

Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting
July 17, 2010
7:30am

Meeting Attendees:

Tina Helm (Chair, Board of Selectmen), Peter Bianchi (Selectman), Mark Kaplan (Selectman), Jessie Levine (Town Administrator), Gary Lineberry, Robert Lavoie, Beth Swanson, Jack Harrod, Jack Sheehan, Will Kidder, Terri Bingham, Bob MacMichael, Howard Hoke, David Payne, Rick Anderson, Rip Cross, Howard Hoke, Carolyn Lockhart, Phyllis Piotrow, Bud Dick, Rich Anderson, W. Michael Todd, Michael Doheny, Hardy Hasenfuss.

Chair Helm called the **MEETING TO ORDER** at 7:30 AM. She welcomed those who were at the meeting and explained that today's meeting would be an open forum for discussion. She first wanted to touch on three points: 1) she noted that there was a water ban in effect from 7 AM – 7 PM; 2) she said that Richard Lee, Public Works Director, had had a heart attack the previous weekend, is now home, and should be back to work on Monday; 3) she noted that Peter Christian's restaurant was sold at auction that week. One of the purchasers grew up in the area and he and his business partner are planning to keep the name and the equipment and get it going again. Bud Dick said that one of the owners name was Doug Dow and has a restaurant in Concord. Ms. Levine explained that they hope to bring the restaurant operational again and then sell it or lease it to someone who would run it as Peter Christian's with its traditional menu.

Beth Swanson had two items to bring up. The first was that she wanted to know the status of the Pleasant Street sidewalk. Ms. Levine said that in an effort to save money, they had hoped that Town forces would be the ones to build the sidewalk. To do this, they had to apply for permission from the Federal Highway Administration via the State Department of Transportation. The FHA has asked her to submit documentation that the Public Works Department has the qualifications of a private construction firm. The original application that was sent in did not go into too much detail, and FHWA has followed up by asking for a detailed summary of the qualifications of every public works employee. She has since sent in a stack of files containing training certificates, biographies, and qualifications of each employee. Another issue that is holding up the process is that the Town wants to use their recycled glass in the base of the sidewalk. The Research & Materials Department of the State Department of Transportation has issued their approval of using the glass, but the Federal Highway Administration does not like to use the material. She has recently been able to connect the head of the Research and Materials Division with the person overseeing the grant administration to see if they can come to terms with the use of the glass. Ms. Levine said that the use of glass won't break the deal, however, and they can use gravel if need be. Ms. Levine added that if they weren't getting \$100,000 back from the Federal Government, it would not have been worth the effort of going for this grant. The Public Works Department could really do this project on its own and could have had the sidewalk built ages ago. She said she is still hoping for a completion date before the start of school.

Ms. Swanson said that her second issue was about the bathrooms at the beaches closing at 5:00 PM. She wondered if they could be opened for 2-3 more hours and the police be asked to lock up after the lifeguards leave. She knows about the threat of vandalism when the lifeguards are not on duty, but wondered if there would be a problem for them to keep the bathrooms open for just a couple more hours so people can enjoy the beaches after hours. Ms. Levine said that this would be up to the Board of Selectmen. She added that even if they agree to keep the bathrooms open after the lifeguards leave, the police still may not be able to get there to lock them up at 8:00 PM (or other agreed time), and so there would be a chance of further vandalism. Ms. Levine said the vandalism was worse at Elkins than at Bucklin. Ms. Swanson said that it would make a difference for the families that go to the lake after hours. Ms. Levine said she would support doing this on a trial basis. Chair Helm suggested that this should be

put on the Selectmen's agenda for discussion. Mr. Kaplan said he would like to check with the Police Chief on this to make sure he was okay with it.

Hardy Hasenfuss suggested installing a camera at the beaches with a sign warning that they were being watched, in an effort to deter vandalism. Ms. Levine said they have done this from time to time but it was not something they wanted to advertise. She encouraged those present to call the police if they witness any unusual behavior at the beaches or other public places.

