



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES January 2, 2013

PRESENT:

Peter Bianchi, Chair
Tina Helm, Selectman
Janet Kidder, Selectman
Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer

OTHERS PRESENT:

Bruce Hudson & Renate Kannler, New London Residents
Jason Lyon, Fire Chief
Doug Homan, Budget Committee Member
Ed Andersen, Sergeant, Police Department
David Seastrand, Police Chief
Jim Wheeler, Budget Committee Chair
Joe Cardillo, Budget Committee Member

Chair Bianchi called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. He noted that the Selectmen have received a letter of resignation from Officer Jodi Bailey. Her last night of work would be that very evening. Chief Seastrand said that he will be conducting interviews the following day and ten candidates are scheduled to be interviewed for the open positions (now two). He indicated that the applicants are of varying levels of experience and certification.

Mr. Homan asked how many months they have been down one officer. Chief Seastrand said that it has been about four months. Mr. Homan asked if they had to make significant changes in how they did things due to being down a person. Chief Seastrand said that they did have to make changes, however they were still able to conduct the DARE program as the officer who ran it finished working for the department right after the program ended. Mr. Homan thought they should wait on hiring the eighth officer until the Budget Committee could look over the numbers. Chair Bianchi said that at last year's Town Meeting, it was voted to keep eight officers employed at the Police Department so he felt that the Board is obligated to hire two more officers. Mr. Homan said he thought this would be a discussion to have with the Budget Committee as he was not sure they really needed eight officers. Chair Bianchi said that the voters made it clear that they wanted eight full-time police officers and until Town Meeting votes to say otherwise, the Selectmen need to fill the vacant positions. They have budgeted for eight full-time officers, with benefits.

Jim Wheeler said when they get to the budget interviews next month they will ask Chief Seastrand about his opinion or perspective of how many full vs. part-time officers he needs after being in flux over this past year.

Mr. Homan asked Ms. Hallquist if the Town conducts exit interviews. Ms. Hallquist said that they do, as well as offer a survey for departing employees to fill out and send back if they wish. Mr. Homan wondered why people were leaving.

FY2014 Budget Preparation

Chair Bianchi noted that the Board has heard from all the department heads and the Selectmen's presentation to the Budget Committee will be on January 23rd. Ms. Johnson handed out updated budget sheets for the Selectmen to refer to. Ms. Hallquist noted that salaries listed on the sheets represent current levels as the Selectmen have not yet addressed salaries for FY2014. Ms. Johnson said that FY2014 has 27 pay periods versus this past year which had 26, so this will mean an increase in the budget. She noted that nothing had been put in for the Emergency Management Director, which is something Mr. Denning performed as part of his job. Also outstanding are budget amounts for Workman's Compensation and sick-time buy-out. Chair Bianchi observed that the Board previously decided to stay with the same insurance and employee contribution percentage for this year. New employees will be paying 15% of their insurance whether it is a single, double or family plan.

Police Department Budget

Chair Bianchi said he found an increase of almost \$11,000 over last year's appropriation. Chief Seastrand confirmed this estimate. Increases are in General Equipment, New Employee Expenses, and Fuel. Ms. Hallquist noted that the New Employee Expenses (to purchase uniforms for new employees) account is a non-lapsing account that should start each budget year with \$3,000 in it. Due to an error last year, the budget included only had \$44, which was thought to be the amount needed to bring the fund to the \$3,000 level. That line item is increased this year to bring the account to \$3,000.

Ms. Helm recalled the Taser repairs/replacement issue that was discussed at a prior meeting. Chief Seastrand said they are now up to four that need to be repaired or replaced. The expense to replace/repair is under the General Equipment fund. Chair Bianchi wondered if it would be possible to have officers pick up and drop off Tasers at the beginning and end of their shifts. Chief Seastrand said they are trying to share the Tasers now but each person should have their own Taser issued to them because it, like a firearm, is a personal safety item. Chair Bianchi said that if they had eight Tasers and there are not more than eight officers on duty, he wondered if it was a viable option to share them. Chief Seastrand said that it was a viable option but not an appropriate one. If that is what is decided, however, they would do the best they can with what they are given.

Ms. Helm thought the increases in the Police Department budget were reasonable and noted there were also decreases in the budget. In her mind, she had a problem with the Taser replacements. She did not equate the Taser with a gun and could not reconcile the need for them

because there does not appear to be a huge need for them in this community. Chief Seastrand said the Taser is just like the other pieces of equipment they carry that they need to train and prepare with and have available. At times, officers come directly from home to back up other officers. This could pose a problem if they must first stop at the station to sign out a Taser. Sergeant Andersen said that each Taser has to be fired once at the beginning of the shift and so the ones they have will be fired more times/day if they have to share them. He added that the threat of the use of a Taser on an individual oftentimes helps them to stop individuals from what they are doing. Sergeant Andersen said that there are cartridges assigned to each officer with the Tasers. These cartridge assignments will also need to be switched with the change in officers using the Taser.

