



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES May 21, 2013 Approved

PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Jay Lyon, Fire Chief

Chair Bianchi opened the meeting at 5:00pm and gave the floor to Ms. Hallquist.

Ms. Hallquist said she would like to request that the Selectmen establish a supervisory position in the Communications Department (Dispatching) and promote Heather Wood to that position. Ms. Hallquist explained that this position would report directly to the Town Administrator. Currently the dispatching department is supervised by the Chief of Police, this will change if the new plan is adopted. Ms. Wood would go from grade 10 to grade 13 on the pay scale, the same grade as the Zoning Administrator and Police Sergeant. If approved, Ms. Wood will be in complete charge of the department including staffing and budgeting. Ms. Wood will continue to perform dispatch duties as well. Her hourly rate (currently \$21.18) will be increased by \$2.50 immediately. As of July 1, after the 2% raise, her wage will be \$24.15/hour.

Ms. Hallquist said she will offer Ms. Wood assistance as needed, especially in the areas of budgeting and management of employees until she is up to speed. Ms. Hallquist admitted that establishing a new position in this way, without more planning, is not the way she would normally like to do it but given recent departures in both the Police Department and Communications Department, she felt this is the best course of action to take. She noted that this change addresses the issues that lead Ms. Wood to tender her resignation, and thus the Town will retain a valuable employee in dispatching and the quality of the service provided will improve. Ms. Hallquist pointed out that Acting Police Chief Anderson agrees with this plan and has agreed to help Ms. Wood with this transition. Ms. Hallquist stressed that Chief Andersen is willing to continue to supervise the Communications Department as well as handle his duties as Chief, but is agreeable to support the changes the Selectmen feel are necessary. It was noted that Ms. Wood understands that she will need to work with the other towns and “sell” the dispatch program to them. Ms. Hallquist said she would help with this as well. Ms. Hallquist felt that this plan is the best option for the Town at this point in time.

Chair Bianchi said they will need to keep track of how things are going in the department to evaluate how the plan is working, and if it is not, then decide how changes can be made. He noted that he did not like this scenario mainly because he felt that they were doing it only because they had a gun to their head. He noted that he doesn't like to negotiate with people when the playing field isn't even. Ms. Hallquist said she would be meeting with Ms. Wood regularly and can help her with the management part of the

job. Ms. Hallquist noted that Ms. Wood brings an extensive amount of experience in dispatching to the position, and can learn the management aspect of the position with her help. Ms. Hallquist noted that both Chief Andersen and Chief Lyon agree with this plan and have committed to helping Ms. Wood as needed to make sure the plan succeeds.

Ms. Helm agreed that she didn't like to feel pressured into making decisions like this. However, it did not seem like they had a choice in this situation. She felt this could be an opportunity to improve dispatch and was not worried about the numbers going forward with the budget, because if they improve the quality of service, the other towns would take notice.

**IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to promote Heather Wood to Communications Administrator with a \$2.50 increase in hourly pay.
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Helm thought perhaps LGC would have some management workshops Ms. Wood could participate in. Ms. Hallquist said Ms. Wood was open to training but for now she wants her to concentrate on the schedule and getting the rest of the staff trained.

1941 Committee

Ms. Hallquist explained that the 1941 committee has asked that the Selectmen give them the green light to choose one of the two architects they have in mind to review the building. They would like a motion indicating that the committee, using private money, can choose either of the two firms and the Selectmen will accept the report.

Ms. Helm thought both architects were right on with their proposals but was taken aback in the difference in cost. One is charging \$11,500 and the other \$3,100. Neither proposal included a study of hazardous waste.

Chair Bianchi said the less expensive proposal has specific recommendations and seemed more detailed than the higher priced estimate. The expensive estimate has come up with estimates for mitigating problems with the building. In his opinion, they should pick the less expensive option as it seemed to provide the most details and offered what they needed.

Ms. Kidder thought they should trust the judgment of those on the committee to select the best firm for the job. The Board agreed that they will trust the judgment of committee members to select an appropriate firm to evaluate and report on the condition of the 1941 building.

Ms. Hallquist said the committee understands that the report will need to be thorough. What the architects have submitted are just proposals. She asked if the Board of Selectmen had the confidence that these individuals had the qualifications and ability to do this work. Chair Bianchi said he couldn't say as he doesn't know much about either of them. He recalled that at a prior meeting, Steve Theroux suggested the Town be the one who picks the architect as the Town will be signing the lease.

Ms. Helm wondered at what point the Selectmen would dissolve the 1941 Committee as a town committee. She noted that members of the 1941 committee are forming a 501 (c)(3) organization to continue efforts to gain control of the 1941 building for the town. Ms. Hallquist noted as a Selectmen created committee, the Selectmen are free to dissolve it whenever they wanted to do so.

IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to dissolve the ad hoc 1941 Building Committee created by the Board of Selectmen. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Ms. Kidder said that they need to decide whether they will trust the judgment of the 1941 Committee to choose the architect who would do the most thorough job for the Town, and accept that decision.

Chair Bianchi asked Ms. Hallquist to inform the Committee and thank them for their work thus far. Ms. Helm noted that the private group to be formed is planning to provide updates to the Town as the project continues. Ms. Kidder said that the new group would appreciate Ms. Hallquist attending meetings to be the link between them and the Town. Ms. Hallquist said she would be happy to do so.

Other Business

Chair Bianchi said he spoke with some Elkins residents this morning regarding some concern of the neighbors of Marshall's Garage. Scott Ellison and Mike McChesney are the abutters. He thought perhaps he and Ms. Hallquist could meet with them to see if problems could be resolved. The issues stem from noise coming from the back building late at night, disturbing neighbors. Apparently there are complaints that there are wreckers off-loading cars late at night there, which is disturbing in a residential area. Chair Bianchi said he reminded Mr. McChesney that he did purchase a house next to a garage and has received a tax abatement because of this fact. He would like to sit down with everyone to find out what is going on.

Ms. Kidder thought they should also ask the principles of the Barn Playhouse to talk about the noise issue. Ms. Hallquist said Fred Sladen, Acting Police Chief Andersen and herself plan to meet about this issue.

Ms. Hallquist noted that the new owners of Ellie's Restaurant would like to put up a new sign as they have a new name. It is now "GRAZE." They are asking for the sign permit to be approved now so they will have it in time for Memorial Day weekend. The application has been approved by the Zoning Administrator. The sign permit was approved as presented.

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

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to adjourn the meeting of May 21, 2013 THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 5:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London