



TOWN OF
NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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

October 5, 2020

6:00 PM

Via Zoom

PRESENT:

Janet Kidder, Chairman
Nancy Rollins, Selectman
John Cannon, Selectman
Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

New London Police Chief, Emily Cobb
New London Fire Chief, Jay Lyon
Emergency Management Director, Lou Botta

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Jerry Coogan, John Raby, Rob Prohl, Mark Christensen, Michael Williams, Joe Cardillo, Lauren Chadwick

Chair Kidder called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and read the authorization for the Zoom meeting. Chair Kidder called the roll: Selectman Rollins: present, Selectman Cannon: present, Chair Kidder: present

Public Comment - None

Recreation Director Vacancy

Chair Kidder stated she felt it was time to go ahead and have the Town Administrator, Kim Hallquist place an ad in the papers for the Recreation Director vacancy to be filled. Selectman Rollins noted in a memo from Ms. Hallquist, that the Recreation Commission has the job description and is reviewing it along with a list of recreation programming, anticipating that the Recreation Commission would do this review in October which would allow the posting for the beginning of November. Selectman Rollins would like to hear from the Recreation Commission about this position as well as their thoughts about the future direction of recreation and a potential location for the department. She feels it is premature at this point to post the job. Selectman Cannon agreed, noting that he does not want to delay this but does want to make sure that the Recreation Commission and interested parties are on the same page so all needs are met.

A proposal from the Outing Club was received. Chair Kidder thinks it's great that we received this so once a Director is in place, they can collaborate with the Outing Club and other organizations. The Recreation commission will be invited to the next Board of Selectman meeting.

Halloween Trick or Treating recommendations - Police Chief Emily Cobb stated in the past, the Police Department and the Recreation Department have partnered together for Trick-or-Treating plans for the

town. Chief Cobb attended a Halloween webinar put on by the New Hampshire Municipal Association. She also reviewed the CDC guidelines and reflected on what had been done in the past and suggested that this year should be different given COVID-19. She suggested that Halloween is not canceled but Main Street will not be shut down this year and there will be no town organized events such as the haunted walk. Main street businesses as well as residents were polled to get a sense of how people felt and what she gleaned from this information is that everyone can participate to their own comfort level. Trick-or-treating should be done in a safe manner and COVID-19 guidelines should be followed. Chief Cobb recommends that trick-or-treating be done in a shorter time period and done earlier in the evening. She suggested Saturday, October 31, 2020 from 4:00-6:00pm. Other suggestions are to only hand out individually wrapped items, stay in your own neighborhoods, trick-or-treat in small groups and avoid entering homes. For all participants, wearing masks and observing social distancing should be done.

Retiring Children's Librarian Timmie Poh – Ms. Hallquist reported that Timmie Poh is retiring after many years of service as the children's librarian. They are asking anyone that wants to recognize and thank Ms. Poh for her long years of service send cards or messages to the library. The Selectmen join the library trustees and staff in thanking Timmie as she will be missed.

Center for the Arts request to lease Whipple Hall and conference room – Ms. Hallquist stated that the Center for the Arts reached out to her to ask if it would be possible to have a formal lease agreement with the town to use Whipple Hall, the foyer area and the conference room for various events. They plan to use this space for events, hanging art and to hold meetings. They have done this for many years in the past. The Selectmen are allowed to lease town property as long as it is less than a year without town meeting vote. Currently, nonprofit organizations can use facilities for up to four times a year without charge. Right now, the facility is not open to the public but will be again at some point.

Selectman Cannon asked about insurance and Ms. Hallquist stated that yes, they would be required to provide it. Additionally, if there was a town need to use the facility, Center for the Arts use would come second. They would like a sign hanging out front, so it is recognized as their home base. Selectman Rollins does not agree that they should have a permanent sign.

Selectman Rollins is fine with them leasing the space for activities however, she is not comfortable with them using the foyer and conference room since there is not a recreation presence there anymore. The agreement with them should be for specific events in the hall as needed. Chair Kidder feels it is premature to even discuss this since the buildings are not open to the public at this time.

Outing Club: formal proposal for reallocation of funding to the Outing Club to enhance their program offerings - Chair Kidder stated they all received the proposal from the Outing Club however the amount they would request to be allocated was not included. Chair Kidder noted that once a Recreation Director is in place, the Director and Outing Club can establish mutual interests and plan to collaborate where possible. Selectman Cannon feels it is a good starting point. Selectman Rollins would like to hear from the Recreation Commission to hear their thoughts about the proposal and the Director position.

Pete Smith attended via zoom and stated this is a good opportunity since both organizations are in the process of replacing leadership. The proposal put forth will save the taxpayers a significant amount of money and offer improved programming from what has typically been done. Mr. Smith stated the line item in the Recreation Department budget was around \$200,000 and they could offer that same programming for half that amount, or a payment to the Putting Club of \$100,000.

Town Administrators Report

Ms. Hallquist provided the following report:

- The tax collector reports that 83.66% of tax payments due October 1, 2020 have been paid on time.

Committee Meetings & Reports - None

Meeting Minutes - Approval of the minutes of September 28, 2020 will be deferred until the next meeting.