Carolyn Lockhart said there has been some back and forth in the paper about Bucklin Beach and about non-residents using the beach and parking along Old Dump Road. She said at one point there was talk about making that area on Dump Road a permit-only parking zone. Ms. Levine said she did not recall that discussion, but said that when this topic has come up in the past, the Board of Selectmen has consistently decided that it is not an enforcement matter that they want to take beyond the permitted parking area. She said there are places where non-residents can park near both of the town beaches, but the Selectmen in the past have not wanted to enforce who is actually sitting on the beach. Ms. Lockhart asked if the beaches were for town residents only and if there were signs up conveying this information. Ms. Levine said that the beaches are for residents and their guests and that there are signs to that effect. She added that it takes manpower to enforce the issue. People can always say that they are a guest of someone they know who lives in New London. Ms. Swanson noted that people who live in New London sometimes can't even park in the designated spaces because they are full of other residents. Ms. Levine said that after they drafted the beach ordinance at the last Town Meeting, they left the issue alone of who can use the beach. Chair Helm asked those at the meeting if the Board of Selectmen should take this issue up again. Ms. Lockhart reiterated that she thought Old Dump Road should be considered for permit parking only.

Mr. Sheehan said there was an article in the *Intertown Record* on the expansion of Bucklin Beach and the possibility of a second floor on the building. He thought they should be cautious about expanding the Recreation Department. If they use the concept of multiple communities using the programs to justify the facilities, the town administration needs to be aware that there might be backlash to stop using the beach for all communities. Ms. Levine said that unfortunately, the article did not make it clear that the expansion of the Bucklin Beach building was not due to the use of the beaches by non-residents. Mr. Kaplan said the building expanding upwards is for storage and, at the same time, can help to clean up and improve the restrooms that are there, but they were not expanding their program at the beach or the number of bathrooms. Mr. Sheehan said that they should be careful as they edge into that idea of growth so that it doesn't start to impact the resources they have in town.

Mr. Kaplan said there were 1700 people living in New London when he first arrived. Now there are over 4400. They are trying to make the town as nice and attractive as possible. The facilities they have need to be improved from time-to-time to handle the extra people. He said if they do it slowly and one step at a time, they can do it and absorb it and get used to it.

Chair Helm said that the flow and the whole conversation of the Recreation Commission's presentation did sort of evolve into a conversation that a number of programs couldn't exist without some outside participation. She was delighted to hear that town residents were given one month earlier to sign up ahead of people from other towns. Mr. Bianchi said that he got some press in the *Intertown* about the recreation activities in Town. He said that his opinion may not be the same as his colleagues and felt that with the two town beaches being limited resources, they have become too crowded. He believed that they should somehow control who is using the beaches and that the top priority should go to the residents. It is an interesting debate and is a concern that they have discussed and it will come up again.

Ms. Lockhart said she has an affiliation with York, Maine, where beach parking is limited and is by permit only. Police patrol on bikes on a regular basis and give a hefty fine to those without a permit. She again suggested Old Dump Road be permit parking only, and if fines were set to \$50, it might deter people from parking there without a permit. Ms. Levine said the fines are currently \$25 and said that they have been enforcing the parking this year more than ever, due to many hot days and several complaints. In the past they talked about limiting the stickers and temporary passes that were distributed, as everyone who has property gets a pass. But there was resistance to this, as well, as residents with multiple children and visitors wanted a pass for each visitor due to carseats, etc. Ms. Levine explained that just making the parking by permit alone will not make a difference if they are issuing an infinite amount of permits. It needs to be discussed how many permits are allowed per household.

Michael Doheny felt that there were two issues being talked about: the general public use of the beaches, and multiple towns using the Recreation Department. He thought they were two separate issues. Mr. Doheny said that they should have surrounding towns involved in the Town's recreation programs. The school is regional and it is important that children from all towns be encouraged to participate. He also commented that while parking at the beaches could be helped by limiting access through the requirement of stickers on Dump Road, he opined that if people want to get to the beach, they will get there. He doesn't want to put the responsibility on the lifeguards to patrol the beach and check for passes.

Hardy Hasenfuss said that other towns deputize responsible college kids in the summer, whose pay comes from the tickets they issue. Mr. Kaplan said it wasn't just a parking issue; people can drop off their kids and pick them up in two hours. It doesn't stop the crowding of the beach by just controlling the parking. It is the question of the number of people who are using the limited facilities.

