



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES July 7, 2012

PRESENT:

Peter Bianchi, Chair
Tina Helm, Selectman
Janet Kidder, Selectman
Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator

ALSO PRESENT:

Howard Hoke, Don Klingler, Doug MacMichael, Bob MacMichael, Rick Anderson, Phyllis Piotrow, Karen Hogle, Bob Prohl, Maureen Prohl, Beth Swanson, Celeste Cook, Jack Sheehan, Hardy Hasenfuss, Jack Harrod, Terry Bingham, Carolyn Lockhart, Sue Clough, Rip Cross, Joe Cardillo, Bruce Hudson, Renate Kannler, Bud Dick

Chair Bianchi called the meeting to order at 7:30am. He noted that they would be reviewing the newly completed Executive Summary of the Master Plan. He noted that the summary and the plan were both complete and so there would be no possibility for amendments to the documents. Reviewing them was merely a catalyst for discussion on where they may go for the future Master Plan.

Chair Bianchi updated the CAC members that the Sunapee Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade project has been awarded to the low bidder in the amount of \$6.66 million dollars. Even though this is lower than their original estimate, they expect that the full \$8.4 million dollars approved for the project will be spent. The \$8.4 million was the estimate New London and Sunapee based their grant applications on. Sunapee anticipates spending everything that was appropriated by both towns. The plant is owned by Sunapee, it is located in the town of Sunapee, but New London pays for 65% of the facility.

Chair Bianchi indicated that the Board of Selectmen was in the process of interviewing for the Planning & Zoning Administrator position for which they received over 60 applications. In addition to the Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator conducting the interviews, Bill Green (Chair of the ZBA), Tom Cottrill (Chair of the Planning Board), and Bob Brown (Chair of the Conservation Commission) would also be involved.

Chair Bianchi said that they had previously been concerned about how things would be run in Town after Mr. Stanley left. Fortunately, Kim Hallquist, Linda Jackman and Amy Rankins have been doing a great job working together to get things done and helping people who need building permits and questions answered.

Chair Bianchi indicated that the Elkins project was in the works. Ms. Hallquist and Richard Lee (Public Works Director) met with Pathways Engineering in Elkins last Thursday. This is the firm that was the Selectmen's first pick from all the RFQs that came in. They planned to meet with a representative from the firm at the next Board of Selectmen's meeting to be held the following Monday morning. At this meeting they planned to find out Pathway Engineering's ideas about the project. He noted that there are lengthy rules and regulations involved in the project due to the fact that they are using federal funds. The Selectmen will decide whether or not Pathways Engineering is the best firm suited for the work. If they

decide to dismiss this firm, they would need to move on to their second choice and could not go back to Pathways Engineering later on, per federal guidelines.

Chair Bianchi was happy to report that the Pleasant Street sidewalk project would be starting shortly. Mr. Lee has ordered catch basins and they are beginning to work on the drainage necessary before anything else is constructed. This project is also being paid for by a grant, which involves a lot of rules and regulations to be followed, as well as lengthy engineering to be done. He was certain that the project would be done before school started in the fall.

Mr. Hoke asked about the stop sign at Gould Road and Pleasant Street. Ms. Hallquist said that Mr. Lee has to order a template to paint the word "AHEAD" (he already has the word "STOP"), they have changed the stop sign to a larger version, and have added reflectors to it to try and bring more attention.

Ms. Helm asked everyone to remember that this was the Public Works Department's busy time of the year and they are down one person. She commended them for putting up a flag pole at the Town Office and installing lighting in the midst of this, their most hectic time of year.

Mr. Hudson asked how they were coming with the replacing of Norm Bernaiche, Chief Assessor. Chair Bianchi said that interviews were taking place within the Town of Newbury as the position is hired by that town. The assessor will service Newbury, Sunapee and New London. Ms. Hallquist said that all three Town Administrators are present on the board that is hiring for this new person. In the transition period, Kris McAllister (Assistant Town Assessor) will be serving as interim Chief Assessor.

Chair Bianchi said that the Town will be sending a couple of highway employees to be certified in the application of herbal pesticides. Many citizens are concerned with the spread of Japanese Knotweed and this certification will enable some of the Town's employees to take some action in right-of-ways and other public areas where this invasive species exists.

