



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES January 14, 2013

PRESENT:

Selectmen
Peter Bianchi, Chair
Tina Helm, Selectman
Janet Kidder, Selectman
Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator

ALSO PRESENT:

Richard Lee, Public Works Director
David Seastrand, Police Chief
Ed Andersen, Sergeant
Mark & Thelma Kaplan, New London Residents
Bruce Hudson & Renate Kannler, New London Residents
Joan Pankhurst, Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector
Doug MacMichael, New London Resident
Sandra Licks, Library Director
Linda Hardy, Town Clerk/Tax Collector
Norm Bernaiche, Tri-Town Chief Assessor
Phyllis Piotrow, New London Resident
Jason Lyon, Fire Chief
Donna Larrow, Police Department
Leigh Bosse, *The Messenger*
Minette Sweeney, *InterTown Record*

Chair Bianchi called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Tri-Town Chief Assessor, Norm Bernaiche

Mr. Bernaiche said he was glad to be back serving New London, Newbury and Sunapee as part of the Tri-Town Assessing. He explained that there has been on-going discussion during the CIP process about updating New London's tax maps. The maps were done in 1992 and updated in 1995 with un-rectified ortho-photos which did not take into considerations contours or mountains. The mapping company, Cartographics, made the maps digital, which is what the Town uses now. Using orthorecertification technology will remove the distortion that occurs when using photos like the Town has used in the past. Currently the town's tax maps are not as

accurate as they could be. Mr. Bernaiche observed that many people use the town's maps and he felt it would be useful to have them as accurate as possible. The original cost for the updated maps is \$75,000 and to date, they are approximately 40% funded for the project. He did not want to see the project fade away and never be done. Mr. Bernaiche thought the project should be done as the maps are not as accurate as they thought they were. If there is any way to fund any of the project in the upcoming budget season, if only to keep it going, he thought it would be a good thing.

Chair Bianchi wondered how the inaccurate maps could impact someone buying or selling property. Mr. Bernaiche said that taxpayers like to have their property files in order, especially when trying to sell their property. The property lines are misleading and can, and have, affected the success of a sale. A survey done by a property owner would go into the system and would help with the accuracy of that area. Absent a survey, this new mapping would be the best information available.

Mr. Hudson asked if the \$75,000 they were raising was for Newbury and Sunapee mapping too. Mr. Bernaiche said that Newbury and Sunapee have already spent their own money to have this done. New London is the only one in the tri-town group that has not done this mapping.

Salaries

Chair Bianchi said that the Board needs to make a decision on what they will recommend for salaries for the 2014 fiscal year. Ms. Helm felt there is a dilemma in that they have added quite a bit to the budget and they have tried not to increase health benefits for current employees. She hated to think that they would have to cut a cost of living adjustment (COLA) increase, but thought they should consider it after looking at the data provided by Ms. Johnson. They gave a 2% increase across the board last year and would like to do the same this year but she didn't know if it was possible due to things handed down to them by the State.

Ms. Kidder observed that the employees are already getting a 2% increase through their benefits in that the cost of the insurance increase is largely being absorbed by the Town.

Mr. Kaplan wondered if the benefit schedule would affect the employee's net take-home pay. Ms. Johnson agreed that it would, the increases the town is paying for employee benefits would not appear as more money in the salaries, but it would be an increase to the Town over what they paid last year. Mr. Kaplan asked if the employees would be taking home less money due to the changes. Chair Bianchi said that the employees will take home less money in their paycheck because, although the Board voted to keep the contribution percentage the same, the cost of the plan increased, resulting in more coming from the employees and more being paid by the Town. Mr. Kaplan acknowledged that the Board of Selectmen is under a lot of pressure and he understood this. However, the employee is defenseless in this position and he urged them to look harder in the budget to find room for raises. He did not see how they could ask the employees to take home less money.

Ms. Helm asked Ms. Johnson if they were to consider a 1% increase, would it make up what the employees would be losing from the increase in insurance. Ms. Johnson agreed that it would

more than make up for the increase in cost of the insurance. Ms. Hallquist pointed out that some employees also have a decrease in take-home pay due to the federal change to FICA (Social Security). A few years ago, to spur the economy during the downturn, the FICA contribution for employees was lowered from 6.2% to 4.2%. Starting January 1st, the rate is back to 6.2%. This change is out of the town's control.

Chief Lyon asked if the Selectmen had looked into other towns to see what they are giving for raises. Chair Bianchi said that they use information made available from LGC and Ms. Hallquist gets information from various online resources. The information regarding raises is all over the map and not consistent throughout all towns. Newbury was giving a 2% raise and up to a .5% merit raise. Chair Bianchi said there are many variables to this discussion and thus it is a difficult issue to decide.

Mr. Kaplan said there is some history to be remembered when they look at salaries. While he was on the Board of Selectmen, they came in under budget every year and they added to the surplus every year. The only way they can do that is by the employees acting and performing efficiently year after year. The employees ought to be looked at in that respect. If the Town is coming in under budget it is because of the employees and the Board of Selectmen should look at the issue from this point of view.

