



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES December 16, 2013

PRESENT:

Tina Helm, Chair
Peter Bianchi, Selectman
Janet Kidder, Selectman
Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Phyllis Piotrow, Budget Committee Member
Bruce Hudson & Renate Kanler, New London Residents
Casey Biuso, New London Community Center
Mark Kaplan, New London Community Center
Dave Kidder, New London Community Center
Fred Downey, New London Resident
Bill Helm, Planning Board Member
Pat Blanchard, Budget Committee Member
Doug Homan, Budget Committee Member
Cicely Markoff, New London Community Center
Meg Wilkie, New London Community Center
Dave Zimmerman, New London Community Center
Bill Green, Budget Committee Member
Joe Cardillo, Budget Committee Member
Ed Andersen, Acting Police Chief
Scott Blewitt, Recreation Director
Jason Lyon, Fire Chief
Sean Carroll, *The Intertown Record*

Chair Helm called the meeting to order at 6:02pm. She gave the floor to Dave Kidder and Casey Biuso to give a presentation on the progress of plans to take over the 1941 Building.

Mr. Kidder, speaking for the New London Community Center committee, said the committee would like to request an article be placed on the warrant at the May Town Meeting asking voters to approve \$75,000 for the care and maintenance of the 1941 Building. He said they are all taxpayers in New London and are aware of the tax implication that this article will have on their fellow taxpayers, but they feel it is a worthy expenditure of town funds. He said they do not plan to increase this amount each year, but would plan to keep it at \$75,000. Mr. Kidder offered a draft warrant article for the Selectmen's consideration and a proposed fiscal year 2015 budget detailing the \$75,000 town expenditure. He said the project is ongoing and the goal of the New

London Community Center group is to present it at Town Meeting. It was his hope that the public/private partnership they are using will be used by others throughout the state to do similar things.

Mr. Kidder gave the Select Board information explaining the mission, values and vision of the New London Community Center Board and plans for phased renovation of the 1941 building. He thanked those who have been working together on the project, noting Casey Biuso has worked endless hours, Cicely Markoff is their fundraising specialist, and Bill Zimmerman, although new to town in the last two years, has been a helpful part of their progress and Mark Kaplan. Mr. Kidder also presented the Board with letters of support from: Jean Cronin Connolly, Chair - Center for the Arts; P. Aarne Vesilind, Music Director, Kearsarge Community Band; and Tom DeMille, President, New London Barn Playhouse.

Mr. Kidder said they are currently working on the first phase of the project. He showed a map of the phase, which includes the cafeteria. They project it will cost \$150,000 to complete the first phase, which will include three meeting rooms and a commercial kitchen, which they have been told is in great shape. They plan to put in all the bathrooms they will need on the first floor and were happy to find they do not have to completely rebuild the bathrooms, which is a savings of about \$75,000.

Ms. Biuso said that in November they started a silent fundraising campaign and have had just under \$50,000 donated so far. They hope to open the first phase this summer. Next fall they will have more of a grand opening. Within a year they will go into the second phase, which will include the first floor of the 1941 building and the stage with an anticipated cost of \$500,000. They estimate that the third phase (second floor and basement)

will cost another \$500,000. Ms. Biuso explained that the committee wanted to take their time to fundraise the right way and to find the right grants and national brands that will partner with them and support their goals.

Ms. Biuso went on to note that the Barn Players are in need of more space and are looking at the first phase's space for use this summer. It is their desire to build space for specific groups and what they need. At this time they don't really know what they will need for the spaces in the second phase so they want to make sure they take the time to learn what is needed. They are holding the 3rd phase open without designing it at this point. They see the second floor as an opportunity for someone else to come take it over and fill it with things like Community Bridges or Pathways. These kinds of organizations, through a subletting scenario, could help answer the sustainability question. Ms. Biuso felt they could have a great creative income opportunity to help with the long term.

Ms. Markoff said they sent about 75 letters out to possible donors at the end of November to kick off their "silent phase" fundraising. She confirmed that they have raised almost \$50,000 so far. Because of the holidays, they are holding off on informational coffee sessions (an opportunity to meet with potential donors and interested individuals, face to face) until January. They are asking

the Town for \$75,000 and their intent is that all the renovation costs will be privately raised. They hoped to open the doors in June, 2014.

Mr. Kidder said one group that has come to the New London Community Center committee is the United Way. They are interested in what they are doing and want to be part of it. Ms. Markoff said they are starting to be sought out by those that want to contribute instead of the committee having to seek out potential contributors.

Ms. Biuso said a question that keeps coming up is why this effort needs to be a public/private partnership. She said it comes down to the fact that it is a community center and they want to have it owned by each and every citizen. Each person will feel some ownership and feel that it is “their” community center. Ms. Biuso said most of the funding should come from the community instead of being owned by a larger entity.

