



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES January 22, 2014

PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Heather Wood, Communications Administrator
Ed Andersen, Acting Police Chief
Jason Lyon, Fire Chief
John Wilson, Chair, Budget Committee Chair
Nancy Friese, COA
Jen Tockman, Lake Sunapee Area Chamber of Commerce
Terri Bingham, Messer Pond Protective Association
Joe McCarthy
Kathy Pfann, New London Garden Club
Bob Brown, Chair, Conservation Commission
Leigh Bosse, *The Messenger*

Chair Helm opened the meeting at 8:00AM. The Board turned to FY2015 budget preparation.

Conservation Commission

Bob Brown, Chair, met with the Board to present the FY2015 budget request. He began by noting that the Conservation Commission produces trail maps which are sold, and the revenues are deposited into the General Fund. Other revenues included over \$7,000 from the sale of timber from a recent tree harvesting project. Mr. Brown noted that the Commission would be looking at a timber plan for the Low Plains conservation property.

Mr. Brown then reviewed the budget as presented, noting that the Commission is not requesting any significant change in funding. Mr. Brown also asked for the Board's support for a warrant article at Town Meeting to allow the unexpended balance of the conservation budget to be placed into the conservation fund, as allowed by RSA 36-A:5. He noted there is not usually very much money left, but it would be helpful to be allowed to spend the money after the fiscal year instead of having it lapse into the general fund. The Selectmen noted they would take the request under advisement.

Lake Sunapee Area Chamber of Commerce

Jen Tockman, Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce, met with the Board to discuss the Chamber's request for FY2015. Ms. Tockman noted that the request remains unchanged from the previous year: \$12,100. She explained that the additional hours in the information booth that was started last year was a great success and they intend to repeat the policy this coming tourist season.

Kearsarge Council on Aging (COA)

Nancy Friese, Executive Director, met with the Board to discuss COA's request for FY2015. She noted that COA has been extremely busy, serving an ever increasing population of senior citizens. She informed the Board that COA was very happy to receive the 2013 STAR Award for Excellence by the Beverly Foundation and its nationwide committee of experts in aging and transportation. The award comes with a cash prize of \$5,000 that will be used to promote and provide transportation services to older adults. The Board offered its congratulations on the recognition of the good works COA accomplishes.

New London Garden Club

Kathy Pfann, representing the New London Garden Club, met with the Board to discuss their request for funding this year. She explained that Crockett Corner was improved by the State a number of years ago but over the last few years, due to budget cuts, the State DOT has not been able to mow and maintain the area as it should be. As a result, The Garden Club has stepped in and paid for the mowing and weeding of the property for the past three years. The money they are requesting from the town will help the Garden Club to continue to maintain this area. Chair Helm thanked the Garden Club for maintaining this gateway to the town.

Selectman Bianchi noted the Garden Club's main source of funding is the proceeds of their antique sale. Ms. Pfann agreed and noted that proceeds have been declining. She pointed out that the group spends between \$4,500 and \$5,000 per year on the areas around town that they maintain. Selectman Kidder commended the Garden Club for their work in the town and said they make the town look great. She didn't think this was an outrageous request and was surprised they hadn't come to the Town before now for assistance.

Messer Pond Protective Association (MPPA)

Terri Bingham representing the MPPA met with the Board to answer any questions regarding the request. She said it is \$275 higher than their request last year. They currently have over 300 hours of volunteer help for the lake hosting program but need more funding to cover their paid help. Ms. Bingham noted that it is an excellent program and area lake hosts have made saves, catching invasive species on a boat before it went into the water.

Pleasant Lake Protective Association (PLPA)

John Wilson, a member of the PLPA, noted that the request for FY2015 is the same as it has been in previous years. There were no questions regarding the request.

Chair Helm said they would consider the information presented and would make their decisions prior to presenting their budget to the Budget Committee.

Chair Helm asked about the Community Action Program (CAP). Ms. Hallquist said it is a program that Celeste Cook, Welfare Director, works with closely. It administers the fuel assistance program. Ms. Friese said it also funds the Meals on Wheels program, which has recently moved to Bradford.

