



TOWN OF
NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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**BUDGET COMMITTEE/
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
JOINT MEETING MINUTES**

October 16, 2017

6:30 PM

PRESENT:

G. William Helm, Jr., Chairman
Nancy Rollins, Selectman
Janet Kidder, Selectman
Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer
Budget Committee Members: Rob Prohl (Chair), Phyllis Piotrow, Bruce Hudson, Lyndsay Lund, Joe Cardillo, Tyler Beck, Christopher Lorio, Suzanne Jesseman

OTHERS PRESENT:

Sandra Licks, Library Director
Donna Larrow, Police Dept. Administrative Assistant
Jay Lyon, Fire Department
Ed Andersen, Chief of Police
Lou Botta, Emergency Management Director
Richard Lee, Public Works Director
Jim Wheeler, New London Resident
John Ryan, Board of Firewards

Chair Helm called joint meeting to order at 6:30pm.

Joint Meeting with Budget Committee: Review of Public Safety Budgets

Police Department – Chief Ed Andersen

Ed Anderson, Chief of Police, presented his budget to the joint boards. He read from a prepared statement, outlining the need for an additional police officer to bring the fulltime staff to 9, excluding administration (the letter is attached and made part of the Minutes). The department staffs three shifts, 24/7.

After reading his opening remarks, Chief Andersen shared comments from newly hired Detective Rowe who stated that he was at first hesitant to come to New London from Newport because he feared as a detective there would be little for him to do. Detective Rowe quickly learned that there is a significant amount of activity in New London and he has been very busy since arriving six months ago. Detective Rowe observed that during his six months at New London, he has learned that crime does occur daily within the Town of New London. What he always thought was a quiet community as he grew up one town over, is not actually as quiet as he thought, noting that the accessibility that Interstate 89 provides to the town also invites crime.

Chief Andersen stated that his struggle is finding people that want to be police officers and the biggest among current officers is working the midnight rotation. The four current officers are facing burnout and want a better schedule. Twenty years ago officers were eager to work and received better pay and benefits. Now it is the opposite. The quality of people applying has diminished. When officers call out sick, attend training or are on vacation, the department is down to running one patrol car. Chief Andersen feels now is the right time to do this for the safety of the community and the well-being of the officers.

Chair Helm asked Chief Andersen to discuss what he, Lieutenant Emily Cobb and Sergeant David Keith do on a daily basis. Chief Andersen explained that he and Lieutenant Cobb do paperwork, bring cases to court, review reports, handle phone calls and complaints while Sergeant Keith deals with all the calls that come during the evening, cruiser maintenance, ordering supplies, radar, scheduling and organizing details.

Chief Andersen reviewed some of the calls for service to-date:

37 – 911 hang ups

241 – House alarms

230 – Animal complaints

1 – Arson

8 – Assaults

118 – Assists to other Agencies

111 – Be on the lookouts (suicidal subjects, theft)

13 – Burglaries

23 – Domestic Violence Assaults

22 – Drug related investigations

75 – Fraud

1 – Indecent Exposure

143 – Motor vehicle complaints

195 – Criminal records checks

150 – Parking violations

Property checks are up but the amount of properties that they were able to check are down.

153 – Road hazards

4 – Juvenile Runaways

3 – Sexual assaults

3 – Registered sexual offenders

Traffic stops are down.

Chair Prohl commented that in the Kearsarge area New London has the largest police force and is the only one with night time coverage. He questioned how do the other communities cover or do we assist? Chief Andersen replied that the other communities either pay to have an officer on call and at times, New London will respond. Some communities put State Police on call. Sunapee, Newbury, Sutton, Wilmot, Andover, Springfield and Grantham are the communities the New London assists most often. New London is not compensated for responding; none of these towns has 24-hour service. Chief Andersen noted that having a college and a hospital are reasons why 24/7 coverage is needed. He also feels that the dispatcher should not be on duty without an officer on duty.

Phyllis Piotrow stated that what is happening to this department is happening all over the country. The state doesn't have reasonable health programs. Many of the problems are the result of activities and responsibilities not being fulfilled by the federal government or state government, so the burden ends up on the local police.

She feels the most important thing a police officer can do is to exercise good judgment and treat people with respect. She would like to know what more can be done. Chief Andersen feels the most important class he's taken is "verbal judo". It teaches de-escalation and talking through situations. He's proud to say that the amount of officer complaints is less than 1%.

