



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES December 26, 2012

PRESENT:

Peter Bianchi, Chair
Tina Helm, Selectman
Janet Kidder, Selectman
Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer

OTHERS PRESENT:

Laura James, Laura Lorio, Jason Stadler (Recreation Commission)
Jamie Messier, Hogan Sports Center
Leigh Bosse, *The Messenger*
Minette Sweeney, *InterTown Record*
New London Residents: Michele Holton, Cicely Markoff, Becca Reeve, John Wilson, Linda Jackman, Bill Green, Jim Wheeler, Jennifer Schad, Jen Tockman, Gary Surprenant, Tim Hernon, Peter & Karen Hogle, Joyce Bosse, Jeff & Jacqueline Hudkins, William Ross, John Kiernan, Jr., Lynne Bartlett, Steven & Malaika Sidmore, Adam Mann, Minnette Sweeney, Christopher Lorio, Paul & Linda Messer, Marilyn Kidder, Gerald Coogan, Putnam & Kara Kidder, Andy Hagar, Lena Jones, Kathy Walker, Kirstin Smith

Chair Bianchi called the meeting to order at 7:00pm and said they were meeting to discuss the future of the Recreation Director position. He was under the belief that the Recreation Commission held a meeting since the last Selectmen's meeting, to come up with suggestions on how to proceed. Chair Bianchi gave the floor to the Recreation Commission to elaborate.

Jason Stadler, Recreation Commission Chair, welcomed those in attendance and thanked them for coming to the meeting. He introduced two members of the Commission who were present that evening; Laura Lorio and Laura James. Mr. Stadler said that in 1999 a recreation focus group was put together to decide if they should hire a full-time director. In 2000 the Town hired its first full-time director and a Recreation Commission came into play to help support the director's vision. They were tasked with developing lifelong learning and leisure activities for people in New London and surrounding communities. Due to the recent resignation of their full-time director they are meeting in an effort to seamlessly continue their programming into 2013. The Recreation Commission has decided to recommend to the Board of Selectmen the hiring of a 6-month part-time interim director to prepare for the summer programs and continue with the current programming.

Mr. Stadler explained that program planning in a Recreation Department is always one or two seasons ahead of the events to have all necessary parts in place. Mr. Denning was very well prepared and sometimes was planning a year in advance. Programs could fall through the cracks without a dedicated employee. Mr. Stadler noted that the interim director would need to oversee all the hiring for the summer positions during the first part of the year as the Recreation Commission members are unable to manage the required day-to-day responsibilities of the department. They have neither the knowledge nor the time to handle these tasks.

Mr. Stadler went on to say that the registration process for the summer programs will also require a dedicated person as there is a lot of paperwork and computer input that takes place. There are many summer programming activities that must be managed including the summer day camp, Junior Summer Adventures day camp, Kearsarge Outdoor Adventures, swimming lessons, sailing program, kayaking program, and Hospital Days Triathlon. Other smaller activities take place in addition to those listed. Registrations begin April 1st and in an effort to continue to offer the high quality programs in New London, they will need someone to oversee them.

It was noted that Colby-Sawyer College will handle the indoor swim program on an interim basis and the Recreation Department will likely take the program back when a Recreation Director is hired. John Kiernan from Village Sports will assist overseeing the ice rink maintenance.

Mr. Stadler said that they are excited about the future of the Recreation Department and hope that the Board of Selectmen agrees with their recommendation for a 6-month part-time interim director.

Mrs. James pointed out that meeting attendee, Jerry Coogan, had just stepped down as the Recreation Commission's Chairman, but that he could offer good insight into this situation due to his lengthy time as a member of the Commission. She thanked him for coming to the meeting.

Ms. Kidder asked if the Recreation Commission had any suggestions for candidates yet. Mr. Stadler said that they did have some. Ms. Kidder explained that the hiring for this position would be done by the Board of Selectmen. She also suggested that one of the members of the Board of Selectmen should serve on the Recreation Commission to improve communication between the two boards. The Recreation Commission expressed agreement and Mr. Stadler noted they welcomed extra eyes and ears to their meetings.

Ms. Helm said the maintenance of the ice rink being handled by Mr. Kiernan makes sense. Ms. Hallquist clarified that the work would actually be done by two young men who work for Mr. Kiernan, but who would be applying to the Town for part-time jobs and would be paid by the Town as town employees to take care of the rink.

Ms. Helm wondered if the interim director could handle the swim lessons program at Hogan so they do not lose the revenue from it. Mrs. James said that was something to consider because the program does bring in some good revenue. She explained that the Commission's first concern is that the children are able to keep up their program and their secondary concern is the revenue the programs brought in. Ms. Lorio said that Colby-Sawyer College is taking over the program for the Town as a favor.

Ms. Helm said that some of the other programs they offer, including karate, toddler time, and language lessons may be handled by the interim director. She would hate to see the Town give up these programs and would like to see as many of the programs remain in place as possible. Ms. Lorio said they no longer have a bounce house to use for toddler time, as it was on loan to Mr. Denning by a friend. Therefore, this program would be handed over to the college to run if they decided to keep it going.

Mr. Stadler commented that the longer they wait to hire someone, the more quickly the programs will dissolve. During the six months the interim director is employed, the Recreation Commission and the Selectmen can have continued discussions on the programs moving forward. Mrs. James said she loved the idea of having a Selectman on the Commission as it would help with the transition and would keep the lines of communication open. She added that Mr. Denning has offered himself as a resource when they have questions after he is gone.

Chair Bianchi asked if Colby-Sawyer College would collect the fees for swimming at Hogan. This notion was affirmed by the Recreation Commission.

