



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES February 6, 2016

PRESENT:

Nancy Rollins, Chair
Peter Bianchi, Selectman
Janet Kidder, Selectman
Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Bob and Emma Crane, Sue Little, Jack Sheehan, Rob and Maureen Prohl, John Cannon, Peter Hoglund, Phyllis Piotrow, Bruce Hudson, Renate Kannler, Celeste Cook, Joe Cardillo, Tim McMurrich, Katharine Fischer, Marianne McEnrue

The meeting was called to order by Chair Nancy Rollins at 7:33 AM.

Chair Rollins reiterated a desire by Jack Sheehan (brought forth at the last meeting) to have concerns of the citizens brought to light. Mr. Sheehan said his tenure over the past six years has been more as a listener as officials take the opportunity to inform attendees of the CAC about recent projects but this venue has not been an opportunity for the concerns of the townspeople to be brought to light. Mr. Sheehan said that it seems the most important concern at hand is that the Recreation Department is squeezed into the Whipple Hall space. Police and dispatch are already established in this space (it would be somewhat hard to move them somewhere else) so that if the Recreation Department moved, this extra space would open up and suit the needs of police and dispatch. This is an appropriate space for police and dispatch.

Janet Kidder described the office space behind the glass reception window that is being used by Scott Blewitt for the Recreation Department. Ms. Kidder said it would be nice to have a facility to suit the needs of the Recreation Department. If recreation did move out, the wall between the current office which Scott Blewitt is using and the dispatch office could be removed and the space would be retrofitted to suit the needs of the police department. When asked a question as to where the rec department stores their equipment Ms. Kidder replied "all over town" in such places as the bathrooms at the beaches. She added, there are currently mats stored on the stage at Whipple for exercise classes and karate equipment just inside the exit doors as well as voting equipment.

Rob Prohl talked about the proposal of a lease for storage area at the adjacent elementary school. Chair Rollins said there is space and she has talked a little with school building personal about storage. It was noted this is not in the 1941 Building but the part of the building already in use by NLOC and the SAU 65. Mark Kaplan and Bill Helm are in discussion with the school board concerning the 1941 Building.

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Jack Sheehan introduced discussion concerning the property on East Pleasant Street for purchase by the Conservation Commission and wondered if some part could be used for storage facilities. Peter Bianchi said this is soon to be voted on but this land will be used for conservation land. It was noted there are about 8 acres of wetlands in this area. If Conservation Commission purchases it will remain in conservation.

Phyllis Piotrow spoke about the current low interest rates and how people tend to be in favor of long-term loans but that there is not sufficient money being funded in the capital budget. Ms. Piotrow suggested that when there are overages (over spending) in other department, the maintenance department funds are used and they get depleted. Ms. Piotrow asked what members thought about putting more money into the capital reserve fund although this will mean a small increase in the taxes. She suggested that we step up the amount we save every year.

Joe Cardillo agreed with Ms. Piotrow and stated that this group is a sounding board and they hear casual conversation around town and are able to share this information with the Selectmen. Mr. Cardillo said the Budget Committee will continue to put money away for future needs and the public should not be of the mindset that the budget committee is not looking into the future. Next year in 2017, \$70,000 in annual payments towards debt will disappear but will be replaced by another \$55,000 in debt payment. Mr. Cardillo stated the need to have some discussion about sharing space with other facilities in town such as the NLOC and the school district are doing now. He said we need to identify space and requirements by the various departments. It is entirely appropriate that beach stuff be stored at the beach. If we really need office space, this should be identified.

Maureen Prohl said recreation programs have increased in number and variety over the years.

Joe Cardillo commented that many programs are off-site and not all programs will take place under one roof.

Chair Rollins said that even if kids are being taken on a trip, there is still a need for a safe space for children to be dropped off and picked up. This area must have good traffic flow.

Jack Sheehan said the recreation center should be in the center of town and should have parking and a safe place to drop off and pick up children. Have we given any thought to purchasing a building in town that would be appropriate and should be close to existing facilities?

Chair Rollins said this should go on long-term planning and that the age of children as well as the declining population at the elementary school should be taken into consideration.

Phyllis Piotrow said there are capital reserve funds for fire trucks, police equipment and dump trucks. There should also be a plan to acquire and preserve the old buildings that need much work.

