



TOWN OF
NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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**BUDGET COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
December 20, 2017
6:30 PM**

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Rob Prohl (Chair), Phyllis Piotrow (Vice Chair), Joe Cardillo, Lyndsay Lund, Tyler Beck, Bruce Hudson, Suzanne Jesseman, Chris Lorio and Nancy Rollins (Selectmen's Rep).

STAFF PRESENT:

Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer

OTHERS PRESENT:

Scott Blewitt, Recreation Director
Justin Garzia, Recreation Commission
Richard Lee, Public Works Director
Jay Lyon, Fire Chief
Ed Andersen, Police Chief
Linda Nicklos, Town Clerk/Tax Collector
G. William Helm, Jr., Selectman
Elizabeth Meller, New London Resident
Vahan Sarkisian, New London Resident
Steve Ensign, Board of Firewards
Sandra Licks, Library Director
Donna Larrow, Police Department Administrative Assistant
Joseph Kubit, New London Resident
Joy Kubit, New London Resident

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

Approval of meeting minutes

IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Bruce Hudson) to approve the minutes from the December 6, 2017 meeting. Phyllis Piotrow noted her name was misspelled on page three and the word library was also misspelled. **THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IT WAS MOVED (Bruce Hudson) AND SECONDED (Phyllis Piotrow) to approve the minutes from the December 13, 2017 meeting. On page three the word round-about needed to be corrected. The minutes were accepted as amended. **THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Selectmen's Report:

Selectman Rollins reported that a presentation was made by Alison Seward and John Manaras on behalf of the Solid Waste Committee regarding the Sanborn & Head Solid Waste Management Facility Study. The study

presents three options and after some discussions and input from Richard Lee the second option was ruled out. The first and third options focus on consolidating and maximizing the use of the existing site. They proposed there would need to be a study done of the site relative to the wetlands and what actual land would be usable. Prior to this, the Board of Selectmen have asked Kim Hallquist to check with the Department of Transportation to see about the possibility that the DOT would be willing to enter into an agreement with the town of New London to access those properties. There is no sense in paying for a study if we can't use the land. Ms. Hallquist has agreed.

Selectman Rollins also reported on a recent discussion regarding crosswalks, sidewalks and lighting. Selectman Janet Kidder has agreed to go to the Planning Board to talk about concerns relative to the approach to new items on Main Street, particularly when new buildings going up. Things that need to be addressed at that time are the pedestrian, transportation and parking needs.

Mr. Lee mentioned there have been ongoing discussions with DOT to try to remedy these issues so they have asked Kim Hallquist to enter into some preliminary discussions with the Department of Transportation about this. If this isn't productive, the Board of Selectmen agrees to take it up the chain of command.

Phyllis Piotrow commented that she has heard from several people and they feel there are too many crosswalks in New London. She feels if there is going to be a study of crosswalks it might be worth looking at Main Street to see if there are enough or too many. Selectman Rollins stated it could be brought to the Planning Board. It is problematic that the DOT doesn't want us to have one from Hilltop Place to Hannaford. It is also felt that in the planning with Colonial Pharmacy that originally had a sidewalk but was taken out of the plans, will be a high pedestrian area. Selectman Rollins concluded by noting that we would like for New London to be a walkable community.