Phyllis Piotrow said this is a tourist destination and this is an area where there are relatives who visit residents. It would be a shame if they couldn't use the facilities. She wasn't sure how they would distinguish between guests and visitors and people with a sticker. She felt that the town shouldn't be selfish and consider themselves as a gated community. She was sure that families who have relatives who live here would be insulted if they got a ticket for not having a sticker at the beach.

Bob MacMichael offered that in about three months, this wouldn't be a topic of discussion anymore. He said he doesn't sit on his front porch all the time, but likes to sit on it on Sundays and that he and his wife see a lot of cars speeding by. He felt as though people just don't care. He said that the police do go by but they can't be out on the beach checking for passes all the time. Mr. MacMichael said he has experience living near both beaches. He said that people (at least 100) walk from the Masonic Hall to Elkins Beach. He likes to see people enjoy the lake but wondered if an influx of people to the beach would put too much pressure on the lifeguards. Mr. MacMichael noted that sometimes people park on the church lawn, which didn't seem right.

Michael Todd recalled a comment from Judge DiClerico that said the grant of the public beach to the Town from the Bucklins intended the land to serve as a bathing beach. It was specified that a colonial structure of tasteful design be erected for bathing activities. Some residents were concerned about the use of the beach because the land area was so small and the numbers of people using it is growing. He said they need to be careful about that usage and try to limit it in some way because it was getting to the point that there were almost too many people there. Ms. Levine said that one of the things in the files of papers before she started in 2000, when she was hired, was that Bob Andrews and the Recreation Commission had been given a charge to do a number of improvements to Bucklin Beach to take some pressure off of Elkins Beach. That is when the plans were generated to upgrade the septic, and build the playground and pavilion. Instead of alleviating the crowd at Elkins, they now have two beaches that are very popular. Mr. Todd questioned if the pavilion, bbq units, picnic tables and boat racks meet the conditions of the gift.

Additionally, would the conditions allow for the fact that they would invite people to come and spend the whole day. Ms. Levine said she remembered one of the heirs of the Bucklin family spoke in favor of the Rowing Club using the beach.

Rick Anderson said that it is a delicate and interesting conversation. He noted that the growth in population is true of surrounding communities, but something happened that struck him: recently, Ragged Mountain was looking to buy The Point property to use as part of its development of the mountain. They had canvassed a very wide area and found that part of the lake to be ideal.

Mr. Bianchi said he is for sharing New London's resources as best they can, but his first obligation is to take care of the taxpayers of the town. If someone from another town is upset with New London, he is sorry but the bottom line is that the town residents put up the money, they bought the property, and pay to maintain and patrol it, and he feels more accountable to the people who pay for the beach. He added that most people are aware that they can't go to other towns and just use their facilities. Other beaches require fees or permission as well.

Howard Hoke said since the Recreation Department formed, his employees have enjoyed the summer programs that have been offered. Kids from Goshen, Newport, Springfield and Brooklyn, NY have participated in the programs over the years. It is convenient for employees to bring their kids or grandkids to work and then have them go to the Recreation Department activities. He wasn't sure if that was true with other employers in town. He thanked Ms. Levine and the Board of Selectmen for keeping the program in the town and thanked the others for being patient with the visitors from out of town.

Mr. Hoke added that he noticed people mucking around in the mud at the Mill Pond. He said that once they go through the process of repairing the dam and there are 3-4 feet of water in the pond, there would be some more shoreline for people to hang out and splash around in. He said that they want the dam holding water and the ambiance of the reflection in it, and people will splash in that water too. Mr. Hoke explained that he has property on Pleasant Lake and that these conversations remind him that with 4400 residents and their visitors in town, there will be people anchored in the water across from their beach. And that is just the way it is going to be. He reminds himself that he needs to be more patient. It is hot. People tend to get irritated when it is hot, which spurs letters to the editor, angry conversations at the Post Office, and then in a couple of weeks, it is all over.

Chair Helm said that perhaps they could revisit this issue and have more of a discussion. She shared that the town she moved from had an extremely efficient badge program and couldn't believe that it would cost that much money to implement. To her knowledge, it didn't offend anyone but helped to define the parameters of who can and can't go to the beach. If someone was a non-resident or visitor, they had to pay a fee to use the facilities. She thought they could have more of a discussion and think more outside the box on how to do it and not assume it would cost the taxpayer a lot of money.

