



TOWN OF
NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

375 MAIN STREET • NEW LONDON, NH 03257 • WWW.NL-NH.COM

NEW LONDON CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE/
NON-RESIDENT TOWN MEETING MINUTES

Saturday, August 13, 2016, 7:30 AM

Whipple Memorial Town Hall
429 Main Street, New London, NH

PRESENT: G. William Helms, Board of Selectmen Chair
Janet Kidder, Board of Selectmen
Nancy Rollins, Board of Selectmen
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer
Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Kristen M. McAllister, Assistant Town Assessor
Jason B. Lyon, Fire Chief
Richard E. Lee, Public Works Director
Celeste Cook, Welfare Officer
Scott Blewitt, Recreation Director
Linda Nicklos, Tax Collector/Town Clerk
Don Sheffield, CAC
Paul Linehan, CAC
Pete Hogle, CAC
David Royle, CAC
Hank Otto, CAC
Sue Little, CAC
Katharine Fischer, CAC
Marie Rossachacj, CAC
John Cannon, CAC
Mark Vernon, CAC
Tracey MacKenna, CAC
Dale Putnam
Bruce Putnam
John Manaras
Ed Canane
Courtney Campe
Mary Ropka
John Philbrick
Peter Gunn
Nathaniel Stevens
Anne Cushman

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Helms called the meeting to order at 7:30 AM and explained the purpose of the Citizens Advisory Committee, which meets four times a year. He stated there was a three part agenda this morning and is as follows:

1. Kristen M. McAllister, Assistant Town Assessor will demonstrate the new accessing software
2. Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator, will distribute a list of current town projects with current status as well as a list of projects under consideration
3. Department heads are present to answer questions and give overview of recent department activities

Chair Helm introduced Kris McAllister and explained her position is shared with the towns of Sunapee and Newberry so that she has good basic understanding of property values in neighboring areas.

Kris McAllister presentation: Ms. McAllister presented *CAI Axis GIS* software overview with mapping capabilities on the visual overhead for the audience to see. She stated this software is to be used as a reference only since these maps are not completely accurate in that they are calculated based on a flat surface area. These maps are in the process of being brought up to date. She explained the search feature, which she uses very much. Ms. McAllister gave an example by inputting a last name and then using the sort feature. She demonstrated the draw tool, the color tool and the measurement tool; she showed how to add layers to maps for different topographical features. She demonstrated how to zoom in and out on a location for more detailed information. She showed how the software could be downloaded to an iPhone. She especially likes this feature because it gives her the ability to determine her exact location in the field when she might otherwise be unsure. The software is able to provide abutters information, layers to show buildings, houses and condos and layers for other towns. She demonstrated how the trails maps could be overlaid on a property as well as sewer lines and ponds. Ms. McAllister produced an example of a particular property in Sunapee and showed how to switch between the aerial map and the tax map. Ms. McAllister said she gets many questions from and about abutters and demonstrated to the audience how to search with specific criteria. She showed how the office uses this particular feature to print labels or a list in a PDF version. The software contains photographs of the properties and vacant lots as well as documents that are scanned electronically such as property cards, deeds, and permits. She then searched for a property on the water and was able to call up one that is going through extensive property upgrades and she pointed out appropriate features.

An audience member expressed concern about the release of personal information and Ms. McAllister explained it is hard sometimes to differentiate between personal information and what is public record. She stated that phone numbers are protected. Residents do not need to come into the office to access this information and Ms. McAllister demonstrated how to access this software on their own computer by using the official Town website. She explained how the assessor's office strives to keep property information up to date by performing a property visit once every five years, which amounts to 20% of the entire town. All property sales are also available online. She explained how to read a property card and that properties are taxed per the assessment at April 1st every year. One audience member asked why there is a difference between the selling price and the assessment price and Ms. McAllister said this occurs when people do updates before they sell their house and the assessed valuation will not reflect these updates if the department was not notified when updates were completed.

Chair Helm presented a *Town Projects Status Update as of August 12, 2016* which was authored by Kimberly Hallquist, and distributed. Items #1 through #9 are in process or have been completed. Items

#10 through #15 a., b., c., and d. are upcoming projects. The new recreation van acquisition is also complete but not included in this list below:

