

Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting
June 12, 2010
7:30am

Meeting Attendees: Tina Helm (Chair, Selectmen), Peter Bianchi (Selectman), Mark Kaplan (Selectman), David Seastrand (Police Chief), Gary Lineberry, Robert and DJ Lavoie, Karen Hoglund, Joe Cardillo, Beth Swanson, Jack Harrod, Jack Sheehan, David Dunning, Will Kidder, Terri Bingham, Bob MacMichael, Howard Hoke, Gary Markoff, David Payne, Bud Dick, Carolyn Lockhart, Ann Loeffler

Chair Helm called the **MEETING TO ORDER** at 7:30 AM. She welcomed the new members of the CAC, as she was not present at the last meeting to do so.

Chair Helm also welcomed Chief Dave Seastrand, who was prepared to give some information on recent activities of the Police Department. He reported that they currently have eight full-time and four part-time officers. They are supposed to have four full-time dispatchers, but have recently lost one due to his going to a full time fire department role in another town. Chief Seastrand reported that they have two detectives. One is full-time and one is a patrol officer who also does detective work. The department uses four vehicles. Three are patrol vehicles (including an SUV) and one is a van they use for training purposes. He noted that the newest car has not been marked yet but will be done in the next week or so.

Chief Seastrand reported that recently, officers helped out with construction traffic on Route 11 & Main Street. They spent over three weeks, full-time, with between two and five officers on detail. He explained that this sort of activity causes some scheduling issues at times.

The department was recently awarded two highway grants to focus on speed and DWI enforcement. He said that if there were any areas people would like them to concentrate on, let him know. Chief Seastrand offered that Route 11/Andover Road has been a popular suggestion. Terri Bingham said Bog Road needed some observation. Chair Helm said that Main Street would be a good road to add to the list.

Mr. Lineberry asked at what point people are stopped for speeding. Chief Seastrand said that it depended on the conditions of the road and the amount of traffic. Mostly, if traveling 9 miles/hour over the limit, they will let it go on Route 11/Andover Road. Mr. Markoff asked if they could get an electronic road sign to re-train people about their speed in certain areas of Town. He said the due to the roads being improved, people are likely to go too fast. Chief Seastrand said that there was such a sign available for use and that currently it was out on Wilmot Center Road. Ms. Loeffler said that it was perfectly placed and that it was doing a great job of slowing people down. Ms. Swanson said that the use of the sign helped to slow traffic when it was put near the Post Office earlier in the year.

Mr. Markoff asked if when a grant is given, there was an expectation of a certain revenue collection. Chief Seastrand said there was no expectation. They look at vehicular stopping and there are checks and balances that go along with the grants to make sure the money is being used properly. He added that the DWI grant pays for an officer who is not on duty to specifically look for drunk drivers. Last year there were two sobriety checkpoint grants that enabled them to stop random people to check for sobriety. Mr. Kaplan noted that one of the checkpoints was conducted during the same night as a New London Hospital dinner. Many people were angry with this as it seemed to be a set-up. Chief Seastrand commented that the Board of Selectmen knew that the whole process was started eight months earlier and that no one location or event was targeted.

Chief Seastrand explained that they are using more foot patrols as the weather has improved. A month ago near the New London Inn, an officer saw the clerk through the window looking nervous. Two suspicious people were inside, with someone in a van running outside. The officer ended up intervening

and calling the Border Patrol. It was determined that these people were not supposed to be in the country. He noted that if people such as these have no record with Border Patrol, they just gather information about them, like fingerprints and their history. However, if they have a history of crime, they usually come and take them in. The Border Patrol ended up coming to New London from Canada to take all three individuals.

Chief Seastrand noted that the officers also conduct door checks to make sure merchants have locked their doors. They begin around 7:30 PM and end around 11:00 PM. He shared that they have had some burglaries recently and are in the process of solving one case in particular. In the Elkins area an antique hutch was missing. Later, it was found that an old clock from in a box in the owner's closet was missing. The items were unique, identifiable pieces and they were able to recover them from a pawn shop in Keene. Chief Seastrand said that both the towns of Hanover and Lebanon had experienced similar crimes and were working to get the suspect(s).

Lots of times, the officers find residents who have left their doors unlocked. They are concerned with homes that seem to be attractive to kids and other people. They appreciate the tips they get when people are suspicious about activities within a house and contact them to check it out. Ms. Lockhart said she found out the hard way that ground-floor air conditioners should be well-secured, as people can get into homes that way.

Chief Seastrand said they will be using more bicycle patrols in an effort to save on car usage. They plan to put one of these patrols in Elkins this summer for an evening shift due to lots of noise complaints and criminal mischief going on in that area.

Mr. Hoke said that he would like to use the parking area at the Elkins Post Office. He wanted to know if that was allowed after beach hours. Chief Seastrand said that the beach closed at 9 PM and they do not enforce parking after hours.