Master Plan Executive Summary

Chair Bianchi started off by noting that the population projection for the Town of New London was off in the previous Master Plan. He said that when they started the document, it was noted that the town would grow by 1,500 people in the next 10 years. The census showed the population really only increased by about 281 people and of that number, over 100 were from the college.

Ms. Helm said that they would like to know how the citizens would envision implementing some of the things included in the Master Plan. Ms. Swanson spoke on converting homes into multi-family homes. She wondered if the project off of Seaman's Road was a college or town project. Chair Bianchi said that it was a private project being done by Harry Snow. The intent, he believed, was to rent the apartments to college students. They are still working out how many occupants would be allowed per unit.

Mr. Hasenfuss said that the summary was not specific at all and he wondered about specific goals and who would do them and when. Chair Bianchi said that the end of every chapter in the Master Plan, there are recommendations that indicate what should be done, and by whom.

Ms. Bingham talked about the roads, the paving of some of them, and road maintenance. She felt that the paving process had stopped and that there wasn't money put into the CIP to handle the roads like they had once wanted to. She also felt there should be some expansion for family unit housing in town. Ms. Bingham did think the town should go back to making the roads a priority. She saw what was going on lately as a "band-aid" approach and thought there should be a more systemized approach to the paving of

roads. Ms. Bingham said that each of the boards should be looking at these things and making sure they are addressed.

Chair Bianchi said that there will be no new roads developed in New London that are un-paved and he added that most of the material in the Master Plan's chapters came from the various departments. Ms. Bingham thought most of the information was outdated. She said that the Master Plan included a plan for the roads to be paved but that the plan wasn't in place any more.

Ms. Cook said that affordable housing for people was very important. They have an empty building in town and they are looking for a community space and a place for people to live. She felt that maybe the downstairs could become a community area and then apartments could be built above it as has been done in many other parts of the country. She said that she hoped that New London Hospital was included as one of the driving engines of the community but saw little talk about the hospital in the summary. She said she was on the Planning Board when they started the 1998 Master Plan. They had put the accomplishments from the previous plan in it and thought it would be nice to have this same feature in the new plan.

Chair Bianchi said that the Community Facilities and Services Chapter alone was 33 pages in the Master Plan and the Executive Summary was only 15 pages total so wasn't very detailed. The hospital is represented in the entire Master Plan, but the summary didn't cover it very much.

Mr. Harrod said that the summary wasn't really a summary, as it skipped a lot of what was covered in the Master Plan.

Ms. Piotrow agreed with Ms. Cook about the old Middle School building and it was barely mentioned in the whole summary. She added that the summary was so general that it didn't offer any specific suggestions of what should be done. She felt there was very little attention to education. The main reason people move to a place is because of education or it being a good place to retire. It did say that the main complaint was transportation and technology. There were no suggestions about what could be done for the old Middle School.

Chair Bianchi said that the old Middle School is not a New London school, but belongs to the regional school district and they have their own master plan and goals. There has been a group of people trying to get a community center into that building. For some reason it has not gained traction. It is a beautiful building and is visible even more now that the old SAU building has been removed. He was in favor of doing something with the building and wondered who people thought should be the ones to start negotiating to purchase or lease the building and get things going?

Mr. Cardillo felt New London should have a strong say in what happens with that building. The school district is open to anything they want to do there. Ms. Prohl wanted to know why the Town of New London hadn't gotten their building back as other towns had when their schools closed. Mr. Cardillo said that they would need to think about whether the town would really want the building back as they would then be responsible for it. Chair Bianchi said that the building would need to be ADA compliant and have much done to it before it could be used as a Community Center.

Ms. Lockhart said that she thought most of the townspeople had no idea what the status of the building was. People come up with ideas for it but most people aren't aware of them. If the Town did know and weighed in on it they might get some solution to it. Ms. Lockhart suggested that a focus group get together for citizens to discuss possibilities for the building.