Ms. Helm said they do not have any merit raises in New London but it has been recommended that they do. Ms. Hallquist said they could do it in the coming fiscal year by adding a line item and funding it.

Chief Lyon asked if they have looked at the affect of what a 1% or 2% raise would make on the budget. Ms. Johnson noted that she has the information as a percentage of the increase over the previous years' gross employee cost, but not the entire budget as the figures have not been plugged in yet. It is expected that a 2% raise will cost approximately \$42,800.

Ms. Helm said that they could look at it as where their priorities lie. If they could find somewhere to cut some money to allow employees get a 2% raise, she would be in favor of it. Ms. Kidder agreed with Ms. Helm and added that she thought they did the right thing by what they have done with the health insurance. They do need to consider the increases implied by the change as well as what FICA will do to the employees' take-home paychecks. They should do something to make the employees understand how much they are appreciated. Chair Bianchi said that not giving a raise to someone does not mean the Board does not like them. He thought it was the Selectmen's obligation to keep things down as much as they could. He would like to hold the line this year and not award any raises.

Ms. Piotrow said that this year employees would be particularly hard hit with the FICA tax as it is going up 2%. Without a raise, it would be a difficult year with decreased take-home pay.

Mr. Hudson believed that this was a hard discussion and thought everyone today was making less money than they did in years past. In the private sector, insurance has gone up and he is actually taking home 5% less this month than he did last month.

IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to approve a 2% raise for employees for the 2014 Fiscal year.

Ms. Helm added that the taxpayers in the town demand the services they have and they receive them. She thought the Board should reward their employees because that is what the townspeople want. Chair Bianchi said he likes the employees and feels that they do an excellent job for the townspeople but he could not support the increase.

Ms. Kidder said if they were going to make some cuts in the budget, this was not the place to do it. They need to support their employees and thought that they deserve a raise.

Chair Bianchi called for a vote.

THE MOTION PASSED. Tina Helm: Yes, Janet Kidder: Yes, Peter Bianchi: No.

Bonded Debt Principals and Interest

Ms. Johnson said that the payments are the same for this year but will be going up in the coming years. The interest has gone down.

CIP Recommendations and Capital Reserve Funds (CRF)

Chair Bianchi said there was an increase of \$15,000 for the sewer bond.

The Sidewalk CRF will have a contribution of \$20,000 to start building the account up after the money for the Elkins project is taken out. This is to keep up the current sidewalks and is not for any new ones.

The Fire Department Equipment and Refurbishing CRF went up \$2,500.

Tracy Library CRF \$35,000 contribution.

Mr. Bernaiche had suggested a contribution of \$10,000 for the GIS Mapping CRF although the Planning Board CIP does not recommend a contribution this year.

Chair Bianchi said that the Pleasant Lake Dam contribution was \$25,000 last year. The Board must decide what the town should contribute this year. This money is intended for a feasibility study to address the State's deficiency rating for the dam. Chair Bianchi noted that he asked someone who is familiar with such feasibility studies and was informed that another \$25,000 would give the Town enough money to do the feasibility study. The State has been very good to New London and the Town has tried to keep them in the loop with their situation. It was his opinion that if they did nothing this year, the State would not be happy with the Town. He felt they needed to make some progress on the issue.

Mr. Lee observed that they could put just \$10,000 in and his budget and do the study in the 2015 fiscal year. He noted that this coming year, FY2014, he intends to do some work on the dam to fill in the cracks. He observed that these efforts will show the State that the Town is still moving

forward. Ms. Hallquist said they could send a letter to the State to let them know what they are planning to keep moving forward. If the State did not feel their progress is sufficient, there will be enough time to adjust the budget and make changes in their plan.

The Board of Selectmen agreed that they would put \$10,000 into the account and wait to hear from the State on whether or not they would need to change this.

The unforeseen Insurance line item was still there and they did not need to add any funding to it this year.

GIS Mapping

It was decided to leave this funding at zero for FY2014.

Conservation Commission Land Acquisition Fund

Mr. Brown had previously met with the Board to request a contribution of \$25,000. The Planning Board CIP recommends that \$12,500 is appropriate. Mr. Brown is still asking for \$25,000. Ms. Kidder and Chair Bianchi felt they had enough money in the account already. Ms. Helm agreed that it was fine to leave the funding at \$12,500.

Computer Maintenance CRF

This fund has a balance of \$4,700 and Ms. Hallquist said she thought they should start building it up a bit in the event they have a catastrophic event such as a computer server malfunction, etc. There is a capital reserve fund for this but it has not been funded in several years. Ms. Hallquist suggested adding a minimum of \$10,000. The Selectmen agreed that this would be appropriate.

Transfer Station Refuse Tractor

Chair Bianchi wanted to reconsider the highway equipment replacement fund of \$150,000 for the new tractor. He felt that if they subcontracted the hauling, it would free up 11 hours/week for a public employee, and they would not need to replace the existing truck this year. The existing truck could be kept and used to move trailers around as needed. If they do not buy a new truck, they could decrease the \$150,000 balance by \$85,000 (the expected cost to replace the existing truck) in capital outlay.

