



TOWN OF
NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
February 7, 2014**

PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Ed Andersen, Acting Police Chief
Donna Larrow, Police Department Administrative Assistant
Scott Blewitt, Recreation Director
Lucy St. John, Planning & Zoning Administrator
Richard Lee, Public Works Director
Sandra Licks, Library Director
Jason Lyon, Fire Chief
Sean Carroll, *Intertown Record*
Heather Wood, Communications Administrator

Dispatching

Town Administrator Kim Hallquist informed the Board that she met with Heather Wood, Ed Andersen and Jay Lyon to discuss the FY2015 budget request for dispatching. Ms. Hallquist noted that she discussed the issue of adding a fifth full-time employee, given the fact that additional funds must be added to improve equipment. She explained that she did not feel that increasing the budget for a fifth full-time employee was advisable at this time. While it can be difficult to find and manage part-time employees, she felt that more effort should go into adding part-time employees, and scheduling the ones that currently work for the town, in a way that shifts are covered with no use of overtime. Ms. Hallquist recommended decreasing the budget request for full-time employees, keeping it the current level of four, and increasing the part-time line item to allow double coverage of dispatchers during the busy months and also to allow coverage when the full-time dispatchers are on vacation, holiday, sick days or are in training. Ms. Hallquist noted that it is a challenge to find good part-time employees, and pointed to Chief Lyon and Chief Andersen as department heads who also must attract, train and retain several part-time employees, but she felt that the effort must be made in order to keep the dispatching fees reasonable while still improving the quality of service to the member towns. Ms. Hallquist concluded by noting that Heather Wood is not in agreement with this recommendation as she feels that a full-time position should be added.

Ms. Wood noted that lack of qualified personnel has been an issue in dispatching for several years because they can't find people who will work part-time. She explained that it takes eight weeks of full-time work to train a dispatcher and many don't want to invest that time to then work part-time. Chair Helm said she felt dispatch should stay in New London and thought they should do everything they can to make it happen. The needs of the service have not been addressed and they have some catch-up to do. She pondered if this was the year to do the complete catch-up in dispatch, or if they could do it in steps? Ms. Wood said the personnel issue (the need for more full-time help) has been an issue every year. The consoles are only part of the catch-up and there is other equipment that will eventually need to be replaced. She felt the personnel increase and the consoles are the priorities out of all that they need. Chair Helm asked if Ms. Wood felt comfortable applying for grants herself. Ms. Wood agreed that is comfortable applying for the grants as she has a great group of support helping her, and those people are willing to continue to assist her at no charge.

Chief Lyon said he thought a lot about the option of getting part-time people after meeting with the Town Administrator, who was adamant that a full-time position should not be added. He noted that the dispatch center currently has two part-time dispatchers that are good and perhaps there is an opportunity to look at other dispatch centers and see if they could solicit help from them or employ their dispatchers on their off days. Chief Lyon said he is looking into whether there are standards and training for dispatchers. Ms. Wood said there is dispatch training available but it is not required or mandated. It would also be hard to send their employees there, as they would then need someone to cover for them at work. Learning the position is mostly hands-on.

Selectman Kidder thought a program that taught the skills needed in dispatch would be a good program the vocational schools in the area should offer to train people who may be interested in the field. She thought they should educate the public about the opportunity, as it is a good job.

Ms. Hallquist noted that she spoke with the current part-time dispatchers to see if the pay they get was reasonable. Both dispatchers stated that the pay was very competitive; their working for the town depends on the shifts that are available and if those open shifts match up to when they can work. It was noted that in the past, the police officers filled in at dispatch but they no longer have available staff (trained in dispatching) to help out with the hours.

IT WAS MOVED (Peter Bianchi) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to keep the full-time dispatch personnel to four.

Selectman Bianchi noted that the full-time wage line should be adjusted and suggested that the \$97,000 for the two consoles wouldn't need to be put in the budget; the Board could consider putting it on the warrant or they could accept the grant if it is awarded. Chief Andersen noted that even if dispatch was no longer in New London, the police department would need one console to dispatch its officers.