Chief Seastrand said that in an effort to try and reduce costs, there is something called "Idle Right" that will be installed in the cruisers to save gas. The electronic functions of the cruiser will run off the battery to eliminate the need for idling. When the battery is running low, the car will automatically start up until the battery has gained a charge again.

Chief Seastrand explained that Detective Currier spends a lot of time with internet crime and working on cases. He started off trying to crack down on child pornography but also does work with solving internet scams. There have been a lot of citizens falling victim to internet crime. Between the Nigerian scam/false lottery winning/Canadian money-wiring, thousands of dollars are being sent away by citizens who believe that they have won something or are helping someone they know. Mr. Dunning said he found it interesting that the local police were helping with this sort of thing. He suggested getting this information out to more people so that they would know about their local police department's willingness to get involved, should they fall victim to a scam.

It was asked about calls that individuals may get from people soliciting money for their local police departments. Chief Seastrand said that the police department generates its money through taxes or other larger events. He said most of these calls are scams. Bob Lavoie asked if they ever try to get to the source of the scams. Chief Seastrand said that they do. He said that Toronto, Canada, has a special unit that scouts out the post office for those receiving money from people who think they are sending money to help someone they know. It is difficult to catch these individuals, however, because they change their post office boxes often. When someone has fallen victim to this scam, the New London Police

Department will add the victim's names to a data bank that will possibly be used as witnesses to the crimes.

Mr. Hoke said that after the stories he heard at the meeting about some of the services the Police Department is providing, he would be willing to help with the advertising of events that would get the word out for the rest of the public. He thought perhaps a more personal presentation would be more helpful. He would publicize any events that are being made so others can attend. Mr. Hoke said that it was valuable to publicize this type of thing. Chief Seastrand said they put on a personal safety course before and only five people showed up for it. Officers went through self-defense and how to get away from danger. There was hands-on training. They have also offered classes for firearm safety and how to maintain a safe fire arm. They also cover transporting, permitting and the laws that go along with having a fire arm.

Mr. Hoke said that he knows people who have been hooked from the scams on a regular basis. They need to hear the stories of it really happening to others so that they will see that they have been involved in a scam. Mr. Markoff opined that Chief Seastrand had such a wonderful presence and should put together video recorded messages having to do with things like how to avoid scams, self defense, etc., and have them cataloged. They could be linked on the Town's website for anyone to see at their own convenience.

Mr. Kaplan asked if there was a program they offered as a presentation of the breathalyzer test. Chief Seastrand said that there was. He went on to say that after the sobriety checkpoints, some people felt it had been set up to "get" a specific group of people. They got an invitation to go to a private residence to explain the laws and rules that go with DWI, including the detection and prosecution of the offense. The officer then asked the people if they wanted to take the breathalyzer test. Chief Seastrand said that it was eye-opening to them to get the facts. They now offer this sort of presentation to others upon request.

Chair Helm said there was room for both Mr. Markoff's suggestion and a live presentation when requested. Mr. Markoff said that this was the kind of information that could be used by the school district and young drivers as well. He felt that the knowledge could be life-saving and strongly recommended getting this done. Chief Seastrand said he has the means and ability to do this, but wants to formulate a plan on how to do it. Ms. Bingham said that there should be a variety of venues to present this information, as everyone learns differently.

Ms. Hogle noted that in the past, she had heard on WNTK information regarding a child molester who was on the loose, along with automobile information, and a personal description. She thought that was a great medium to be able to utilize. Chief Seastrand said they also have the CodeRED program to alert people of this sort of thing.

Mr. Hoke said that he had recently signed up for the CodeRED system. When it said he needed the longitude and latitude of his home, he found it difficult to distinguish his own home from within the parameters given. He ended up identifying someone else's home by accident and saw no way to contact anyone to fix it. Chief Seastrand suggested contacting Linda Jackman at the Town Office, who can contact CodeRED and make that adjustment for him. Mr. Hoke said that other than that one problem, it was very easy and clear to sign up to be part of the program.

Chief Seastrand indicated that the CodeRED program is a reverse phone system notification. It can notify the entire Town, or parts of it, of emergency situations (gas leaks, etc.). It could tell people to evacuate or to stay in place, and is done so by a recorded message. Due to the smoke from the Canadian fires on Memorial Day, a notification came from Newbury. It is the sort of thing that can be very helpful if they have a weather event like they did this past winter. He suggested keeping a land line in the home to be

able to receive information of where/when shelters are open, where supplies could be obtained, and when power is likely to come back.