1. **Pleasant Lake Dam:** Dubois & King selected to perform engineering and seek approvals from State Dam Bureau to comply with the state issued Letter of Deficiency. This must be completed by May 1, 2017. Dam upgrades as approved by the State Dam Bureau must be made by November 30, 2018. Estimates: \$405,000 - \$485,000 for construction.
2. **Brookside Drive Culvert (first of two):** Town Meeting approved funding for first culvert, work expected to be done in Fall 2016 assuming property owners grant required easement and State permits are secured. The job was awarded to B.U.R. Construction of Claremont in the amount of \$204,000. Second culvert estimate is \$275,000.
3. **GIS (Geographic Information System) Mapping:** Town Meeting voted to appropriate the remaining funds needed to do this project for a total cost of \$115,000. Project is expected to take two years to complete.
4. **Wage & Salary Survey:** Employee Compensation: Survey completed, report submitted with recommendations. Selectmen are currently considering how they will implement salary increases expected to cost \$130,000 for an entire year, within the \$80,000 appropriated in the FY2017 budget.
5. **Bandstand Renovation:** This was completed in June including replacement of the floor, benches, stairs, repair of structural beams; addition of an ADA compliant ramp and ungraded electrical service to Code. Roof was replaced in January 2014.
6. **Elkins Sidewalk Project:** State/Federal Transportation Enhancement Grant of 80% of cost of sidewalks, drainage improvements, guardrails and pedestrian bridge. Town repaved the road during the project with budgeted road funds. Project completed at the end of May 2016 and dedicated to Bob and Janet MacMichael on July 31st, 2016.
7. **Sewer Lagoons:** One of three lagoons was officially closed this summer, two remaining lagoons expected to be closed in FY2018, depending on adequate funding: \$150,000.
8. **Sand & Salt Shed:** Public Works Department: Town Meeting approved appropriation of \$70,000 to replace existing sand & salt shed. Target date for completion: November 2016.
9. **Street Lighting:** LED conversion: Upon recommendation of the Energy Committee, the Selectmen agreed to replace the existing street lights with LED fixtures, paid in part with a grant of \$11,500 from Eversource and town funds of \$16,500. The Town has received the fixtures and installation of the fixtures will be accomplished in the coming weeks.
10. **1941 Building:** Selectmen met with the School Board to ask that the School Board hold off on a decision to raze the building until voters of New London have a chance to vote at Town Meeting, March 15, 2017, on whether it wanted to take over the building. Estimate received from Milestone to rehabilitate the building for town use: \$2,539,725.13

11. **Whipple Hall:** Cupola is currently being painted and repaired, the windows are out and being restored. Outside trim is being painted and gutters being inspected to formulate a plan for repair. Two engineering studies have been completed that outline extensive repairs and upgrades needed. Centennial of building is in 2018. There are ongoing discussions on how to approach repairs.

12. **Harold W. Buker, Jr. Municipal Building:** The Police Department, Dispatching and Recreation Departments. Two engineering studies have been completed that outline extensive repairs and upgrades needed to this building and Whipple; estimated cost: \$500,000. There are ongoing discussions on how to approach repairs.

13. **Academy Building:** Project to replace siding, repair cupola, add insulation and replace windows completed in Spring 2016. Remaining projects: adding insulation to the attic and replacement of roof: estimated cost for both: \$278,000 (insulation alone: \$92,000) – discussions on these remaining projects is ongoing.

14. **Roads, Bridges, Sidewalks:** Paving gravel roads, upgrading bridges and culverts, upgrading drainage, repairing existing sidewalks and adding new where needed. Public Works Director submitted project list that list \$1 million in projects that will need to be done. Additional funds will be needed for more aggressive gravel road paving.

15. Other projects to be considered in the coming year(s):

- a. Elkins Post Office Repairs
- b. Police and Communications Department future space needs
- c. Recreation Department future space needs
- d. Transfer Station future space needs: consolidate collection points, increase recycling opportunities

A question was asked as to how these items are paid for and Chair Helm explained that at the current interest it seems prudent to fund many projects with bonds. He added it is also wise to put money away for projects in the future but many of the projects on the list require immediate attention. Chair Helm explained that there is a dollar limit to how much can be paid for with a bond by a state limit of 3% of the assessed valuation of the town. In addition, he added that on page F9 of the Town Report is a list of the outstanding bond debts. He explained that in reference to the sewer debt, people in town who use the service also share the burden.

The status of the 1941 Building acquisition outcome was asked and Chair Helm said this has not been resolved. Selectman Rollins pointed out there are multiple issues to consider and that the 1941 Building is attached to the existing school district which is comprised of 7 area towns. Any building decisions must be made keeping the school district and child safety considerations in mind. Hank Otto asked if the building roof had been repaired, Selectman Kidder said the portion of the roof that required repair had been completed. This is actually the part covering the existing gymnasium and up to the 1941 Building. Chair Helm gave a short history of the various uses of the building through the years. He stated the building will need an estimated 2.5 million dollars to be repaired.

Chair Helm explained the how New London tax rate is broken down per \$1000:

Town Tax:	4.50
County Tax:	2.93

Statewide Education Tax:	2.37
Local Education Tax:	6.10
Total Tax Rate:	15.45
Water Precinct Tax:	.98

Richard Lee, Public Works: Two residents thanked Richard Lee for opening the Transfer Station on Saturday and Sunday. Mr. Lee informed the audience that 600 to 700 cars a day visit the transfer station and the area was not meant to accommodate this large number of cars. He also explained how there are various places in town for recycling other items that the main transfer station does not take and perhaps one day these can be consolidated. Chair Helm opined we might work out something with other towns so that it would be easier to dispose of unusual items.

