

APPROVED
Budget Committee
Meeting Minutes
May 19, 2011

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Wheeler, John Wilson, Connie Appel, Ben Cushing, Doug Homan, Kathy Bianchi, Bill Green, Ann Bedard, Mark Kaplan (Board of Selectmen Representative)

OTHERS PRESENT:

Linda Hardy, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Interim Town Administrator

Carolyn Fraley, Finance Officer

Linda Jackman, Town Administrator's Assistant

Peter Bianchi, Selectman

Tina Helm, Selectman

Peter Stanley, Zoning Board Administrator

Dave Seastrand, Police Chief

Chad Denning, Recreation Director

Jay Lyon, Fire Chief

Steve Ensign, Board of Fire Wards

New London Residents: Renate Kannler, Bruce Hudson, Bryan Jones, Erle Blanchard, and Dave Cook

Chair Wheeler opened the meeting at 7:00pm and noted that the meeting would serve as the Budget Committee's organizational meeting for the next budget season. He welcomed Doug Homan and Bill Green, who were new members of the committee. He also gave thanks to Bill Helm, who had resigned from the committee prior to the meeting. Among other things, Mr. Helm was responsible for the idea for bonding for the improvements at Tracy Library. Chair Wheeler thanked Mr. Helm for his service.

Chair Wheeler indicated that the first order of business was to fill Mr. Helm's seat, as the committee has to appoint a new member until the May elections the following year. He had distributed a memo explaining the processes they have used to fill vacant positions in the past, as well as his suggestion for filling the spot this time around. Chair Wheeler explained that it has to be a public process and they do not have the option to leave the seat vacant. A majority vote must be achieved to win the seat. He asked for a response from those on the Budget Committee regarding these guidelines. Mr. Wilson thought the majority of the voters present should declare the winner, not the majority of those voting.

**IT WAS MOVED (Connie Appel) AND SECONDED (Bill Green) to appoint a new member of the Budget Committee using the process outlined in Chair Wheeler's memo.
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Chair Wheeler asked for nominations.

Ms. Appel nominated Bryan Jones.

Mr. Homan nominated Brian Prescott.

Mr. Cushing nominated Joe Cardillo.

Mr. Wilson nominated Jack Sheehan.

There were no further nominations. Chair Wheeler opened the floor to the Budget Committee to discuss the nominations.

Ms. Appel said she nominated Bryan Jones because he is qualified on every level with a lifetime of experience working with businesses (SCORE for 15 years), and has served on quite a number of Town boards over the years, including the solid waste project. He has shown interest in coming to meetings, and after speaking with him, has found Mr. Jones willing to serve. Ms. Appel said that in the past they have looked to the next highest vote winner from Town Meeting, and in this case, it is Mr. Jones. She felt that nominating him would serve as the voice of the voters.

Mr. Homan said that he spoke with Brian Prescott, who is interested in serving. He is a past Selectman, and served on the ZBA for a decade. Even though he is currently sick, Mr. Homan felt that Mr. Prescott would give the position of Budget Committee member the attention it deserves.

Mr. Cushing said that he spoke to Joe Cardillo, who is also interested in the position. He believed that Mr. Cardillo would be a level-minded individual as a new resident to the town who would do well by the Budget Committee.

Mr. Wilson said that Mr. Sheehan was a respected member of the Budget Committee in the past. He did his homework and presented well. He added that it was his understanding that in one appointment they had gone with the next-highest vote-getter. That was the first time they had filled the position in this manner, and it was not the typical method. Mr. Wilson also noted that Mr. Sheehan was willing to accept the position, should it be offered.

Mr. Green offered that there were some good candidates on the list but felt that Brian Prescott's experience with the town was valuable. He was on the Budget Committee a while back and he was also a Selectman. He thought Mr. Prescott had been feeling better and this term was only for one year. While there were some great names on the list, he felt Mr. Prescott had some useful experience within the Town.