Janet Kidder stated members of the Planning Board have had conversations with the college about sharing space. As an example, Ms. Kidder said the Archives Department of the town and the college have a lot in common in that both department refer to New London citizens.

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Jack Sheehan asked as to the location of the college archives and Kate Turcotte stated the college archives department is in the college library.

Peter Bianchi referred to a chart which illustrated how \$122,000 was currently in capital reserves and there are 12 other accounts that are being funded. The highway department has \$150,000 in their account. Capital reserve accounts are sufficiently funded. Phyllis Piotrow said money had to be added to this since there was not enough. Mr. Bianchi thinks the storage problem could be solved quite easily by adding portable storage. He spoke to the possible sale of the TDS Building directly across the street from the fire department. He suggested it might be wise to ask the TDS people for right of first refusal when/if there is a sale.

Joe Cardillo asked for a further description of archives. Mr. Cardillo wanted to know if the documents were paper. Janet Kidder responded both paper and digital as well as books, flags and other articles. These items are hard to get to and parking is also a consideration. Ms. Kidder asked the committee to take a moment and think about what parking is going to be like on Election Day at Whipple Hall.

Joe Cardillo stated that collaborative avenues should be explored and that we are lucky to have a hospital and a school and a college in town. The school would be a natural partner for the recreation department. This is a facility that will be used after school.

Janet Kidder stated the Town has been working with the NLOC and the school board but at this point in time there is only discussion. It is hard to know how much should be disclosed concerning these discussions.

John Cannon said he does not understand where the available space is in town and Janet Kidder said most of the space in the area is already being used.

Marianne McEnrue said it would be helpful to have knowledge of what departments need space and identify specialized requirements of a particular department. Janet Kidder said that department heads have tried to address these needs. Ms. McEnrue asked if a list exists and if this list is available for the public to view.

Town Administrator Kim Hallquist said CIP has knowledge of the department requirements and they have a list and Ms. McEnrue said it would be helpful to have a public list.

Sue Little stated that when the Archives Department moved into the town offices they knew it was damp and only a small portion was climate controlled. It is too small for this department and stuff is crammed in and hard to access.

Marianne McEnrue asked if archived documents have been digitized and wondered about the need for hanging on to the hard copies of these documents. Sue Little and Maureen Prohl both lamented that these articles/documents had to be kept.

Maureen Prohl spoke to the costs that are unanticipated and there was not enough money to fund and perhaps these will need to be covered by a loan. What are we doing to plan for the future? She said she

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thought we were planning for these things 20 years ago. The Master Plan is for planning for the future. Does this Master Plan ever get used?

Janet Kidder stated you need the money to back up the things that are stated as needed 20 years down the road such as affordable housing for the young.

Kim Hallquist discussed the difference between the CIP and the Master Plan in that the CIP provides the funds for the Master Plan.

Jack Sheehan said institutional memory is very forgetful. He gave an example of the streetlights that were replaced 6 years ago by Town Administrator Jesse Levine. Mr. Sheehan stated that when administration changes, memory is lost. Perhaps this is the reason for the disconnect between the Master Plan and the CIP.

Phyllis Piotrow commented that these documents are hard to read and that the Planning Board does not appropriate money. These committees should work together. The fire and police departments speak for themselves and it is easy for them to talk about their needs.

Rob Prohl cited the lack of time by a volunteer board of selectmen and staffing to putting these pieces together.

Chair Rollins stated our participation in The Upper Valley/Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission. They have produced a document covering regional impacts that affect our town. Towns can do some work by looking at institutions that have charted information with studies that have collected data such as conditions of every culvert in town.

Katherine Fischer asked if we have access to this information.

Peter Bianchi reminded the committee of the previous Master Plan and was of the opinion that people do not remember what it contained. Even after a summary was commissioned to make it a little easier to understand, it was a complicated publication to understand. The current building was supposed to be a forever home for the Selectmen's Office and now the building is nice and tight but still some problems. There needs to be a way to remember what happened in the past. Where is this history located? Is this a function of the historical society or the archives department? We need to remember where we came from and where we are going.

Phyllis Piotrow suggested a column every week in the Intertown Record or a municipal newsletter.

