



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

June 17, 2013

### PRESENT:

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

### ALSO PRESENT:

Leigh Bosse, *The Messenger*  
Minette Sweeney, *InterTown Record*  
Doug Homan, Budget Committee Member  
Phyllis Piotrow, Budget Committee Member  
Bill Green, Budget Committee Member  
Scott Hilliard, Merrimack County Sherriff  
Craig Saltmarsh, Chief Deputy, Merrimack County Sheriff Office  
Ed Andersen, Acting Police Chief  
Donna Larrow, Administrative Assistant, New London P.D.  
Renate Kannler, Peter Messer, Andy Deegan  
Recreation Commission Members: Jason Stadler, Laura James, Laura Lorio

Chair Helm opened the meeting at 4:00pm.

### Phillips Preserve Conservation Easement

Chair Helm noted that after much hard work between Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust (Ausbon Sargent), particularly Andy Deegan and John Garvey, and the Town, in consultation with town counsel, the easement deed has been revised so that it is in the form acceptable to both parties. Voters approved the granting of the conservation easement to Ausbon Sargent at the May 2012 Town Meeting.

**IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Peter Bianchi) to accept the language of the Phillips Preserve conservation easement deed to Ausbon Sargent.**

**THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The deed was signed by the Selectmen.

### Police Department Review – Merrimack County Sherriff, Scott Hilliard, and Chief Deputy Craig Saltmarsh

Chief Deputy Saltmarsh presented his written report to the Selectmen and noted that he would offer a brief summary of his findings. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh began by noting that his review was not an in-depth review as that kind would have taken months. However, the review he conducted is a comprehensive overview of the agency. He noted that he spoke with people at all levels within the department and had access to the entire facility. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh noted that Acting Chief Andersen was very cooperative and provided all information that was requested of him. Discussions were held regarding the status of cameras within the facility and in the cruisers. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh concluded by noting that he believed that the New London Police Department is in good hands. He

observed that the department was dealt a difficult situation that has been hard to handle, but the officers and staff are remaining positive and doing their jobs. He has been in law enforcement for a long time and feels confident that the New London Police Department is well-situated and is being well-maintained.

Chief Deputy Saltmarsh felt that the greatest asset to any agency is the staff. He felt the citizens of New London are being served very well by the staff they have but there is always room for improvement in every agency. He explained that his report was broken down into sections. The sections include:

1. Chief & Staff
2. Dispatch
3. Staffing
4. Equipment
5. Policies and procedures (most of the time was spent in this area)
6. Facility
7. Areas of improvement and recommendations.

Chief Deputy Saltmarsh observed that the opinions and observations within the report are the result of his experience over 27 years in law enforcement and stressed that the report contains his opinions and not those of the Merrimack County Sheriff's Office.

Chief Deputy Saltmarsh concluded by encouraging the Police Chief, Selectmen, town committees and the Town Administrator to sit down and discuss several important topics for the Police Department:

1. Staffing
2. Reorganizing of the agency
3. Dispatch and how it is defined
4. Training (officers and dispatch)
5. Fleet
6. Equipment and firearms
7. Capital reserve for dispatch equipment
8. Policies and procedures
9. Facility (continuing updates could be done)
10. Proactive police work (DARE and other programs for the town)

Chair Helm thanked Chief Deputy Saltmarsh for his presentation and report and also thanked Sheriff Hilliard for his willingness to assign personnel from the Merrimack County Sheriff's Office to the Town. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh offered that he was only a phone call away if there were any questions.

Mr. Bianchi said they have wrestled with staffing issues over the last few years. When looking at comparable populated towns, he identified, through sources like Local Government Center (LGC), that New London's police department is very well, if not over-staffed. He questioned the recommendation in the report regarding adding another full-time police officer and dispatcher. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh responded that he also looks at LGC's information but he also has to look at the things that have gone by the wayside within the department. As an example, he observed that the Chief is supposed to be doing a lot of the administrative work and working on planning and training and filling in only infrequently as needed for other officers. In this case, the Chief is often doing patrols and not doing the administrative portion of the job, which is not an ideal situation.

Chief Deputy Saltmarsh noted that Chief Andersen is oftentimes the only back-up and while they may need to spend money to hire another employee, it will save money in the long run. He noted that he spoke with several employees who are tired of having to cover extra shifts for holidays, sick time and vacations. He identified that the employees enjoy coming to work and like the Town, but they do not want

to have to work so much overtime. Once in a while it is OK, but doing it all the time gets tiring. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh remarked that he was surprised to see as much part-time help being used. Many other agencies have done away with part-time help and have invested in full-time employees. While it is expensive to pay for healthcare and benefits, towns get “more bang for their buck” by filling the positions with people who are invested and trained for the town they are working in.