Selectman Bianchi said he hadn't made his own mind up as to whether they should keep dispatch in New London. Selectman Kidder said she thought at this point they should try to work with

part-time help. Until they figure out the dispatch situation, this is the wisest course of action. Chair Helm thought they should have a warrant article and have town input on the issue. In talking with the public, she feels they do not want to see dispatch leave New London.

Chair Helm called for a vote: **THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IT WAS MOVED (Peter Bianchi) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to increase the part-time wages line item by \$12,186 to total \$48,405 as recommended by the Town Administrator.

THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

With regards to dispatch overtime, Ms. Hallquist thought they should keep it level-funded at \$14,280. She hoped that with better management of part-timers, they won't have to use as much overtime. She pointed out that the line item is over-spent this year because the department was down one employee for a period of time, however now they are at full staff, so the use of overtime should go down.

Selectman Bianchi thought the remainder of the line items, as presented on February 5, 2014, were fine. Chair Helm said this was an ongoing challenge for all of them and they wanted to support Ms. Wood and be fair, observing that open discussion and communication is key.

With regards to the consoles, Ms. Hallquist said if they don't put it on the warrant they could have a hearing and accept the grant if the grant application is awarded. It is a 100% grant. However, if the Board wants to purchase the consoles in the event the grant is not awarded, it should be put on the warrant so money is available for the purchase. Selectman Kidder said the warrant article will give them an idea if the town is in favor of keeping dispatch in town. Ms. Wood said even if they outsource, the Town will still need to purchase another console. The \$97,000 is for two consoles. Selectman Bianchi said until the Selectmen and the Town decides if they want this, they should wait for a year and not appropriate the \$97,000 right away. He didn't feel they had enough direction on how to proceed and that they should wait. Chair Helm said she didn't agree with this sentiment. She thought this was part of improving the system; the thought of having to get parts for the current system on eBay was not an ideal. She thought the dispatch study group (made up of Heather Wood, Chief Lyon and Chief Andersen) did a wonderful job with their study in a short period of time. She thought the \$97,000 should be put on the warrant this year. It could be voted down if people were against it.

Selectman Bianchi said if they put \$97,000 on the warrant for a new console, it makes their position as a board appear that they want to keep dispatch in New London. He didn't think that was a decision they were ready to make at this point. Chief Andersen said the Police Department will still need a console even if they didn't keep the service in town.

Selectman Kidder said if they don't put this on the warrant, they won't know how the townspeople feel about the issue. Chair Helm said they had discussed having a town-wide questionnaire with less than a dozen basic questions about dispatch. Selectman Kidder said she thought the voters in town could understand the issues and added that the people she has talked

to also want to keep the service in town, however, perhaps the Board should wait on the warrant article, try for the grant, and if they don't get the grant, put it on the warrant for the following year. Selectman Kidder noted that they have time to put it on the warrant article for Town Meeting. They could decide after they get more information and have their questions answered.

Fire Department Budget

Chief Lyon said his budget has remained the same with no changes. He noted that Ms. Hallquist met with the Board of Firewards to discuss compensation of fire fighters and the need to be consistent with town policies. He noted that it was a good discussion.

Chief Lyon referenced Table 17 for the Apparatus Repair and Refurbishment in the CIP noting that the amount planned had been reduced by the Selectmen at a previous meeting by \$2,000. Chief Lyon explained that this is the second year of doing work on the engine. The cab and chassis is over 12 years old and the quote for the second phase is \$24,000 which was why he had increased the contribution request from \$16,500 as in previous years to \$18,500. After this year, there are no plans to ask for funds for this line item within the CIP.

Chief Lyon noted that the servicing of the apparatus and vehicles has been about \$10,000 - \$11,000 per year and included some unforeseen repairs. This has been added into vehicle repair and maintenance line in the operating budget instead of being in the CIP.