Mr. Hoke said given their recent experience since the Middle School moved to Sutton, it would be important for the Town of New London to find out what would be necessary to even receive ownership of the property. The building is of a unique nature relative to the other towns' buildings, as every town in the district has used the building since 1968. He thought that everyone should be prepared that the other towns in the district would not sit by while the Town of New London was allowed to acquire it for one dollar. He added that a focus group would be perfect with regards to the building's future, but he did not feel it was something that should be maintained or taken on full-time by the Town Administrator or the Board of Selectmen as it would take an incredible amount of time and work.

Ms. Prohl said she thought the old part of the Middle School (the old New London High School) is what she was more concerned about being returned to the town for one dollar. Mr. Hoke said the other towns don't care and they would feel that they have some ownership in all the buildings that were used for the entire district.

Ms. Clough said there are some people who are currently working towards obtaining the building. She felt it important to include them in whatever the group feels is appropriate without overriding them. Chair Bianchi asked if the Board of Selectmen should initiate some sort of focus group to look into the possibility of the town acquiring the old Middle School.

Mr. Cardillo said that the district could sell the building off to a developer for an assisted living facility or apartments if they wanted. He asked Ms. Kidder where they were with the committee that currently exists with Fred Downing at the helm. He wondered if any traction was gaining on the project. Ms. Kidder felt it would be gaining more traction as there are some new people getting involved. It all boils down to money and they hope to have some private and public money used and noted it would be a very expensive project. If the community feels they are willing to support this project that is great, but it will have to be the Town of New London supporting it and they will have to be the major donors of the project.

Ms. Kidder said the school district is interested in leasing the building but not selling it. She said they weren't interested in selling it for one dollar and felt that this was because at some point they may need the building for educational uses should the district grow. Mr. Harrod felt that this seemed like a deal-breaker.

Ms. Helm said she felt extremely uncomfortable about the conversation. She knew about another group looking at the whole usage of the building from a different vantage point. There would be a meeting the following Thursday at 2:00pm at the library about it. She offered that some of those at the CAC may want to go to the meeting to learn their ideas. The group is called "Task Force 41."

Mr. Prohl felt it would be good to sit down with the school district, as they own the building. Most districts want to get rid of buildings because they cost money. Chair Bianchi said that he has no problem doing this but would like more direction before doing so.

Mr. Cardillo said that things are convoluted at the old middle school because the SAU is using part of it, and the Outing Club is leasing some space as well. He didn't know that if the Town acquired the building, if it would go into the gymnasium portion. The elementary school currently uses the gymnasium and will need to continue to do so.

Ms. Prohl said that New London owned the building from 1941 – 1968. Mr. MacMichael gave some history of the 1941 building and said he would love for it to be given back to the Town of New London.

Chair Bianchi suggested moving on to another topic within the Master Plan Executive Summary.

Ms. Bingham said there was a growing need for senior housing. She knew the hospital was planning some of this kind of housing but it went by the wayside due to the economy. She thought workforce housing and senior housing was something that should be addressed. She thought there should be something included in the summary in terms of what has been accomplished since the last Master Plan and how they can accomplish more of the recommendations. She feared that if this was not done it would become a worthless document in a drawer.

Ms. Helm agreed with Ms. Bingham and wanted to see if legally, they could see what kind of document they could craft that wouldn't be the official Master Plan document, but would update some of the information. Ms. Hallquist said that the Planning Board can update the document any time they want. Every decision they make should consider the goals of the Master Plan. The law says they should update the plan at least every 10 years but it could be done more often if they wish.

Mr. Dick brought up the term "residents aging in place." He has extensive experience in making use of old buildings around the country to house the aging but more recently, autistic people. There is a movement away from assisted living into "co-housing" where there is an intergenerational component. He'd like to see a group of couples buying an old B&B, which all have private bathrooms. They have public spaces and a commercial kitchen. This would enable the couples that have young, able-bodied, autistic children, to live together with assistance. He felt the old middle school would be an ideal place for this kind of housing. They need to get ready to house this segment of the population.

Ms. Cook said the reason why the hospital stopped in their plans for the assisted living housing was due to the downturn of the economy. If people can't sell their houses, they can't afford to move into new assisted living housing. The property the hospital wanted to use for this housing is owned by the hospital and will remain so until they decide what to do with it.

