

Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting
November 19, 2011
7:30am

Meeting Attendees:

Mark Kaplan (Selectman Chair), Tina Helm (Selectman), Kim Hallquist (Town Administrator), Jack Harrod, Renate Kannler, Bruce Hudson, Beth Swanson, Peter Hoglund, Donn Klingler, Teri Bingham, Will Kidder, Terri LeBlanc, Celeste Cook, Dave Payne, Phyllis Piotrow, Rip Cross, Rick Anderson, Jack Sheehan, Ann Loeffler, Hardy Hasenfuss, Howard Hoke, Carolyn Lockhart, Bud Dick, Susan Bryant (New London Hospital), Bob MacMichael (7:55am).

Chair Kaplan called the **MEETING TO ORDER** at 7:30 AM. He welcomed Susan Bryant from New London Hospital who was there to speak about Hospital Days. Before giving the floor to Ms. Bryant, Chair Kaplan noted that he had received a letter from the New London Hospital regarding the cost overrun for the ambulance; instead of asking the Town for additional funds, the hospital has agreed to waive the additional fee to the town, which was \$38,000. Chair Kaplan noted his appreciation for the hospital's efforts to keep costs down and not request additional funds. He requested that a letter be sent to the hospital to that effect.

Ms. Bryant thanked everyone for inviting her to speak to the CAC. She explained that Hospital Days started 87 years ago and was a fundraising benefit for the hospital, put on by the summer residents. It was always on a Tuesday and the town shut down for that day. The merchants and residents put on activities on at the green and there was a parade. The money raised would go to the hospital. The Tuesday-event eventually changed to Saturday as people were working and found it hard to attend mid-week. When people stopped coming to the one-day, Saturday event, it was changed again. In the late 1980's it was decided to make it a longer event to raise more money for the hospital. In 1991-92 an amusement company was brought in for a period of time over the weekend. This evolved into a three day event when amusement companies began requiring a minimum of three days. This required them to have the event from Thursday night through Saturday night, which has been her experience since her beginnings in New London.

Ms. Bryant said that they recently had to take a look at the finances for the event. At the end of 2010 they were all asked in their departments to take a look at everything they were doing to see if it fit with their mission as a hospital and within their budgetary constraints. Over the years they have reported to the community what the proceeds of Hospital Days were, but not the expenses. Into the 90's and in the last 10 years, Hospital Days has become a pure hospital-staffed event. While there are many volunteers, the coordination and structure of it is done by hospital staff. By 2002 they had to hire a Hospital Days coordinator who worked part time for six months, which eventually evolved into a full-time position. Their facilities team works on the event as well. The hospital also incurs expenses for the tents, porta-potties, etc. Additionally, the town was incurring expenses for the roles it played such as police, fire and recreation staff.

In 2010 expenses, excluding staff time (for the hospital and town) was \$25,200. Revenues were \$46,500. When an event begins to cost 60% of what it brings in, that is when it needs to be changed. If they added in the expense of their full time equivalent, marketing costs, coordinator, facilities team, expenses became 180% of revenue. Over the years they were losing approximately \$60,000 per year. It was mostly in staff time, but it was clearly not a sustainable event.

Ms. Bryant explained that in a hospital where there have been no raises or contribution to retirement in two years, they couldn't justify keeping the event the way it was. They needed to change it. It was suggested by some stakeholders to try and take Hospital Days back the way it used to be. This year they

had a one-day event with participation from the Outing Club and the Recreation Department as well. This lessened their tent and porta-potty costs. The big thing they lost was the midway. The stakeholders were split about this particular change as it was taking something away from the older group of kids who came, and was hard to tell out-of-town people in advance that this change was happening. They had a battle of the bands instead which was suggested by Chief Seastrand. Including expenses of having a part-time person from April through September, with sponsorships and other proceeds, they netted \$15,000. They don't view Hospital Days as a fundraiser for the hospital. Their goal now is to not spend as much money.

Ms. Bryant said she understood completely that the loss of the midway was a disappointment to many. This transition year has worked well and they kept parts of it: rotary pancake breakfast, market on the green, and the bake sale. The whole reason the event became three days was because the midway company wanted to be assured that there would be other things going on to bring people in. They would get 20% of the proceeds from the midway. \$9,000 was the most earned over the years. The simple fact became that the hospital was putting on an event for the community. They always like to thank the community, but when they are trying to meet their mission, help those who can't afford their healthcare, etc. it didn't make sense for them to spend \$60,000 on this event.

This year started off with the usual Pancake Breakfast, activities put on by the Outing Club and the Recreation Department, the Teddy Bear Clinic, Market on the Green, the parade, Battle of the Bands, and ended with a movie on the green. She felt that attendance was down because of the lack of the midway, but said she received more positive than negative comments. It was has heard from a lot of people that it was nice to have it the way it was. Some felt the midway was a distraction.