Mr. Bianchi asked if the policies and procedures they have seemed to be well understood by the new employees. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh said he was not sure as he didn't ask the employees about the policies directly. He said that he knows that policies and procedures were important to Chief Andersen and that he believed that the policies were available for the officers to refer to. However, because the policies were not written specifically for the department, but instead were model policies to be used as a guide, the policies cannot be followed in all cases because they just do not apply to the circumstances of the police department (as an example, a policy might say that a report is made to the Captain, and there is no such position in the police department). The policies need to be re-written, but this is a task that will take a long time. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh said that there are about 60 policies and only seven policies have been updated since 2007.

Mr. Homan said that growing the dispatch meant spending more money. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh said that currently the staff was appropriate but another employee would help. Mr. Homan wondered if other alternatives to dispatch had been explored, such as subbing it out or growing the service. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh said he was tasked at looking at the dispatch and see if it was performing adequately, not to come up with alternative ways to provide the service. He was not there to advocate hiring or firing people, but is offering what he thought would be useful in the future. Mr. Homan asked if they had looked at eliminating the midnight shift as this was a difficult shift to cover. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh said he was not asked to look at the shifts and what should be eliminated. As far as he was concerned, it was an important shift to cover.

Mr. Homan wondered how they envisioned updating the Town's policies and procedures. He understood that this was part of what the Sheriff's office would help with. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh said he went through each policy line by line and provided recommendations on how they could be updated for the Town. It will need to be a policy by policy sit-down but it takes a lot of time and effort on top of one's regular job. It is usually something the Chief of Police would handle but right now there just isn't the time.

Bill Green wondered if they found out why the department found itself in the predicament it is. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh said that he wasn't really sure and it didn't seem to be because of the policies and procedures. Ms. Hallquist noted that she contacted the Sheriff's Office and asked for their assistance in reviewing the policies and procedures of the department, they were not asked to determine if the department is overstaffed, or anything concerning the events concerning the former Chief. Mr. Green wondered if time was being spent on determining how the police department found themselves in the situation they are in (referring to the events surrounding the former Chief). Ms. Hallquist responded that town staff is not looking into that at the present time.

Mr. Green observed that New London has two detectives and questioned how many towns of New London's size has two detectives. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh responded that staffing depended on the number and type of calls for service they receive. He also observed that one of the detectives also works as a patrolman. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh noted that there is not a standard number for detectives in a town of a particular size as it varies based on the needs of the particular community.

Sherriff Hilliard said each community is different. For example, Tilton's population is about 3,200 or 3,300 and has about 3 detectives, but they also have the outlet malls. He reminded those present of the armed robbery that occurred at the outlet mall some months ago. He observed that similarly, New London is different from towns of similar size because it has the college. With these nuances brings different types of crimes. College communities pose additional weight on the police department and the potential for problems is there.

Ms. Piotrow asked if the policies and procedures that will be put in place promote diversity within the department with regard to male/female employees. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh said the policies need to be updated for the times to make sure things are covered for when officers are doing interviews or speaking with people, whether male or female. Ms. Piotrow wondered if they would make any allowances in the procedures to recruit more women police officers. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh observed this is not something they would put in the procedures. He noted that it is difficult to find a good officer, male or female. Departments try to hire the best officer they can be regardless of their sex.

Chair Helm asked if it would be the recommendation of Chief Deputy Saltmarsh that the Board begin the search for a permanent chief immediately or if they should wait longer. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh said that he felt most of the employees do not want to be in the spotlight, they want to do their jobs and keep the town safe and work with the citizens. He said that Chief Andersen has a good handle on things and he was communicating well with the Selectmen. The employees are watching the dust settle and since they have an interim chief that is doing a very good job, they are not in a big hurry to move on and deal with another change at this time. Chief Deputy Saltmarsh observed that the department is in good hands at the moment and suggested that the Selectmen could address the process of hiring a permanent chief at some point in the future, but for now, let the staff continue to adjust as the dust continues to settle.

Mr. Homan felt the Selectmen should have another meeting where the public can say their piece about how they will move forward with the hiring of the Chief of Police position. Chair Helm agreed and added that she had total confidence that Chief Andersen was doing a good job and people should feel well-protected and safe. Sherriff Hilliard commended the Selectmen for going through with this study and said that they were doing their town a great service.

Recreation Commission Members Jason Stadler, Laura James, Laura Lorio joined the meeting to participate in interviews for the Recreation Director position.

**IT WAS MOVED (Peter Bianchi) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to enter nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(b) to conduct interviews for the Recreation Director position.**

**Roll call vote - Selectmen: Helm: YES; Kidder: YES; Bianchi: YES**

**Roll call vote - Recreation Commission: Stadler: YES; James: YES; Lorio: YES**

The Selectmen and Recreation Commission entered nonpublic session at 5:03 PM.

The Selectmen and Recreation Commission re-entered the public portion of their meetings at 7:05 PM.

**IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Peter Bianchi) to adjourn the meeting at 7:05PM. THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUS.**

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary  
Town of New London