Dispatch

Heather Wood, Communications Administrator, Fire Chief Lyon, and Acting Police Chief Andersen met with the Board to discuss the FY2015 budget for the Communications Department. Ms. Wood thanked the Selectmen for the opportunity to put together her first budget. She had assistance from Ms. Hallquist and Chiefs Lyon and Andersen. She explained that there are two larger requests in her proposal; one which represents funds for an additional full-time employee. Ms. Wood explained that she is having trouble staffing without paying overtime. The part-time people they employ are limited with what they can offer for hours. In the past they have tried to hire and train part-time personnel and are finding this difficult. \$56,297 would cover wages and benefits based on a two-person benefit package.

Selectman Bianchi noticed the wages for part-time also went up \$7,000. Ms. Wood concurred; they are still hoping to hire some part time help. She noted that right now, if a full-time person were to take a 40-hour vacation (1 week) they would not have enough coverage for those hours. Ms. Wood said the additional personnel would assist during busy times and could alleviate some of her own time spent dispatching. She currently works 32 hours/week on dispatch, leaving her just 8 hours/week to work on administrative tasks. Selectman Bianchi reminded Ms. Wood that when hired as the Communications Administrator it was agreed that she would continue to dispatch full-time. She agreed but pointed out that she would like to be able to do more training.

Chief Lyon said the calls into dispatch are generated by population and weather events. He thought having another full-time person would make it easier for Ms. Wood to do her job better and even more successfully.

Chair Helm asked if any training had been done within those eight hours per week. Ms. Wood said it has been difficult to fit training in with just eight hours but it is still a goal of hers.

Selectman Bianchi pointed out that the communications department request is up almost 50% in funding, while the Board awaits the report on dispatching options for New London. He noted that if they lose a couple of towns due to increases in charges for dispatch, New London will have to absorb the difference. They need to determine the future of dispatch in New London. These are all issues that need to be considered when coming up with their budget.

Ms. Wood said the report they are working on considers the option of going elsewhere as well as keeping the service in town. They weren't researching other services, specifically. Selectman Bianchi thought the report would include such information as what it would cost to go elsewhere, including costs for equipment changes, etc. Chief Lyon agreed that this is the information they are coming up with, noting that even though they had only a few weeks to come up with the information they are trying to make sure it is as valid as possible.

Chief Lyon observed that Dispatch has always been short in personnel. They have always tried to cover for each other, leading to overtime problems. Having another full-time person would allow employees to get training and ultimately improve the service that is being provided.

Selectman Kidder said whatever number they approve, they should assume that New London is going forward alone; if others decide to join in paying a share of the cost, great. She asked if the numbers would be lower if they only included dispatching for New London. Ms. Wood said perhaps, but all employees still need to be trained and the police portion alone is extensive. Personnel are tested bi-annually and they are required to know all the information to keep the officers safe and do the job right.

Chair Helm thought the process, although laborious and painful, is making them go through the details and find out exactly what they need. She thought they needed to put together a warrant article at Town Meeting to see where the taxpayers stood on the issue. She would also like to have an informational session in March for voters to come and express their opinions and ask questions regarding dispatch in New London.

Ms. Wood said because Dispatch is an unseen department within the town, it is easy for people to think another service could be used if it saved money. Chair Helm thought townspeople need to be aware of dispatch, as well as all the other departments in town. Ms. Wood said the upgrade for consoles was not a mandated upgrade. The system is obsolete and although has not failed them, the company they deal with (Beltronics) will need to search eBay for parts should they be needed. The representative from Beltronics said the department might get by for another couple of years with the system they have, but there is a chance that if it was malfunctioning, they couldn't find parts for it. Chair Helm said this is an area where obsolete equipment is not something that can be tolerated. She thanked Ms. Wood, Chief Lyon and Chief Andersen for their work.

