it to save money. He respected Ms. Helm's opinion

but disagreed with her. Ms. Helm said they have never talked with the department heads and had an honest dialogue about their staffing and come to a mutual understanding.

Chair Kaplan said that in this instance they talked to both of the department heads and discussed their needs. Mr. Homan asked when the department heads have ever said “no” to needing to fill a position. Chair Kaplan said they don’t say no because they don’t ask for people they don’t need.

Mr. Green asked if there were other alternatives considered instead of not replacing the person. Chair Kaplan said they did discuss part-time help and it was his understanding that for this position, part-time would not work. Putting a part-time employee into this scenario would hurt instead of solve the problem. Mr. Green wondered if they could hire someone for the winter season when the demand is high. Mr. Bianchi said there wasn’t a unanimous position on the board regarding the use of part-time help. He thought they should use it more, as they could pay the part-time help more and actually save money due to not having to pay them benefits. Chair Kaplan said he wouldn’t be in favor of part-time unless it was something the department head needed. He repeated that the departments don’t say that they want something they don’t need.

Chair Kaplan said since 2008 they have reduced the budget in terms of the tax rate by fifty cents. This cut the taxes collected by \$500,000.00 in the last three years. He explained that this was due to the department heads finding ways to save money. Mr. Wheeler disagreed with Chair Kaplan’s figures.

Mr. Homan said most people in the town understand how hard the recession has been. The Town of New London has added one employee since the recession started. The Budget Committee was clear that they aim to find permanent ways to make reductions in the budget. There will be no long-term sustainable reductions to the budget without reductions to staffing levels. Chair Kaplan disagreed with this. Mr. Homan said that this was his opinion. He believed the Budget Committee as a whole believes there are opportunities to reduce staffing. He doesn’t want to see layoffs but thinks it important that the Budget Committee and the Board of Selectmen work together to prevent it from happening. The Board of Selectmen need to stop avoiding the opportunities presented to them to not fill positions. He hoped to work together with them to achieve long term sustainable changes.

Ms. Helm said a number of calls were made by citizens after the last snow storm complaining about the lack of timely snow removal and she was even stopped in the grocery store with remarks that the plowing wasn’t as good as it has been. This was due to the fact that they were one man down.

Mr. Homan asked Mr. Lee what time the staff was called out for the last storm. Mr. Lee said they were called at 2:30am and at 3:30am had four trucks out. 2” of snow takes 1.5 hours to clear. The fifth truck (which they didn’t have due to being short an employee) plows the main lines while the other trucks do the secondary roads. Chair Kaplan said if they reduce the staff, this kind of thing will happen more often. His philosophy was that he doesn’t want it to happen. They have to find other ways to reduce the budget.

Mr. Wheeler said they reduced the budget over the last three years by reducing the CIP fund as it was over-funded, and by using some of the surplus. Chair Kaplan said his point is they don’t want to cut people, but want to maintain staff and find other ways to cut the budget. He agreed that the CIP was a good place to start, but if they keep cutting that they won’t have the equipment and maintenance they need in town.

Mr. Wheeler said that 50% of the town’s budget is personnel and it was disingenuous to ignore this issue. He liked Ms. Helm’s idea of speaking with the department heads to see where they could cut personnel, if possible. Mr. Homan said many people in town agree with Chair Kaplan about having all positions filled,

but said that others feel that the town is over-staffed and they don't want to pay for it. He felt that these people's voices should be heard. He commented that reducing staff through attrition had been discussed. Ms. Helm said she would rather have a sit-down with the department heads and talk seriously together about what they have for personnel and why they are needed. They should put a model in place before it is needed. Mr. Homan said that this would happen this year, as he will bring up the topic with the department heads come budget planning time. Ms. Helm said that perhaps the Board of Selectmen will discuss this at the beginning of the budget process. Mr. Wheeler asked if the department heads could come up with a scenario of how the department would run without someone.