Selectman Bianchi didn't see any reason not to approve the fire department budget, as presented. Chief Lyon said he is always upfront with them about how much things cost in an effort to be transparent. He would like them to replace the \$2,000 from the Fire Department Equipment Repair/Refurbishment Fund, which would, after the refurbishment of the engine, would leave them with \$22. Selectman Bianchi suggested when they vote on capital reserves, they can vote to put the \$2,000 back in or not.

Chair Helm asked Selectman Bianchi if he had any remarks to make about the Police Department's budget, since both Chief Andersen and Ms. Donna Larrow were present. Selectman Bianchi said since the last meeting they had quite a few changes, including insurance, FICA and Medicare. The bottom line changed from \$1,218,000 to \$945,720. Full-time officers' wages went from \$402,000 to \$380,000. The guns were up a little as was the General Equipment fund.

Chief Andersen said he had a guest speaker arriving at 9:30am to discuss the guns. He said the security and strikes costs (for the doors in the police department) went down \$2,000. Beltronics audio visual was removed, which was another decrease of \$4,300. Ms. Larrow said the increase she had was 3.62% without the changes to salaries and insurances. Selectman Bianchi said the budget sheets as of February 5, shows the operating budget, including the decreases and adding in the guns as presented, is a .3% decrease from what was appropriated for 2014.

Chief Andresen said if he was to be selected to become the permanent Police Chief, what is the Board's position on promoting someone to sergeant (the position he held before becoming Acting Chief)? Ms. Hallquist said the salaries in the proposed budget are based on the current

salaries for this year. If they want to increase someone significantly more, they would need to revise the budgeted figures. Selectman Bianchi said they would also need to consider the cost for another full-time officer if Chief Andersen is selected. This person could be a new officer or someone who would come in as a sergeant.

Selectman Bianchi asked if there was any other items in the budget request that could wait another year. Chief Andersen said the strikes on the doors are important and they have had to take some from other less-important doors and put them on others. The copier is on its way out and is giving them a lot of problems. Ms. Larrow said they will be able to scan and fax through the new copier which will cut down on the number of hard copies that are made. She sees a reduction in use because of these electronic capabilities.

The Hirsh line item is for 24 strikes, among other things. Selectman Bianchi wondered if they could replace half of the strikes this year and half next year. Chief Andersen said they have the wrong amp service for the strikes and this could result in them burning out and/or causing a fire. He wanted it known that two needed to be replaced for sure, and the rest of them would need to be replaced at some point in time. He noted that the strike that malfunctioned due to the amp discrepancy, when removed from the wall, was over 300 degrees. This is a fire hazard. He would try to do with half the number of strikes that was requested. Hirsh suggested they should replace all of the strikes to fix the problem. Selectman Bianchi said it made sense to him to replace them as needed and to upgrade the voltage. Ms. Larrow said if they use the company from Vermont, they charge an exorbitant amount just to come and do the work. They should try and do as much as they can at once and not do one at a time. This equipment installed at the PD is proprietary so not all companies can work on it. Chair Helm felt if this was a need, to cut it in half wasn't the way to go. They should just get it all done. She was concerned with the safety aspects if they didn't replace the strikes. Selectman Kidder said only the authorized company that has been sanctioned to deal with this system should work on it, or else they can't stand behind the system.

Russ Lamson arrived to provide information on firearms. Mr. Lamson reviewed his background to illustrate why he has the expertise to offer an opinion on the issue of firearms at the police department: he is retired from the State Police and currently works part-time for the New London and Goshen police departments. He is a licensed firearms instructor for 18 years and was the armorer for Troop C in Keene where he was responsible for the maintenance of all of the firearms for the troopers there.