Bruce Hudson discussed the breaking and entering statistic and questioned whether calls on alarms are part of that number. Chief Andersen said no. So far this year, the alarm call number is down by 5. Last year there were 134. Right now there are 8 full time officers and 2 part timers. Joe Cardillo feels this is a national dilemma. When talking about juggling the budgetary constraints, we have to consider if we can accomplish this with part time officers. A new full-time person means benefits, retirement and ends up blowing the budget. He also wondered about signing bonuses. Is there anything that proves that signing bonuses have long term positive effects on keeping employees? Chief Andersen stated that they have done two signing bonuses and they were instrumental in employees not having to take a pay cut to come to New London. He has no doubt that they will finish their careers here so it was a good investment. Mr. Cardillo commented on the growth of the department which means more vehicles and maybe a new building. Personally, he is in more favor of increasing people as opposed to a new facility.

Chief Andersen stated his philosophy is that the most important thing is to have boots on the ground. The well-being of his officers is most important. Whipple Hall needs major work done but he'd rather have a better life and schedule for his officers.

Tyler Beck feels this is about spending money to save money. Training and hiring is costly. It is smart money for a town of our size to invest as most of us live here because of what this town offers and what's available. Christopher Lorio asked if there was a length of retention that has to be met for the signing bonus. Chief Andersen has structured it so that 1/3 is given at hire, 1/3 at a successful 6-month review and 1/3 at the end of their first year. The sign on bonus is for full time certified officers. Joe Cardillo asked what other towns do as far as signing bonuses go. Chris Lorio also asked Chief Andersen whether nine officers is enough looking into the future. Chief Andersen feels nine officers would put him in a good position for at least the next 3-5 years. Fire Chief Jay Lyon asked if there were any grants available for the Police service for additional officers. Chief Andersen stated that there were currently no grants available.

Dispatch – Chief Ed Andersen

Chief Andersen stated the only concern with Dispatch, which could mean a budget increase, is the Spots computer system. State Police gives us information on motor vehicle records and criminal history and are currently not charging us for this service. Next year they may charge us \$2-4,000 for that service. He is going to try to absorb it in the budget.

Fire Department – Chief Jay Lyon

Fire Chief Jay Lyon provided an overview of his budget requests.

- Vehicle Maintenance – each time a piece of apparatus needs repair it is in the \$3,000 range.
- Small Tools and Equipment – \$3,500 for new ventilation fan. These fans are used for cooking related incidents. Using electric fans require multiple fans and gas-powered fans push carbon monoxide into the buildings.
- Radios – There is a significant increase going from \$3,100 to \$19,500. Chief Lyon's recommendation would be to not put \$30,000 in FY2019 Capital Reserve and put in \$13,500 therefore offsetting the budget. The majority of the increase is for portable radios. The older portables can't be fixed.

- Increase in wage and salaries – part of this is because of increased call volume. A lot of the overage from last year was due to training and use of per diem staff. The call volume is expected to be around 800 calls this year.

Chief Lyon noted that training requirements are significant and this is where a large portion of the salaries budget is affected. New London responds to more calls than all the surrounding towns combined with the fewest pieces of apparatus.

Chair Helm questioned the part time compensation increase and asked if it would be adequate. Chief Lyon replied that they were currently covering 12 hours but this was not adequate. Really, three days a week makes more sense. Chair Helm asked if call rates were up enough and are they impacting the ability to hire people. The biggest issue Chief Lyon faces is recruitment and retention; he feels this isn't any different than any other fire department.

Emergency Management – Louis Botta

Emergency Management Director Lou Botta reported to the group that he works with an incredible team. It is a smooth running team and they work well together. They will begin coordinating with the Red Cross. One thing they would like to do is Critical Emergency Response Team (CERT). This program had lapsed and they would like to either take it over or start it from scratch. In the Kearsarge Shopper there will be an ad asking for volunteers. They will be looking at the possibility of using the Middle School as a shelter.

They validated the requirement for fire association to get the uniform equipment. They will be getting safety vests that say emergency. They are enhancing the preparedness of this town. Together with the Red Cross they will be increasing the training opportunities in the entire town. He would like to see as much training on AED and CPR as possible.

The Committee recently completed a training at Hilltop. The entire Emergency Management team was there. Phyllis Piotrow commented that these trainings are very helpful. Selectmen Rollins wanted to clarify that the budget was \$5,000 less than last year and Mr. Botta confirmed this.

The Joint Meeting concluded at 8:55PM.

The Budget Committee continued its meeting outside of the main meeting room:

After the Budget presentation at the selectman's meeting, the Budget Committee members, Prohl, Lund, Jesseman, Piotrow, Beck, Cardillo, Hudson met in an adjacent room to discuss the resignation of Budget Committee member Colin Campbell. Lund made a motion to not fill the vacancy and it was seconded by Jesseman. Chair Prohl asked for discussion on the motion, Cardillo stated that the Budget Committee has the legal authority to fill the vacancy and stated he was opposed to the motion as he felt an extra set of eyes during the budget process would be helpful and that in the past we had filled a vacancy when it occurred. Cardillo also stated that there were experienced people who had been budget members who might be willing to be appointed to fill the vacancy. Chair Prohl stated we had only 5 months till the next election and if a new member would need time to get up to speed. And that he felt the remaining members plus the Nancy Rollins, the selectman rep, were up to the task of developing the budget. Hudson added that we have 9 members so a tie would be unlikely. Jesseman added that the existing members have already heard the 2 largest departments. Chair Prohl added that this issue could be put on the agenda of a future budget committee meeting or a special meeting Prohl noted that if he was away, vice chair Piotrow would run the meeting. Beck felt that this issue could wait for a later meeting as he wanted time to think about this issue.