Chair Kaplan called for a vote.

In favor: Peter Bianchi. Opposed: Mark Kaplan and Tina Helm

THE MOTION WAS NOT APPROVED.

Ms. Helm asked Mr. Lee and/or Ms. Hallquist why there was a special ad in the Kearsarge Shopper just from Public Works Department to say they would be closed during the holiday. She wondered why they couldn't have the Public Works information be included with the regular Town ad Mr. Lee said that they used to do have the ads together, but people complained that they didn't see it, as they didn't read the entire ad. He said he was fine to put them back in together to try it again. Ms. Helm thought they should combine the ads again. Ms. Kannler noted that people, who don't read the ad or keep the yearly schedule of the transfer station hours handy, will eventually learn if/when they end up taking their trash on a day that they are closed.

2012 Health Insurance Renewal

Ms. Hallquist said they have a January renewal so a decision on what policy the town will have must be made in the coming week. Amy Rankins and Wendy Johnson were present to explain what needed to be done. Ms. Rankins noted that their current policies would increase 11.5% from last year, assuming they stay with the same plan. Ms. Rankins received quotes from LGC and School Care that would offer comparable plans. Ms. Hallquist noted that Primex is no longer writing health insurance coverage but that starting in July there will be an additional organization writing policies, so for the next renewal they will be able to get another quote to compare prices.

Ms. Johnson explained the spreadsheet she distributed. In 2011 they budgeted \$552,000 and they agreed to cover the maximum exposure for deductibles of \$23,750. This would be a \$576,388 total cost to the town. If they keep with the same plan and choose to not cover the deductible, they would still be paying \$610,945, which is still an increase of 6%.

LGC has a second option. The deductible is higher, which is the only difference. This would be \$517,707 without the town covering the deductible. Ms. Johnson's idea to soften the blow to the employees was for the town to split the deductible with the employees. This way, the maximum exposure would be \$38,000 with a total potential cost to be \$555,700. This would be about \$20,000 less than what the Town budgeted for in 2011.

Ms. Johnson said that the School Care options are based on a fiscal year timeframe and so they gave a price for six months at one rate. Starting July 1st they would offer a higher rate. Using a School Care policy would cause the town to lose an \$18,000 credit for using LGC for their other insurances. The fourth School Care option did not have a co-pay but rather people would need to pay up to \$250.00 for their appointments or prescriptions and once that was met, they would only pay 20% up to the deductible amount. Ms. Rankins said the amount budgeted for the town to cover deductibles in 2011 was \$23,000 but that only a little over \$2,000 was spent.

Chair Kaplan said that they would review this information and make a decision at a later date. Ms. Rankins said that LGC would require a decision by that Friday to avoid any late fees in joining the plan. Ms. Hallquist said she would contact LGC to ask that they allow an extension since the Board will not be meeting again until Monday morning.

Mr. Bianchi asked if he was correct in saying that on Monday the Board needs to decide which policy but not necessarily how much the Board will require the employees to contribute to the plan. Ms. Hallquist agreed noting that the Board will select the policy and will be responsible for payment of the premiums regardless of how much the employees are required to pay, that decision may be made at a later date.

Receipt of New London Hospital ambulance bill

Chair Kaplan said that they received a bill from New London for \$21,393.00 for the ambulance service, and notification that they were forgiven \$38,000. Mr. Bianchi said this was not true. There was never any obligation for New London to pay any more than the \$93,000 they voted on. There was never a vote to pay any extra, so technically nothing is being “forgiven.”

Mr. Bianchi said that they still have not received a report from MRI for the ambulance study. Chief Lyon noted that the hospital has put out an RFP for private ambulance companies. He added that they have disclosed more information than they did to MRI. Chief Lyon said he understood that it would take years to get any new format for the ambulance in place given the infrastructure of the present service. The quickest way is for the hospital to sell out or contract with a third party. When dealing with seven towns and organizations, the complexity of making sure everyone is on the same page is difficult. He offered that they would also need a buy-in from the town fathers, the Budget Committee, etc. Chief Lyon also indicated that last year the hospital said that they would purchase a new ambulance this year. To his knowledge, no ambulance has been purchased but thought an additional one was loaned from another town. He was concerned was customer service and availability.