Town Clerk/Tax Collector: \$69,823

Linda Nicklos attended the meeting and expressed her concern for the lack of support regarding her revised FY2019 budget proposal. She disagrees with the decision of the Board of Selectmen for not approving it. She feels its conservative compared to what is really needed in that office, which is two full time people. Until recently, it has operated with two full time people. The last town clerk/tax collector reduced it to a part time position. Ms. Nicklos stated she isn't creating a new position since it was there previously. She showed comparisons between other town offices and most with similar statistics have two full time people. New London is different than some of the comparisons because they collect taxes four times per year and sewer bills are collected two times per year. Having Colby-Sawyer College in town means more voting and motor vehicle registrations and also due to the Funeral home in town, approximately 100 death vital records copies are done per month. The demands and expectations of the office are the same, if not more, but the help and support has lessened by bringing the position of the deputy to part time. It makes for a challenging environment and can affect the quality of service performed. It is imperative to give the residents the type of service they deserve and must be properly staffed on a constant basis. The employees in the office are the face of the town. Residents rely on their expertise and services. They process over 15 million dollars per year and these services cannot be taken lightly. They strive for a pleasant work environment but if it's not staffed properly it can become stressful and intimidating. She hopes everyone had a chance to look at the job description for the town clerk/tax collector. They wear many hats and have to constantly switch priorities. It doesn't matter the experience level, tenure or speed, there is just a lot to do. Because of all of this, she believes that the deputy should have consistent hours and not fluctuate at all. This is important for the betterment of their exposure to the responsibilities. The hours in the revised proposal is minimal and she'd like to get them approved and implemented. She has found it stressful and inconsistent to adjust the hours up and down to stay within the budget.

Ms. Nicklos is trying to be creative to find ways to make the office run smoothly and efficiently without a second full time person. In order to do this, she is asking for \$5,167.20. She feels this is important to the welfare of the office.

Phyllis Piotrow asked what the maximum amount of hours allowed before it becomes full time and you have to pay for benefits. 35 or more hours is full time. Ms. Nicklos is asking for 34 hours on a constant basis and also hours for vacation coverage. From May to November which is peak time, there would be additional hours as well.

Kim Hallquist was asked to provide the history of the position, and also what her recommendation was to the Selectmen. Ms. Hallquist explained that soon after arriving at her position in 2011 she spoke with all department heads, including Linda Hardy, former Town Clerk/Tax Collector. At that time, Ms. Hardy was considering that she didn't need a full time person in her office. When her full time person retired in 2013, Ms. Hardy decided to change the position to part-time. Ms. Hallquist stressed that Ms. Hardy made this decision on her own, she was not asked to switch to a part-time deputy. At the time, Ms. Hardy recommended 25 hours a week; 29 hours was budgeted to consider some weeks of more hours due to elections and vacations. When Ms. Nicklos took over the position it was increased to 32 hours. The reduction to part time was a result of the experienced town clerk/tax collector who identified that she didn't need the hours. All of the same work described today by Ms. Nicklos was being done back then as well. Ms. Hardy didn't express a need for more than the 25 hours requested. At the time of her departure this was still working well for her. It is not working well for Ms. Nicklos mainly because she is not as experienced as Ms. Hardy and her part-time help is not very experienced. Ms. Hallquist noted that Ms. Nicklos has put in a lot of time learning the job and she is becoming more knowledgeable about her job. We are getting to a better place now with consistency. Ms. Hallquist's recommendation to the Selectmen was that she was not in favor going back to full-time given her experience with Linda Hardy and her observation of the office when staff is well trained. Training deputies and learning the job has proved difficult for Ms. Nicklos.

Lyndsay Lund commented on the position itself stating that the position is an elected position and she is under no protocol other than her own, and there is no person with experience seeking to be elected into the position. After a lot of thought, she would approve the additional funds she is seeking for the additional hours. Anyone coming behind her would need just as much support.

Joe Cardillo commented on the twice a year tax bills to quarterly seems to have created more work than it's worth. The creation of the tax bills are outsourced but Ms. Nicklos produces them and sends out the file to the outsourced company to print and mail them out. The office still has to process them. Mr. Cardillo wasn't sure if it would need to go for town vote, but what would be the impact of going back to twice a year since there is no financial hardship in doing this and it should lessen the burden. Ms. Hallquist would have to research this but thinks it would have to go to town vote. He also discussed the Saturday hours as the last Saturday of the month the office is open from 9-12. This is for people that can't come in during the week and for summer people that are only here on the weekends. Ms. Nicklos is trying to create convenience for the residents. Mr. Cardillo is questioning if this is actually causing an inconvenience for the office with scheduling. People can come to learn when the office is open and work with that.