Ms. Bryant felt that the midway was a wonderful way to draw people to town. They had a lot of retailers in town who were stakeholders and the event planners tried to engage the food retailers to participate. Their plan for 2012 is to keep it as a one-day event. They can't return to the way it was. Other non-profits have asked if they could bring the midway into town themselves. Ms. Bryant said they were open to other models but noted that anyone wishing to enlist a midway company would have to come to the town for permitting and other expenses it would incur. The hospital cannot and will not go forward with a three day event; it is not keeping with their mission and they cannot afford the expense.

Ms. Helm asked if the Recreation Department and Outing Club services were donated. Ms. Bryant said that they were. This proved to be an expense to the town, but not the hospital. She also indicated that Jessie Levine (former Town Administrator) had called her shortly before the 2010 hospital days, informing her that the expenses incurred by the Town for Hospital Days was at least \$5,000, which was not being charged to the hospital. Ms. Bryant said she didn't dispute that figure at all. Her response was that she wished she had been told this fact earlier because had this been so, they could have budgeted for it. She didn't know what the town's expense was for the event this year.

Mr. Hoke said that during the day of and the day after the event he didn't hear one negative comment. He thought it was well attended, and that people enjoyed the parade. He noticed a lot more younger children there, and heard from some of the the older children (who would have been at the midway) say that they enjoyed it. He heard others say they appreciated the quiet made possible by the absence of the midway. He could imagine that people from out of town may have been disappointed, but that most people understand the reason for the changes - the cost of the event and lack of revenue. They seemed to have a "lets try it" attitude. Mr. Hoke said that he is part of the Masons and there was some enthusiasm within the group to participate in Hospital Days the year, but the offer came a little too late to be able to plan anything. They would be on track to participate in 2012.

Ms. Helm said the teen population may not have been served as well as they had in prior years and wondered if there had been any effort to try and engage the teens in leading some of the activities geared for the younger people. Ms. Bryant said that wasn't done, but they would try for next year. Some teens did volunteer for some of the activities. They worked with a dance group at the hospital who organized a flash mob. They didn't really reach out to groups that could have been better integrated.

Mr. Dick said he was involved in the pre-planning, with the Chamber of Commerce. They agreed that the midway was not a good idea, financially. He wondered if they could increase the market on the green into a weekend event. He also noted an event in the mid-west called a "Tractor Square Dance" which drew a lot of teens. He also suggested an agricultural fair theme.

Ms. Bryant said the community stakeholder group was open to everything. Her caution was "who was going to do it" as many events incur expense due to staffing and planning. They had discussed "Amazing Race New London" in the town. It became an overwhelming amount of work. They don't know if they will hire anyone, even part-time, to plan Hospital Days this year. Volunteer organizations can certainly plan things and she was open to this, but she explained that she was the "staff" at this point.

Ms. Bingham wondered about any comments the merchants shared in the debriefing meeting from Hospital Days. Ms. Bryant said that no merchants came to the debriefing, although they were invited. They did speak with Rob Bryant at the Chamber of Commerce, however. Her understanding is that they (Chamber members) felt that business was down because people were not attracted to the event. Arctic Dreams didn't want to participate and was then disappointed when Walpole Ice Cream came and was selling ice cream at the event. Pizza Chef did participate but was not happy with the amount of people who came.

Ms. Helm asked Joe Cardillo about how the families with younger people felt as he networks with these kinds of families. Mr. Cardillo said from 1980 he has been living in the area, although not always in New London. He had a business in New London for 22 years and always saw that there were things people could count on happening in the summer. There was a lot of enthusiasm and a "buzz" from the middle of July to the end of August. People would make sure that vacations coincided with the Sunapee Craftsman's Fair and Hospital Days, both of which brought a lot of people and business into the area. He feared that they would lose this opportunity for the retailers if Hospital Days changed. Mr. Cardillo said he heard that some of the merchants who were at Hospital Days were not local; they were from the Upper Valley. He felt that the event should be one to build up their own area but it seemed as though other vendors were reached out to. He also heard a disappointment level that the midway wasn't there this year. Mr. Cardillo offered that the midway is something that the kids, especially the older kids, look forward to. Hospital Days was something like a rite of passage; they'd go to meet their friends at the midway. This year there was a void for that age group.

Mr. Cardillo said he received a response email about what people were hearing on why the midway was done away with. One person had heard that it was because the town did not help out very much and it was all on the hospital. They also thought that the midway company required a \$5,000 deposit, which had to be secured by the hospital. Another comment he heard was that some people don't like the "carnies" in town and don't want them around.

Mr. Cardillo said an email chain went out from some of the younger parents when they heard there was not going to be a midway. He wondered what they could do to change this but it never gained traction. He thought they were losing sight of the ripple effect that these kinds of events have. He suggested choosing a different movie choice in the future movie night event. This past year's movie was Grease, which wasn't appropriate for all ages.

