



TOWN OF
NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
BOND HEARING
MEETING MINUTES
February 14, 2018
6:00 PM**

PRESENT:

G. William Helm, Jr., Chairman
Nancy Rollins, Selectman
Janet Kidder, Selectman
Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Suzanne Jesseman, Budget Committee member
Ed Anderson, Chief of Police
Peter Bianchi, New London Resident
John Raby, *Intertown Record*
Robert Bowers, New London Resident
Kathy Bowers, New London Resident
Jack Sheehan, New London Resident

Chair Helm called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

Proposed \$500,000 bond

Chair Helm announced that pursuant to RSA 33:8-a, this public hearing is being held to receive comments on the proposed issuance of a bond or a note in the amount not to exceed \$500,000 for the purpose of purchasing land for future use by the town. The question of whether to issue a bond or note for these purposes will be placed on the warrant for voting at town meeting on Wednesday, March 14, 2018 at 7:00pm. A public notice appeared in a publication of general distribution so that requirement has been adhered to.

Selectmen Janet Kidder provided the following information:

The Capital Improvement Subcommittee that consisted of Bill Dietrich, Paul Gorman, Bill Berger, Rob Prohl, Michele Houlton, Janet Kidder and Adam Ricker Planning Administrator, met four times from July – October 2017. The CIP Subcommittee met with all department heads to discuss their future facility requirements and in addition to the meetings previously mentioned, the Subcommittee also visited the Bow Safety Services facility in Bow NH. Police Chief Ed Andersen and Donna Larrow also attended the visit to the facility to see what the Police, Fire and Emergency Services building had to offer, as this facility was just built.

The Subcommittee also met with Susan Stuebner, President of Colby Sawyer College regarding future plans for the College and they also met with Ken Jacques, Commissioner of the

Springfield/New London water precinct, who was asked to give an overview of the adequacy of the town's water supply.

Based on these meetings, recommendations were formulated, and a presentation was made to the Planning Board on November 14, 2017. The recommendations were discussed and approved. On January 8, 2018, the Chair of the Planning Board, Paul Gorman, presented the capital improvement recommendations to the Selectmen. The recommendations were discussed and approved. The recommendations are:

1. Find a new location for the Police Department.
2. Develop a plan based on the recommendations of the Transfer Station Review Committee for the Transfer Station.
3. Replace the second Brookside Culvert and authorize an engineering study for the Goose Hole Bridge.
4. Once the Police Station/Dispatch has been relocated, review the Buker Annex to determine how this space can be repurposed, bearing in mind the parking limitations of the site, and the need for town wide storage and meeting space.
5. Institute a planning process for a community center.

There was also a Master Planning Steering Committee. This group included Paul Gorman, Mark Vernon, Bill Dietrich, Tim Paradis, Jeremy Bonin (Chair), Janet Kidder, Casey Biuso and Town Planner, Adam Ricker. This group met with Colby Sawyer President, Susan Stuebner and members of the Colby Sawyer staff to discuss possible property the college might be willing to sell to the town. Also discussed were future college plans regarding off campus property along Seamans Road and the College's need for a certain type of housing. At one meeting the Subcommittee met with all department heads including representatives of the Springfield/New London Water Precinct about future facilities and thoughts about their departments. The committee felt it was important for all department heads to hear what each person had to say. Also, at several meetings, the discussion revolved around the type of questions to be included in a survey of residents, the possibility of holding a charrette and holding public meetings to gather input from residents regarding their vision for the future of New London.

Future meetings will be held with New London Hospital, all non-profit organizations, Planned Unit Developments, the Lake Associations, the Chamber of Commerce, the School District and many other groups.

In order to get as much input as possible, scheduled meetings with different groups takes a great deal of time. The planning process could take another year to complete. Therefore, based on the information that the Selectmen have received, they have concluded it would be worthwhile to have money available in case a potential piece of property becomes available for future town facilities. If no property becomes available, no money will be spent, and the bond will not be taken out.