Upcoming Meetings & Special Events

- Next regular Selectmen's meeting – Monday, October 19th – 6:00 PM – Zoom
- Buildings & Facilities Committee – Thursday, October 8th – 6:30 PM – Whipple Hall
- Joint Selectmen & Budget Committee – Monday, October 19th – 6:30 PM – Zoom
- Master Plan Committee – Thursday, October 8th – 8:30 AM – Zoom
- Planning Board – Tuesday, October 13th – 6:30 PM – Zoom
- Conservation Commission – Wednesday, October 21st – 8:30 AM – Zoom

6:30 PM: Selectmen and Budget Committee Joint meeting to prepare FY2022 budget:

Public Safety: Police, Dispatching, Fire Department, Emergency Management

Chair Kidder called the roll of the Budget Committee: Robert Prohl: present; John Raby: present; Mark Christensen: present; Jerry Coogan: present Joe Cardillo: present. Lauren Chadwick: present, Michael Williams: present. Absent: Lyndsay Harkins, Chris Lorio

Ms. Hallquist noted that the budget figures currently do not reflect any adjustments for health insurance, the town should learn the “guaranteed not to exceed” percentage in the coming weeks. The Selectmen have also not decided on a COLA amount at this point, so the salary lines do not include that amount

Police Department – Police Chief Emily Cobb stated she reviewed every line item and came up with a reasonable and prudent budget based on the Police and Dispatch Center needs as well as considering the spending trends of past years and the current economic climate. She noted that each budget had a separate line item for overtime and training. She found it appropriate to combine those line items as they are both at an overtime rate of pay. This should also help with tracking.

Replacement Plan for Ballistic Vests - Money was added to the uniform and safety line item to account for this. An increase was also requested to the line item for the maintenance lease agreement for the printer/copier machine.

Chief Cobb is also requesting the creation of a K-9 line item. This was discussed last year. She has suggested what she feels is reasonable and economic amount for this line item if approved.

Chief Cobb noted that while she is not requesting any money this year the Board of Selectmen and Budget Committee should be aware that she will request funding next year for the purchase of body and/or dash cameras. This would cost approximately \$40,000-\$50,000 depending on the number of

cameras purchased and storage needs. Chair Kidder asked if money should be put aside in a Capital Reserve Fund for the body/dash cameras. Chief Cobb thinks this would be a good idea.

Another item to consider in the future would be accreditation. Selectman Rollins fully supports entities becoming accredited as it is very worthwhile and an admirable goal. Ms. Hallquist stated this may have impact related to insurance rates as well.

Selectman Cannon asked about the \$43,000 reduction in the budget. Chief Cobb stated this is due to replacement of officers who left the department at higher salaries than the officers who replaced them.

Michael Williams responded to an inquiry about the computer systems. They are in the process of reviewing agreements that will better fit the needs of the town. The plan is to move forward with a new vendor.

Chief Cobb also addressed training. The types of training she anticipates include implicit bias, fair and impartial policing and diversity. Verbal judo, firearms and use of force classes are ongoing training that officers attend.

Dispatch – Chief Cobb stated that last year, former Police Chief Andersen discussed another full-time dispatcher. Chief Cobb has decided not to ask for an increase in full time staff this year.

Chief Cobb may ask for a small increase in the new equipment area. This line item has been overspent for the past three years so better budgeting needs to be done. The Dispatch office supplies line item has been decreased to be more in line with what has actually been spent. The Dispatch miscellaneous line item was at zero in 2021 and was typically at \$400. Chief Cobb would like to reinstate this line item at \$500. This pays for the water cooler and a few other items.

Fire Department – Fire Chief Jay Lyon reported that the pandemic has not increased their calls significantly which is good so there is not a huge increase in the budget for PPE and related items. This year's budget is similar to budgets in the past.

The increases this year reflect wage and salaries and an increase in calls. Filling the position for a third fire fighter will result in an increase. One of the biggest increases will be in the building maintenance line item. In the future there are plans for an expansion of the fire department.

Chief Lyon discussed the signalized intersection light in front of the station that is used to alert traffic on Main Street to stop to allow fire vehicles to leave, or return to, the station. It is his recommendation at this point to wait on replacing or fixing it this year. Selectman Rollins has concerns that this is in a congested area and this could be problematic. Chief Lyon will do some research and get additional information for the Selectmen.

The Fire Department is virtually fully staffed. There is a good volunteer base so this minimizes the need for additional full time staffing. The Fire prevention position has not been filled. There was a freeze put on the position, but the position has been posted now that the freeze has been lifted.

Emergency Management – Emergency Management Director Lou Botta reported that last year they finished the Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) update. It appears that the Emergency Management budget was not spent but it was reserved for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as there is no assurance that supplying PPE will be funded by the government or FEMA. Early on, items were purchased wherever and however they could. They also assisted their sister agencies in town. Work was done with Greater Sullivan County Emergency Health Network and the joint Sullivan/Grafton Op center in Lebanon. Boxes of masks were delivered to the hospital and as well as critically needed disinfectant supplies.

The Emergency Management Committee established a goal to obtain a six-month baseline of PPE and they met and exceeded this goal. They assisted the VNA and developed a relationship with Rotary International who supplied them with masks for the food bank and schools to distribute to families. Cooperation from first responder agencies has been superb. With regards to the upcoming election, all of the PPE is being stored at the Emergency Management storage at the Department of Public Works. The upgrade of the Emergency Operations Center in the Sydney Crook Room is still in process.

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) has been formed and their first priority will be shelter operations, followed by actions and community resilience.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (John Cannon) to adjourn. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson
Recording Secretary
Town of New London