Selectman Bianchi said the non-profits as presented amounted to over a \$6,000 increase. Those requesting funding are:

Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission	\$ 5,685
COA Chapin Senior Center	\$35,000
New Hampshire Municipal Association Membership	\$ 5,663
Community Action Program	\$ 3,809
Messer Pond Protective Association	\$ 3,500
Pleasant Lake Protective Association	\$ 6,500
Lake Sunapee Protective Association	\$ 5,000
Little Sunapee Protective Association	\$ 5,500
New London Hospital Ambulance	\$126,297
Lake Sunapee Region Chamber of Commerce	\$12,100
Lake Sunapee Region Visiting Nurse Association & Hospice	\$12,276
American Red Cross	\$ 1,980
New London Garden Club	\$ 1,055

Selectman Bianchi said they should get the lease in place; they planned to use Fred Downey's 25-page lease as a template. Both parties will then know what they are responsible for. Chair Helm wondered about the timeframe he was suggesting; many in town have commented to her that they felt the Selectmen did a lot of talking but didn't show a lot of leadership. Selectman Bianchi thought in two to three weeks they could know exactly what both parties wanted out of the lease. The long-term plan is critical in this matter and should be considered prior to appropriating money.

Ms. Hallquist said she could get back to the Selectmen by February 3rd with a draft lease. Selectman Kidder said an opt-out in 5 years should be included as well as renewable options for 20, then two 10 year renewals. Major repairs to the area should be considered, as should things like plowing costs. Within the first five years if something major were to happen they should be able to go back to the School Board to negotiate. She thought they should move forward on the lease and make a decision on it. That would be the first warrant article and then the appropriation would be second.

Selectman Kidder felt that this was something that was being negotiated between the Selectmen and the school board; not the Budget Committee. She didn't think the budget committee should be asking questions of the New London Community Center group regarding the lease; those questions should be directed to the Selectmen. Budget Committee Chair Wilson noted that he would conduct his meetings as he felt appropriate, without the direction of the Selectmen. He noted that a list of questions have been forwarded to the group so they would have an idea of the areas the Budget Committee would like to hear them address. Selectman Kidder said that the New London Community Center group has been told that the Budget Committee is not negotiating the lease; the Selectmen are.

Chair Helm thought they should not lose sight of having a vision for the town. There are biases both ways. Visions do cost money at times but come back ten-fold in benefits to the community.

Selectman Kidder asked Selectman Bianchi if he thought the whole project should be dropped. Selectman Bianchi said he thought a lot of things had been missed with regards to expenses. He explained that he is not in favor of the Town being on the hook for upwards of a million dollars to repair it. He heard someone refer to the building as "the library on steroids." Selectman Kidder said it sounded like he wasn't in favor of the project. Selectman Bianchi said he was but didn't think it was fiscally responsible; he was in favor of the project but just not having the lease with the town.

Old Business

Selectman Kidder said she contacted Richard Lee, Director of Public Works, about the pruning session that has been offered to the Town from the UNH Cooperative Extension. Mr. Lee is excited about the opportunity. On January 29th they will meet to look at bushes around the Town Office and Whipple Hall. She and Mr. Lee will coordinate this project.

Ms. Hallquist informed the Board that a suggestion was made by a resident that signs should be placed at the entrance to the Post Office to stop people from using the Post Office parking lot as

a shortcut to the Hannaford parking lot. Chief Andersen said he has heard complaints from the Post Office staff that some people park in the Post Office parking lot to shop at the grocery store. The postmaster has talked to him about people doing this and since it is private property, they would be responsible for putting up signage to ask people not to do it.

Committee Meetings/Reports

Planning Board

Selectman Bianchi said the College presented their master plan, there was discussion of potential zoning amendments, including changes in the zoning to enable the hospital to revitalize their retirement community project.

Approval of Minutes

January 6, 2014

IT WAS MOVED (Peter Bianchi) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to approve the minutes of January 6, 2014, as amended. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

January 13, 2014

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Peter Bianchi) to accept the minutes of January 13, 2014, as amended. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Upcoming Meetings

- 1/22 Budget Committee Meeting, 7:00pm
- 1/24 Board of Selectmen's Meeting, 6:00pm
- 1/28 Planning Board Work Session, 7:00pm
- 2/1 Community Advisory Committee, 7:30am

Selectman Bianchi informed the Board that Pleasant Lake is finally rising and that the dam gate has been set to winter level. Dr. Wilson said the lake is currently 2" above the winter level.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Peter Bianchi) to enter into non-public session to discuss two issues pursuant to RSA 9-A:3, II(a) and (c).

THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Kidder: Yes, Helm: Yes, Bianchi: Yes

IT WAS MOVED (Peter Bianchi) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to adjourn.

THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 11:06am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London