Linda Nicklos stated the Town Clerk/Tax Collector is now open the last Saturday of the month from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

Fire Chief Jason Lyon demonstrated a software package known as *Active 911*, which is an interactive program installed on every firefighter's cell phone so the Chief knows exactly how many people are responding to a particular alarm. It also lets him know precisely where all the apparatus is located. This software gives him the tools to access a situation and determine how many men he is going to call and what equipment to bring to the scene. He commented that it has been very dry and there have been various fires from people throwing cigarettes out of their car windows. He also noted there is an abundance of motor vehicles accidents although these are provided service by the New London EMS team. Chief Lyon stated there are 3 full-time employees at the Fire Department from 7 in the morning to 7 at night and the remaining time is covered by the on-call office. The main focus of the fire department is on:

- Preparedness (making sure the trucks start, tanks are filled with water, there is air in the cylinders)
- Training, Recruitment and Retention (list of firefighters over last 5 years has changed dramatically)
- Firefighters have to know locations in town as well as property access and egress

Lucy St. John, Planning and Zoning Administrator introduced herself and explained how she uses the GIS maps all the time. Ms. St. John stated she works with the Planning Board for compliance issues, oversight on building permits, sign permits and most recently Accessory Dwelling Units research and sign research to bring the town in compliance with state statues. She also works with the Zoning Board of Adjustment for variance applications, the Selectmen, the Conservation Commission and various boards in town. It is ultimately the responsibility of the Planning Board to listen to different department heads concerning needs and planning for the future and presenting this information in the form of the Capital Improvement Plan.

Selectman Kidder asked Ms. St. John to give the most current information on the *Colonial Pharmacy* relocation and building proposal at Newport Avenue between Lake Sunapee Bank and the *Restaurant at 74 Main Street*.

Ms. St. John stated at the last Planning Board Meeting there was a conceptual (non-binding) discussion of a new building for *Colonial Pharmacy*. This proposal is to combine the two Oberkotter lots on Newport Road to develop a new 14,000 SF building for a new pharmacy with a drive-thru. The applicants will be coming to the September 20, 2016 Planning Board Meeting and all their plans and applications

concerning this construction will be due by the end of August. There will be a public hearing, abutters within 200 feet will be noticed, and comments submitted to become public record. All of this information will be available to residents on the web site and the office is happy to answer questions regarding the proposed pharmacy plans when available.

Ms. St. John noted the recent tour of sites proposed for the Capital Improvement Project list were visited by members of the Planning Board and the Budget Committee. Transportation was provided and narrated by Richard Lee via the new Recreation Department van so that members could visualize the location and the scope of work that is needed and requested for the CIP list. Everyone is invited to the CIP meetings and all comments are listened to.

Scott Blewitt of the Recreation Department informed the audience that summer is the busiest time of the year with the opening and maintenance of Buckland Beach, Elkins Beach and running the day camp that is based at Whipple Memorial Town Hall. Mr. Blewitt stated his registration for camp has doubled and tripled over the past few years and pointed out that this building is not really set up as a community center. Every Wednesday is a trip day where 60 to 70 children are bussed to an area attraction/beach. A third bathroom (ADA compliant) has added at Elkins Beach and the parking lot has been paved. There are new docks at both beaches and swimming lessons are always popular. At Buckland Beach there are paddle-boards, sailboats, canoes and kayaks available free of charge. The new Recreation Department 14-passenger van has been a blessing for transporting children about town during camp hours. When the summer season ends Mr. Blewitt is going to look at the possibility of trips for other populations in town.

Mr. Blewitt emphasized that staffing in the Recreation department is tough and he is the only full-time employee to answer all the email and telephone calls. He stated there is a difference between the Outing Club and the Recreation Department and believes residents should be aware of this but noted they do cooperate with each other. But he believes customer service is paramount. All the other employees are seasonal.

Celeste Cook of the Welfare Office assists people who need help with rent, electric bill, and other utilities. She is aware of the assorted assistance programs that currently exist and is able to refer people to different agencies. She works with the various churches in town to get applicants some help and has her own budget of \$16,000 that is approved at the town meeting and uses her best discretion to spend this money. Ms. Cook commented "I know a lot of people in town who need help and it is nice I am able to fulfill their needs." Selectman Rollins informed the audience that the Town of New London has a statutory requirement to take care of the residents in their town.