Selectman Bianchi said the total project seemed to be \$1,150,000 but the money raised so far was just under \$50,000. He was nervous that should the Town decide to go forward with the lease and “own” the building, and the private funds do not come in as expected, the Town will have a building that they will have to maintain and can’t do anything else with. Mr. Kidder said they just began fundraising. Ms. Biuso said they wouldn’t be able to fundraise for a million dollars without the Selectmen’s approval to go forward. Selectman Bianchi said this made him nervous. They have a lot of money to raise to do the work. Mr. Kidder said this was a legitimate concern. He said the first phase gets the activity and excitement going. He thought this would generate more interest and contributions.

Mark Kaplan agreed that Selectman Bianchi’s concerns are valid, however he suggested that they look at the whole picture. If the town signs on, they own all the problems of the building. If the private sector doesn’t raise the money, what will the town do? He suggested that if the town has a lease for 25 years for \$1/year, they could sublease it. The town would have a 23,000 square foot building, valued at \$11 million dollars, which he felt made it a great opportunity. If they can’t raise the money they need to do the things they want, they could sublease it to someone else. He felt they would come out OK either way. If they can’t do the second or third phase, that is OK. They can lease the parts of the building they can’t use. He felt they have the smarts to do this, and pointed out that both the college and the hospital are on board with this effort. Ms. Markoff noted the Barn Players wanted to be in the space June 1st at a handsome fee. They are currently spread out between other locations and the community center space would be ideal for them.

Ms. Markoff suggested the Selectmen look at this issue from another viewpoint. She asked them to think about what it would cost the Town if they *don’t* do this. It wouldn’t help build their economy and their community if they don’t have that space there. It could be an economic stimulus for the Town. It is a leap of faith, but they believe they can raise the money.

Mr. Kidder said over the last 50 years New London has lost King Ridge, the NORSK ski area, and the Middle and High Schools. All of those entities brought people to New London. This is the time when they have to have a vision for the future for the Town. This is a way to bring

people here and this is the vision. He referenced a book he read recently, *The Creative Class*, that explained what most people want in a community and what kind of a town most people want to live in. If they want to maintain and grow property values and things that make it a nice place to live, a community center is something that becomes very attractive.

Pat Blanchard asked what the \$75,000 would pay for and if the building would necessitate any more staffing. Mr. Kidder said Scott Blewitt would be the director of the building and would run his programs from it. Ms. Blanchard said her impression was that it wouldn't be a desk job. Mr. Kidder said they have budgeted for support staff and volunteers in their own numbers. Ms. Blanchard was troubled by the fact that Mr. Blewitt would be given additional duties. She wondered how that would work with him already being busy with the tasks he has now. Mr. Kidder said Mr. Blewitt will do his paperwork, coordinate what is going on in the building, and programs would be going on in the classroom spaces. He won't be in and out of the building, as he is now. Mr. Blewitt said it would be similar to what he does now in Whipple, he would just be in a different building.

Chief Andersen said before Mr. Blewitt was hired, the police and dispatch helped keep the programs running in Whipple Hall by signing people in to the building and giving keys to those who needed them. He didn't foresee much additional work in this regard at the new building for Mr. Blewitt. Ms. Blanchard didn't think insurance companies would be happy with them just giving out a key to the 1941 Building. Chief Andersen said they have had luck with the use of a camera at Whipple Hall to monitor keys and usage. Mr. Kidder said at night events when Mr. Blewitt was not there, there would be volunteers overseeing the building and its functions. Ms. Blanchard asked if they would be coming back to the Town asking for a part time secretary, etc. Ms. Markoff said that if they did do this, it would be paid for by the private funds and would not be funded by the Town.

Mr. Homan asked for pro forma for the next three years. Mr. Kidder said they don't have this because they haven't done this before and don't know what to expect.

Mr. Green asked if a thorough review had been done of the capital costs and the needs of the building. Mr. Kidder said they don't know what it is actually going to cost but it is on their nickel to come up with it. If they can't come up with the money the project will not be viable but said he didn't see that happening. Ms. Biuso said they know they are looking to take a percentage of the costs for utilities but it hasn't been inhabited. There are unknowns but they do have some basic numbers that have built their operating costs. Mr. Green said a challenge is to ask the Town if they want to become a real estate developer and rent out space to others. Ms. Markoff asked how he thought having this building would make the Town a developer. Mr. Green said they would be leasing the space out to others and he didn't think they really had a plan. Mr. Kaplan said they just presented their plan. He added that they have many letters of intent from those who want to use the space.