Mr. Wheeler said he felt similar with regards to remarks made in favor of both Mr. Prescott and Mr. Sheehan.

A show of hands was asked to show favor for each nominee.

Bryan Jones: Anne Bedard, Connie Appel, Mark Kaplan (3 votes)
Brian Prescott: Bill Green, Ben Cushing, Kathy Bianchi, Doug Homan (4 votes)
Jack Sheehan: Jim Wheeler, John Wilson (2 votes)

The two highest nominees would then be voted on by a show of hands.

Bryan Jones: Connie Appel, Mark Kaplan, Anne Bedard, John Wilson (4 votes)
Brian Prescott: Jim Wheeler, Bill Green, Ben Cushing, Kathy Bianchi, Doug Homan (5 votes)

With Brian Prescott collecting five votes, he was determined the winner of the vacant seat on the Budget Committee. Mr. Homan agreed to contact Mr. Prescott to let him know.

Approval of Minutes from February 14, 2011

After a few typos were identified, a motion was made to approve the minutes.

IT WAS MOVED (Ben Cushing) AND SECONDED (Kathy Bianchi) to accept the minutes, as amended. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Subcommittees & Schedule

Chair Wheeler said the schedule before them was just a proposed one and that he had added some cushion. None of the other towns that had gone to the fiscal year also had appointed Budget Committees, so he had to formulate his own schedule. He had included some suggested times for department heads to meet, but said he could not demand that they meet at those times. If the times worked with the department heads, that was great. He explained that if they wanted to meet in July, they could, as the State's budget is finalized at the end of June. He noted that subcommittees would meet throughout the summer and would meet again in October.

Mr. Kaplan asked if the February 6, 2012 date could be moved to the week of the 13th instead. Chair Wheeler made note of this request. He indicated that October 24 would be their first meeting all together. Subcommittees would have their own schedules, coordinating with department heads to have meetings as needed. Full reports, recommendations and comments would be expected at the October 24 meeting. January 19 or 23 would be the next time they meet. It was the consensus that Mondays tend to work better for people than Thursdays for meetings.

Ms. Bedard thought it was a good idea to plan ahead, but opined that they should wait on scheduling these later dates for now until the new Town Administrator was in place. Perhaps at the October 24 meeting they could finalize the dates. Chair Wheeler agreed that the definite setting of dates should wait until the October meeting. He thought people could email their preferences or conflicts to him or Ms. Hardy in the meantime.

Subcommittees

Chair Wheeler proposed that this year they use subcommittees in a more focused and diligent way. He opined that they should spend some time, do some analysis and talk to the department heads at length. They should then report to the Budget Committee with comments or suggestions they may have. Hopefully by doing this, they won't have to drill the department heads at the Budget Meetings as they have in the past. He also proposed that within the three-person subcommittee, someone should be chosen to coordinate the meetings, and notify the Town Administrator, as they are considered public meetings and should be posted 24 hours in advance. A subcommittee is considered a quorum and needs to be noticed. Minutes from these meetings, at a minimum, should include who was present, who participated, what the subject matter was, and any decisions reached or actions taken.

The subcommittees Chair Wheeler suggested were:

Highway Department: John Wilson, Doug Homan and Brian Prescott

Public Safety: Kathy Bianchi, Ben Cushing, Connie Appel

Administration: Bill Green, Jim Wheeler, Ann Bedard

Ann Bedard commented that the Public Safety subcommittee was not represented on the CIP Committee the way the assignments presently stood. Chair Wheeler will take this under advisement.

Touring Departments

Chair Wheeler did not think everyone needed to tour the departments, except for the new members. These new members should hook up with the department head on their own to get a tour. Ms. Bedard thought the tours were helpful, even to experienced members. She recalled that once they planned tours but very few people came. She said it didn't hurt to go back, revisit, see what they had bought the previous year, and look around. Chair Wheeler opined that they shouldn't ask the department heads to facilitate multiple tours for them.