Mr. Hoke commented on the use of the word "rural." He said that he agrees that they have rural character in town. In going forward and in planning, he admitted that he misses the cows grazing in the woods and the cows being milked at Crockett's Corner. He misses viable and productive farming in town. Instead of enabling that aspect of life the town is making it more difficult to do so. He thought some people's perception of "rural" was "neater" than his own. Mr. Hoke said they should work to change some of their laws to make it easier to permit more intense development of larger lots. There also may be opportunities in the village center to create more of those kinds of co-housing units.

Mr. Hoke added that discussion of the use of the old Middle School before they know the circumstances of the building and them owning it was like putting the cart before the horse. There are more things that could happen easier if they had control over that property.

Mr. Hoke said that with regards to energy conservation, there needs to be some amount of ease for individuals to be able to install projects that are actually going to be functional. He thought the harnessing of wind or solar on a roof should be encouraged or just made easy for people to implement. Mr. Harrod said that in his experience it was easy to get permitting from the town for his solar panels. Mr. Hoke said wind generation was not as easy to get permits for.

Mr. Hoke was concerned after having read through the summary, that there is nothing in the plan that addresses managing the improvements and changes in a historical time of declining revenue. A plan is just that; a plan. It is going to change and is altered even the day it is published. There is no sense of priorities in the document.

Ms. Lockhart said that this document came out in 1997 and had citizen input. She thought the whole idea was that in a time of growth they did not want to find themselves with the cart before the horse. It was meant to be a guideline and a living document. If someone came forward and wanted to do something aggressive in the town, they could refer to the document to show that they didn't want to do this in the town. She thought they should have some tool in place to update the plan on an annual basis to see where they were with regards to the things that were included in it as goals.

Chair Bianchi said that it is a tough balance to keep development and the rural nature in the town.

Mr. Sheehan wondered about the Water Precinct and to what extent the town controls its expansion and the availability of water. Chair Bianchi said that it was a village district and was in two towns. The commissioners are elected by the towns. They have made every effort to accommodate the town (such as with the round-a-bout construction), to meet their needs. The town doesn't have much control over the precinct. He has been told that the amount of water at the Colby-Point well was finite and that at some point they will run out of water. The Water Precinct has their own Master Plan with their own goals that they are striving to meet.

Ms. Helm said that Mr. Sheehan's point was well made and it might be nice to have someone from the Water Precinct come explain how they make decisions. Mr. Sheehan wondered if the precinct had seen the Master Plan to determine if they could meet the needs of what would be requested of them in the future. Chair Bianchi felt that the Water Precinct was consulted while the plan was being crafted.

Ms. Helm felt that the Water Precinct would like a better mode of communication with the town.

Mr. Cross asked how close they were to capacity at the new sewer plant. Chair Bianchi said he didn't think they were close but should there be a major increase in sewerage in Sunapee or New London they would need to address this. He noted that New London was only at about 70-80% capacity of what they have available to them at the facility. Ms. Helm said she recalled a discussion that indicated there was plenty of capacity at the plant even if all the scenarios of increased sewerage around the obvious locations happened.

Mr. Prohl felt that they didn't have a clear vision of what they want to accomplish in the next ten years. It does identify that their views and land are protected, which is important. Chair Bianchi said there is a tough balance when it comes to development. He said the document belongs to the Planning Board and he urged people to get involved.

Chair Bianchi felt there had been some good discussion and they should think about what had been covered. They should think about where they should go from there and what part the Board of Selectmen should take. Mr. Harrod felt they should update the Master Plan each year. Ms. Piotrow felt they should update the priority recommendations. Mr. Cardillo thought updating each year was way too much. It is a charter, change and guidepost. The things that change each year (zoning amendments) are the things they have to look at regularly to see if they are fitting in to what they have outlined in the Master Plan. They need to look at the Institutional Recreational Zone (IR Zone) that the college is included within. There will be some things coming up in this zone at some point where they will want to change the rules of the zone.

Ms. Bingham felt it would be helpful if the reports from the different commissions referred to their accomplishments since the previous plan. She thought this would be helpful for the citizens to see.

It was decided that the CAC would not meet in August.

**IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to adjourn the meeting.
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London