Mr. Homan said there is risk involved in the lease and didn't understand why they didn't just fundraise on their own and not ask for Town funds. Ms. Markoff said they don't want another country club in town; they already have a beautiful one. They want it to be somewhere people

feel welcome and where they can take ownership. Mr. Homan said, as a taxpayer, he didn't want to hold part of a community center. He didn't think they could renovate the building for \$40/square foot. He could be convinced, but he would need to see the numbers. Mr. Kidder said they aren't talking about fancy renovations; they are basically keeping the classrooms the same and assured Mr. Homan that people were interested in leasing those space as they are. Ms. Biuso said they won't be getting things like new carpet but they would get things like new paint. They will bring things up to code but said it would stay as "Yankee" as possible.

Chair Helm asked if a much more complete presentation on January 13th could be given. Some of those attending the presentation that night were a little disappointed in the information that was given. She admitted that she was a little disappointed as well and didn't feel comfortable taking a vote on the requested warrant article at this point. Chair Helm observed that the group has clearly done a lot more work than the last time they spoke. Chair Helm said she would like to take time to assimilate the information they have given and insisted that January 13th be the date they get real, hard numbers. She said Mr. Homan made some good points. Sometimes there is an element of faith that has to be followed and the group feels it is the right thing to do for the community. She envisioned this as a central place where people of all ages can be together and have activities together and it would be extremely good for the town and attract others from out of town.

Mr. Cardillo said he loved the building and would be encouraged if it could move forward. He was slightly disappointed that he did not see more specific numbers in the presentation. He was encouraged by the amount of effort being put forth, however. Mr. Cardillo thought the leap of faith, for him, would be easier if he could see in writing a commitment from groups. He would love to see it succeed but he needs more numbers. He has heard several times that "they can't disclose" certain information as yet, and many have been patient to hear this information they will not share. Now they have to wait until January 13th to hopefully hear the numbers. To be comfortable with the project, they need numbers.

Selectman Bianchi said it would be beneficial to see what groups were interested in the project and at what level they would be willing support it, financially. They also want to see a contingency plan to know what it will cost if a phase doesn't work. He said it was hard to ask the Town to commit money without some pro forma statements in front of them.

Chair Helm thanked the committee for the work they had done and said on January 13th the Board would like to see more information that will make the package more appealing to them. She thought there was a good chance that this would pass at Town Meeting if the facts were there and the citizens understand the initiative. She said she was 100% in favor of the project. Mr. Cardillo said he was also in favor of the project if he saw numbers. Mr. Homan agreed and said his problem was a signature on a lease. The issue is proving that signing this lease is a smart long-term move for the community. Mr. Cardillo thought staffing for the building should be included in the long-term projections.

Chair Helm encouraged those not on the committee to forward remarks and suggestions to Ms. Hallquist or any of the Select board if they wished. Their charge is to be good stewards for the town.

Mr. Homan noted that the Budget Committee has reserved its January 22 meeting for the New London Community Center committee to make a presentation, and suggested that the Selectmen could attend that meeting if they wished. Chair Helm said it is the Selectmen's job to feel this out first on the 13th and said the Budget Committee was welcome to attend that meeting so they were all on the same page.

Dispatching Fees - Croydon

Chair Helm noted receipt a letter from the Town of Croydon regarding their dispatching fees. In the letter, Croydon indicated it would be agreeable to a 5% increase if necessary. Since the Selectmen decided to remain with the funding formula used for the last several years, Croydon's increase is under 1%.

Dates for Upcoming Selectmen's Meetings

December 30, 6:00pm
January 4, 7:30am – CAC Meeting
January 6, 8:00am
January 13, 6:00pm
January 22, 8:00am
January 27, 6:00pm
February 1, 7:30am – CAC Meeting

Town Administrator's Report

Ms. Hallquist said she would like to place an ad in the paper for a recording clerk. Since the current recording clerk will be working in the office on a part-time basis, assuming some of the duties performed by Linda Jackman, there may be a need for a second person to take minutes. The Selectmen agreed.

Ms. Hallquist noted that budgets would be coming in soon and as early as December 30th they can have Department Heads come in to meet with them. The Selectmen decided they would schedule Department Head meetings as budgets come in.

Committee Meetings

Recreation Commission Meeting

Selectman Kidder said the Recreation Department's plans for the winter include two trips to the movies using the van. There will be a Jack Frost progressive dinner during the last weekend in January. Lots of programs are in the works for Winter Carnival and a committee is working on the details. The Chamber of Commerce is involved with the carnival as well as some Colby-Sawyer College students. Mr. Blewitt hopes to start showing movies on Friday nights at Whipple Hall, using an inflatable screen he has access to. There was also mention of possible trips to Foxwoods and Celtics games. Selectman Kidder noted that the ice rink was opened December 24th last year and it remained open for 67 days. This year, the rink has already been opened for some time and it looked like it would be a long season of skating. It was noted that the snow blower was in good shape.

