



TOWN OF  
NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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**BUDGET COMMITTEE/  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
JOINT 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

Budget Committee Members: Joe Cardillo, Lyndsay Lund, Chris Lorio, Tyler Beck, Phyllis Piotrow, Suzanne Jesseman, Bruce Hudson. Absent: Rob Prohl, Chair.

**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

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

**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 7:25PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson, Recording Secretary  
Town of New London