Chair Kaplan asked about car accidents on I-89 where the victims are not always New London residents. He wondered how ambulances and other service teams were chosen to tend to the accident. Chief Lyon said that Exit 11 through mile marker 36.5 was New London’s responsibility, but that the New London Ambulance covers Exit 9 through Exit 14. The dispatcher gives out information on the mile marker and that is how the towns are designated.

Mr. Homan opined that the calls from the highway were good ones to get, as the drivers were probably insured. It was noted by Chief Lyon that this was not the case. He explained that the reimbursement rate is about 79% in Lebanon. DHART helicopter is only at 63% reimbursement.

CIP as Adopted by the Planning Board

Ms. Helm reported that Planning Board chair, Tom Cottrill felt the CIP process went very well and he felt good about the way it evolved this year.

Notice to proceed with bids for Pleasant Street Sidewalk

Mr. Lee said they received the notice last week that they could proceed with bids for this project. Bids have not gone out yet but would specify that the work would be done at the end of June.

Elkins

Ms. Hallquist said that they received the notice to proceed to advertise request for qualifications (RFQ) of potential engineers for the Elkins project in a much more timely fashion than what has been the experience with the Pleasant Street Sidewalk. There will be a walk-about on Wednesday for interested engineers to get an idea of the project. An ad was placed in the Union Leader and so far seven or eight

firms from around the state contact the town with interest. Also, information on the RFQ was mailed to 11 firms.

Committee Reports

Ms. Helm reported that the Planning Board meeting of November 22, 2011 had several issues come forth. There was a lot line adjustment/annexation for the Stephenson and Hoover properties on Murray Pond, which changed four non-conforming lots into two conforming ones. There was a lot line adjustment within the Stanley Point Trust and the Vinton Trust, as the Vinton's had mistakenly built a garage over their lot line. It was an amicably decided solution. Tom Galligan, Colby-Sawyer College President, presented the college's master plan but did not expect any resolution at that meeting. There was discussion regarding changes to the Institutional/Recreational zoning language. They plan to come to the Planning Board on the 27th of December to accept new zoning language. There was also a tree cutting request and approval for the Elliason family, and the CIP was presented and adopted. Additionally, Hilltop requested to have waived a site plan review to build a cover over a sand bunker they currently have on County Road.

The next Board of Selectmen meeting would be held at 8am on Monday, December 5, 2011.
The next CAC meeting would be held on Saturday, January 7, 2012.

Mr. Lee asked if they could close the Transfer Station at 12:00pm on Christmas Eve, which was a Saturday. The Board of Selectmen had no objection to this. Mr. Hudson inquired if Mr. Lee intended to do the same for New Year's Eve, Mr. Lee noted that he did not; the Transfer Station would be open for the regular schedule on New Year's Eve but will close at noon on Christmas Eve.

**IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Peter Bianchi) to enter non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A: 3 (II) (a)
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY. Peter Bianchi – yes, Tina Helm – yes, Mark Kaplan – yes. The Board entered nonpublic session at 7:42 PM.**

The Board of Selectmen came back into public session at 8:08pm.

Application for Building Permit:

- Jeremy & Kimberly Bonin, 64 Little Sunapee Road (Map & Lot 060-006-000) window & door replacement – Permit #11-117 – Approved.
- Hilltop Place Community Association, 1000 Hilltop Place (Map & Lot 144-001-000) construct sand shed – Permit #11-118 – Approved.

Other items to be signed:

- Disbursement voucher.
- Petition & Pole License – approved.
- Molloy Sound & Video – contract for May town meeting – Approved.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London