



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES October 30, 2017 6:00 PM

PRESENT:

G. William Helm, Jr., Chairman
Nancy Rollins, Selectman
Janet Kidder, Selectman - Excused
Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer

OTHERS PRESENT:

Linda Nicklos, Town Clerk
Richard Lee, Public Works Department
Steve Ensign, Chair, Board of Firewards
Gerry Gold, New London Resident
Leigh Bosse, *The Messenger*
Peter Bianchi, New London Resident
John Wilson, New London Resident
Jay Lyon, Fire Chief
Doug Lyon, Chair, Zoning Board
Budget Committee Members: Joe Cardillo, Lyndsay Lund, Chris Lorio, Tyler Beck, Phyllis Piotrow, Suzanne Jesseman, Bruce Hudson. Absent: Rob Prohl, Chair.

Chair Helm called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Public Comments: None

Old Business: None

First discussion of amendments to the Selectmen's Rules of Procedure

The Rules and Procedures are required to be discussed twice. This is the first discussion of the amendments and they will be discussed again at a later date.

Selectmen Rollins discussed section IV, B 5 – “Direct questions or requests for information to the Town Administrator or directly to the department head; the Town Administrator shall be copied on all requests and discussions.” Selectmen Rollins is suggesting this be eliminated. She doesn't think the Selectmen should be restricted from having a conversation with a department head and having to copy the administrator on those discussions. Chair Helm questioned if both parts should be eliminated? He does like the idea of directing things to the department head.

Selectmen Rollins' concern is that it has been interpreted such that selectmen cannot have a conversation or inquiry. She'd like to clarify that. If there is a specific request for a department head to do something, she is fine with that being put into writing and letting the administrator know. There is no organizational structure in state government or private or public sector where a board director cannot speak with a senior employee. If a request is made, the other selectmen and the town administrator should be made aware.

Chair Helm recommended changing it to direct requests for information to the Town Administrator or Department Head and copy the Town Administrator and other selectmen on all such requests. This leaves out the discussion part and question part. Selectmen Rollins is still concerned about how that would get interpreted. Chair Helm agrees with the principle of what Selectmen Rollins is saying which is if they have a conversation they should be able to do that, and other Selectmen should be made aware of it.

Chair Rollins will review this issue be ready to discuss at the next meeting.

Section II D (1) (iv): The position of the Chair and appointments to the Planning Board, Budget Committee and any other committee shall be limited two consecutive years for any individual Selectman. The purpose of this rule is that ensure that each Selectman participates in different aspects of town government. Chair Helm feels that since he has been on the Board this hasn't happened, and all have been doing the same things. Prior to elections next year, he would like to discuss rotating these positions. Selectmen Rollins and Chair Helm are in agreement.

Chair Helm noted that he would also like to propose to add a section II (g) – Selectmen Appointments to town boards and committees

1. Prior to appointing any individual to a position on a town board or committee (other than a temporary or ad hoc committee), the Town Administrator shall solicit interest from the public and nominations from current committee membership.
2. At least one Selectman shall interview each candidate for a position and recommend one or more individuals for appointment.
3. Appointment shall be made by a majority vote of the Selectmen.
4. No appointed board or committee member shall serve for more than nine consecutive years.

Chair Helm observed that much of this was already in place, but it has not been followed. Selectmen Rollins and Chair Helm are in agreement.

Set 2017 Tax Rate

Wendy Johnson supplied the data to review the 2017 tax rate. Setting the tax rate means how much unassigned fund balance will be applied as the State of NH Department of Revenue actually sets the tax rate. The tax rate for next year without any unassigned fund balance would be \$4.72 compared to this years \$4.35.

Selectmen Kidder was not in attendance at the meeting but provided Kim Hallquist with her recommendation.

Ms. Hallquist reported that Selectmen Kidder recommends using between \$600,000-\$750,000 dollars of unassigned fund balance to offset the amount to be raised by taxes. That would leave the town with an unassigned balance in the general amount that the town has maintained over the past several years. It was discussed that in the future there could be higher expenses, for such things as a community center or a police station, which might be a reason to leave the fund balance higher at this time and use less to reduce taxes now, but Selectman Kidder feels that those projects are far enough into the future that the town could save up for those projects.