Mr. Lamson noted that he carries the same pistol that New London uses (Sig Sauer) and he understood that the current pistols have been in service for over 10 years. He explained that one thing that is going wrong with the pistols is the night-sights that are supposed to glow at night without batteries. This part of the pistol has a shelf life of around 10 years and is expensive to replace. Many of the sites are already failing. The problem this sight design gives is that they offer good illumination when working at night, but not the best illumination in the daytime. They start losing site picture which is important to acquire the target. Mr. Lamson suggested it would cost \$125 – \$150 to purchase new night sites, which does not cover the installation. With installation, he estimated it would cost between \$150 and \$200. When asked by Selectman Bianchi about how many rounds the pistols go through each year, Mr. Lamson answered that he

didn't know, but suggested that regardless of the number of rounds fired, it is not recommended to keep pistols in service for over 10 years. The State Police swaps out their guns every five years. His opinion was that the pistols needed to be replaced.

Mr. Lamson said that the civilian market is very interested in buying Sig Sauer weapons so the Town will be able to get a very high trade-in on them. He said Chief Andersen was surprised to see what they'd get for a trade-in value. Mr. Lamson added that a civilian is not going to be betting their lives on their firearms, but an officer would be. He felt it was time to do some type of upgrade on New London's weapons.

Mr. Lamson went on to explain that if they wanted to keep their current firearms, each pistol would need to be gone through to replace springs. The State Police change their springs every two years. He noted that he recently upgraded the Town of Goshen's pistols to Glocks, the weapon about 80% of law enforcement carries. He thought Glock had given a generous offer to New London to replace their current weapons with Glocks.

Chief Andersen said since he has been working for New London, the weapons have been cleaned but have never had any maintenance because they only have \$200 in the Firearm Repair Fund. They have had instances when the springs have exploded and the firearm has locked. Chief Andersen said he felt this was an area that hasn't had sufficient attention over the years. Chief Andersen believed he could get an even trade-in to acquire new Glocks, and the only expense they would have to pay is about \$1,800 to replace the holsters and bullet pouches.

Selectman Bianchi asked for the price to replace a spring. Mr. Lamson said he didn't know and it depended on how many springs needed to be replaced. He offered that these should be replaced often to keep the firearm running smoothly, just as one would replace the oil in a car to keep it in good working order. An armorer will be looking at New London's firearms every year from now on because it is a necessity.

Mr. Lamson said some of the department's firearms will be worth \$300 to \$450 on trade-in depending on their condition. Selectman Bianchi said he'd like to know the cost to refurbish the current firearms. Mr. Lamson said when hunting, he doesn't mind using a gun that is 30-40 years old but carrying a firearm as an officer, he would prefer to have something that wasn't refurbished. Glock is willing to do such good deals with the different agencies because they want to be able to say that "x-amount" of agencies carry their firearms. Chief Andersen suggested that upgrading the old firearms would cost more than getting the new firearms from Glock.

Ms. Hallquist said a warrant article would need to be written to purchase 15 Glocks at "x" per firearm and to apply trade-in value to the cost of the new firearms so the money from the trade wouldn't go into the general fund, or the full amount of the cost (cash plus trade-in) would need to be put into the operating budget. Gross budgeting is required to ensure the total cost is made clear to voters.

Mr. Lamson said they could get 10 years out of the Glocks even though the State Police trade theirs out every five years. He said personally, he shoots every other week and knows that officers will take their own ammo and practice with their issued firearm, which is something they should do to keep sharp.

Public Works Department

Richard Lee asked what the Selectmen wanted to do about the generator repair; did they want to repair all of them this year or stagger the repairs. Chair Helm asked what her colleagues felt and noted that she thought they should repair them all at once. Selectman Kidder agreed. It would be \$8,450 to repair them all. Repairs to the generator come from the Equipment Repair and Maintenance line of the emergency management budget. \$11,950 would be the total for that fund to include the cost for the generator servicing. It was noted that the emergency management budget will now be \$14,100.

Selectman Kidder said the Garden Club was asking for \$1,000 to mow and weed at Crockett's Corner because the State won't do it anymore. Was this something the Public Works Department could do? Mr. Lee noted that his department could take on this responsibility; it would take about an hour and a couple people each time.

