

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
November 7, 2015, 7:30 AM  
New London Police Department  
Whipple Hall**

**PRESENT:**

Nancy Rollins, Chair  
Peter Bianchi, Selectman  
Janet Kidder, Selectman  
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer  
Scott Blewit, Director of Parks and Recreation

**ALSO PRESENT:** John Cannon, Dave Payne, Jack Sheehan, Donn Klinger, Katherine Fischer, Marie Rossachaj, Bruce & Renate Hudson, Casey Bruno, Maureen Prohl, Robert Prohl, Joe Cardillo, Mark & Thelma Kaplan, Marie Kaplan, Rose Bernard, Phyllis Piotrow, Tim McMurrich, Laura Lorio, Pete Hoglund, Kate Turcotte, David Royle, Lindsay Lund, Bob Crane, Jason Stradler, Sue Little

The meeting was called to order by Chair Nancy Rollins at 7:30 AM and Chair Rollins asked everyone present to identify themselves for the record and identify themselves when speaking.

Scott Blewitt introduced himself and thanked everyone for coming and gave some employment background and personal history. Scott grew up in Newport and graduated from high school in 1991, college in 1995 and then went to work for Newport Recreation from 1995 to 2013. He has been with New London since 2013 and loves the community. Scott brought in his own personal flat screen television and displayed a seven minute slide show that featured most of the events that have gone on in the past year including beginner archery, karate, yoga, Insanity Workouts, after-school intramurals, art classes for adults and children, toddler group activities, summer camp, swimming lessons, paddle-board lessons, sailing lessons, Halloween activities, Easter activities, Christmas activities, Winter Carnival and Hospital Days participation. Scott expressed his gratitude and said he had been fortunate to follow in the footsteps of Bob Andrew and Chad Denning.

Scott stressed how the building is used most of the time and the convenience of the location. Many of the recreation functions are done in conjunction with Colby Sawyer students and it is fortunate that the students can just walk over as they may not have cars. The recreation van is on location and very easily accessible when needed. During summer day camp the children go right outside to play on the green. He also stated that the recreation department has a wonderful relationship with the Historical Society, the Chamber of Commerce, the Outing Club, and the school district and Scott sees his role as being a team player and a facilitator.

Scott spoke about the Recreation Department van that was donated by Woodcrest. The van is used all the time but especially in the summer during day camp when it is used five days a week

to transport children to and from Bucklin Beach. It is also used for school vacation day trips when the kids are off school and working parents need a place for their kids to go.

Summer time is extremely busy at the recreation department and both Elkins Beach and Bucklin Beach are used by residents as well as the many lessons that take place at the beaches. Scott pointed out that both beaches have new signs and the he asked for questions from the audience.

In response to a question about the length of summer camp, Scott replied that kids can sign up for only one week or up to eight weeks in any combination or they can come for \$35 a day if needed. To accommodate a late start day by the school system, the camp went to nine weeks this past summer. Signing up for the week is a better deal financially. This past summer the registration doubled to 50-60 kids a week and additional kids were taken on Wednesday when there are field trips. On these days the Goffstown Bus Company is used to accommodate all the kids. The Recreation Department also offers a Tuesday and Thursday Junior Summer Adventure Camp that does fishing, farming with Spring Ledge Farm and stump dump art with Alison and Mark Vernon.

Scott was asked how many kids come to the camp and how many of those children were outside of New London and he replied there certainly are children that come from surrounding areas, many whose parents work in town. He thought about 40 to 45 percent people come from outside New London.

The need was expressed for a town park and Scott explained the desire for a place so that people can socialize and have special events such as birthday parties or wedding receptions. Right now the town green is available for many events and it is a beautiful place to go. Scott said what he hears most often is that people want a place to go with their dogs and they can't go to the beaches. Scott said he envisions a place where residents have a gazebo, a green area, a dog park, an athletic field and a playground.

In response to a question from the audience, Scott said his current relationship with NLOC is good and has improved over the years. Scott has a personal relationship with current president Jim Tucker and they have tried to do things together but NLOC is very busy with athletic scheduling. They were most cooperative with the recent "Haunted Walk" and even let the Colby Sawyer Players use their classroom space as a dressing room. When NLOC puts on movie nights Scott allows them to use his movie screen.