Mr. Dick said that 40 years ago he built a house on the beach on the cape. At that time it was free to use the beach. Now it is \$25 to \$40/day. He suggesting having a beach monitor armed with a cell phone with a speed dial to the Town Office and make it a voluntary thing. This would take the pressure off of the lifeguards and would eliminate the problems of non-residents using the beach without a permit.

Ms. Lockhart said if access to the beach is limited and they can't go because there was no place to park, where would they go? And if there are non-residents with a pass there for a day trip at the beach, what happens then? She said that when access for town residents becomes limited, that is something they would need to look at. Ms. Levine said they need to research this issue to find the facts. They are assuming that access is limited because of people who are there from out of town, when in fact it could be

new residents or guests of residents. Ms. Swanson noted that she has been going to the beach every day for the past week and has always had a place to park in the lot. Ms. Levine said there seems to be an assumption that the parking is being taken up by non-residents but it might be lifeguards, other employees, or other residents who are spilling out of the parking lot. She added that she has heard both sides of the issue. This could open a Pandora's Box that may not please everyone.

Mr. MacMichael said that the Town owned Post Office is in the middle of the parking area for Elkins Beach. It can sometimes be hard to get through the parking lot to get to the Post Office because of so many cars parked closely together for beach use. If the postal part of the parking area complained, it would make the matter worse. Mr. MacMichael said he was proud of the nice beach and park.

Dave Payne said that people are saying that drivers are exceeding the speed limit. He opined that the speed around the lake is extreme. He wondered how many of the sign boards the Town owned and whether they could be placed on multiple roads. Ms. Levine said that they have only one that they try to move around to different areas in town. She said that this speed problem is happening all over town. There is not a road in town that she hasn't heard about speeders. There are at most two officers on duty at the same time and they cannot cover the whole town.

Ms. Piotrow congratulated Ms. Levine on her columns in *Intertown Record*. Those at the meeting applauded. Ms. Piotrow said she found the articles interesting and informative and opined that without a local daily newspaper, they should encourage people to get the *Intertown* to see what is going on in town.

Ms. Piotrow added that on behalf of the residents of Hilltop Place, someone made a horrible mistake with the painted lines for the turn into the complex. A center lane has an arrow pointing to the post office. Then there is an arrow pointing to the left. It is about 100 yards before Hilltop Place. They have to go past the center turn line, go around a pedestrian walk sign before they can turn left into Hilltop Place. In the daytime people can figure it out, but in the dark, people could get into an accident or run over the green pedestrian walk sign. Ms. Levine said she would look at it and talk to the State, as this area is their jurisdiction.

Michael Todd said when he lived in Manchester, Mass., the town purchased a one-mile piece of waterfront. It became very busy and even had a train that brought many people into the area. The Boy Scouts won the contract to charge people to park in the public lot, and has become a very wealthy organization because of this.

Mr. Todd wanted to publically thank the Public Works Department for the superb job they did on the cemetery fence posts on Old Main Street. He said that the neighbors appreciate it, as the frontage of Old Main Street is that fence and makes the whole road look better. Mr. MacMichael said that it breaks his heart that someone had broken the sign on the corner of Old Main Street and Bog Road.

Mr. Cross asked about the tall grass and weeds at the Junction of Route 114 and Route 11. He said that the State spent a lot of time fixing this area and now it is overgrown with weeds. Ms. Levine said that this is mowing that is usually done by the State maintenance crew that hasn't been done. The contractor and construction division of the DOT has ownership of the project for a certain amount of time until they hand it over to the maintenance division. She said that the Town is apprehensive about taking over maintenance of this area because of the fear that the State would want to hand over more of their work to the Town. Ms. Levine added that the State has also not been watering thousands of dollars of plantings that were recently installed. Mr. Dick asked if the Garden Club could take it over. Ms. Levine said that they have been one of the biggest criticizers of the tall grass, as it hides their good work around the Crockett's memorial, but she does not think they have the manpower to weed and mow the State property.

Mr. Dick said that things like the Department of Transportation and the Department of Maintenance are purely political. He said that his church is located right at the corner near the area in question. He wanted to see if anyone there would like to mow the grass and take care of the weeds. They spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on the intersection and now they are not taking care of it. Mr. Dick said that he was not afraid to take initiative. Chair Helm said that at times she has been a consummate volunteer, but she sees that people are very busy. She also knows that New London has a lot of volunteers. Many issues keep these projects from getting done. Ms. Levine said she has no problem with private citizens maintaining this area, but did not want the Town to get involved.