Chair Helm noted Jessie Levine's column in the Intertown Record explaining the system. She said that everyone is being encouraged to sign up for it as it helps with communication in the event of an emergency. It also helps dispatch so that they won't have to be relaying the same information over and over again. Ms. Helm shared that on June 24th at 11:00 AM there would be a test of the CodeRED system. She suggested signing up for the program before that time. Chair Helm commended Chief Seastrand and the rest of the department heads for their recent presentation of Emergency Services in the Town. She said that she felt the Town was well covered and prepared to get through any emergency.

Chief Seastrand said that the number: 526-9444 is the number that has been set up to get the same sort of emergency information out via a recording. He said that the information would be the same that was going out on CodeRED. He also mentioned the use of shelter place-cards that are green on one side and red on the other. If individuals are OK during an emergency situation, they should put the green side out in a visible place in their home. If they expose the red side, it will tip the emergency personnel that the people inside need help. Mr. Harrod asked how often the information will change on the 526-9444 number. Chief Seastrand said that it would change as frequently as necessary.

Chair Helm said that there were a few glitches that the town is trying to work out with the CodeRED system. It is a work in progress but is certainly a useful tool.

Mr. Markoff said that getting the knowledge of the smoke while away, as well as receiving information about the propane tank that was hit at the Seasons, both via CodeRED, helped him not to be afraid. The knowledge he was given made him feel secure that he and his family had the appropriate information. There were no rumors and he knew precisely what was happening.

Mr. Sheehan asked about the paving being done on Newport Road. He asked if there was a plan to smooth out the shoulders, as they were very abrupt. Chief Seastrand said that this was part of the plan and they weren't finished with that project yet.

Mr. Sheehan also asked a question regarding a major issue that came up during the last budget session. There had been \$20,000 added into the budget for the increased expense for transportation for officers to go to Newport to testifying at the courthouse (since New London's courthouse had been closed). He wondered how the budget was at this point, half-way through the year. Chief Seastrand said that it is going very well. To get to the \$20,000 figure, they calculated the number of times officers have had to go to court in the past, and then included time and mileage. The Newport judge came up with a schedule with them so they are in court about 1-2 days/week. The clerks see that if there is one officer scheduled, they put all of that officer's schedules on that particular day. Chief Seastrand said that the Newport Court judge and clerks have helped them make a very smooth transition. He said that if it keeps going in this way, he believes that the expense for traveling to Newport Court will be dramatically cut back next year.

Chair Helm thanked Mr. Seastrand for coming to the meeting. She said that the Town was blessed with the leadership they have.

Bud Dick thanked Chief Seastrand for transparency. He felt that they have the ability to walk into the Police Department and ask any questions they wanted, and that they'd get an answer very quickly. This is not the case elsewhere. As a business owner dealing with the Police Department over the last two years, he said that he has appreciated this aspect of the department very much.

It was asked about tasers being used in the Police Department. Chief Seastrand said that they have 13 of them, and in total, they have had to be deployed twice. The tasers that had been purchased by the Town are ideal because they record audio and video as soon as they are turned on. Each officer on duty carries a taser, which replaces the sticks they used to carry.

Chair Helm asked for the CAC members to sign up for CodeRED. They should call Linda Jackman at the Town Office with any questions. She suggested trying to get signed up by June 24th to be part of the test that will happen.

Chair Helm read some notices from PSNH. There would be some power outages in Town. One had happened the past Wednesday. The second would be Tuesday the 15th. This would include outages to Main Street to the junction of Newport Road and Little Sunapee Road. On Wednesday the 16th there would be outages effecting South Pleasant Street to Old Main Street/Bog Road. PSNH will be updating their systems at this time, and all outages would last between 9:45am - 1:30pm.

Chair Helm noted the new "Story Walk" which is open to the public. It is sponsored by the Recreation Commission, Tracy Library and the Town. It is situated on a trail behind the Old Middle School and features pages of a book that has been enclosed in a plexi-glass frame. Participants walk along the path and stop at different stations to read segments of the books. Books will change with the seasons.

Chair Helm announced that SAU #65 has moved to the Kearsarge Learning Center (Old Middle School). An open house will take place on June 17th from 3-5pm. The public is welcome to attend.

Chair Helm asked the members of the CAC if it would be acceptable to them to cancel the August 14th CAC meeting. They would be meeting on July 17th and then meet again in September, as planned.

Mr. Markoff said that he wanted to share some news from the School Budget side. Due to the 2011 State deficit being \$295 million, the rainy-day fund going from \$100 million to \$10 million, and the breakdown of the Euro in Greece, the shortfall in money will be shoved back down to the State and local levels. He said that he is on the Finance and Audit Committee and said that they are trying to anticipate how it will come out. In New Hampshire it is going to affect the real estate tax and result in having to cut more things from budgets. By the time September comes around, it will be getting more real. He said that he would like to share more of this information at the September CAC meeting.

Chair Helm noted that the Board of Selectmen would be meeting with the Portsmouth Coalition on June 28.