Chair Prohl called for a vote on the motion-those in favor-Jesseman, Lund, Piotrow, Prohl, Opposed, Cardillo, Hudson, one abstention-Beck. Motion carries.

Motion to adjoin by Pietrow, seconded by Jessman, all present noted yes.

COMMENTS READ BY CHIEF ANDERSEN

I would like to start out with explaining over the years why I understand why so many department heads do not want to adequately make requests for staffing and structure.

I have been a police chief for over 16 years and presenting budgets to selectman and budget committees for over 18 years. Right up till this year the process has always been exciting and fun for me. I believe this should be a process of one in which you bring before the committees your needs first and your wants second. I think wants serve a very important role in all agencies weather fire highway or police. It's sometimes the small wants that brings excitement and fun to our jobs that also allows us to bring the community and the departments together. A great example is our bike patrol. The bike patrol serves as an important function on many occasions it is one we could truly survive without however I get more positive feedback from the business owners and community members about having the officers out on the bikes then the needs of having a radar to write tickets in the communities. We can survive without a bike but lives would be at risk if we did not run radar daily.

As I prepared for this meeting tonight I explained to Donna that I have the pit in my stomach for the first time about requesting a much needed 9th officer for new London. I explained to her how it would be so easy for me to sit back and say I will let the next chief handle this battle as I have heard so many chiefs say in the past at chiefs meetings. However I cannot just sit back and put the community and officers I swore to protect at risk of crimes and burn outs. I will go over many points in which I feel that a ninth officer is so important to this community and our department. I am very passionate about this subject and can talk for hours however I am going to try to hit the most important reasons why and will take questions. I want to make sure that I read a memo from my detective to the select board and budget committee before I end.

New London is a much changed community then when I started over 20 years ago. In just this year I have personally struggled with a 275 pound man in the dark on the side of the interstate trying to get him in my cruiser while not getting run over by the morning traffic and hurt by him. (1 moth ago called in a 3 because of a sick officer on a midnight shift) This was a call I handled because the closest trooper was Concord. I have been spit on, kicked, threatened, responded to an officer involved shooting, watched people die, have pointed my fire arm at subject wandering if he/she had a gun, dealt with major drugs, prostitution and prostitutes, I have been in a head on collision working at 8 pm in a heavy snow storm, worked every hour that's on the clock.

One thing that has changed is the availability of people who want to be a police officer. I just read an ad in the paper that they are starting a bus driver out at 24.00 and hour with a retirement plan and health benefits. This is 3.00 more an hour then we start out a new officer. When I was in the public sector the retirement and

benefits most importantly health benefits was a major role in my career choice. It took three years for an opening in law enforcement for me and I worked two part-time jobs as an officer and a dispatcher until the first full time position opened up. Today I bet that I could almost get a job in any community over the next year as positions just sit unfilled and vacant. The work force of today don't sit and wait for a job they are setting their salaries and negotiating the benefits they want. Hiring bonuses and better work schedule and time off is what is important. If you have a qualified employee you are worried about losing them to the next agencies or town.

New London continues to struggle with staying full staffed. I feel largely this is in part to the fact that we are a 24 hour department that only affords the ability to staff one person on at night. Our schedule is the worst for any social or family life. Our upper staff is now well organized with LT Cobb, Sgt. Keith and Detective Rowe. However the four patrol officers continue with the brunt of the 3-11 6-2 and 11-7 shifts. This is creating burn out. The health factors on our bodies is over whelming. I personal have had zero issues with sleep apnea since coming off the midnight rotations as well as IBS. There is many reports on line that you can read about just how unhealthy and quite frankly dangerous shift work is to our bodies. I have watched 5 employees leave New London Police just because of shift rotations. The Standard Officers per 1000 people in the north east is 2.6 and an average of 2.2 in New England which would put us at needing 11 officers and we have been working with 8 for the last 13 years. We are a reactive police department not a proactive one. I receive daily requests for radar and speed control on many of our roads during the days and early evenings. We do not have the ability to cover these issues and the evening patrols are on calls.

The seriousness of crimes are going up. The safety to officers is becoming more real to our area. We are down half a detective. [concludes written comments by Chief Andersen, October 16, 2017]