Bruce Hudson clarified that the elected position is the town clerk; the tax collector is appointed by the Selectmen. Mr. Hudson asked if there is anyone else in the office that could backfill if things get busy. Ms. Nicklos replied that some of those hours she is requesting would be used by an assistant to help with filing, etc. Ms. Nicklos also asked if an administrative person could assist with filing. Ms. Nicklos is looking into that as well. Mr. Hudson asked if the whole process of the tax collector and the deputy clerk has been looked at to see what is value added and non-value added. It would show areas that could become more efficient. Ms. Nicklos feels that every minute in the office counts and they have to multi-task. She is always trying to think of ways to make things run better.

Phyllis Piotrow discussed the town elections and keeping the website up to date. She asked if Ms. Nicklos had the equipment, time and ability to address and sort through what comes up for reelection under unknown legislation. Ms. Nicklos stated they get emails from the state keeping them updated. The additional hours will be for whatever is needed in addition to the regular workday.

Chair Prohl stated that the Selectmen's budget has the number at \$69,823 and with Ms. Lund's motion it would increase it to \$72,407. Tyler Beck wanted clarification as to why the Selectmen reduced the amount. Selectman

Rollins replied that they were trying to keep the budget within a certain amount, administratively this office has gone through numerous changes and turnover and they wanted to get it stabilized and felt they should give it some time. It was also based on Ms. Hallquist's recommendation. The Selectmen have asked Ms. Hallquist several times to look at the efficiency issues in the office.

Ms. Hallquist has asked Ms. Nicklos to describe how the Selectmen's Office staff might help and how would that look. She stated it would be a possibility.

Chair Prohl commented that he is voting against the motion based on Ms. Hallquist's recommendation.

Chris Lorio asked what was being lost by not getting the increased budget. Ms. Nicklos stated the burden is more on her and she would be consistently working 50+ hours per week. For the size and amount of work in New London, other towns have two full time people. More help is needed. Mr. Lorio stated that everyone is hearing that the office is busy. He feels it needs to be articulated what the town is losing by not getting this increase.

IT WAS MOVED (Lyndsay Lund) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to approve the request of \$72,407. Yes: Lyndsay Lund, Suzanne Jesseman, Phyllis Piotrow No: Joe Cardillo, Robert Prohl, Tyler Beck, Chris Lorio, Bruce Hudson, Selectman Nancy Rollins. THE MOTION FAILED.

IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Bruce Hudson) to approve the request of \$69,823. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Tax Collector Salary: \$65,448

IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Tyler Beck) to approve the request of \$65,448. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Joe Cardillo would like to recommend that a warrant article be placed this year by the Selectmen to switch the tax billing back to twice a year.

Police: \$1,168,621.

This amount includes the addition of a new officer and reduction in overtime wages.

The reduction in overtime is due to the proposed new officer; the selectmen approved the new officer starting in October of FY2019. The \$5,000 sign on bonus is still in place if the officer comes already certified. This is paid out 1/3 at hire, 1/3 at the 6 month evaluation and the remaining 1/3 at the one year anniversary. Joe Cardillo commented that retaining people is important but not implementing a bonus appropriately can feed into the problem of losing people. His concern is that once a bonus is paid out after one year, an officer can go to another town that's offering a sign on bonus. He suggests paying back if the officer doesn't stay longer or it's paid out after a longer length of time.

Ms. Lund asked Chief Andersen what the probability is that he would hire an officer that has jumped from job to job every 18 months or so. Chief Andersen stated he wouldn't.

Ms. Piotrow commented that she has heard his plea for support of the additional policeman and understands his concern for his staff. She would like to know how many criminal events would be prevented by having another policeman. Chief Andersen stated this is impossible to answer. His reasoning for an additional officer isn't statistic based. It's more for the wellbeing and health of the officers that have a demanding rotating schedule.

