



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

375 MAIN STREET • NEW LONDON, NH 03257 • WWW.NL-NH.COM

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BUDGET COMMITTEE
JOINT MEETING MINUTES
Monday, November 18, 2019
6:30 PM**

SELECTMEN PRESENT: Nancy Rollins (Chair), Janet Kidder, John Cannon

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Rob Prohl (Chair), Joe Cardillo (Vice Chair), Jerry Coogan, John Raby, Michael Williams, Chris Lorio, Suzanne Jesseman

STAFF PRESENT: Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator, Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer

OTHERS PRESENT: Kathleen Kennedy, Ashlee Rowley, Steve Root, Shawn Riley, Lisa Cohen, Sally Patton, Jay Lyon, Michael Kennedy, Bob Brown, John Wilson, Norm Bernaiche, Celeste Cook, Michael Gelcius, Maggie Ford, Sandra Licks, Nancy Mahar, Wendy Dumais, Gordan Terwilliger, Frank Anzalone, Kathy Pfann, Tim Paradis, Julia Lafluer, John Philbin

Chair Rollins called the joint Selectmen and Budget Committee meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

FY2021 Budget Preparation: Social Service Organizations and Nonprofits, Health Admin, Welfare, Library, Conservation, Archives, Energy, Patriotic Purposes, Planning & Zoning, Administration, Finance, Insurance, Assessing, Legal

New London Hospital Ambulance: Lisa Cohen, CFO, New London Hospital, Sally Patton, Chief Nursing Officer and Shawn Riley, Director of New London Ambulance submitted their annual request for funding; funding that is needed to help offset losses that they encounter during the course of providing ambulance services. Ms. Cohen explained that for 2020 the request is in the amount of \$184,095. Cost comparisons are done each year and the cost is passed on based upon usage by town. New London has remained fairly steady for the past several years. About 39% of overall costs come from New London. Operating costs have remained stable, but the reimbursement has declined year over year. Even though they are a critical access hospital, the ambulance is not cost reimbursed by Medicare. The New London ambulance services seven towns and New London has the largest call volume. All seven communities contribute financially.

Chair Rollins asked Ms. Cohen if there is a breakdown by town. Ms. Cohen stated no, they don't show town by town funding. If the towns want to share that information with one another they are welcome to do so. Chair Rollins stated it is public funds so it should be public information. Ms. Cohen responded that they have never shared this information. Chair Rollins also requested the no transport rate. There are a significant amount of calls that relate to this but there is no revenue if there is no transfer.

Sally Patton stated they have had a difficult time consistently being able to run two ambulances due to staffing issues. They are working their way out of this as they have recently filled vacant positions.

The New London Ambulance maintains four ambulances. They replaced an ambulance last year and have another on order that they expect will be ready in early 2020. The funding for these is through an anonymous donor which has allowed them to get the fleet back to where it should be.

Chief Lyon asked what the percentage of reimbursement is. Ms. Cohen responded it is about 30%. Chief Lyon asked how Lebanon's reimbursement is 78% and Hanover is mid 80's. Ms. Cohen stated that New London has to bill differently because they are related to a critical access hospital; additionally, they are not cost reimbursed because there is another ambulance service within 35 miles. The payment methodology from Medicare and other payers is very different than Lebanon and Hanover bill under. They bill under Medicare B while New London Hospital Ambulance must bill under Medicare A so reimbursement is different.

Chief Lyon commented that he is excited to have Shawn Riley as the new Ambulance Director, noting that he has had concerns, especially in the past sixth months, about the quality of the ambulance service. Chief Lyon noted that in 2014 he was asked by a Selectman about the response time in New London and at that time he reported problems in the service; he still feels they are dealing with the same issues today and it hasn't changed. The ambulance service has a great staff but when an ambulance is not in town, they are not available to respond to 911 calls in New London. He is excited to see where the ambulance service goes under Mr. Riley's leadership but stressed that there are significant concerns from the town of New London and other fire departments. Mr. Riley stated their biggest issue right now is staffing and coverage and he is confident that he can solve these issues relatively quickly.

Lake Sunapee Region Visiting Nurse Association (LSRVNA) - The request is for \$12,566 and this has been the same request for the past several years.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) - Julia Lafluer attended the meeting and stated that CASA trains and recruits citizens throughout New Hampshire that speak on behalf of abused and neglected children within our family courts. They are a statewide organization and last year they served 1,533 children across the state. There are 618 CASA volunteers. The CASA volunteers receive 40 hours of training and get to know the children and their circumstances so they can make recommendations to the court and the judges for ongoing care. There has been a sharp increase in cases and about 75% of cases are due to substance misuse within the family. If CASA cannot provide a volunteer advocate for a child, the state will then hire guardian ad litem at \$60 per hour plus travel costs. CASA estimates that they saved the state about 5.3 million dollars. This is a significant savings to taxpayers.

The funding that they are requesting will be used to recruit and train more volunteers. They estimate that it costs about \$1,460 to train one volunteer advocate. They are seeking an increase in funding across the state and are appreciate of any funding the town can provide. Last fiscal year, state grants accounted for 24% of their funding sources.

Community Action Program (CAP) – This request is for \$6,000 and has been the same request for the past several years. Celeste Cook, Welfare Director, noted that CAP is extremely helpful to the citizens of New London.

Counseling on Aging (COA) – COA Treasurer, John Philbin attended the meeting on behalf of the Council on Aging. Their budget request is for \$35,000. They serve 8 different towns and rely on contributions from the towns. It is a very vibrant place and their programs are busy. They are the second largest supplier or resource for mobility equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers and canes.

