



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES May 12, 2014

### **PRESENT:**

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

### **ALSO PRESENT:**

Norman G. Bernaiche, Chief Assessor  
W. Michael Todd, Town Moderator  
Minette Sweeney, *Intertown Record*

Chair Helm called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM.

### Abatement Recommendations

Norm Bernaiche, Chief Assessor for the Towns of New London, Newbury and Sunapee, was present to discuss his abatement recommendations in response to appeals filed by 10 New London property owners for 2013 property taxes. The Board reviewed a memo from Mr. Bernaiche detailing his recommendation. Mr. Bernaiche noted the town recently completed the formal abatement season and asked if the Board had any questions regarding these recommendations.

Chair Helm remarked that the amount of abatements Mr. Bernaiche is recommending comes to over \$500,000, which seemed an extraordinarily high amount. Mr. Bernaiche responded that the town has picked up \$10-\$12 million in new construction this year. After checking the list of recommended abatements, Selectman Bianchi commented that it looks as if the town is “chasing sales”, citing the Bedard, Hayes and Poh abatements. Mr. Bernaiche noted that “chasing sales” is illegal according to regulations, so the town is very careful not to do that. He explained that there were some sales on Route 11 and part of his analysis did not adjust for that area being affected by heavier traffic. He pointed out that the town must address market value of properties either now or in court. He noted that the number of appeals in the Parkside development were high this year. Mr. Bernaiche stated that the assessors will address those appeals and adjust the values for all the condominiums in Parkside/Lyon Brook this summer.

Selectman Bianchi asked what methodology was used for assessing sales prices. Mr. Bernaiche replied market value and over-all assessment level. That’s the test in abatement. He noted that sometimes competition plays a role. Mr. Bernaiche pointed out that with the Kellett property, this was a house that needed a lot of work and generally people do not want to deal with these types of properties. The adjustment made in that case was a “physical condition adjustment.” Assessors consider whether adjustments are property specific or systemic within a group of properties. An “arm’s length sale” is one where there is a willing buyer and a willing seller who agree to negotiate and come to a fair price for the property. Selectman Bianchi commented there seems to be a fuzzy line between condominium and

neighborhood values. Mr. Bernaiche responded that the assessors are dealing with 2,800 properties and putting numbers to each one is an art. There are various reasons why properties end up selling and that sometimes gives assessors a standard which they can apply to similar properties. Market value and average level of assessment - that's what the State of New Hampshire requires and it is the test that the town is going to be up against all the time. Mr. Bernaiche mentioned that the assessors will be adjusting Lyon Brook and the Seasons during the re-evaluation.

Selectman Kidder noted that at the last tri-town assessment meeting, Mr. Bernaiche informed that committee that the State of NH approved the town's methodology in determining the value of a property. Mr. Bernaiche confirmed that this is the case.

**IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Peter Bianchi) to accept Norm Bernaiche's recommendations as outlined in his memo to the Select Board dated April 30, 2014. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### Town Meeting 2014

Michael Todd, Moderator, discussed his plan for conducting the meeting. He explained that the elementary school children will be first up at Town Meeting, leading the Pledge of Allegiance and singing the National Anthem. Ms. Hallquist noted that the certificate for presentation by Mr. Todd to one of the children who has participated in Town Meeting for the last five years is ready. Mr. Todd noted that there will be two 17-year olds on hand to help count paper ballots. Next, the dinner crew and election team will be thanked. Afterwards, election results will be given. Then it will be time to recognize the volunteers and Mr. Todd will ask Chair Helm to do that.

Mr. Todd asked if the town should recognize any specific people at the meeting. The Board agreed that the passing of Bob MacMichael should be recognized. Selectman Bianchi noted that he has suggested that some pictures of Mr. MacMichael be available at the meeting.

Following thanks to everyone, Mr. Todd will remind townspeople that this assembly will be conducted respectfully. In addition, before the meeting actually begins, it was recommended that Chair Helm explain why there are two budgets in the warrant – the Budget Committee's version and the Selectmen's version. These parallel budgets are really the only new things added to the report. Mr. Todd recommended that we acknowledge Chair Helm before that, and thank her for her years of service. It was agreed one of the Selectmen would recognize Chair Helm.

The Board discussed plans for presenting warrant articles for Town Meeting.

Chair Helm suggested we start with Article 3 (General Government Operations). Selectman Bianchi will introduce the Article and explain why there are differences between the Budget Committee and Selectmen's recommendations.