There is a statistic that states one traffic stop can affect as many as ten motorists driving by. This helps with the prevention of crime. Approximately 60% of the crimes dealt with are not our residents, its people traveling through our community. When an officer gets tied up with a call, he is taken off the road and isn't patrolling. The simple driving around of a police car deters crime. Ms. Piotrow is concerned that we are dealing with the symptoms of crime rather than the root cause. What actions can be done to address these root causes? Chief

Andersen stated they do public speaking to the College and different organizations. The problem is that the people committing the crimes are from outside of the community so it's difficult to educate. Minors with alcohol get counseling on how it affects them and their life. There are misdemeanor diversion programs that force to do community service and take educational classes.

Ms. Piotrow stated there is a lot of money designated for training. She noted in a recent meeting Chief Andersen discussed a class called Verbal Judo. She wanted to know what percentage of training is spent teaching policeman how to talk to people as opposed to weapon training. Chief Andersen stated they spend 20% of their time in weapons training and 80% of their time in classes and education.

Mr. Lorio inquired if Chief Andersen feels that \$5,000 is appropriate for a sign on bonus. He wanted to know what his preference would be. Chief Andersen would like it to be more but will stay with \$5,000 in order to get the additional officer and stay within his budget. Selectman Rollins noted that the ninth officer was needed in order to have a better rotation of shifts to give our officers a better quality of life noting that the Selectmen want young officers with families to stay. Mr. Lorio feels if the bonus is higher you attract more qualified candidates.

Mr. Hudson inquired why there were two line items for retirement. The difference is that the non- police/Fire is in a different retirement system. He also asked about the PD Miscellaneous line item. This covers odd expenses not included in other areas. Chair Prohl asked what will happen with the old cruiser. Chief Andersen called Auctions International and it has been decommissioned and is at the highway department. He is waiting for them to send someone to take photos and post it online. It will go into the revenue budget.

Mr. Cardillo had questions regarding training and asked if this was for everyone. Chief Andersen feels he will use the amount budgeted as he has two part time officers coming on which requires more training.

Vehicle Maintenance – this is unpredictable however we buy a new cruiser every year. If we aren't stretching them out as far can we adjust this? Chief Andersen stated just the winter tires are \$3,600 so doesn't feel there is an ability to lower that.

Radio Repairs – This is consistently at \$5,000. Is there a plan this year to reach the amount budgeted? Chief Andersen stated they are planning to buy portables.

Travels/Meals – This is specifically for hotels and mileage reimbursement. They send officers to training/courses so this will be used.

Dues/Subscriptions – In the past this has been \$600 and it has jumped to \$3,600. Chief Andersen replied that they are part of the New Hampshire central special unit's team which has a \$3,000 fee.

Mr. Cardillo asked if since Chief Andersen is the chief in another town, this takes away from what he does in New London. Chief Andersen said it doesn't take him away from New London at all. He has a salaried position in Goshen and his job is to make sure the police department runs smoothly. He has no set hours and isn't required to work certain times. He works mostly evenings and weekends. He has patrolman that work week days. Also the town of Goshen has State Police on call if a major call comes in. He said his job in Goshen has never affected his availability in New London.

IT WAS MOVED (Bruce Hudson) AND SECONDED (Tyler Beck) to approve the request of \$1,168,621. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Dispatch Services: \$412,855

Joe Cardillo stated that wages was a small increase of 2% but is unclear as to why the health and dental insurance line increases 50%. Ms. Hallquist stated this is due to a change in plans – ie: single plan to family plan. Employees make changes when they get married, have kids etc. There are currently four full time and four part time employees.

Phyllis Piotrow feels the 2% increase seems low as dispatch is not an easy job. The Selectmen approved a 1% COLA as well.

