



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## **BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES Wednesday, December 4, 2019 7:00 PM**

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

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Joe Kubit, Scott Blewitt, Ruth White, Vahan Sarkisian, Stanley Morono, Mark Vernon, Bob Brown, Michael Kennedy, Peter Stanley, Bob Harrington, Fire Chief Jay Lyon

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

### **Approval of November 18, 2019 minutes**

**IT WAS MOVED (John Raby) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to approve the minutes from the November 18, 2019 meeting. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Selectmen's Report**

Selectman Cannon reported that the Selectmen's budget represents a 4.3% increase in the operating budget; transfers to the Capital Reserves represents a 16.3% increase. The overall increase is 5.4%.

In the personnel section, the budget includes a change in the Town Clerk/Tax Collector position, going back to budgeting 50% of the salary for each position. This means Town Clerk budget line looks like a decrease and Tax Collector looks like an increase. There is a 1.5% COLA for all employees, the addition of a one day per week position for the finance department and moving a part-time position to full time in the Public Works Department.

The Selectmen voted not to fund the request of the Fire Department for a third full-time position.

Additionally, at the Board of Selectmen meeting on Monday (December 2<sup>nd</sup>), the Selectmen decided to make the following cuts to the proposed budget:

- \$5,000 from Legal
- \$6,580 for Planner Services
- \$5,900 for Zoning building permit software
- \$1,400 Merrimack County Attorney fee in the Police Department
- \$3,000 K-9 from the Police Department
- \$40,000 from the Conservation Land Acquisition capital reserve fund

There was an increase of \$500 for CASA and also \$6,000 increase for cleaning services at Elkins Beach (\$3,000) and Bucklin Beach (\$3,000).

The Building Inspector position was included in the amount of \$40,000. Chair Prohl thanked Selectman Cannon for his review of the Selectmen's budget as presented to the Budget Committee

### **Budget Committee FY2021 Budget Preparation:**

#### **Executive**

Joe Cardillo asked if we could make any cuts to the printing line item or is there a reason we keep it funded the way we do. Kim Hallquist stated this is principally for the printing of the annual report. There has been cuts in the number of reports printed so there are fewer remaining to dispose of. The town is legally required to provide annual reports and having a nice one serves the town well as it is an historical document. She concluded that Echo Printing does a great job and they are helpful in keeping costs down as much as possible.

**IT WAS MOVED (Jerry Coogan) AND SECONDED (Joe Cardillo) to approve the Executive budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **Election**

There was increase in the supplies budget line for new printers. The state used to supply these to the town and they don't do that anymore. These printers are used for registrations, vital records, marriage licenses etc.

**IT WAS MOVED (Jerry Coogan) AND SECONDED (John Raby) to approve the Election budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **Finance**

A part time position to help in the finance department has been proposed. Chair Prohl questioned if we could train someone already in the office to do the work that needs to be done. Wendy Johnson responded that in her opinion, everyone in the office would say they are already too busy. Chair Prohl asked if the Deputy Tax Collector could be used in this capacity; Ms. Hallquist stated that Linda Nicklos has been clear that she needs a full-time person in her office and thus it is unlikely that she would be willing to spare one day a week of her staff to work in the finance department.

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (John Raby) to approve the Finance budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **Reassessment of Property**

**IT WAS MOVED (Jerry Coogan) AND SECONDED (John Raby) to approve the Reassessment of Property budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **Legal and Animal Rescue Fees**

The Selectmen discussed the legal fees budget amount at the Board meeting Monday night and recommended cutting this amount from \$25,000 to \$20,000. Kim Hallquist had recommended an increase because it is a revaluation year and that is typically when more legal expenses happen. Joe Cardillo recommends cutting this line item by another \$5,000 and bringing it down to \$15,000. He stated that we generally have not come close spending \$15,000.

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Jerry Coogan) to cut this line item to \$15,000.**

John Raby stated he is not comfortable cutting it by that much. Chair Prohl noted that if the expenses did occur, the Selectmen would have to find the funds elsewhere in the budget to pay for it. Generally, the legal line item ends up a surplus.

**ALL WERE IN FAVOR WITH THE EXCEPTION OF JOHN RABY WHO WAS OPPOSED. THE MOTION CARRIES.**

**IT WAS MOVED (John Raby) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to approve the Legal and Animal Rescue Fees budget in the amount of \$15,750. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Personnel Administration**

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (John Raby) to approve the Personnel Administration budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Planning & Zoning**

The Selectmen brought up the issue of hiring a Building Inspector at their meeting on Monday and included \$40,000 in the budget for this position. Ms. Hallquist explained that in most cases, the Selectmen can hire whomever they want, but in the case of a Building Inspector, the law states that the town has to vote to adopt an enforcement mechanism; this would be done by an article on the zoning amendment ballot during Town meeting voting.

Chair Prohl invited Peter Stanley to the meeting to discuss. Peter Stanley is a long-time resident of New London and former Zoning official. Mr. Stanley stated that in addition to hiring a building inspector, there is an entire process that needs to be developed. This includes knowing what to inspect and how often. There also needs to be a building code board of appeals which is made up of 3-5 people that should be representative of different aspects of disciplines that reflect what you will be dealing with (Mechanical engineering, structural engineering etc.). The members should have expertise. This would all have to be done by January 8, 2020 for this to be on the warrant for this year.

Mr. Stanley feels we should let the Building and Facilities Committee review this and make a recommendation to the town. This should not be rushed. Mr. Stanley also commented that allotting \$40,000 is not nearly enough if you are seeking a properly qualified candidate. This needs to be carefully considered and it would make more sense to bring forth a proposal next year that has been endorsed by the Building and Facilities Committee. He urged the Budget Committee to reject this funding recommendation.