Terri Bingham said she noticed the porous concrete parking lot at hospital has failed and people are now parking at Colby-Sawyer College while the parking lot is being repaired. She wondered what happened to the lot. Chair Helm said that the parking lot was a test and it failed. Ms. Levine said that they are in the process of rebuilding it with other porous materials.

Ms. Bingham said that she thought the Hospital's plan was for more handicapped spots to go in at the main entrance. She volunteers there and has heard complaints from people who can't find appropriate parking. She thought they had permission from the Town to make all the spots in the horseshoe into handicapped spots. Ms. Levine said that was not something the Town usually enforces, as it is an ADA issue. However, she said she would check their site plan to see what they had intended to do. Ms. Bingham asked how they could get more spots. Mr. Kaplan said that when they put the building in, they have to designate a certain number and type of spots. Ms. Levine said that as long as they keep the total number of spaces, they can designate more spaces for handicap. Mr. Cross said they may need to eliminate spaces because handicapped spaces are larger.

Ms. Bingham added that she lives on Messer Pond and that she and other owners recently got letters from their banks saying they were now in a flood zone. FEMA redid the maps and within 45 days they are required to get flood insurance. Ms. Bingham said that when they built their homes, they had to get clearance to show that they were within 1500 feet of the 100-year storm flood mark. They are trying to get an exemption from FEMA but still need to get the insurance to satisfy the bank. She wanted to know if this was a problem for others. Ms. Levine said that FEMA mapped flood zones last in 1991. The idea of having a flood area designated is to benefit the residents so that they can qualify for flood insurance. Ms. Levine said that her understanding of the FEMA map update was that there were very few areas where the flood zone changed. Ms. Levine said that she will ask Peter Stanley to look into the letters from the banks, but to her knowledge nothing changed that would have triggered this response. Properties that were in or out of the zones didn't change. Mr. Sheehan said that his son on Checkerberry Lane received the same letter. Ms. Bingham said she would give Ms. Levine a copy of what she received from her bank.

Mr. Lavoie asked about the changes in assessments, and also about the Master Plan, as it seems to be taking a long time to complete. Ms. Levine said that there were no changes to the assessments yet, and that they are still collecting data and that the results would be mailed out in the fall.

With regards to the Master Plan, Peter Bianchi, Board of Selectmen representative to the Planning Board, said that since March, they had one meeting, which was last Tuesday. The chapter covered Utilities. They worked on the chapter for about 2.5 hours. The Springfield Water Precinct didn't show up. They deferred the wastewater section of the chapter for a subsequent meeting. Ms. Levine said that the Planning Board is waiting for her to do the Community Services chapter. Mr. Bianchi said it is a complicated process due to the economy being in flux. Mr. Lavoie said that the Master Plan was started long ago and what was written three years ago may not necessarily be true now. Mr. Doheny, also on the Planning Board, said that there are a number of chapters in the Master Plan. To get through them, it takes 3-4 meetings, as it

takes time to make editorial changes, and to try and incorporate comments from the public who show up at the meetings. He said that the public is welcome to attend and give their input. Mr. Doheny added that they are not taking the document with one run through and then publishing it.

Chair Helm said that she also thought it was taking a long time to get the Master Plan done. She opined that it would appear to the citizens that the first part will be obsolete by the time it is complete. She felt that it had been a very frustrating process. Mr. Lavoie asked if the schedule could be condensed somehow. Ms. Levine said that the Planning Board has been alternating with the second Tuesday each month being for the Master Plan and the fourth being for business. They are trying to keep to the regular meeting schedule so as not to add meeting dates for the volunteer board members.

Mr. Hoke felt it was taking an extraordinary amount of time to complete. He anticipated being able to participate, but when the economy went downhill, his life changed. He hasn't been able to squeeze time in to participate. If the protracted time is a matter of the collected nature of things, the priorities have been changed the last couple of years. If the solution was to get one meeting in per month instead of none, he appreciated the length of time it is taking. Mr. Hoke opined that they are living in extraordinary times and that the Planning Board is doing the best they can.