Chief Seastrand said that as long as he is given 24 hours notice and as long as he is around, he doesn't mind people coming in for a tour; they could come in as often as they like. Chief Lyon said that when the subcommittee comes to tour the station, those who haven't participated in the tour previously should come with them. He believed that going through the tour with different members of the Budget Committee, rather than individually, may help because in a group, questions could be raised that otherwise may not be thought of by the individual. Mr. Homan said he would like the option to visit alone as well as with a group.

Ms. Bianchi understood what Ms. Bedard was saying about going back to visit each year, but thought they are going to be meeting in their various subcommittee groups and will be meeting more intensely and more so than in the past. Those reports will be brought back to the Budget Committee, so visiting shouldn't be needed, except of course, for the new members. She opined that new members should preferably visit all at once.

Mr. Lyon said that a tour prior to summertime, perhaps in June before schedules are hectic, may be a better time to plan.

Chair Wheeler suggested setting one tour date for each department and if not everyone can meet, those who could not would then make plans to go on their own. Mr. Cushing felt that each department head is likely to be accommodating.

Chair Wheeler said his hope was to work town-wide as a team with the Board of Selectmen, the department heads and the public. He asked for comments or thoughts regarding the memo he distributed. Ms. Fraley said the figures were not correct, as they were prior to the audit, and the encumbered funds were incorrect. He agreed that he suspected the figures were not completely accurate, but wanted to share it with the group as a starting-point. Mr. Kaplan said the numbers didn't take into account inflation.

Ms. Appel was surprised to see the population in town has not grown in any substantive way. She felt the use of the town had increased, but wondered how many police calls were logged from 2000 to 2010. Chief Seastrand said they hadn't gone up. Chief Lyon said the fire calls have gone up. Ms. Appel felt the town was being used more than the population figures indicate. When they look at the town budgets and how they increase, they are not padded. Any increase is because the need of a department to serve the community has increased. Chair Wheeler asked Mr. Stanley (Zoning Board Administrator) about the population increase in New London.

Mr. Stanley reported that in the 1970's the population increased at an average rate of 2.8% per year. The population was 2,236 in 1970 and rose to 2,935 in 1980. This was a 31.26% increase in population in that decade alone. During this period of time the Town was still operating out of the basement of Whipple Hall, with only a part-time bookkeeper and a part-time secretary for the Board of Selectmen. The 1980's were quiet by comparison, but during that time they added on to the Town Hall, added dispatch, added to the Police Department, added on to the transfer station, and basically had to catch up on the population increases from the decade before.

Mr. Stanley explained that in the 1990's they had another growth of about 1,000 people. There were many subdivisions and developments throughout town. Some were finished from projects started in the 80's and some went into the year 2000. The Town was still operating in the same building, and using the same facilities. The highway department didn't change that much either. In the 2000's, every facility in town had an expansion; every department had some growth in staffing. More roads were accepted by the Town, which meant more roads to plow and maintain.

Mr. Stanley summarized that population growth happens in waves following the decade after a time of expansion for the Town. Since the last population increase there has been an average of about ten new houses built per year.

Mr. Stanley explained that he doesn't put a lot of faith in the figures coming from the census bureau. In the 2000's, 24 houses were replaced and 162 houses were built. When they use the formula of 2.1 people per household, it ends up suggesting they have 340 new people added to New London. That doesn't jive with the number that comes from the census bureau. He said it just doesn't fit; there is no vast inventory of unoccupied homes. He questioned the validity of some of the numbers. Mr. Stanley added that the enrollment at Colby-Sawyer College during the 1970's declined, in the 80's it was flat, and in the 90's it increased.

Chair Wheeler said that he participated in the census this last time around. The figures taken are as of April 1. Perhaps the 340 people were in Florida (summer residents) at the time the census was taken.