Ed Canane asked what a citizen can do to help with the welfare of the community. He would like to be able to give directly to Celeste Cook to distribute. He expressed a frustration with donations in the past that he felt was not properly used or used for administrative salaries. Ms. Cook advised that the food pantry is a good place to donate and she often sees people here. One audience member suggested setting up a foundation who works with the Town Welfare Office so that she has direct resources to use. Chair Helm stated there many services needed by town residents. Help with transportation is important so that residents can get to get to doctor's appointments and grocery stores since there is no public transportation to get out of town. Another big effort is made at Thanksgiving so that families have enough food.

Richard Lee, Director of Public Works stated that he is responsible for 6 of the 9 projects listed on the front and 5 projects on the back of the *Town Projects Status Update as of August 12, 2016*. There are 14 full-time employees under his administration that take care of the transfer station, waste water, grounds

maintenance, the cemeteries, beaches and so on. The department did a lot of paving this year including 64 miles of road in New London including striping. The recent water valve/drainage pipe replacement work at the intersection of Seamans Road and Main Street required 3 days of cooperation from his department and they were an integral part of getting this project finished. Mr. Lee also asked residents to be patient while the snow is being cleared off the road. In order to understand how much time/effort it takes he compared New London to the length of road trip to Boston while going 15 miles per hour.

Fire Chief Jason Lyon complemented the Police Department and Public Works department in clearing the 19 closed roads of downed trees after a severe weather system passed through New London a few weeks ago. He noted that all roads were cleared within 15 minutes except for trees that were leaning on power lines in which case the power company is required to remove.

Conservation Commission: On Monday night (August 15, 2016) the Selectmen are going to sign an agreement to create a conservation trail and Chair Helm asked Mark Vernon of the Conservation Commission to speak to the audience. This is an agreement that has been years in the making between Eversource, New London Hospital and the Town of New London to create a trail starting from the roundabout, traveling along the power-line to Parkside Road and then into the Lyonbrook Trail. This will create a beautiful in-town trail that hikers/walkers can get to without having to drive to a distant trail head. Mr. Vernon hoped this will be finished in a year from now but cautioned there are still many legal documents to be signed.

Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer, introduced herself and explained her job to manage everything to do with money in the Town. Ms. Johnson stated she had just finished the year-end review up to June 30, 2016. Ms. Johnson felt there was significant savings this year due to the mild winter and lower energy costs. Ms. Johnson explained the budgeting process starts 18 months before the fiscal year starts. She said we make our best guess as to what the energy costs are going to be and this year we came out ahead. We have recently taken out two loans, one in the amount of \$350,000 to renovate the Academy Building and another in the amount of \$460,000 for some new structural projects or other projects that were in need of completion. Ms. Johnson said it is great to finish up the old projects but perhaps in the future money can be taken from the tax collections. Chair Helm added the tax rate is set in October and the last taxes due at the old rate will be September 30, 2016.

Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator described her job to support the town officials and the department heads. Ms. Hallquist stated she gets many phone calls and emails from residents who are looking for assistance with a specific issue and she will work with department heads to resolve problems and speed this along. Ms. Hallquist stated it is time to start thinking about the budgeting process and she will be sending out an email to department heads to make them aware this is coming soon. Ms. Hallquist stated the importance of the 1941 Building in that it is time sensitive as the school board is potentially thinking about razing the building. She advised residents to keep informed on the status of the building by reading her newsletter *Municipal Matters* for up-to-date information, scanning the Town website and the Selectmen's Meeting Minutes. All comments are welcome, even those from non-residents (who are not allowed to vote.)

Ed Canine told the audience to look at website which is a phenomenal resource for information as it has everything you want to know. It is here you will find projects that are started and when they get finished. The new Elkins Sidewalk project was such an improvement to the town; it is a beautiful restoration and a gateway to our beautiful town.

Wages and Compensations: The main goal is to find out what our employees should be making so that our salaries are on the same level with other towns. The money that we have budgeted now will bring the employees to that level. Selectmen Kidder stated there will be discussion about how to deal with wage increases in the future. The police department is interested in a step program, each year if your performance meets expectations you will get a step. Selectman Kidder stated that at this time the only wage increase is what the Selectman approve and the Budget Committee appropriates. Kim Hallquist explained that some town employees do not like the merit program because they are not confident that their supervisors will accurately reflect and evaluate their work. This means department heads and selectmen are going to need training on instituting this type of arrangement. What we want to make sure of is to not have a large turnover of employees as it is expensive to train new employees. There will be much discussion in the next 9 months.

- Board of Selectmen Meetings are on the first and third Monday of every month at 6 PM
- The next Citizens Advisory Committee is Saturday, November 5, 2016 at 7:30 AM. There will be discussion about the budget
- Town Elections March 14, 2016
- Town Meeting March 15, 2016
- *Municipal Matters* newsletter comes out on a regular basis

The meeting was adjourned at 9 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Vitiello,
Recording Secretary
Town of New London, NH