A tentative schedule of events for the Winter Carnival was as follows:

Wednesday, January 29: “Learn to Skate,” skating games, a Dodge Ball tournament at the Outing Club Indoor Center (OCIC) with the assistance of the New London P.D.

Thursday, January 30: Ski Day at Sunapee (reduced rates to ski), a Broom Hockey tournament, and a Scavenger Hunt for teams of four people.

Friday, January 31: Magic Show at Whipple Hall, co-sponsored by Tracy Library, and the Jack Frost Progressive Dinner on the Common

Saturday, February 1: “The Frozen Open” (golf with one club), a cross-country ski event at Pine Hill, Ski Jouring at the Historical Society, and fireworks to close the event.

There will also be snow sculptures on the common, possibly ice fishing.

Tri-Town Joint Board for Assessing Meeting

Selectman Kidder reported that she and Kim Hallquist attended this meeting. New London will be reevaluated in 2014, Sunapee in 2015, and Newbury in 2016. They are working on amending the pole tax that would give towns revenue from the utility companies for the poles they have placed in the Towns’ right of way.

Selectman Kidder noted that Workman’s Compensation insurance increased for the assessor’s but they have money in the budget to cover this no increases is requested. There are two outstanding appeals, both are from New London.

Chair Helm said it was a great model that the tri-town assessing board has that encouraged representation at all their meetings. She was struggling with New London’s representation at the Sunapee sewer meetings. She understood they only meet as a joint board on a quarterly basis, but felt that they (New London) are a big part of the sewer treatment plant and wondered if it was appropriate for them to have representation at every sewer meeting. She asked her colleagues what they thought.

Ms. Hallquist noted that New London Selectmen attend quarterly meetings to hear updates on the wastewater plant and are required to approve and sign meeting minutes (from the joint meetings). She noted that the Sunapee Sewer Commission meetings are open to the public and the Board could have one of the Selectmen go to all of the meetings, just like they have a representative attend Planning Board meetings. Selectman Bianchi said they don’t have a vote in the decisions, but they can go and report back to the Selectmen about what is going on. They could voice their concerns but they wouldn’t have a say in anything. Ms. Hallquist said if New London was concerned about something it would at least start a conversation. Chair Helm thought it was important for them to know what was going on but she would focus more on the joint meetings, where they do have a say.

Selectman Bianchi noted that they need to look into the details of who pays for what and the percentage of usage from both towns. The town’s engineer, that performed the peer review of the treatment plan upgrade plans, can assist in this review.

Selectman Bianchi said he spoke with Ms. Hallquist recently about having someone speak with Tommy Miller, as he was a good person who could fill them in on some history of the sewer

department to help them understand how they got to where they are. He could come in and talk to Ms. Hallquist or someone else; it didn't have to be done in a meeting. The Board agreed that this would be a worthwhile conversation.

Planning Board

Selectman Bianchi said the Planning Board met on December 10th. There was some discussion of the Marshall's Garage issue. It was decided that Mr. Marshall would need to have a site plan review unless he removed his temporary structure. There was some discussion on the boat house issue at Pleasant Lake. The Planning Board voted to send a letter to DES saying they felt their boat house plans went against New London's zoning. A letter was written by Ms. St. John and approved by Chair Cottrill. It was sent on Friday. Selectman Bianchi thought some zoning amendment would come up this year addressing boat houses on the town's water bodies. There were also a couple of tree-cutting applications.

Selectman Bianchi noted that the attorney for the boat house applicant stated that the State's regulations prevailed over the Town's zoning regulations. Selectman Bianchi thought the more stringent regulations prevailed.

Upcoming Meetings

Recreation – Monday, January 6th at 5:00pm

Planning Board – Tuesday, January 14th at 7:00pm

Approval of Minutes

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Peter Bianchi) to approve the minutes of December 2, 2013, as amended. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Application for Building Permit:

- Kenwood & Elizabeth Foster, 1026 Lakeshore Drive, (Map & Lot 064-010-000) interior renovations – Permit # 13-136 – Approved.
- Brian Byrne, 1891 Little Sunapee Road (Map & Lot 043-026-000) build new 3 bedroom home with attached garage – Permit #13-137 – approved.

Application for use of Town Conference room:

- Adventures in Learning – Spring classes – approved
 - May 21st to June 4th, 2014 1:00-4:00PM
 - May 22nd to June 5th, 2014 1:00-4:00PM
 - April 24th to May 15th, 2014 1:00-4:00PM
 - April 25th to May 16th, 2014 9:00-12:00PM

Other Items to be signed:

- Disbursement voucher
- Birthday Cards

IT WAS MOVED (Peter Bianchi) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to adjourn the meeting.

THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 7:42pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London