Joe Cardillo reported he was asked about money reserved to renovate the Elkins bathrooms and wanted to know the time frame on completion. Scott reported the bathrooms are not ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant, the doors are too narrow for a wheel chair to fit. The stalls are outdated in that they are not strong enough to hang support bars from. In order to make compliant the size of stalls may have to decrease. Scott added the sinks are too low and the supports are too wobbly. There is a new idea that would create a new separate bathroom in the back of the building which would be designated handicapped. Scott is waiting for a final design, and expects work to be done by Memorial Day in the spring of 2016. Nancy Rollins expressed need for a family bathroom that would include a diaper changing area and Scott replied both bathrooms currently have diaper changing tables. Scott thinks the last time these

bathrooms were updated was in the 1970's. The windows have been replaced so it is brighter but is still in need of new fixtures and a paint job. Bucklin Beach was done in 2013 with a separate bath and has worked out beautifully.

It was asked if there was any relationship with the high school community like the existing relationship with Colby Sawyer students in so much as the recreation department would be a good resource for seniors looking to fulfill their community service hours. Scott replied not so much and he thought it was a matter of accessibility although he would like to be able to provide high school students with some hours.

Scott said the recreation department has a good relationship with CFA (Center for The Arts) which is based out of New London and this organization benefits the entire region. They assist with set up art and music programs at Whipple Hall and split event profits after expenses are paid.

Scott also added that this is a wonderful group of summer staff and it has been his goal to increase pay from \$8.50/hr. to \$9.00/hr. so that it is competitive with other employers. The summer staff is grateful for this increase and it makes it easier to retain staff. They know they will have a great working environment as opposed to the state beach at \$11.00 an hour.

Janet Kidder suggested Scott should talk about the money received from the Byrn Family Trust. Any time there is a large group going on a summer trips there is a need to hire a commercial bus. Scott reached out to Dorothy Byrn from Lyme, New Hampshire for financial help to purchase a new van that will probably cost about \$50,000. Scott asked the foundation for \$15,000 to get started and three days later he received a check for \$15,000. Scott will ask the town for another \$15,000 and expects to be able to get the rest of the money with fund-raising events. Scott feels he needs to plan for a new van in the future as the current van is getting older and needing more repairs all the time. The present van can accommodate 12 people but currently a seat belt is broken so can only take 11 people. The van came from Woodcrest but is not very comfortable. The desired van will accommodate 15 people with a center aisle and more windows, a shuttle style. If there is a need to put in a handicap ramp to accommodate a child in a wheel chair then the van would only accommodate 11 people. Scott said he hopes to arrange smaller trips for seniors and adults in addition to the trips to the Red Sox games and other places. Lindsay Lund asked if the van was available for the people in attendance to have a look at and Scott offered them a ride around the block. When asked how often the van is used, Scott replied it is used all the time in the summer for camp and various activities. Scott introduced members of the recreation commission, Chair Jason Stadler, Laura Lorio, Lindsay Lund, Casey Fuso and Janet Kidder. Marie Rossachacj asked what will be done if a handicap student needed transportation and since it is a public function this access would have to be accommodated. Scott said he has not had this happen as yet but if he wants to plan for more senior trips this needs to be a consideration for the older population. Nancy Rollins thought that multi-generational use of the vehicle a good idea.

Scott talked about a software program called "Rec Desk" that he uses for event and sports registration that also had the capability of sending bulk email. He will be spending time to get all

email addresses entered so that he can keep people informed with pertinent material at the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Marie Rossachaj asked if the “New London Families” page could be updated and Laura Lorio replied that it was just done. She also asked about the cost of renting a handicapped equipped van on an “as needed” basis and Scott agreed that option was a good alternative.

When asked if there was any area of town that should be pursued as a recreation area, Scott referred to a 2005 map of the Kearsarge/Lake Sunapee Community Center. This land is on Pleasant Street and across the street are the Kidder/Cleveland Trails. This is roughly 26 acres that is owned by the Kidders and the Clevelands and is still undeveloped at this point with probably a third of the property designated as wetlands. It was noted that Mary Haddad funds may be available for acquisition of recreation lands.

Responding to a question, Scott informed the audience that his budget of \$146,000 included his salary, advertising, insurance, telephone, summer staff, waterfront staff, computer support, special events and other items you would expect as operating costs. Most programs are totally paid for by user fees with the exception of beach staffing and swim instructors. There was a change in swimming lesson arrangements which increased the amount of money brought in to \$9,500 from \$3,500 last season. Additionally, more children are served while still meeting the criteria of the American Red Cross swim lesson program. Currently residents pay \$35 fee and non-residents pay \$50.