The Board discussed Article 4 (Public Safety). It was noted that \$14,000 of the difference between the Budget Committee and the Selectmen's budget was no longer an issue because the locks were repaired within the current budget. Selectman Kidder wondered if the Select Board should amend the Article since the locks have already been replaced. Ms. Hallquist replied that they could offer an amendment to the Budget Committee's recommendation or not. It's all about informing the voters. Selectman Bianchi suggested that if someone asks from the floor to amend the Budget Committee recommendation, it would be appropriate to say that money had already been spent. Ms. Hallquist reiterated that before anyone offers the amendment, the voters should know what's going on regarding the difference between budget committee figures and Selectmen's figures.

Before discussion begins on Article 8 (Principal and Interest of Long-Term Debt), Selectman Kidder will explain that the first bond payment for the Sunapee Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade will not be paid in FY2015, and therefore can be reduced from the budget at town meeting. The Board noted that during the budget preparation process the town was led to believe that substantial completion of the project would occur in April or May, making the first payment due in April or May 2015 and thus it was included in the budget. However, the project has not, in fact, reached that stage, so New London will not make the payment in FY2015. An amendment will be offered to reduce the appropriation by \$271,017.

Article 9 (Capital and Non-Capital Reserve Funds (CRF) – Selectman Bianchi noted there are two major differences between the Budget Committee and Selectmen’s recommendations – sewer lagoon clean-up and the highway equipment capital reserve. He pointed out that the Selectmen want to add to the capital reserve fund for the sewer lagoon, noting that there is currently \$31,000 in that account. The State of New Hampshire has not yet told the Town what it has to do to close the lagoons. Chair Helm recommended that Selectman Bianchi stress that the Selectmen feel it is important to keep funding this project, but the Budget Committee determined there was not enough information to justify putting another \$10,000 into the fund for this.

Selectman Kidder will speak about Article 11 (building maintenance projects). She asked who is going to work on the Highway Department Building. Ms. Hallquist noted that the project will go out to bid if the Article is approved. She noted that the CIP figured the project will cost \$85,000.

Chair Helm will cover Article 13 (to raise and appropriate the sum of \$670,190 for the Elkins Sidewalk and Streetscape Project). Selectman Bianchi said we have applied for a grant for the Elkins beautification project. The town will pay 20% and the state pays 80%. This will be funded by capital reserve funds, so no money will be raised from taxes.

Jay Lyon, Heather Wood and Ed Andersen will be ready to explain Article 14 (to raise and appropriate funds in the amount of \$75,125 for the purchase and installation of a repeater and antenna duplexer to improve radio communication) at the town meeting.

Selectman Bianchi will speak to Article 15 (to raise and appropriate \$48,500 for a communications console). Chair Helm said she assumed that even though there were some mixed feelings about this Article among the Selectmen that a balanced, unified report would be given to voters. Selectman Bianchi confirmed that was the case.

Article 16 (to raise and appropriate the sum of \$3,000 for historical objects by the Archives Committee) – the Selectmen feel the article is self-explanatory. Chair Helm will put in a personal comment about maintaining the Archives.

Article 17 (to see if the town will change the date of the annual meeting from May to March) is a petitioned article. This issue will also require a balanced approach. Mr. Todd asked who the proponent of the Article was. Ms. Hallquist noted that there were several signers on the petition who might like to speak to the issue. She noted that Joan Lamson brought the petition in. Mr. Todd said for petition warrant articles, we need someone from that camp to speak. Ms. Hallquist noted that the Selectmen could offer an explanation as to whether or not they had a position on the article. Mr. Todd inquired, if the meeting date is moved back to March, does the town also have to change their fiscal year? Ms. Hallquist noted that it did not have to change the fiscal year if the meeting is changed back to March – but it does mean that the Budget Committee has less actual expenditure data on which to base the new budget on.

Article 18 (to see if the Board of Selectmen may appoint a committee to study the issue of single stream recycling) will be introduced by Selectman Bianchi. He noted the Select Board has not taken a stance one way or another. At a past town meeting, people did vote to look at single stream and he intends to give a brief synopsis of what occurred. The Selectmen listened to a specific proposal and, at that time, it did not seem to be in best interest of New London. The company putting forth the proposal later failed. Selectman Bianchi noted he is 100% in favor of this article. Chair Helm said technology has changed and there is a difference between zero sort and single stream recycling. Zero sort is much friendlier. However, as Selectman Bianchi pointed out, the article says nothing about zero sort. Chair Helm felt the Board should educate people about the differences. After discussion by the Board, Chair Helm noted that the three of them are in favor of the article as presented and will create a committee to study this further unless townspeople do not want to do it.

Article 19 (approval of a resolution regarding corporate donations). Mr. Todd recommended we just move the motion and see what develops. Chair Helm will represent the Select Board, which has not taken a stand on this issue.

Mr. Todd indicated that some of these issues will elicit discussion on the part of voters, but that is a good thing. It's all about robust debate.