Selectmen Rollins suggested an amount of \$400,000-\$450,000. Chair Helm suggested an amount of \$450,000 which would give a tax rate of \$4.32 which is slightly below the past year. It will also leave 1.3 million in the unassigned fund balance.

Chair Helm and Selectmen Rollins agreed to an amount of \$450,000.

John Wilson inquired what the unassigned fund balance is currently; Wendy Johnson reported that it is \$1,751,184. Dr. Wilson noted that he felt this is a high balance. Chair Helm replied that only

\$275,000 was used last year and an audit adjustment added funds back in. Peter Bianchi asked why the fund balance is so high. He feels even without the audit it would be high at 1.5 million. Chair Helm would like to leave \$1.3 million given the issues they are dealing with in this budget and the items to be planned for in the future. Ms. Johnson reported prior years have remained fairly stable. A smaller amount was used last year as they were more conservative. Chair Helm wants to keep enough in the unassigned fund balance so that in the event there is a need, like in 2008, there will be the funds available to address the need. Chair Helm would like to keep 14% of the budget in reserve.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Bill Helm) to apply the amount of \$450,000 of the unassigned fund balance to reduce taxes. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Timeline for Selectmen's decision for FY2019 budget

Chair Helm updated the schedule of meetings and activities. In talking with Kim Hallquist, several items were deferred in Selectmen Kidder's absence. Meetings may need to extend into December.

Chair Helm stated they will turn the budget over to the budget committee on Friday, December 8, 2017. Budget meetings are scheduled for December 6, 13, and 20th.

Request of Pine Hill Ski Club for use of town property for cross-country ski trails

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Bill Helm) to approve the request of Pine Hill Ski Club for use of town property for cross-country ski trails. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Town Administrator Report

Kim Hallquist provided the following report:

- The monthly report was received on the phosphorus project that Colby-Sawyer College students have done. Richard Lee and Ms. Hallquist are pleased with the way that project is going.
- A thank you note was received from the son of the person who painted the 1941 mural.
- The new Zoning Administrator started today. Her name is Nicole Gage.
- The new Land Use and Assessing coordinator will start on November 8, 2017. Her name is Cary Lagace.
- Ms. Hallquist attended a Managers Conference in San Antonio last week and found it informative and worthwhile.
- The phones in the town office have been replaced. They were installed by TDS. There was no cost increase. There is a new set of phone numbers for the town offices. Ms. Hallquist will print this in municipal matters for November.

Richard Lee, Public Works Director, reported on the recent storm: six roads are still currently closed due to trees down with wires in them – they are awaiting attention by the power company. There is substantial damage in Sutton. There were only minor washouts in New London. Pleasant Lake went up a foot in elevation in 12 hours. Chief Lyon reported that there was a mutual aid fire in Sutton. The rest of the evening was spent closing roads and responding to over 50 calls. Mostly the calls were for trees down, blocking off roads and power lines that were down. Fortunately, there was substantial rain and this helped with fire danger.

Selectmen Rollins wanted to give kudos to Richard Lee and his crew for the great work done on the sidewalks on Parkside.

Committee Meetings and Reports - None

Joint Meeting with Budget Committee: Administration, Finance, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Election & Registration, Assessing, Legal, Insurance, Planning & Zoning

Town Clerk/Tax Collector: Linda Nicklos attended the meeting to review her department budget.