John Raby asked Mr. Stanley what he feels a proper salary would be. Mr. Stanley replied that \$80,000+ would be more accurate. To administer the Board of Appeals would add a few more thousand dollars. Mr. Stanley concluded by observing that in his experience, a Building Department that is not run well can be costly to everyone.

Joe Cardillo stated that he is part of the Building and Facilities Committee and they were given a charge to look at this as well as many other things. The Selectmen made a good decision last year to create this committee and it has been populated with very talented members. Mr. Cardillo feels it is

in the town's best interest to let the Building and Facilities Committee take the time to research this adding that it is too soon to fund or address this position now. He is not in favor of funding this position. Chair Prohl agrees and is in favor of removing the money from the line item as well.

Vahan Sarkisian stated he has been in the construction business for many years. A Building Inspector will look at the structure of the building and needs to know the laws. They would be protecting the town from sub-standard construction and there has been a lot of that in town over the years. He feels we do need an appeals board and it would not be difficult to find three qualified people in town. The issue of having a building inspector has been talked about for years noting that the town has many big projects that will be starting soon and we should have someone overseeing them. Mr. Sarkisian stated that \$40,000 is more than adequate to fund a part time position. Mr. Sarkisian concluded by noting that to push it off another year for more discussion is not necessary; this is the time to move forward.

Stanley Morono stated that this is a position that requires a very qualified individual that knows the community and can work well with contractors, developers and engineers. He also commented that \$40,000 would not be enough of a salary for what that person would be required to do.

**IT WAS MOVED (Rob Prohl) AND SECONDED (John Raby) to remove the \$40,000 for a Building Inspector. ALL WERE IN FAVOR WITH THE EXCEPTION OF JERRY COOGAN WHO WAS OPPOSED. THE MOTION CARRIES.**

Chair Prohl asked for clarification regarding the reduction of funds for RPC Planning Services for additional hours for the Town Planner. The request was for \$66,000 and the Selectmen approved \$60,000. Selectman Cannon commented that the discussion was around capping the hours and monitoring the time spent by the Planner more closely.

**IT WAS MOVED (John Raby) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to approve the Planning and Zoning in the amount of \$152,544. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Health Administration**

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Jerry Coogan) to approve the Health Administration as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Health Agencies (LSVNA, COA, Hospital, CASA)**

Joe Cardillo asked why the amount for CASA had increased. John Cannon stated that during the CASA presentation it was explained that it cost \$1,500 to train one advocate volunteer. The Selectmen suggested that the total amount of training be funded.

Jerry Coogan commented that for the New London Hospital Ambulance, he would like to see what other towns contribute and would like to have NLH explore expanding their Medicare reimbursement. Right now, the reimbursement is 35%. Joe Cardillo noted that public funding is public record so just because they haven't supplied this information to us in the past doesn't mean they can't.

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to approve the Health Agencies budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Welfare Administration**

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to approve the Welfare Administration budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Inter-Governmental Welfare**

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (John Raby) to approve the Inter-Governmental Welfare budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Welfare Payments**

Joe Cardillo noted that Celeste Cook has done a great job managing this and generally doesn't spend the entire budgeted amount. He recommends cutting this amount from \$16,000 to \$12,000.

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (John Raby) to reduce the Welfare Payments budget amount to \$12,000.**

**JOE CARDILLO: YES, SUZANNE JESSEMAN: YES, ROB PROHL: YES, JOHN RABY; YES**

**JOHN CANNON: NO, LAUREN CHADWICK: NO, JERRY COOGAN: NO, MICHAEL WILLIAMS: NO, MARK CHRISTENSEN: NO. THE MOTION FAILS.**

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to approve the Welfare Payment budget in the amount of \$16,000. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Parks/Recreation**

**IT WAS MOVED (John Raby) AND SECONDED (Jerry Coogan) to approve the Parks/Recreation budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Patriotic Purposes**

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to approve the Patriotic Purposes budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Other Culture and Recreation**

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Lauren Chadwick) to approve the Other Culture and Recreation budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Conservation**

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to approve the Conservation budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Conservation Commission Chair, Bob Brown attended the meeting and discussed the Conservation Commission request to add \$50,000 to the Capital Reserve Fund for land acquisition; the Selectmen included \$10,000 in its budget. It was explained at a previous meeting that in the past 25 years there were 13 years when there was no contribution to the fund. During the other 12 years there were contributions that ranged from \$10,000 - \$150,000. There are many parcels on their desirable lands list that are expensive. Chair Brown believes there should be level funding in this fund to build it up to a reasonable amount.

Mr. Brown pointed out that in the Master Plan survey, the feedback showed that land conservation and preserving the charm of this community is the number one priority. He would like the Budget Committee to consider this very seriously. He is aware that the Selectmen did not support a \$50,000 contribution and reduced it to \$10,000 which is disappointing. Selectman Cannon commented that it is not that the Selectmen don't support the Conservation Commission's efforts, but they had concerns about the size of the budget increase.

Chair Prohl commented that at the last Board of Selectmen meeting there was a motion by the Selectmen to have an appraisal done of the Cricenti property. The idea is that the town could potentially purchase this property for later development needs.

The Board will discuss the Capital Reserve Funds at a future meeting.

### **Energy**

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Suzanne Jesseman) to approve the Energy budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Other Conservation**

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (John Raby) to approve the Other Conservation budget as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Adjourn**

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:51PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson,

Recording Secretary  
Town of New London