Laura Lorio expressed the desire to obtain property for a recreation facility. Lindsay Lund commented that the reason she was late for the meeting this morning was because she was unable to find parking which is also the case when you try to pick up your child from a recreation program such as summer camp. The day camp previously used the multi-purpose room at the school but because the room was not available the past two years, the day camp had to be held at Whipple Hall.

Question asked if there was a need for a skate park and Scott replied the boards the current generation are using are long boards which work better in the streets. These are generally used by college students and they want to use the public roads. There was a push at one point but that no longer exists and the younger children are usually taken to skate parks by their parents.

Question was asked about insurance coverage for a skate park and Wendy Johnson said that the recreation department was covered by a blanket insurance policy. The parks and beaches are listed on the insurance policy and the insurance company sends a representative to inspect.

Rob Prohl asked if any conversation has occurred about creating a bike lane in town. Janet Kidder replied it is part of the Upper Valley 10-year plan as well as signage indicating bike lanes and the need for safety. It was noted that Mark Veron has been working on a bike lane from behind Hubert’s (and the hospital) along the power lines.

It was noted that the town owns a lot of land where the old sewer plant used to be. This is at the end of Frothingham Road where the Lyon Brook Trail goes all the way down to Kezar Lake.

There was a question about the insurance for drivers of the van and Scott replied because it is under 15 passengers there is no special license required and as long as the driver is 18 years of age they are covered. In addition, all volunteers and employees that work with the recreation department children have to pass a background check.

The \$15,000 donation from the Bird Foundation has to be used for a van and there is no date the money has to be used by. If the money is not used for a van it has to be returned to the foundation. Scott will do more research as to cost of a new van versus the cost of a used van.

Joe Cardillo expressed his pleasure that the town is sharing facilities but that they will not share the program registration software called Rec Track. Originally, the Outing Club paid the initial \$10,000 but town has paid the \$3,500 annual fee for the past two years. When Scott started he had a need for some training but there was no money available at the time and it was not included in the software license. Scott found an alternative software program call Rec Desk at a cost of \$2,350 year with no additional fees. The Outing Club pays for their own software now.

Question was asked if there is enough parental involvement to run all the programs at the recreation department. Each group has volunteers but in the summer time it is mostly paid people. Certain times of year such as the beginning of summer, Winter Carnival, the Strawberry Festival and Hospital Days are examples of times when staff has to be available to answer the phone and questions. This is where Rene is required so that good customer service can be provided. Knowledgeable staff is needed to accurately answer questions. Colby Sawyer interns are available sometimes but this should not be relied on and there are variations in ability.

Scott commented it had been a pleasure to work with the hospital during Hospital Days, the historical society, the Outing Club and the college to incorporate the Chad Denning Walk to School Day. Chad was instrumental in getting the sidewalks on Pleasant Street. Scott said we should always acknowledge people who contributed to the community.

Scott was asked if there is a place in town where he would like to see the recreation department. Scott would like to be close to Main Street where there is plenty of parking and central for the activities for children as well as accessible to the senior population. He would like a community center that includes lots of green space. The 1941 building was brought up and suggested that building be taken back. Laura Lorio suggested that everyone should go to an informational meeting on Nov. 12 at the SAU office. Laura said she thought it was going to take 2 to 3 million dollars to renovate or bring the 1941 building to a useable state and even at this amount the building would not be luxurious. Nancy Rollins said there is potential space at the 1941 building that might be shared and again encouraged people to attend the SAU November 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. It was also suggested that audience members read the "all-scenario history" that was recently published in the newspaper. This history will list all the proposals that have been constructed for the last 7 years and it would be helpful to read before going into the meeting. Nancy Rollins wants to remain in conversation with the school board and does not think a developer will be interested in the project because there is not a good financial return. The school board is not interested in returning the property to the town. She also encouraged audience members to attend the SAU meeting on November 12<sup>th</sup>.

Peter Biachi reiterated that the SAU wants to control the land although they are willing to give someone else the building so that they would assume the cost of demolishing the building. There are other groups interested in leasing the building. The land is valuable and SAU has plans for the land. They want to address traffic flow and parking issues. They may want to use the middle school campus for staff training at a centralized campus. It was always conveyed that they would not give up the land.

Scott asked for suggestions for any programs or trips that the public would like to see. Nancy thanked Scott and said she had received numerous compliments for the rec dept.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 AM and a tour of the recreation van commenced.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Vitiello,  
Recording Secretary  
Town of New London, NH