IT WAS MOVED (Bruce Hudson) AND SECONDED (Chris Lorio) to approve the request of \$412,855. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Emergency Management: \$5,040

IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Tyler Beck) to approve the request of \$5,040. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Recreation: 184,412

The Selectmen were in favor of using the revolving fund for the part time Administrative Assistant during peak times. Also supplies in the amount of \$6,250 came out of the Elkins and Bucklin Beach equipment line and \$1,500 from lifeguard and swim supplies will come out of the revolving fund.

Lyndsay Lund asked Selectman Rollins about the Administrative Assistant and the recommendation of having it come out of the revolving fund. Would this be a decision left to the Commissioners? Selectman Rollins stated this is correct, noting the Selectmen didn't approve an assistant but did have the discussion recommending it go back to the Recreation Commission for their determination that they agree it was needed for that timeframe it would come out of the revolving fund.

Chris Lorio asked Mr. Blewitt about the changes to salaries. Mr. Blewitt presented a budget of \$59,313. This provides 42 days of 6 lifeguards, 3 at each beach from 9am – 5pm. It provides 40 days of 6 lifeguards from 11am -5pm plus 10 days from 5pm-7pm at Elkins Beach only.

Tyler Beck asked why \$11,000 came out of the revolving fund. Mr. Blewitt stated there wasn't sufficient money in the budget so he overspent to make sure the beaches were staffed. Phyllis Piotrow asked what the highest hourly rate paid to lifeguards was last year. Mr. Blewitt stated it was \$9.50 - \$10.00 per hour. This year he is proposing \$11.00 per hour but will depend on their level of experience and their age.

Mr. Blewitt is concerned that in the last few years, the van payment is coming out of the revolving fund and last year swim instructors and sailing instructors were being paid for out of the revolving fund and now the assistant. Without the assistant that comes to close to \$20,000. This is a lot of expectations out of this fund that he's unsure how long this can be continued. Chair Prohl wants to know if he has enough money to do what he needs to do to run the programs he wants to have. Mr. Blewitt stated that assuming that nothing changes, the answer is yes. He wouldn't be able to expand into other programs. He is limited based on the revolving fund balance.

Justin Garzia, Recreation Commissioner, commented that the revolving fund isn't growing and there isn't a surplus. It fluctuates with the needs of the department.

Lyndsay Lund commented that the revolving fund is generated by fees from programs provided. She would like the budget committee to tell Mr. Blewitt how to present the budget to them and in what format. She feels every year his budget gets picked apart. She would like to see more help for him going forward.

Phyllis Piotrow feels the work of the Recreation Department is underappreciated. It is the activities of the Recreation Department that get young people involved and in the long run keep them from getting into trouble. The role of recreation is positive for the whole town and instead of discouraging we should be encouraging Mr. Blewitt to come up with new programs. These programs are important for the health of our community.

Bruce Hudson stated there are a lot of revenue producing programs. Can the revenue be increased? Mr. Blewitt stated it was a possibility. He also asked if there were friends of the recreation department, similar to the library and police. He suggested soliciting fundraising. Mr. Blewitt stated there are many people that donate already.

IT WAS MOVED (Bruce Hudson) AND SECONDED (Tyler Beck) to approve the request of \$184,412. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Other Business:

Steve Ensign commented on his observation that during the discussion of the recreation department budget, a comment was made that if more money is needed to come talk with them. The Selectmen were concerned about the Police Department and want to make sure they are well treated and not overworked. Most departments get overtime. Yet, the meeting started with the Town Clerk who isn't asking for a lot more money, works 50+ hours a week and doesn't get overtime. Mr. Ensign stated if he were Ms. Nicklos, he'd be upset with the way he had been treated.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 3, 2018 at 6:30PM.

IT WAS MOVED (Bruce Hudson) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to adjourn the meeting. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:34PM.
Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson
Recording Clerk