Capital Outlay

The total is currently at \$144,500.

Capital Outlay Buildings

Chair Bianchi explained that there will be a committee formed to survey the town buildings and to prepare a list of maintenance and repair needs. The committee will also provide an approximate cost of the repairs. The fund currently has \$69,000 in it. He thought it prudent to add some money to the Building Maintenance fund. Ms. Johnson said that the CIP committee had suggested putting \$30,000 into the fund.

Mr. Hudson did not feel that an added \$30,000 was enough, considering all the buildings and the work that is needed on the Town Office, alone. Chief Lyon said that the committee may come back with information on what they will really need with regards to funding.

New London Hospital Ambulance

Chair Bianchi said they recently got a letter requesting \$123,821 which is up 2% above last year's request. They are still under negotiations for a contract for the model of how the ambulance service will be run.

The Board of Selectmen plan to meet on January 22nd at 8:30am at the fire station to do their final voting on these issues. They will meet with the Budget Committee on January 23rd to hand the budget over.

Request for Interest Abatement – Peter and Jacqueline Dunning

The Board reviewed a request of property owners Peter and Jacqueline Dunning that asked for an abatement of \$54.56, the interest charged on a late payment of the tax bill on their property. The Dunning's noted that they were not informed during the closing of their property in August that a tax bill would be due on October 1, and thus was not paid on time. Chair Bianchi said that the issue did not appear to be due to a mistake on the Town's part. Someone should have told the Dunnings what the tax schedule is so they would have been prepared to pay the taxes in a timely manner. Ms. Helm agreed. She thought they should ask Ms. Hallquist to send a letter to the Dunnings and suggest they go to their realtor or lawyer to find a resolution. Ms. Kidder agreed and added that it was not the Town's fault.

Letter from the Town of Sunapee Police Department

Sunapee Chief Cahill sent a letter to the Town Administrator offering praise to Chief David Seastrand and the staff of the New London Police Department and thanked them for their help over the past year. Chief Cahill noted that working in small towns makes the cooperation of neighboring town's police departments in providing mutual aid even more critical. He noted that the professionalism and dedication of every employee of the New London Police Department providing back up assistance to Sunapee is an important component in allowing the Sunapee Police to meet their mission statement. Chief Cahill closed his letter by stating, *"I wanted to inform you and the select board of our gratitude to Chief David Seastrand and ALL of his employees, they are fine representation of the Town of New London and each display the pride of a "small Town employee."*

Review of Minutes

January 2, 2013

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to approve the minutes of January 2, 2013, as amended. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Planning Board Update

Ms. Helm reported that the Messer minor subdivision and boundary line adjustment revocation went as planned at the last meeting. Peter Messer will be back at a later date to resubmit the subdivision. There was also a lot merger on Hillcrest Road, a tree-cutting request on Boulder

Point Road, and the two appointed representatives to the RPC (Nancy Rollins and Bob Crane) were in attendance. It was noted that the 10-year traffic study needed to be reviewed by the Planning Board.

Ms. Helm said that the Planning Board wanted to know if it was allowable to appoint a few more alternates due to difficulty assembling a quorum at meetings. Ms. Hallquist said that the number of alternates is determined at Town Meeting. She recalled that Town Meeting approved “up to five” instead of setting a specific number, as should have been done. Two alternates is the number that has been used in the past. The Board of Selectmen is the one that appoints the alternate members. The next meeting will be January 22nd at 7:00pm.

Upcoming Meetings

Recreation – January 17 at 6:00 – Whipple Hall
1941 Committee – January 18 at 7:30am
Board of Selectmen – January 22 at 8:30am – Fire Station
Planning Board – January 22 at 7:00pm
Budget Committee – January 23 at 7:00pm

**IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to enter into non-public session pursuant 91-A:3, 11(b). Roll call vote: Janet: Yes, Tina: Yes, Peter: YES
The Board entered non-public session at 8:10 PM.**

The Board reconvened the public session at 8:55PM.

Application for Building Permit:

- Sarah Howard, 57 Main St. (Map & Lot 073-055-000) renovating porch into living space – Permit #13-001 – Approved.
- Robert & Nancy Ludwig, 57 The Seasons (Map & Lot 146-002-057) close in screen porch & winterize – Permit #13-002 – Approved.

Application for sign permits:

- NL Historical Society, sign at information booth (1 week a month, throughout the year) – Approved.

Application for use of Town Commons & Whipple Memorial Hall:

- NL Bandstand committee – band concerts on the bandstand & Whipple as a rain back up – 6/14, 21, 28 & 7/5, 12, 19 & 8/9, 16, 23 – Approved.

Other Items to be signed:

- Disbursement voucher
- Intent to cut – John Clough – (Map & Lot 040-001-000)
- Pole Licenses -

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to adjourn the meeting.

THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London