Ms. Nicklos explained that for the town clerk side there will be an increase of 30% and for the tax collecting side a 29% increase – these increases are to allow for a fulltime deputy. She noted that the work done in the office requires a full-time person so the biggest percentage of increase is for the salary and benefits for that position. The figure for benefits uses the estimate of a family plan. Ms. Nicklos has been filling in the extra hours needed so the budget stayed on track due to her time not being an added expense. She did a spreadsheet of local towns to show what the manpower is in those towns. New London is unique compared to these towns due to a funeral home that processes 109 death certificates per month. Colby-Sawyer adds additional motor vehicle transactions and voting registrations. Springfield is not a municipal agent and are not online to the State of New Hampshire for the DMV and don't do state portions of the motor vehicle transactions which means these residents can come to New London which increases the work load. The office staff also collect sewer bills. There are 1800 residents on sewer and collect bills twice a year. Chair Helm wanted clarification as in one place it says 800 and in another it says 1800. Ms. Nicklos corrected it to 800 bills twice a year.

She pulled statistics and it shows 47 transactions per day for DMV and vital records. She uses an average of 7-10 minutes to calculate those transactions take. This is a low estimate. This doesn't include voter registrations, absentee ballots, beach decals, fishing licenses, off road vehicle registration, boating registration and other various customer service jobs performed in the office. In 2019 there will be three elections.

For the tax collecting part of the office, Ms. Nicklos reported that they produce 2700 tax bills. New London does quarterly billing. Instead of two high volume periods, there are four (July, October, January and March).

Selectmen Rollins wanted to clarify that based on the spreadsheet provided, there are close to 11,000 transactions just on tax bills alone. In Sunapee, it shows they have 3,033 tax bills and so only bill once? Ms. Nicklos stated that those that don't bill quarterly, bill twice a year. Using Sunapee as an example, they have two full time people. Chair Helm questioned the data used for Sunapee. Ms. Nicklos will check the numbers.

Chair Helm asked if Ms. Nicklos had considered semi- annual tax bills. She would like that but is not proposing that as she was under the impression that when it went from twice a year to quarterly, it was due to a vote from the residents. It was a town meeting vote. Chair Helm asked if the Selectmen and others were in favor of moving to semi-annual tax bills, Ms. Nicklos wouldn't be opposed to that. She said no, and in fact, people get confused with the quarterly billing.

Bruce Hudson asked Wendy Johnson if it was better for cash flow to do quarterly billing. She stated that it is easier to manage but could plan for it if it went to semi-annual. Phyllis Piotrow asked the members of the budget committee if they had any objection to tax bills being issued twice a year as opposed to quarterly. Lyndsay Lund replied that she prefers the quarterly billing. It's easier to budget.

Joe Cardillo asked if it is new that Springfield comes to New London for the state portion of their registration. Ms. Nicklos stated that they are the biggest town that comes. Mr. Cardillo asked if we get compensated for that and she stated we get \$3.00 per transaction. He wanted clarification about the funeral home number of 109 per month. This is the number of death certificates issued and there could be multiple copies issued.

Christopher Lorio asked if there were any platforms that could help reduce the amount of time she spends on clerical work. Ms. Nicklos replied that even though some of these things can be done online, she still has to process them as if you are there in person.

Ms. Lund asked if residents of Springfield could go to Sunapee or Grantham? Ms. Nicklos stated that yes, they could, but New London is closest. Phyllis Piotrow is concerned about elections. She feels this process is more complicated. She feels the website is confusing to find information, rules and regulations.

The statistics for new registrants last year was 885.

Peter Bianchi doesn't feel the cost can be justified going from part-time to full-time since it will only add 8 more hours per week, so not a big increase in manpower compared to the amount that will be spent to provide benefits.

Administration

Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator provided the following overview:

Wages – for the first time, all of the wages on the new pay grade schedule are in for each department. This is different this year. In years past, the selectmen would wait until the end to decide what salaries would be. For all employees that are still within a grade, the raises for FY19 will go between 1.3% - 2.5%. The reason for that is now raises are given on the employee's anniversary date so the increase amounts are different.

For the health insurance, we have been guaranteed a maximum of not to exceed .6% increase. The budget includes an estimate of 10% increase. Dental is up 2.3%. The net change to the budget will be a reduction of \$41,000.

Administrative/Executive

The administrative assistant position has gone back to full-time, so the budget includes an increase in health and dental insurance.

