



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## **BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES Wednesday, December 11, 2019 7:00 PM**

**BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rob Prohl (Chair) Joe Cardillo (Vice Chair), Jerry Coogan, Chris Lorio, John Raby, Michael Williams, Suzanne Jesseman, Lauren Chadwick, Mark Christensen, John Cannon (Selectmen's Representative)

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Public Works Director, Bob Harrington; Police Chief, Ed Andersen; Fire Chief Jay Lyon; Library Director Sandra Licks, Library Trustees Frank Anzalone, Nancy Mahar, Kim Bonin and Wendy Dumais; Emergency Management Director Lou Botts; Police Dept AA Donna Larrow

Rob Prohl called the Budget Committee meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**Approval of December 4, 2019 minutes – Deferred until the next meeting.**

### **FY2021 Budget Review:**

#### Library - \$565,650

Sandra Licks provided a new updated detail of actuals through November and informed the committee that the Library is amending their request to reflect a recent Selectmen's vote to include a cost of living adjustment for town employees. This means a higher request for their general library expense. All other areas remain the same.

Jerry Coogan noted there have been issues in the past with regards to flooding and other building issues. He asked if these issues have been properly addressed. Ms. Licks responded that they did a capital reserve project on the foundation drainage and no longer see moisture coming into the basement after heavy rain so that has been resolved. The next improvement will be the sprinkler system and they will be asking for a bond for that.

Mr. Coogan asked what prompted them to install a sprinkler system - is it being mandated by fire code or other regulations or do they just think it is something they need to do? Ms. Licks responded that they feel it is the right thing to do and the Selectmen have suggested it for a while. The new sprinkler system will cover all the exposed areas and concealed areas including the attic and roof overhangs. Ms. Licks stated that they are still waiting on the design in order to get an accurate price for what the system will cost. They will have a better idea on the cost by January/February. They have obtained rough estimates that range from \$135,000 - \$250,000.

**IT WAS MOVED (John Raby) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to approve the Library budget request. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### Police

Chair Prohl asked Police Chief Ed Andersen about the new software system as this is a significant increase. The cost for this system will be split between the police department and dispatch. The increase is primarily for support and it is going from being billed by the hour and a monthly fee to an all-inclusive package that covers everything. Other towns that use this service are Sunapee and Newbury.

There was discussion about the possibility of using electric cars in the future. Chief Andersen stated a lot of research would need to be done regarding battery life and how often they need to be charged. Other areas of concern are the cost of these cars, maintenance and dependability.

Chair Prohl asked Chief Andersen if there will be a need for any new hires since the ninth officer was added this year. Chief Andersen stated that it is hard to predict but they are currently fully staffed.

Chair Prohl noted that the money that was budgeted for the K-9 was removed by the Selectmen. Chief Andersen recommended that the committee should support at least some funding from the operating budget for the K-9. Chief Andersen noted that the previous handler did an excellent job of fundraising to get the K-9 program in place; everything was paid for by donations and the dog has been a wonderful asset to the Police Department. Chief Andersen stated there are still agencies in town that are helping to support the dog but there is a cost to it. The estimated cost is about \$5,000 per year. Chair Prohl stated that according to the Selectmen they thought this would be covered by fundraising, with no expense to the town.

Chris Lorio does not recall being told there would never be expenses related to the dog but that the initial costs would be covered. Chief Andersen does not recall saying that the dog would always be free. He told the officer who originally recommended the K-9 program that he had to fundraise for the dog, the equipment and training so there would be no cost to the town to start the program. Somehow it was interpreted that this meant there would never be a cost to the town. If there isn't any money budgeted for the dog, he will have to find it elsewhere in the budget to pay for expenses related to the dog if there is no money in donation account.

**IT WAS MOVED (John Raby) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to add a line item for \$3,000 to help fund the K-9.**

Joe Cardillo stated that they were sold on the sentiment that this was safe for the town. He doesn't argue this point, but his recollection was that the resounding message made by people in support of this was to say that they would donate food, shelter and expenses related to the dog. The impression was made that this would not cost the town anything.

Selectman Cannon wanted to clarify that the Selectmen were not opposed to the concept and know it is a valuable service. It was a matter of money and they were also under the impression that it would be funded through other donations and not through tax dollars. Selectman Cannon stated that they felt the department should be more aggressive with fundraising to support the dog.

Chris Lorio would like to have a line item in the budget for this. If they can fund raise and they don't spend it, that's great but pointed out that the committee isn't talking about a lot of money. Chief Andersen stated they are planning to fundraise regardless but if there is not budget for this, whatever bills come in will have to be paid for from other line items in his budget.