#### New Business

The Board reviewed a memo from Ms. Hallquist regarding some housekeeping changes needed to update the personnel policies to reflect changes made by the Board over the past year. Selectman Bianchi had a question with regard to paid holidays and asked, is this for a calendar year? Ms. Hallquist confirmed that it is based on the calendar year, not the fiscal year. Chair Helm added that she hoped that, going forward, the Select Board will have an open dialogue with the Personnel Committee. Selectman Bianchi asked how much time is given for bereavement leave, and Ms. Hallquist responded three days. Any more than that has to be approved. It is three days per death.

**IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Peter Bianchi) to accept the items as outlined in the memo dated May 8 from Kim Hallquist. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### Town Administrator report:

Ms. Hallquist noted that she will send an e-mail streamsend about the upcoming election and meetings. She noted that the portable sign announcing the voting day is ready to go.

#### Committee Meetings and Reports:

Selectman Kidder reported for the Recreation Committee, which met on May 6, 2014, and conveyed that Paula Schoonmaker, from New London Boy Scouts, will organize Boy Scouts to do the work to refurbish the warming hut at the skating rink. The boys will be primarily scraping and painting, and will be overseen by parents and Scout leaders. Scott Blewitt, Recreation Director, is creating a list of who will be participating. The plan is to spend no more than \$500 and materials will be paid for from the Revolving Fund. The Boy Scouts hope to complete the work this summer.

Alison Vernon noted that because Whipple Hall's facilities are heavily scheduled, there is not much space available for various art programs and she is looking into renting space on Main Street. She hoped the town would support a School for the Arts. There is a building available on Main Street, owned by Ellen's Interiors, and the rent is \$700 a month. Ellen would like a long-term lease. The Recreation Commission did not support this expenditure at this time. It was noted that at the Recreation Committee meeting that the beach at Elkins does not have a handicapped accessible bathroom. Scott Blewitt is looking into it.

Scott Blewitt recently received a donation and is looking to change the computer program from RecTrack to RecDesk. RecTrack costs \$3,400.00 a year and is not the right program for the department. RecDesk is approximately \$1,000 a year less, with no initial installment fee. Training is free. Scott will do some additional research on this.

Scott Blewitt will hire Patten's Auto Body to do rust work on the van. The Recreation Committee voted to spend \$5,429.00 from the Revolving Fund for these repairs.

The Recreation Committee noted Carter Bascom from the New London Outing Club is working well with our Recreation Director, Scott Blewitt.

The next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for May 20, 2014 from 7-9 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

The Board reviewed Meeting Minutes of April 9, 2014, noting various typographical corrections needed.

**IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Peter Bianchi) to approve the minutes of April 9, 2014 as corrected. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Selectman Kidder said she had not finished reading the May 5 meeting minutes. Chair Helm noted there was on mistake on page 3, third paragraph – “Chair Helm asked about the \$15,000 fee” it should read *Chair Helm asked about the \$13,375 fee.*

Other Business:

Selectman Kidder asked if it would be possible to send out the Water Precinct bills separately as they are having cash flow problems since the town went to quarterly billing. Ms. Hallquist noted that this issue is being investigated by the State Department of Revenue as the town can only do what the State authorizes with regarding to tax billing. Selectman Kidder asked if the Precinct could change its fiscal year. Ms. Hallquist noted she was not sure about whether precincts could go on the fiscal year. Chair Helm said she thought it would be useful to have a chat between the Water Commissioners and Selectmen. She noted if the Town went back to semi-annual billing, that would help the Water Dept. Ms. Hallquist noted that the law did not envision a town that had a precinct in its boundaries would be on a different fiscal year. The DRA supposedly fixed this problem last year by increasing the amount billed out in the June and October bills, but then reduced the following two bills by that extra amount, putting the precinct back in the very same position.

The next Selectmen's meeting has not been scheduled. The Select Board agreed to tentatively schedule it for Monday, May 19, 2014 at 8:30 am so the new Selectman elected at town meeting can attend.

Chair Helm felt this entire Select Board worked very hard for this town. She has enjoyed working with both of them, and with the town employees.

Application for Building Permit:

Thomas Wallace & Ronald Collins (053-004-000) 606 Wilmot Center Road- Adding 10 x 26 addition, shed dormer and skylights to garage – APPROVED

Application for use of Whipple Hall:

Center for the Arts – Music Presentation 12/5/2014, 4-8pm

Center for the Arts – Dance 2/2/2015, 4-8pm

Other Items to be signed:

Abatement Forms

Citizenship Award for Natalie Stark

Warrant for Property Tax Billing

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

Meeting adjourned at 10:09 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Work, Recording Secretary  
Town of New London