The moderator line item is up. There will be three elections and one meeting and the Moderator gets paid by the event.

Other increases include printing of the annual report. They have cut down on how many they print but by law these have to be printed. Ms. Hallquist noted that she is recommending an increase in advertising. This is to inform the public on closings and various other things.

Phyllis Piotrow is in favor of spending additional money on advertising to keep the public well informed.

Finance

Wendy Johnson provided the following overview of the financial budget:

An audit is required every year. The same amount of \$21,000 was budgeted.

Telephone – increased to \$6,500.

Computers licenses and fees – subscriptions for municipal software, internet access, payroll processing. All the programs on the front page of the website require fees to maintain.

Computer support – there are sophisticated computers and software and it is costly to maintain.

Lease Equipment – new copier and postage meter.

Advertising was left the same. They anticipate a lot of advertising for a DPW director.

Postage – \$9,400. Selectmen Rollins stated that it appears each area in the administrative budget has its own advertising budget. Ms. Johnson stated that is correct.

Phyllis Piotrow questioned the audit and if we got competitive bids and changed auditors from time to time. Ms. Johnson stated that the Town has not gone out to bid for some time. The arguments in favor of changing auditors is that it means there are fresh set of eyes on the work while the down side is that it takes longer so it means more staff time. The same auditors are used since we are familiar with them and it's easier and they get it done quickly. Ms. Johnson stated it should be something brought up to the Selectmen.

Doug Lyon stated that in the for-profit realm, it is included in the bylaws of the organization because there has been collusion between auditors and the companies. In the not-for-profit realm, the argument is it is good practice as there is advantage to having the same auditor as they are familiar with the organization and can be called on throughout the year to answer questions. In not-for-profit organizations there is typically no CPA working in the office. In the next few years, there will be changes in the audit structure and having someone who is familiar with the organization would be an advantage. As a general rule, he feels it makes sense in the for-profit world, but in not-for-profit, it doesn't make sense to change audit firms often. The Board of Selectmen will discuss this further.

Planning & Zoning

Doug Lyon provided the following overview:

Mr. Lyon noted that the full-time Zoning Administrator position is now two part-time positions: two days a week the Town has a planner from the Upper Valley Planning Commission and three days a week the Zoning Administrator position that is being shared with Sunapee. This is an experiment that will be on a trial basis. The budget this year is the same as last year. He doesn't anticipate any changes. The number of cases before the zoning board is a matter of how many people are referred to them and that is not predictable.

For the Zoning administrator salary and benefits, New London will be paying 3/5 of it and Sunapee will pay 2/5. 100% of the cost is in the gross budget but there will be an offset.

Ms. Hallquist noted that for Planning, they did include under planning services, to contract with Upper Valley Regional Planning Commission. That contract ends in June. They are assuming it will go into FY19 so the money is there should the Board of Selectmen chose to continue the contract. It has been working great. It is good to have different people doing those jobs since at times; both areas may need to be addressed at the same time. This model allows for people with specific skills to be directed at a specific job.

Insurance

Wendy Johnson provided the following report:

The town is in a three-year deal with Primex for both property and liability and workman's compensation. 2019 is the third year in the deal so the increase is capped at 9% for property and liability and 10% for Workman's compensation. Chair Helm questioned the numbers. Ms. Johnson stated she used actual and not budget to budget.

Assessing

Kim Hallquist provided the following report:

The amounts estimated may change as the tri-town assessing budget was recently completed and it is down. The tri-town board uses a calendar year budget and we use a fiscal year. The calendar year budget is going down slightly for at least one half of the year.

Legal

Ms. Hallquist stated that this budget has been cut in the past only to have expenses exceed the budget; she recommended keeping the amount the same.

The next joint budget committee meeting will be on Monday, November 6, 2017.

The Joint meeting concluded at 7:25 PM.

The regular Selectmen's meeting resumed.

