



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN / BUDGET COMMITTEE JOINT MEETING MINUTES October 22, 2018 6:30 PM

SELECTMEN PRESENT: Nancy Rollins (Chair), Bill Helm, Janet Kidder

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Rob Prohl (Chair), Joe Cardillo (Vice Chair), Phyllis Piotrow, Chris Lorio, Bill Helm (Selectmen's Rep).

STAFF PRESENT:

Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator

OTHERS PRESENT: Scott Blewitt, Bob Harrington, Bob Brown, Mark Vernon, Joe Kubit, Michael Gelcius

Chair Rollins called the meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM.

Chair Rollins reported on the Board of Selectmen's meeting held prior to the joint meeting: the board has agreed to a 2% COLA for employee salaries and the Board has been told Health Insurance is not to exceed 4.9% so a decision has been made to not make any changes at this time. For the unassigned fund balance, the Selectmen agreed to \$450,000 which puts the tax rate at \$4.34.

FY2020 Budget Review

Conservation Commission

Bob Brown, Chair of the Conservation Commission stated that their operating budget is fairly level from year to year. Having money available in the land acquisition capital reserve fund is important in the event that land becomes available so they are prepared. There was a slight increase in their overall budget from last year.

Chair Brown stated he met with the Selectman about a plan he would like to present at town meeting that involves sharing the funds generated from forest harvest wildlife management. All projects they have previously done have been cash positive. The harvest done at Phillips Preserve in 2014 and generated \$13,000 which goes into the general fund. In 2016 there was a harvest done at Low Plain. Money had to be spent up front to do some prep work but the net amount ended up being \$11,000. A third project has just started on Mountain Road. There are two parcels totaling about 60 acres, but this is a selective cut, not a clear cut. With this harvest, they would like to ask the voters at town meeting if they would allow half of the profit to go into the general fund and the other half to the Conservation Commission. They would put it into the Conservation fund which was started many years ago and is non- tax payer dollars. This fund was generated by gifts and donations and is not a part of the budget. This fund has only been used once to put a deposit on a piece of land. The Conservation Commission would like to build up this fund in case there is an emergency that can't wait for town meeting.

Joe Cardillo asked what the legal ramifications were of this. Ms. Hallquist responded that the sale of town property always goes into the general fund unless town meeting wants to direct it somewhere else.

Phyllis Piotrow discussed trails through Phillips Preserve Area and down to Otter Pond. She asked about making a trail that loops around. Chair Brown responded there is a desirable piece of land on the list that abuts this, but the sellers are not willing at this point.

Chair Brown discussed the land acquisition capital reserve fund. He stated the Conservation Commission made their request for \$50,000 and understand from the minutes of the meeting that this was not well supported. This fund started in 2004 with a contribution of \$75,000 to the Land Acquisition fund for the purchase of conservation land. In 2005 and 2006 \$150,000 was put into the fund and in 2007 and 2008, \$50,000 was deposited. In 2009 and 2011 there were no contributions. In 2010 a request for \$50,000 was negotiated down to \$25,000. In 2012, the contribution was \$10,000 and since then there have been no contributions to the fund. Chair Brown understands that maybe \$50,000 isn't the appropriate number but feels there should be a reasonable and consistent contribution to this fund. He hopes the general feeling isn't that no contribution should be made to the fund. The Conservation Commission has a list of over 50 properties and these parcels aren't inexpensive. Currently this fund has a little over \$200,000.

Chair Rollins stated they will take this under advisement.

Public Works

Bob Harrington noted that the department has been very busy this year and started out understaffed. The sewer lagoon project was completed but more work needs to be done to fix erosion there. Electrical work upgrades have been done on the Town Common. Paving is going slowly due to weather.

Line item 4312-600 for equipment and oil can be lowered by \$1,000.

Line item 4311-600 should be 352 not 362 for Drug and Alcohol testing. The change is to the code, not the request which is \$700. Random testing is done which is a state and federal requirement and it is done for pre-employment screening.

Chris Lorio asked about signage and noted we have been spending more than what is budgeted, and questioned whether the budget should be increased. Mr. Harrington stated they have gotten a lot of calls about faded signs and signs in poor condition. It wouldn't be a bad thing to increase it and would have to see what they have in stock.

Phyllis Piotrow asked about savings per mile for maintaining a paved road versus a gravel road. This information could make a strong case for paving. Mr. Harrington does not have that information. Ms. Piotrow would like a cost analysis on this.

Selectman Helm asked about the cleaning services for government buildings. There must be a more efficient way rather than individual contracts for each building. Ms. Hallquist stated there is one contact for Whipple Hall and Buker, Town Office and the Library. After several years of no increases, the cleaning contractor raises the prices significantly. They will seek proposals to see if a better price is available. The Fire and Police Departments do their own cleaning. Selectman Helm would like to look at doing this for the entire town versus individual departments. Chair Rollins would include the beach areas in this as well.

Kim Hallquist suggested that Audio Visual equipment for the town office building and Whipple, as well as new chairs for Whipple and a sound system would be helpful. Selectman Kidder feels strongly that we need better audio visual and sound equipment.