Ms. Lockhart felt the planning committee did a good job to get the food people in town to consider being a part of the event. Ms. Bryant said they reached out to everyone. It wasn't until after people decided not to participate that they reached out to other vendors from other towns. They tried to incorporate Market on the Green but it was too late as most of the vendors had already planned to vend in other venues on the date of Hospital Days. Ms. Bryant explained that since they were changing the format, it would take them a while to get it right. She noted that the coordinator who was helping plan the event didn't know the community as well as others might. Hole in the Fence participated in a watermelon-eating contest, New London Confectioners didn't want to participate, which is why they invited the Cupcake Lady from Lebanon.

Mr. Hoke said he has been an active volunteer for Hospital Days since 1989. He doesn't go on vacation until after Hospital Days. He was hearing ideas coming forth and others who were looking for feedback. While this is good, he noted that this doesn't get the job done. People need to step up to the plate, organize, commit and do it. Over the last 22 years it has gone from being put on by citizens in the community, to an event that is being provided and organized by the hospital. Mr. Hoke stressed that if people want it to be different, do it; don't tell the hospital what to do. The people in town who complain should be told the same; do it. Mr. Cardillo agreed with Mr. Hoke on this. He said he gets many people coming to him with input but he can't get anyone to step up to do something. It is hard to get volunteers now-a-days. Ms. Helm added that similarly, she was concerned that they are not getting people in town who want to run for office.

Ms. Piotrow asked if they were perhaps making a mistake about having Hospital Days be only in the center of town. Her grandchildren like to spend time with animals, going to the corn maze, visiting Cricenti Bog, Knights Hill, etc. Instead of having Hospital Days all on the green, have interesting things around town end encourage people to go places at certain times. This may help with volunteers as well. Chair Kaplan said they need to consider how they will move forward. If they move away from the green, they would have to have a lot of volunteers or money, which they don't have.

Mr. Cross asked if someone was not a member of a local group and wanted to volunteer, how they would go about finding out volunteering needs. Ms. Bryant said in the past they first turn to their own volunteers, of which they have 190. They have not reached out to ask for volunteers for Hospital Days. She said it is different to ask someone to volunteer for a shift or to help out, than to ask them to raise money or organize a large event. Mr. Cross said that people could volunteer and filter down into the positions they were willing to fill.

Mr. Denning said that one community he loves to go to is Newport as there is a lot of collaboration and enthusiasm there. One can feel the heart and soul there. Newport doesn't have the things that New London has, but Newport has so much more because they have the heart and soul – many families come out for events there. Mr. Denning noted that he brings his own family to Newport events because he likes the energy there. In New London, they can't get everyone together at once. He recently sent an email to 20 food vendors for the Winter Carnival. One person came to the meeting. When he reaches out and hears nothing, it makes him feel like he doesn't want to do it. The community center project has the same problem; there aren't enough people who want to play in the same sandbox. Mr. Denning noted that they need to get the heart and soul back into the community for events such as these to be a success.

Mr. Dick said that part of the problem was that over the years, a lot of people have created their own "turf" and they don't want to share. The Barn doesn't want to participate in community affairs because they have their own turf. The College has quite often resisted. Some seem to have built a wall around themselves and don't want to share.

Mr. MacMichael, after apologizing for being late to the meeting, said he remembered when Hospital Days was the big thing for the town. In those days they had a winter carnival as well that was popular. The only thing that upsets him about Hospital Days is volunteerism. Newport, Andover and Warner do these things together. For 25 years he ran the Hospital Days auction by himself. He did it all with his own truck and the help of his son Doug and Brian Prescott. One year they had two auctions because someone donated all of their home furnishings to the town. Everything they made went to the hospital. They had the spirit to do it then but he doesn't know why it has changed. He didn't feel the town is too big to still have this spirit.

Chair Kaplan observed that the town used to have two summer camps where parents would come up to get their children during Hospital Days and attend the event while they were in town. If the town wants to continue doing these types of activities, they can't do it without volunteers. If they don't get volunteer help, Hospital Days will fall by the wayside. It is up to the people of the town to get involved.

Mr. Payne said one approach would have been to not have Hospital Days at all. He thought they had a reasonably good transition year, from the three-day event to a one-day event. It could get better and he felt they were working to make it better. Mr. Cardillo said the college and hospital were two extremely important things in the town. He said there are reasons why people live and move here. This is a quintessential town in New Hampshire that outsiders love to come to visit. He felt they should keep Hospital Days in some way and felt they needed to figure out how to get more people in the room to volunteer.

Ms. Helm wanted to thank Mr. MacMichael for continuing the Veteran's Day service at the Baptist Church. She observed that the band, scouts and veterans provide a sobering and uplifting service. She thanked Mr. MacMichael for spearheading this event.