Selectman Kidder said the UNH Cooperative Extension would be coming on April 17th to prune some trees at Whipple Hall and at the Town Offices. Margaret Hagan and Heather Pappineau will be the demonstrators.

Mr. Lee said he had asked for \$31,000 for dump body and wondered if the Board will approve that expenditure. They were not going to replace the truck and he asked the CIP Committee to include this \$31,000 but it was never clear as to where the money was going to come from; the operating budget or the capital reserve fund (CRF). There was a question as to whether funds could be used from the Highway Equipment Replacement CRF. Selectman Bianchi said they could also have it as a warrant article. Chair Helm opined that if this was going to prolong the life of the equipment, they should take it out of the Capital Reserve Fund. Mr. Lee said the deal was when he didn't hire another full-time person, they would keep the truck meant for that person and keep it in good shape and functional. The Selectmen were in favor of somehow coming up with money to replace the body but will need to determine where the funds will come from.

Gravel Roads/Paving Plan

Mr. Lee said the current CIP plan shows the roads to be paved being completed in 2037, with a balance at the end of \$636,000. He felt that this is an error that no one picked up on during the CIP process. Mr. Lee said he took the existing deposits under Capital Reserve and re-worked the numbers. He took the same roads on the list and used the same deposits and withdrawals. By 2022, all the roads on the priority list would be paved and the fund would show a balance of \$7,200. By 2037 every road that had been requested to be paved would be done, not just those on the priority list.

Mr. Lee said next year, he would like to pave Tucker Road, Quarry Road and Old Coach Road. Tucker Road is 640' and right off of Quarry Road, so it would be practical to do it all at once. They would request a withdrawal of \$63,000 next year to do this. Ms. Hallquist said the revised schedule would be picked up by the Planning Board the following year during the CIP process.

The Selectmen checked off the departments that they had discussed:
Executive, Town Clerk/Tax Collector/Elections, Finance, Assessing, Legal, Personnel Admin (Insurance), Planning & Zoning, Buildings, Cemeteries, Other insurance, Advertising/Regional Associations, Police, Fire/Fire Wards, Emergency Management, Dispatch, Highway Administration, Streets & Highways, Street Lighting, Transfer Station, Health Administration, Health Agencies, Welfare Administration, Intergovernmental Welfare, Welfare Payments, Recreation, Library, Patriotic Services, Archives, Conservation, Energy Committee, Other Conservation (care of trees and milfoil), Debt Service & Principal, Transfer to Capital Reserves, Capital Outlay

Chair Helm thought it important to differentiate what the Selectmen recommend for the general operating budget because when adding the debt service in, it increases markedly. She suggested that it is important to convey to the public what the Board of Selectmen has control over, which is the operating budget. Selectman Bianchi said from previous sheets, they had increased the budget that day by \$20,387. This doesn't include the \$31,000 for the truck body at DPW or the \$97,000 for the consoles at dispatching.

It was suggested that the Selectmen would meet on Monday, February 10th at 6pm, and would plan a meeting for Wednesday morning, if needed.

Salaries

The Board discussed the issue of salary increases for town employees. Ms. Hallquist asked the Board to consider the fact that all departments are trying to make use of as many part-time employees as possible to keep expenses down. When they do that, money is saved, but it also puts additional pressures on the employees that are there already as in many cases, they are asked to pick up additional duties. She felt that this is an important consideration in thinking about salary increases for employees.

Selectman Kidder asked if there was any formula suggested for performance-based raises. Ms. Hallquist said no policy had been formulated yet, but thought they could do an across the board raise and have some money held aside for performance-based raises. She noted that she is in favor of performance-based raises. In the coming months the employee committee could be asked to prepare a policy for review by the Selectmen for possible adoption. Ms. Hallquist said for the system to work, employees must have a clear idea of what it will take to get the performance based raise so everyone has a fair chance of getting the additional raise.