Phyllis Piotrow commented there is a large increase for the sidewalk tractor in the capital reserve fund. Mr. Harrington stated the sidewalk tractor that is currently used is not ideal commercial use and breaks down. With the addition of more sidewalks it doesn't seem feasible to use it. Mr. Harrington would like to visit other towns to see what other options are out there.

Recreation

Scott Blewitt, Recreation Director stated he is at the end of his fifth year and is proud of the Rec Department as it is a well- rounded program and an important asset to the town. Last year they ran 117 programs for all ages. There is a lot going on in town and many cooperative efforts with all organizations within town. The staff and volunteers are dedicated to the mission of the Rec Department and improving quality of life.

Mr. Blewitt noted a few small increases to the budget. One was an increase to the waterfront staff wages. This past summer all the lifeguards were paid \$10 per hour. In the past there was a range of pay so he changed this to be consistent. The increase will bring them up to \$10.50 and \$11.00 per hour. Chair Rollins asked about Mr. Blewitt's desire to pay returning lifeguards a higher rate than new employees with the hope they would return the following year. This pays everyone the same amount. Mr. Blewitt stated even the staff returning were making \$9.50 so he felt a .50 raise was good. If they come back this year it will be an additional .50 or \$1.00 increase and they know this so there is incentive to return. A returning staff member will get 40 hours a week as well where a newer person may get less hours.

Chris Lorio asked about increasing night time hours as lifeguards leave at 5:00. Mr. Blewitt stated they had additional hours at Elkins and stayed open until 6:00pm but there are challenges to do this.

One item he would like to reinstate is to outfit seasonal employees. In the past they have relied on the revolving fund for this. This costs \$1,100 and supplies swimsuits, shirts, whistles and safety equipment. There are many things not in the budget (skate rink equipment, playground equipment maintenance, and boating and water equipment, background checks) that comes out of the revolving fund. Right now, there is \$29,000 in the revolving fund. The van payment has been paid for the year and four plastic coated metal picnic tables were bought for Elkins Beach. He would like to continue to buy more until all the wooden ones are replaced. He also purchased kayaks and paddleboards. Mr. Blewitt is also paying an office assistant that works 20 hours per week from the revolving fund.

Selectman Helm would like a more detailed and itemized list of expenses paid out of the fund and asked that Wendy Johnson provide this information. Chair Rollins would like information that identifies charges for residents and non-residents for day camp, swim and sailing lessons and whether there have been increases to these programs.

Chair Rollins asked about trips provided through the Recreation Department. It is her understanding that the fee covers the amount to attend an event but is there an administrative fee added in to account for time, fuel and insurance. Mr. Blewitt stated they are not adding an administrative fee at this time in an attempt to make it affordable for everyone. Chair Rollins would like to offset some of the risk and liability cost. Ms. Hallquist stated generally it does include those things in that the cost for the trip is more than the cost of the ticket to the event, the

amount over and above that is what makes the revolving grow. Chair Rollins would like to better understand what is included in the income.

Selectman Kidder stated the Recreation Commission feels they should offer programs to the entire population and there are some that can't afford to do them if they aren't made affordable. Certainly they can charge more but if it's too expensive people won't do it. Chair Rollins agrees but there is no way to discern how decisions are being made as to the charges and if they are reasonable or not.

Scott Blewitt stated there will be meeting later this week regarding grooming trails around New London for snow shoeing and cross-country skiing. If this is a worthwhile venture, there will be expenses related to this.

Administration

Selectman Helm distributed a handout with regards to stipends for town officials. Some of the requests have large increases so he went through and listed the current stipend, the proposed stipend and the amount he thinks it should be. He wants to raise the question about how to rationalize them.

Chair Rollins asked if there is a sense of how many hours the welfare and health officer put in. Ms. Hallquist stated it depends. The Welfare officer is here a lot if there is a case and this is a difficult job. The Health officer is required in New London to do test pits for septic systems. DES will not issue an approval without the health officer signing off on it. She also tests the beaches several times throughout the summer for bacteria and would quickly alert citizens if there was a health risk identified. Phyllis Piotrow asked what required qualifications were for the health officer. Ms. Hallquist responded the Selectmen can choose whoever they want but many towns prefer a public health or medical background. Deb Langner has a PhD.

Currently Kim Hallquist is the Tax Collector and does not get a stipend, but money is being set aside in the event someone else is appointed by the Selectmen. A more detailed discussion will be held about this.

Phyllis Piotrow expressed her dislike for each department submitting their budget in a different format as it is inconsistent and she'd like a simpler presentation. Joe Cardillo noted that he felt the departments did a good job with their budget presentations and the budget printout is easy to see all of the budgets as well as the previous few years.

Next joint meeting: October 29, 2018, 6:30 PM.

Budgets to be reviewed: Social Services, Nonprofits, Welfare, Health, Town Clerk

IT WAS MOVED (Bill Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to adjourn the meeting. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson, Recording Secretary
Town of New London