Ms. Lockhart said they have a vibrant core group of young people in town who love the area. She felt they would step up if asked or if they saw a need that should be filled. Ms. Kannler asked how other hospitals do when they put on fundraisers. Ms. Bryant said Alice Peck Day's (APD) biggest fundraiser is their auction. There are no staff persons at who touches this but it is all handled by volunteers. New London Hospital has their gala in June, which netted \$60,000. It was done by a volunteer committee, almost exclusively. They also do a golf tournament, which Baker Hill helps organize.

Ms. Bryant said that the hospital is committed to keeping Hospital Day, which is their thank you to the community. They are also committed to the triathlon. They have a good system down with the Chief of Police and the Fire Chief. She said that the hospital's charity care has increased 35% since last year; that is where their money needs to go.

Parking Regulations Elkins/Bucklin

Mr. Denning said that prior to this summer, Bucklin Beach had no permit or regulation required to park on dump road. Anyone could park there. This year they required a hang tag or dump sticker to park there. It was felt that Bucklin was being overused by non-residents. The Board of Selectmen agreed to try a permit parking system. The only way they can regulate who goes to the beach is through parking. He felt it was successful and the numbers at Bucklin went down a lot.

Mr. Denning passed around the results of a survey taken this year at the beach by the lifeguards. There were several things that were checked every few hours, such as the number of people in the water, on the beach, cars in the parking lot, and the weather. They saw a shift of the number of people who used to go to Bucklin who were now going to Elkins. These people are parking at the Mason's parking lot, the Post

Office, MESA, and other private driveways. The Post Office can be monitored, but it is hard to prohibit people from parking in these other areas. Mr. Denning said that he doesn't know if they have accomplished anything by taking more people away from Bucklin, which can actually hold more people than Elkins can. He can't tell who the non-residents were or who the guests of people who are residents were. He said the beaches were used a lot, the boats and kayaks were used steadily, and the lifeguards were great. They did have to make a few big saves this year.

Mr. Hoke wondered if there was a sign that said "Boat Trailer Parking Only" at the Mason's lot if it would create a circumstance where the town could oversee it. Mr. Denning said they have talked about this with Chief Seastrand but said it was tricky. Mr. Hoke said they could put specific wording to make sure it was just the boat and trailer and not vehicles.

Mr. Sheehan said the thrust of the program was that Bucklin tended to be overused. By shifting the people to Elkins he wondered if it was overused. Mr. Denning said that in comparison to Bucklin, Elkins did appear to be overused.

Ms. Swanson said she frequents Bucklin Beach 3-4 times/week with her kids. She thanked the Recreation Department for keeping the bathrooms open later this past summer. Ms. Swanson added that sometimes people in town want outsiders to come into town (to shop and for business) but not at other times (use of beaches). The only comment she heard was that every weekend people living there could not go to the beach because there was nowhere to park. She opined that New London has a persona of "exclusivity"; while many don't want that persona, she feels that some in town like it. People in New London don't want people outside of New London to go to Bucklin Beach. The kids from other towns who go to school with the New London kids want to get together and play at the beach and she didn't see that this should be discouraged. She hasn't seen a horrible overuse of the beach at Bucklin and she would like to encourage a less "exclusive" attitude within the town.

Mr. Denning said other towns offer the purchase of a pass if they are not residents, but New London does not give this option.

Mr. Hasenfuss opined that Elkins was much busier than usual but he didn't feel it was overused. It was never a problem for him put his chair on the beach or to get into the water. Mr. Denning said that it wasn't overused, but was busier than it ever had been. Mr. Cardillo said that their kids go to school with kids in other towns. People from outside of the town are part of the community. They shouldn't put up so many barriers. Mr. Denning said they are not looking to regulate any further.

Mr. Hoke said that when he sees a family drive up and drop off six kids and an adult, it is great. He doesn't want to exclude people from using the beach. The Masons noticed that more frequently than past years as there were issues regarding parking that were a bit of a problem and tension. He said if there was something they could do, they would like to help. Mr. Denning said that generally the cars they saw parked near Elkins were not from New Hampshire or were from out of town, but they were just trying to use the beach. He noted that it was an unfortunate result of the new parking rules that Elkins should get the shift of more people when Bucklin can hold more people.

Mr. MacMichael said he has let some people park in his yard and swim at Elkins. He said on Sundays he'll see groups of people who are parked at the Mason's hall and walk to the beach. He said he feels sorry for them because they have to walk all that way just to go swimming.

Chair Kaplan thanks Ms. Bryant for coming to speak on Hospital Days and Chad Denning for discussing the parking rules at the town beaches.

Chair Kaplan asked those at the meeting if they wanted to have a meeting in the month of December. The decision was no. The CAC will meet again in January.

The meeting adjourned at 9:06am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London