Selectman Bianchi suggested an appreciation for extra and quality work could be compensated by awarding a bonus. Ms. Hallquist said it had been done in the past and adjustments have been made mid-year for those moving within departments. Ms. Larrow said, as a member of the

employee committee, they are waiting for direction from the Selectmen on the next step towards this kind of policy.

Selectman Bianchi suggested giving a 1% increase across the board for full-time personnel. He also thought an increase in the Selectmen's Discretionary Account by \$5,000 would allow the Select Board to make some adjustments in salary on a type of merit or performance-based system until they get a firm policy. He noted that they have given an increase to the employees every year and the Town absorbs a substantial amount for benefits already.

It was noted that there was \$1,000 in the Selectmen's Discretionary Account that was earmarked for the employee holiday luncheon in 2015.

Ms. Johnson noted that to give everyone a 1% increase would cost the Town \$23,818. She added that those employees deemed "Regular Part-Time" would also get this raise. Selectman Bianchi felt comfortable that they offer good benefits in the Town. The family insurance plan is \$20,000 and the most a new person would pay for that is 15%.

Mr. Blewitt asked what the Northeast Cost of Living Increase was. He thought it was 1.5%. Ms. Hallquist noted that the town does not currently use the CPI to decide raises. Selectman Kidder said the cost of living is increasing and there is inflation. The Government doesn't take into account utilities when figuring in these numbers. Chief Lyon wondered what surrounding towns were giving for increases. Ms. Hallquist said she thought Newbury was suggesting a 1.5% raise across the board and then offers a .5% merit raise. Selectman Kidder suggested doing the same in New London.

Mr. Blewitt noted that Sunapee has a step program and each step is 2%. They also get a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA).

Mr. Lee said in the past when they did merit raises, they got an across-the-board raise and they could get up to 3% on top of this. Some people could get as much as a 4.5% raise.

Selectman Bianchi said his initial thought was to not move people up in their pay grade but instead give the performance based increase as a bonus. It was suggested that perhaps the \$5,000 should be increased to \$10,000 to be able to realistically award merit raise to employees.

Selectman Kidder suggested a 1.5% raise across the board and putting \$10,000 in the discretionary fund for merit raises. It doesn't have to be spent but it will be there. She thought the employee committee should suggest how the raises would be implemented. Mr. Lee thought it would send a message to the employees that they are trying to show appreciation for their hard work. He said his employees are always trying to find ways to cut costs and thinks this merit suggestion sends a good message.

Ms. Johnson noted that \$35,712 was what it would cost the Town to award a 1.5% raise to everyone.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to increase employee salaries by 1.5% and put \$10,000 in the Selectmen's Discretionary Account for performance-based bonuses.

Selectman Bianchi said the \$10,000 wouldn't all have to be spent for raises. Ms. Hallquist said the policy would have to be approved first before any money was handed out.

Chair Helm called for a vote: **THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Selectman Kidder said Winter Carnival was super and many helped with the events. The fireworks were paid for entirely by donations. The cost for the tent, the band, and the wagon will be about \$1,600. People were very pleased with it. She offered that Mr. Blewitt has a huge network of people ready to help thanks to his helping with Hospital Days and working with the Chamber of Commerce. Selectman Kidder said it was a wonderful week and thanked everyone who was involved in it. Chair Helm and Selectman Bianchi agreed with Selectman Kidder's remarks.

Application for use of Town Common:

Bandstand Committee – 2014 Summer Concert Series

Application for use of Whipple Hall:

Bandstand Committee – 2014 Summer Concert Series

Other Items to be signed:

- Tax Abatement Form for Paul & Andrea Licari
- Petition and Pole License from PSNH/TDS Telecom
- Highway Safety Grants (3) DWI patrols, radar patrols, and "COPS in Shops" patrols.
- Sign Permit – New London Historical Society (sandwich board signs at Chamber – 9 events)

With no other business, Chair Helm called for a motion to adjourn.

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

THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London