**Lauren Chadwick: NO, Joe Cardillo: NO, Michael Williams: NO, John Cannon: NO, Rob Prohl: NO, Chris Lorio: YES, Mark Christensen: YES, Suzanne Jesseman: YES, John Raby: YES, Jerry Coogan: YES**

**THE MOTION FAILS: Vote 5-5**

**IT WAS MOVED (John Raby) AND SECONDED (Michael Williams) to approve the Police budget in the amount of \$1,240,041. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### Fire

Chair Prohl reported that the Selectmen reduced a proposed new full-time position out of the budget. Fire Chief Jay Lyon explained his proposal. In 1997, the New London Fire Department was dealing with issues with response. A group was formed to look at the problems. In 1999 the Board of Firewards was formed and they are appointed by the Selectmen. Chief Lyon was hired as the Fire Prevention and training officer and in 2007 when the part time fire chief retired; he received the Fire Chief position. The Fire Prevention and training officer position was approved at town meeting but at that point was not filled and a second position was created to look at preparedness. The Fire Department focuses on three things: Fire prevention, preparedness and training.

Recruitment and retention have been an issue and calls have increased significantly. The funding for this position is not strictly based upon calls, it is based on demands of service and site plan reviews. With this additional position, they would be able to have coverage on the weekends. Not only would they be a Fire Prevention and Code Compliance Officer, they would be a fire fighter who would assist with training. This will make it possible for the volunteers to be volunteers. Chief Lyon commented that approximately \$320,000 has been received by the Town of New London through grants that have paid for things they would have had to spend money on. Examples of things they purchased with grant money include air packs, an air filling station and air trailer, and personal protective clothing. Looking at the demands for service, Chief Lyon thinks it is the time to fund this position.

Chair Prohl asked if a part time position would work. Chief Lyon stated that having someone part-time is better than not having someone at all but getting an employee to work part-time is difficult. They would most likely have to work elsewhere part-time and scheduling is hard. Fireward Pete Lauridsen noted that the Fireward Board voted in favor of hiring for this position. Police Chief Ed Andersen commented that he is in support of this pointing out that having part timers can be a nightmare with regards to the training expense and then having the employee leave. Having part timers is a steppingstone and becomes a revolving door. They aren't invested in the community.

Chair Prohl noted that Chief Lyon has been very conservative over the years and has saved the town money whenever possible. He would like to add this position back into the budget.

Selectman Cannon stated that the reason the Selectmen made the decision to remove the position was due to the cost as it is a big-ticket item. Even with the upcoming Continuum Development, it will be at least a year down the road so it's not necessary at this time. He also feels it will be a difficult position to fill. He also suggested trying to get a grant to help fund the cost.

Michael Williams asked if having this position would alleviate the need for a building inspector. Chief Lyon stated they do very different things. The Fire Department would look at sprinkler systems, fire alarms, means of egress, emergency lighting and life safety aspects. The Building

Inspector would be looking at plumbing, electrical and foundation issues. While these positions would complement each other, they are different.

By adding this position back in and the increase in the library expense, the percentage increase to the operating budget would now be 6.2%.

**IT WAS MOVED (Rob Prohl) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to add the Fire Code and Prevention Officer line item back into the budget in the amount of \$93,378. ALL WERE IN FAVOR WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SELECTMAN JOHN CANNON WHO WAS OPPOSED. THE MOTION CARRIES.**

**IT WAS MOVED (Michael Williams) AND SECONDED (Joe Cardillo) to approve the Fire Department budget in the amount of \$545,028. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### Firewards

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Chris Lorio) to approve the Firewards budget in the amount of \$292. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### Emergency Management

Lou Botta noted that the Code Red emergency alert system amount is now included in the Emergency Management budget in an effort to consolidate and track all of the Emergency Management funds that are spent in the community.

There is a substantial increase in the Equipment Repair and Maintenance line item. This is due to the generator contract. The town buildings are equipped with generators and a yearly contract was needed to ensure they are properly maintained.

**IT WAS MOVED (John Raby) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to approve the Emergency Management budget in the amount of \$31,157. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### Dispatch

Police Chief Ed Andersen explained that this budget amount includes the other half of the Complete Care Computer support service expense. It was noted that the other towns that get dispatching services from New London (Sunapee, Newbury, Wilmot, Sutton and Croydon) pay for part of the dispatching budget.

**IT WAS MOVED (Chris Lorio) AND SECONDED (Jerry Coogan) to approve the Dispatch budget in the amount of \$441,932. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **Other Business**

Joe Cardillo commented that the budget is at 6.2% and the committee may need to make hard decisions and try to find areas to make cuts to get it back down to the 4% range. Chris Lorio stated that they may be catching up from potentially not funding some things in the past, and it may need to be higher due to things that need to be funded. We all want improvements and a 2-3% increase may be unrealistic as this only covers the basics, not improvements.

The next meeting of the Budget Committee will be on December 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00PM.

**IT WAS MOVED (Michael Williams) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to adjourn the meeting. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:56PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson,

Recording Secretary  
Town of New London