Ms. Lorio said there are many things Mr. Denning does that are not listed on their list of activities. Parents call and he knows who they are and has the answers to their questions. Ms. Helm asked how many hours they anticipated hiring someone on this part-time basis. Mr. Stadler thought between 20-30 hours/week. Ms. Helm agreed that she thought perhaps 20-25 hours/week would be sufficient. Mr. Stadler said on the front end, the hours may be more like 25-30 so the person can get caught up but he felt they were in the same ball park.

Chair Bianchi said the next step would be for the Recreation Commission to give the Board of Selectmen the names of the people they have in mind to take this six month position as well as a job description. Mrs. James offered that one of the Recreation Commission members would be willing to serve on the hiring committee, should the Board of Selectmen find that appropriate.

Chair Bianchi opened the meeting up to the public for questions and remarks.

Michele Holton agreed they should hire someone part time and thought this was a perfect time to talk about what was going on with the Outing Club. She understood that there had been bad feelings on both sides in the past, but perhaps there was some way something could be worked out so both groups could combine and serve the public.

Ms. Helm said she has had some informal conversations with members of the Outing Club about collaborating with the Town. She offered that there are also discussions about the 1941 building currently, and recreation in this town could be a major part of the utilization of that building as well. Ms. Holton said that Bob Andrews (the first full-time Recreation Director) kept the goal of working with the Outing Club. She urged them to consider the talents available at the Outing Club and thought this could be a great opportunity.

Ms. Hallquist noted that Craig Howe from the Outing Club has reached out to offer the help of the Outing Club with one of the Recreation Department language classes. She expects to meet with Mr. Howe in the near future. Mrs. James said the Outing Club is a great organization and thought it was a good time to sit down and discuss the opportunities before them.

Tim Hearnon spoke and said he was both a resident of New London and on the Board of Directors at the Outing Club. He felt that there is no ill-will on their part. They are a private organization and they are bound by different things. Overall, their goal is the same: the kids. They are also reaching out to the high schools to see how they can make the high school sports better. Ms. Helm said she was committed to working together and acknowledged it would take some time, patience and compromising.

Chair Bianchi noted that the Town of New London did not own or manage one field, basketball court, or skateboard park. They have zero facilities compared with other neighboring towns. It seemed to be a logical direction to go in to get the facilities of the Outing Club to be used for the community and the kids.

Bill Ross said he chaired the Recreation Commission in 1998/99 when they went from a part-time to a full-time Recreation Director, and through to the hiring of Mr. Denning. He pointed out that the Town has two beaches and an ice skating rink. They do have some important facilities that should not be turned over to any other private organization.

Lisa Lacombe from the Hogan Sports Center at Colby-Sawyer College wondered if they had a time line in mind, as they were planning their Master Swim, Youth Fit Swim, and the Climbing Wall Program. With regard to the climbing classes, she explained that in the past the Town charged a fee to the participants and Mr. Denning paid her to rent the climbing wall. Her students worked the climbing wall program. She could continue to do the program as a college program, pay her students, and collect the fees. She noted that Mr. Denning only brought in about \$5 per student so it was not a moneymaker for the Recreation Department.

Jamie Messier said he is the head coach of the Fit Swim program and he has conducted the lifeguard recertification through the years. The Selectmen thanked Mr. Messier for introducing himself to them. There were no specific questions for him at that time.

Ms. Helm informed the attendees that the School District vote is held in March and she hoped that many of the people present that evening, expressing an interest in Recreation, would also show up for the school voting. She noted that last year New London was very poorly represented. Since they are the largest town representing the district, it is important for them to vote and she encouraged them to do so. Mrs. James noted that the Deliberative Session for the School District is January 5th.

Steven Sidmore said he hoped the Board of Selectmen would consider the interim position and look into a bigger recreation position within the town. Perhaps someone could be hired to oversee both the Recreation Department and the Outing Club so as to enhance all the opportunities. Chair Bianchi said that this is the time when they will take everything into consideration and review what is before them. He wanted to continue to work together to come up with a solution. Ms. Helm noted that all their meetings are public and they welcomed input.

Michele Holton urged them to make sure the new hire be aware of the decades of volunteerism at the Outing Club and understand how the organization came from a groundswell of community effort.

Gary Surprenant said he has two daughters who participated in both the Outing Club and the New London Recreation programs and felt they were both excellent. He offered that what Mr. Denning did will not be easy to duplicate as it was seamless. He (Mr. Denning) knew people by name, knew the issues, and did a lot of behind-the-scenes work.

Ms. Markoff said she is on the 1941 ad hoc committee. She felt they should keep careful consideration of continuing with a full-time paid position. There is something about accountability when it is a paid position. She observed that it cannot be a part-time position, even if they pull in the Outing Club. Ms. Markoff also noted that the town's fulltime Recreation Direction has been an important part of the planning for the eventual use of the 1941 building, as the person would serve as a facilities manager.

Mrs. James wondered when the Board of Selectmen would like the job description. Chair Bianchi said it should come as soon as possible but indicated that it did not have to be a 10-page formal document.

Bill Ross said that since Mr. Denning had left and his salary and benefits were not being paid out, why did Ms. Helm think that the budget would only allow a part-time person to come in for 20-25 hours per week? He suggested that there would be more money available since they just lost their fulltime employee. Ms. Helm agreed that Mr. Ross made a good point. She said hers was a general comment that it looked like there was enough money to cover what they were asking for in a part-time position. Chair Bianchi said they would not be constrained in the area of funding for the part-time position. Mr. Ross

added that they are losing a bunch of their waterfront staff this year and the interim director may need to spend more than 25 hours/week to find new hires.

**IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to hire an interim part-time employee as Director of the Recreation Department.
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:53pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London