Mr. Dick felt that gambling should be discouraged in the State. With past experience in Maine, the incidence of social needs, divorce and poverty increased dramatically when gambling was introduced. It was a negative choice that has only worked partially in Maine. He said that it is a very un-fair tax on the poor, who cannot afford to pay it. Mr. Dick said that the State of New Hampshire doesn't have a social service network in place that could handle the demand that would come. Mr. Markoff commented that Governor Lynch said he would veto anything having to do with gambling. He added that the trouble the State is in now will affect its citizens for a decade. They won't be able to get out of it without increased taxes to work its way through.

Chair Helm wanted to be sure people were aware New London was rejected for the sewer grant. Sunapee had received some of the grant previously and New London had been rejected for their part. Now, Sunapee has also been rejected. The Sunapee/New London Sewer Commission will meet on the 24th of June to figure it out. Mr. Kaplan said the hook USDA promised was that they would grant \$3+/- million

for the project. When the boss in Vermont looked at it, the median income of New London was \$61,000 which puts them in a different category. They felt that Sunapee would be fine and still qualify. They reapplied for Sunapee to get the money, noting that New London was a 2/3 user. The idea was that New London would pay Sunapee back the 2/3. Chair Helm said the USDA was now offering to provide a loan at 4.25% for 30 years. Mr. Kaplan said that when they did the engineering for the project, they borrowed money at a bond issue. It was 2.65% for 30 years. He felt that the local banks would give a much better rate.

Chair Helm added that Sunapee has started to investigate some legal avenues on this issue. The median incomes of the two towns were averaged together, making it so neither town qualified for the grant. Mr. Kaplan said that from his point of view, the only way to say the Town should get involved is if they receive a grant for this substantial amount of money. New London's portion of the refurbishment is \$5 million. If that amount of money was borrowed in full, it would distort the ability of the Town to run itself the way it is being done currently.

Mr. Bianchi noted that the current plant is only at 60% capacity, with some repairs needed, but they have to look at what the \$8 million upgrade would have given them. He said that Sunapee is discouraged as well. He didn't feel they would get anything done with the upgrade this year. Mr. Harrod asked if the plant could be deemed insufficient. Mr. Kaplan said that it wasn't insufficient as of yet, but that reality was looming.

Mr. Lavoie asked if there were other sorts of grants available. Mr. Bianchi said there were other options, which Ms. Levine was looking into. He said that New London is an affluent town and from the point of view in Concord, they believe that the citizens can afford it. Chair Helm felt they did well to get the project started now before they have a totally failed system which would require immediate attention, no matter what.

Mr. Kaplan wanted to note that when some 150 under-aged students from Colby-Sawyer College had their drinking party, Chief Seastrand and his department went over, stopped it, recorded the facts, and all 150 kids were put through the courts. His point was that there was not one single suit filed by any parent. He opined that it was executed beautifully.

Chair Helm said that if the members of the CAC do not get the minutes from the meetings to let Linda Jackman know. They can be sent via email or US mail. They are also posted on the Town's web site.

Mr. Hoke asked how the skateboard park was progressing. Chair Helm said that the past Thursday night the committee made a presentation to the School Board and approved the site off of Cougar Court (behind County Press). It was a unanimous vote. Chair Helm said that there were about 20 kids with their families at the meeting. They agreed to enter negotiations with the private group to go into a long term lease. The skateboard park funding would amount to about \$200,000. The School Board had concerns about traffic, safety and hours. They agreed to negotiate these issues but now have identified a site. They can now go forward and start fundraising.

Ms. Lockhart asked who would be responsible for liability and maintenance of the park. Chair Helm said that the lease would be to the Town of New London and that the Recreation Department would oversee it, but not raise funds for it. The park would be covered under the Town's liability. The committee raising funds has said that they plan to raise enough money to put some into an endowment to pay for maintenance of the park for years to come. Chair Helm said the Town will have some dimension of responsibility of maintenance.

Ms. Swanson asked about sidewalk between the Elementary School and Job Seamans Acres, as it seems to have been put off again and again. Mr. Kaplan said the delay is because there is a historical house in the path-way of the sidewalk. Separate care is needed to keep the area in its pristine condition. He said that they are still promising to do the project. Chair Helm said that the historical preservation part has been taken care of. Mr. Bianchi said highway/sewer department project with Main Street is done, so perhaps now Mr. Lee (Director of Public Works) can get to these projects that have been on the back burner.

Mr. Markoff asked to whom thank-you notes could be sent for making the Main Street paving happen. Chair Helm said that they should go to Ms. Levine and Mr. Lee. She added that the Board of Selectmen had also gone to quite a few meetings regarding Main Street. She said the key was getting the commissioner to travel the roads. Chair Helm said that it has been a group effort and while it wasn't a total improvement it was an upgrade. Mr. Markoff said that it will certainly buy the Town some time and has been a big plus.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London