Other Business

Lyndsay Lund commented that at a recent Municipal Budget meeting it was suggested by a school board member to review the current 60/40 apportionment formula for the school assessment. Chair Helm stated that it does state this in the minutes. Ms. Lund wants to ensure it is public record. Chair Helm gave Kim Hallquist the minutes and she will be the representative at the next meeting to hear the discussion of the proposal to the School Board. Currently the formula for determining the allocation of the school budget among towns is 60% for enrollment and 40% for assessment. A member of the school board has proposed this be changed to 50/50.

Selectmen Rollins wanted to discuss Halloween. She felt it went well but had serious concerns about Barrett Road. It was limited to a single pathway because cars were parked on both sides. It would have been impossible to get an ambulance or fire truck down there. She would like to know what it cost the town for additional police presence and public works. Another concern was safety as were kids dressed in dark clothing with no lights. Chair Helm addressed the cost to businesses on Main Street.

Chief Lyon feels these concerns are valid. They looked at parking areas and suggest working with the school or Outing club for designated parking.

Meeting Minutes:

Approval of the minutes from the October 13th and 16th deferred to a future meeting.

Items to be signed

- Payroll Authorization Voucher
- Accounts Payable Voucher
- Notice of Intent to Cut Wood or Timber – Morgan Hill Rd. TM 011-003-000 by Leo Maslan.
- Notice of Intent to Cut Wood or Timber – Morgan Hill Rd. TM 010-001-000 by Leo Maslan.
- Requests to Use Town Property:
 - ✓ Whipple Hall by Nicole Southworth of Center for Arts for the Winter Performing Arts Series on Saturday, February 24, 2018 from 4:00 PM to 10:00 PM. This is an addition to the dates already approved.

Applications Approved &/or Denied

Sign Permits

- Temporary Sign – St. Andrew's Church for a 2' x 3' A-frame sign at the Information Booth for the St. Nicholas Fair on December 2, 2017. APPROVED 10/17/17
- Temporary Sign – First Baptist Church 18" x 24" A-frame sign at the Information Booth for the Harvest Fair on October 28, 2017. APPROVED 10/17/2017

Building Permits

- Margaret Keeler, Trustee, Barrett Road, TM 084-038-001. Construct 2 family house with 6K solar array. BP 17-107 APPROVED 10/17/2017
- PA Properties of Maryland, LLC, 742 Pleasant Street, TM 049-006-000. Demolition of house. BP 17-110 APPROVED 10/17/2017
- PA Properties of Maryland, LLC, 742 Pleasant Street, TM 049-006-000. Construct a new 3 bedroom house. BP 17-114 APPROVED 10/17/2017
- Frank and Nancy Durocher, 108 Everett Park, TM 073-015-000. Construct 20' x 20' shed. BP 17-112 APPROVED 10/17/2017

- Rick Stecker & Ann Page, 30 Prescott Lane, TM 073-021-000. Demo porch & construct single story living space. BP 17-117 APPROVED 10/18/2017
- Jeff & Julie Deacon, Trustee, 52 Pillars Lane, TM 094-023-000. Install 6kw solar rooftop array. BP 17-125 APPROVED 10/18/2017
- Eric & Kim Lavoie, 166 Wilder Lane, TM 111-012-000. Construct 10'x16' shed. BP 17-118 APPROVED 10/18/2017
- Robert & Donna Young, 25 Everett Park, TM 072-042-000. Adding roof over porch, changing siding to vinyl. BP 17-122 APPROVED 10/18/2017
- Malcolm & Kim Minor, 88 Little Brook Road, TM 023-001-000. Demo & construct 3 bedroom house. BP 17-118 APPROVED 10/18/2017
- Scott & Katherine Devoid, 964 County Road, TM 093-015-000. Finish space above existing garage. BP 17-120 APPROVED 10/19/2017
- Harry Snow, Snow Lane, TM 055-012-005. Construct 4 bedroom house. BP 17-116 APPROVED 10/19/2017
- Edward Ordman, 132 Everett Park, TM 073-014-000. Demo & reconstruct mudroom, add family room & decks. BP 17-121 APPROVED 10/19/2017

The Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson, Recording Secretary
Town of New London