They continue to fulfill an important service in the town, and they appreciate continued assistance from the town.

Protective Associations: Lake Sunapee, Little Lake Sunapee, Pleasant Lake and Messer Pond
All of the protective associations are grouped together for a total request of \$20,400.

Steve Root of the Little Sunapee Protective Association addressed the question as to whether lake hosting is effective. He explained that lake hosting is done to inspect boats for invasive species before entering the lake. DES reports that it has contributed significantly to prevention efforts statewide and it's a best practice. Studies have shown that invasions will have a tax effect of between 13-19% loss of property value. Mr. Root wants to emphasize how valuable and important these programs are in protecting our town and value.

John Doyle of Messer Pond Protective Association thanked the Board of Selectmen for their support in lake hosing on Messer Pond. He also wanted to reiterate what Mr. Root stated about the importance of it.

Lake Sunapee Region Chamber of Commerce – Kathleen Kennedy and Ashlee Rowley presented the Chamber's request for funding. They noted that the request is for the same amount that is has been for the past several years. The Chamber of Commerce serves 12 towns. The support they are asking for, \$12,500 is 10% of their budget.

New London Garden Club – Kathy Pfann, Chair of Civic Beauty stated their budget request is for \$1,000. They do 14 garden spots in New London. They have reduced their budget as they will not be doing an antique show this summer as there wasn't a lot interest.

Chair Rollins thanked Ms. Pfann and stated that the work the New London Garden Club does is wonderful. Ms. Pfann stated their manpower is limited as the number of volunteers is down to about 50. Chair Rollins suggested they could put an article in *Municipal Matters* to solicit more members.

Library

Sandra Licks and Trustees Wendy Dumais, Gordon Terwilliger, Nancy Mahar, and Frank Anzalone attended the meeting. Their overall operating request is slightly lower than last year, and their Capital Reserve request is the same as the previous five years. New this year is a request for a bond for an automatic sprinkler system. The consulting firm that they have hired is currently working on the design plan. This system will cover the entire building as well as some of the external overhangs.

Chair Rollins asked about the wage increase and where they are in their step sequence. Ms. Licks responded that the 2.5% is a combination of merit/step and the Trustees are waiting to decide if they want to do an additional cost of living adjustment.

Chair Rollins thanked Ms. Licks pointing out that she (Chair Rollins) has been asking for a water suppression system for several years.

Conservation – Conservation Commission Chair Bob Brown attended the meeting. Chair Brown stated their annual operating budget over the years has been quite level. If there is a land acquisition, there are costs associated with this and if there isn't one, there is usually money left in the account.

For the Capital Reserve account, Chair Brown has requested \$50,000. Last year they received \$10,000. Contributions to this fund have varied greatly. Chair Brown would like level funding

Health Administration – Ms. Hallquist reported that Dr. Nick Baer is the new Health Officer. Dr. Baer does a variety of things as Health Officer, inspecting failed septic systems and witnessing test pits being the most common tasks.

Welfare – Celeste Cook reported that the amount (\$16,000) is the same as it has been for many years. Ms. Cook stated the number is based on what is needed at the time. She makes a good effort to spend the money wisely.

Planning & Zoning – Norm Bernaiche, Chief Assessor reported that the town has switched to new assessing software: Avitar. The new software offers another product that is a building permit software package. It works directly with the assessing program. This database will allow everything to be organized automatically. The building permit process is a trigger for assessors to go out and make sure all the current use penalties are captured. This software would give them direct access to be able to do this. This database is interactive between departments, less paper, better tracking, document storage and easy retrieval of information. This would be a one-time purchase and then \$1,500 a year for software support. This software would be a benefit to the assessing department as well as the planning and zoning departments.

Ms. Hallquist pointed out that the budget also includes an increase in hours for Town Planner, Adam Ricker. Originally, he was contracted for 16 hours per week and this will increase to 20 hours.

Legal – The budgeted amount is \$25,000. Chair Rollins asked if we had any pending legal issues. Ms. Hallquist responded that currently there are no cases pending, however, on the years that the town conducts a revaluation, it sometimes triggers more appeals.

Archives – \$1,000

Patriotic Purposes – \$300

Energy – Tim Paradis of the Energy Committee reported that they aren't asking for a change in the operating budget amount of \$450 but are asking to continue contributions to the Capital Reserve Fund. The purpose is for energy efficiency projects in the future. Specifically, as they proceed with the solar project at the town highway garage and the sewer lagoon area, they would like to be in a position to buy the system after a certain period of time. Mr. Paradis recommends continuing with the \$30,000 contribution.

Administration – Ms. Hallquist is not recommending any huge changes or increases. There were some changes to salary levels and there was a slight reduction in advertising.

Finance – Wendy Johnson reported that the larger expenses include the computer licensing fees and audit. Any items that have gone up are the result of price increases.

Ms. Johnson is requesting an assistant to help out one day a week with payroll and other various duties. Ms. Johnson stated that over the years she has acquired more duties and there is no back up for her. Succession planning also needs to be considered.

Insurance – Workers Comp is not to exceed 8% and Liability is a 7% increase.

Review Minutes from the October 28, 2019 and November 4, 2019 joint meeting minutes

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (John Raby) to approve the minutes from the October 28, 2019 and November 4, 2019 meetings. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY. (Rob Prohl and Suzanne Jesseman abstained from the vote as they were absent).

The meeting adjourned at 7:59PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson,

Recording Secretary
Town of New London