Peter Bianchi feels that under no circumstances should the purchase of land be taken out of the hands of town meeting and the voters of New London. There hasn't ever been a time that New London has relinquished or taken this power away from town meeting. Decisions on warrant articles should and usually are based on facts and information as to where the money will be spent and for what specific purpose. Specifics are critical to make an informed decision. The study passed last year as part of the \$875,000 bond issue included a phrase to determine the future viability of the Buker municipal building for police and recreation. This study has not

been done. As presented in the current CIP, these concerns have been expressed. However, Mr. Bianchi noted that he has yet to see any specific details, or site requirements for either police or recreation. This article assumes there is a better location for these departments, especially Police and Dispatch however he feels the present location is ideal. Millions of dollars have been spent to renovate many old buildings in town. The Buker building is approximately 30 years old and the cost to upgrade or renovate should be factored into any plans. It seems important to know if land purchase, site work and new building costs would be cost effective compared to redo or renovations. If the present building is abandoned from present uses it would have to be repurposed. The attempt to repurposed would also have unknown costs. He feels it's unsound to give an open checkbook to the Selectmen to purchase unknown land leading to a building yet to be determined, and the purpose yet to be fully vetted to the taxpayers of New London. Mr. Bianchi concluded by noting that he thinks the article should be defeated.

Robert Bowers wanted clarification about the determination that bigger and different space is needed. Selectman Kidder responded that it is different space needed, not necessarily bigger.

Mr. Bowers asked if an analysis was received that stated what was needed and why the space is not workable or able to be renovated. Selectman Kidder replied that studies have been done on that space and there are quite a few issues with it. It was noted that the Dennis Mires study is online and available for review.

Chief Andersen stated that the building is large and spread out which makes it difficult to work fluidly. They share space with the Recreation Department and Whipple Hall. Noise is a factor and there is zero storage space. There are issues with the heating system, pipes have burst and the dispatch area is too small. There are mold problems. He agrees that the current location is centrally located which is a plus, but the building itself needs a major overhaul.

Mr. Bowers questioned if the Selectmen have been asked to set aside money to hire an architect or expert to see if it could be redone in a way to satisfy all the needs expressed. Chair Helm stated that based on the Mires study done years ago and on Chief Andersen's information and review, they don't feel it is a good expenditure of the Town's money to remodel it. It is land locked and lacks parking.

Jack Sheehan stated he isn't questioning the need but rather the process, asking if the town would be voting on a \$500,000 bond but will not be paying interest until we actually draw the money. Wendy Johnson stated that there would be no borrowing of money unless a piece of property was purchased. Selectman Rollins clarified that it is up to \$500,000. Mr. Sheehan asked if papers were being signed to take money or making a commitment for an interest rate. The Selectmen responded no. The Board clarified that the bond would not be taken out until a piece of property is identified for purchase, explaining that the Selectmen feel that if they don't have that authority now, and an opportunity comes along, they need to be able to take advantage of that opportunity. The Board noted that waiting until the next annual meeting or attempting to get permission from a court to hold a special town meeting, may result in missing an opportunity to acquire the desired land.

Mr. Bianchi stated that part D of the \$875,000 bond issued last year was to conduct a study of the Harold Buker Memorial Building and other sites to determine their future viability for Police and Recreation, or some other use. It is his understanding that there is still approximately \$200,000 left in the bond and questioned why the study to determine the specifics of what could be done to the Buker building was not done.

Chair Helm responded that he stated earlier that the Selectmen determined that would not be a good use of town money given what the Chief has told them about the current facility. Also, the warrant article provided for a study of the Buker building or other sites. The Selectmen have used some of the money to look at two other sites to see if they are viable sites so part of the \$25,000 has been used for two other studies. Chair Helm stated it was not used for the Buker site because in the opinion of professionals that would not be a good use of money. Mr. Bianchi asked who the professionals were. Chair Helm stated Chief Andersen. Mr. Bianchi feels they aren't professionals to determine this. He felt based on the town meeting you would assume someone was going to study the Buker building to determine its feasibility. Chair Helm stated the purpose of the bond is to acquire land, not to renovate buildings. In their judgment this is the direction they want to go.

Kathy Bowers asked what the use of the building would become if the Police Department moved out. Selectman Kidder stated that it would likely be used for storage and meeting space and Recreation would also be able to utilize more of the space as well. Selectman Rollins stated that there are multiple potential uses. They also are committed to keeping the Police Department in the main corridor and they need to be able to act if property becomes available.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to close the public hearing. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 6:29 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson, Recording Secretary
Town of New London