Rob Prohl said the sewer lagoons was a perfect example. This should have been the purview of the Sewer Commission but the Sewer Commission was disbanded. When pumping to Sunapee was chosen and paid for there was extra money leftover but this money is gone and there is no record of where this money went. Tommy Miller said in the early 80's there should have been records. Many of the people who worked on this committee are no longer available to ask questions of. We should have records of what these committees have done.

Jack Sheehan brought the subject of recreation, police and dispatch and their space needs.

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Renate Kannler asked about priorities. Pleasant Lake Dam needs to be completed, there is a State deficiency and bids have been received. Unfortunately, priorities are driven by cost. Original estimates for the Pleasant Lake Dam came in at \$350,000 to \$500,000. Ms. Kannler asked what is going to be done about Whipple Hall. Where is this study? Peter Bianchi said nothing will be done to Whipple Hall until we know what this building will be used for. There is an estimate of \$700,000 to repair the current problems such as gutters, electricity and safety issues.

Jack Sheehan said we should not let this go way of the 1941 Building, let us keep in a state of good repair. Renate Kannler asked if we are going to fix.

Peter Hoglund suggested a loan to fix this, but Peter Bianchi said this is not legal for us to do unless it is a catastrophic event in which case one would hope the insurance covers.

Rob Prohl asked if there are any funds in the next budget for Whipple Hall such as the cupola. Peter Bianchi replied that first there must be capital funds appropriated at town meeting.

Kim Hallquist said the voters will be asked to approve the Selectmen as agents to make decisions on the funding of the Pleasant Lake Dam that is not included in the budget.

Rob Prohl asked about the present disposition of the 1941 Building and it was noted that Bill Helm and Mark Kaplin and in discussion with the school board.

Whipple Hall is in need of painting, exterior windows and gutters and the cupola needs to be fixed. Plastering at the front of building is fixed at a cost of \$1500 and not \$10,000 as was originally thought. Bushes at front of building were pruned back by Public Works. These improvements are not necessarily noticeable but they are being done at a modest cost internally.

Peter Hogund asked about the status of the skating rink and there was a quick recap of the situation that also appeared on the front page of the Intertown Record on January 26, 2016. Several parents have helped to install fences but they have fallen down several times. There was a suggestion to create a separate rink for hockey on the town green. Chair Rollins said discussion on the ice rink needs to start early in the year. Perhaps the field behind the 1941 Building would be a good place for a rink.

Joe Cardillo spoke to the importance of institutional memory and commented that many committees have come and gone and stressed the importance of the CAC for feedback. "I want nothing more than to see this town thrive and grow." said Mr. Cardillo and added "I travel a lot and see many towns and each one has an identity." This could be in the form of streetlights or flags hanging from the existing streetlights. Currently, when you drive into town there are buildings with lights on such at the Kidder Building occupied by the retail store known as Artisan's and this creates a lot of energy.

Celeste Cook added that there is not even a sign when you drive in that reads: "Welcome to New London"

Joe Cardillo commented that these are low-cost items.

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Phyllis Piotrow pointed to a framed article on the wall of the Sydney Crook Conference Room created by Gary Signor in 2004 that reproduced historical town markers from 1963 to 1978 for places of historical significance in New London. Ms. Piotrow would like to see a poster made and sold at Hospital Days.

Peter Bianchi mentioned a map that reflected all of the commercial district at one time.

Joe Cardillo ask which members owned the game “New London Monopoly” or had ever played.

Peter Hoglund wanted to know who owned the round-about and suggested better landscaping.

Janet Kidder stated that semi-tractor trailer trucks go right over the rotary due to turning/space problems.

Renate Kannler asked if we are planning to advertise for Town Meeting. Perhaps a big blinking sign could be put out in front of town offices?

Kim Hallquist asked if the potluck dinner was going to take place and that so far no one has come forward to organize. The requests she initiated were not possible due to health issues.

Jack Sheehan stated he felt this meeting had stimulated some different discussions.

Celeste Cook stated that there are 3211 registered voters in New London of which 1084 are registered Republican, 1346 are undeclared and 781 are registered Democrats. In the State of New Hampshire one can vote even if they undeclared. Those voters who are undeclared can change to a party the day of voting and if desired can then change party again when exiting the polling place. Ms. Cook then went on to explain proof of residency identification and said students who are living on campus can register to vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Vitiello
Recording Secretary
Town of New London, NH