Mr. Wilson asked Mr. Stanley if college students weren't always included in the population going back to the 70's. Mr. Stanley said that between the 70's to this decade, they have been included. Prior to the 70's he wasn't sure. He also saw a difference in the census and the numbers the college provided.

Chief Lyon said at the lowest point in the 80's Colby-Sawyer College had just 384 students. This coming year they expect 1,200. Their ultimate goal is 1,500 students. He opined that looking at the infrastructure and housing, it is interesting what 20-25 years will do.

Mr. Homan said that the people he deals with in his business are showing a trend in the population with regards to seasonal inhabitants. Some are coming back a lot later and leaving a lot earlier in the year. That trend is continuing and he felt there was a major demographic shift in the community.

Ms. Appel said they have seen a major change in the population from the view of her bookstore (Morgan Hill Bookstore). She opined that having the public schools opening in August has cut into the commercial opportunities.

Mr. Cook asked if there had ever been a challenge to use the figures of tax payers instead of using population figures. Mr. Wilson said the college students are not taxpayers and are a significant part of the population number. Mr. Stanley said that the tax billing system doesn't get to the number of people living in the town.

Ms. Bedard asked Chief Lyon if the protocol changed with regards to what kinds of calls the Fire Department responds to. Chief Lyon said that it hasn't changed, but he felt society was changing. When people don't know what to do, they call 911; people call 911 when they are not feeling well. Instead of driving themselves to the hospital, they rely on the services available. They do not respond to every ambulance call. Out of 500 calls last year the Fire Department responded to about 100 of them.

Election of Chair

IT WAS MOVED (Bill Green) AND SECONDED (Doug Homan) to appoint Jim Wheeler as the Chair of the Budget Committee. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Selectman's Report

Mark Kaplan said the Board of Selectmen has been working diligently to replace Ms. Levine as Town Administrator. They have hired LGC (Local Government Center) to do the advertising, accept the applications and pare them down to a workable number. LGC offered 13 applications to the Town after

receiving 87. The Board of Selectmen has formed a selection committee of eight people to review the applicants, which were further whittled down to nine. As of this week, two of the people who applied wanted their names withdrawn, as they have found other positions. There are now seven remaining who will be interviewed the following week by the selection committee. The committee will pare those seven down to three, who will then be interviewed by the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Kaplan said they hope to have their choice picked by early June. They will then find out if the person will have to give notice for a prior position, or if they can start right away.

Mr. Homan asked why the Board of Selectmen didn't pick someone from the Budget Committee to serve on the selection committee. Mr. Kaplan said they wanted to have the opinions of people who were from the town, but not someone who was an elected official of the Town. They wanted the viewpoint of what the town wants. Mr. Homan commented that Doug Lyon was on the ZBA. Mr. Kaplan said that ZBA members are appointed, not elected.

Other Business

Mr. Wilson said that last spring when talking about some of the Recreation Department usage and boats, it was in the minutes that going forward they would have more precise records this summer. He hoped this would be true for the other programs they offer in the Recreation Department, so they don't have to talk this through each summer. He recommended they do it in a way other than by recording zip codes, as that was an elusive number.

Mr. Denning asked why Mr. Wilson thought the use of zip codes would not be appropriate. Mr. Wilson said that quite often people surmise from a zip code that someone may be a grandchild of someone living in New London, but they could actually be the grandchild of someone living in Wilmot. Mr. Denning said that they will be keeping track of the necessary data this year. The only thing in question was the boat use, as it isn't something people have to sign up for in advance. They are setting up a process to collect this data this summer with the lifeguards. As far as program numbers, he said that he has that information today.

Mr. Denning added that the Recreation Department recently purchased four brand new Sunfish with the \$8,000 they were given in the budget. They had thought they would only be able to purchase two for this amount. He was pleased to announce that they will have a brand new fleet of Sunfish this summer at Bucklin Beach.

IT WAS MOVED (Bill Green) AND SECONDED (John Wilson) to adjourn the Budget Committee Meeting of May 19, 2011. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 8:23pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London