Ms. Lockhart wondered if before the summer was out, the Board of Selectmen might meet with a representative from the college and with Mr. Stanley on zoning to define or refine some of the guidelines they have for student housing. She had asked Mr. Stanley what the maximum number of students living together in an off-campus house was and he told her that it could be up to five non-related individuals. She thought perhaps they should think about revising that downward. Someone she knows thinks that there is a drug house on County Road because of all the traffic that is coming and going and feels more people are living there than should be. Mr. Bianchi said that the college increased on-campus housing recently, as the College didn't want the kids spread out all over the place. Ms. Lockhart felt there were some enforcement issues when local individuals rent to students and there doesn't seem to be any monitoring. She thought the College could inform students of what the town zoning was. Others believed it to be a landlord issue. Ms. Levine said it was a difficult thing to enforce because limiting the number of non-related individuals is difficult. She also added that residential houses need to be treated as residential houses. They can't limit the amount of visitors on weekends. Ms. Lockhart said that going by that house they have six or seven cars in the driveway with different state license plates. Ms. Levine repeated that it was a difficult situation to enforce, and that it is not illegal to park extra registered cars. Ms. Lockhart said she talked to the owner and he was sure that there were only three people on the lease.

Ms. Bingham said that she lives on Messer Pond and there is a house nearby that is owned by someone who lives out of town. They have rented the house to some college students. There has been a tremendous amount of traffic on Forest Acres Road and the police have been called numerous times. She added that the students have been incredibly rude. In addition, there is a lot of litter and a lot of vandalism. She appreciated that this is a landlord problem but suggested it should be discussed with the College. Ms. Levine said that it should be discussed, but she did not think that revisiting the number allowed for residential housing in the Zoning Ordinance was the way to handle it. Ms. Bingham asked how it should be addressed. Mr. Bianchi felt the College would be concerned with the relationship they have with the town. Mr. Harrod said that this was an issue to take up with Dave Sauerwein, Dean of Students. Ms. Bingham was concerned with how rude the students were. Mr. Kaplan felt they should talk to the College about the rudeness. He said that three years ago almost everyone at the College was on-campus. The number of new students began to increase and has done so over the past two years. They are now above 1200 students. They haven't gone and built a new building but have refurbished basements in some of their buildings, which brought some people back on-campus. Off campus students at the College went

from less than 10% to 12% and this year it is 14%. Until they build a new building, that is the problem. The problem is only exacerbated by the fact that the students are being rude.

Mr. Doheny said he talked with College President Tom Galligan who told him that enrollment was under 1100. A good problem for them was that they sent out 1075 acceptance letters expecting getting 1000 to come. Instead, they all came. Some privately rented homes are overcrowded, which is an enforcement issue for landlords to deal with.

Mr. Payne said he was on the Board of Trustees at Colby-Sawyer College, and he wanted to provide correct figures. Enrollment is not 1200. They are taking about 420 more students this year. The trend is that more students will be living on campus. Part of the reason there are a fewer number of students is because there are some who are overseas in the fall. They also lose a number of students in the first semester. People living on-campus, he feels, will go up this year. Mr. Payne added that if he lived on Messer Pond, he would be all over the owner to talk to his tenants. Mr. Anderson added that the off-campus houses become the party houses for students. Chair Helm said that just because there is an aggregate of students gathering, they should not assume that it is a drug house.

Ms. Levine suggested inviting President Galligan to a future CAC meeting, and all agreed that would be a good idea.

Mr. Doheny asked about roundabout traffic education. Ms. Levine said she could write about that in her article. She shared that a recent accident at the roundabout was caused when someone was not paying attention to the road but to his GPS.

Mr. Dick said that the number of visitors to the food pantry has doubled exponentially. He noted that Hannaford has donated 11 tons of past due food to the various food pantries, including the Kearsarge Food Pantry which is held at the Baptist Church. He also noted that the Upper Valley Haven, a facility for young couples and single young adults with or without children has existed for a number of years taking no federal money, and just opened another facility. Mr. Dick said that people need to be aware that poverty exists not too far from where they were sitting.

Chair Helm said that there was a lot of good discussion at the meeting. She reminded them that there was no August meeting. The next meeting was planned for September 11th.

The meeting adjourned at 9:03 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London