Mr. Homan wondered how many small towns issue Tasers to their officers. Chief Seastrand said it has become a standard piece of equipment in most towns, including Springfield and Sutton whose forces are both smaller than New London's. Mr. Cardillo wondered if other departments share their Tasers. Chief Seastrand said he has never heard of anyone sharing Tasers in other departments. Chief Lyon thought smaller departments would have more Tasers than would departments in larger cities. Using a Taser is a method whereby an individual can control many people instead of having to have many more officers to do the same thing. They are beneficial to towns with minimal personnel.

Chief Seastrand said right now they are down to eight Tasers and are having to share. They are having trouble keeping them charged because they are being used continually and sometimes officers are not able to carry them because of this need to charge them.

With regard to fuel prices, Chief Seastrand said that the State is guaranteeing the price of fuel to go no higher than \$3.06 through 2014. They are currently getting gas at the Elkins store and pay \$.03 over what the store pays for the gas.

Mr. Homan asked why they do not put a gas tank in at the town shed. It was discussed that they had a tank in earlier years but took it out. There was a discussion that the savings on the cost of the gas would likely not justify the cost to install a tank and the associated costs to maintain the tank.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to reduce the Police Department's "General Equipment" by \$3,000.

Ms. Kannler wondered if they had eight Tasers now, would it be possible they could get down to having just five at some point. Chief Seastrand said that this was possible. Ms. Kannler wondered if they could find the \$3,000 somewhere in the budget to give the Chief what he was asking for. She knew this equipment was something that made the Police Officer's job less difficult and would make them feel more comfortable. Ms. Hallquist reminded the Selectmen that Chief Seastrand is already facing some potential shortfalls in the current budget due to the error in the new employee line as well as the unusually high turnover this year. She noted that he may not have the extra funds to purchase or repair the Tasers in the current budget.

Ms. Helm said they could leave the \$3,000 in for the moment and after they are done looking at the overall budget, could decide to leave it in or not. Chief Seastrand said they have sent the Tasers back and they are committed to getting them fixed the least expensive way possible. Chair Bianchi said that if they use all their \$3,000 this year, they could revisit the issue for next year's budget.

Mr. Hudson wondered what the life expectancy was for the Tasers. Chief Seastrand estimated about five years and explained that they have a one-year limited warranty.

Chair Bianchi said it was about a 1% increase in the budget when the error from last year was taken into account. Ms. Johnson said it was .0078%.

**Chair Bianchi called for the vote on the motion. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED.
Yes: Janet Kidder and Peter Bianchi. No: Tina Helm**

Chair Bianchi said that they will decrease the account to \$3,000 but if they use all of it this year they would revisit the issue and put more funding in the account for FY2014.

This change brings the Police Department budget to \$896,595.00, which will change once Workman's Compensation and salaries are put in. Chief Seastrand said he would let Ms. Hallquist know what he hears back from the Taser company about the repairs.

Fire Department Budget

Chair Bianchi calculated that there was a \$4,085 increase that brings the Fire Department's budget to \$298,757, which is less than a 1% increase. Retirement accounts for the increase, which is out of their control.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to approve the New London Fire Department budget, as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Recreation Budget

Ms. Helm thought they should defer the discussion of the Recreation budget until they have a discussion with the Recreation Commission about what their vision is. She did not know that they should approve the budget as presented. Ms. Kidder said that a Recreation meeting was planned for the next Monday night and she and Ms. Hallquist would both be attending. At the meeting they would put together a job description and get program information from the Commission members, if possible. She said they could not really make a decision on the Recreation budget until they confer with the Commission.

Chair Bianchi assumed that the budget Mr. Denning previously submitted would not change after they talked about programming with the Commission. Mr. Wheeler suggests that if the Commission decided that they would offer swim lessons only to New London residents that would impact the numbers for lifeguard salaries. That is one way it could impact the numbers.

Mr. Homan asked if the 1941 building costs would be included within the Recreation Department budget. Ms. Helm said that is something they will need to discuss. Chair Bianchi said the 1941 committee is still working and has not given information to the Selectmen about their proposal for money requested from the town. Ms. Helm said that the previous Friday she went to a 1941 Subcommittee meeting and it was their thought that they would like the Board of Selectmen to propose \$75,000 coming from the town. She did not believe they would be asking for a bond at Town Meeting.

Mr. Wheeler thought a formal request would be appropriate coming from the 1941 Committee. Ms. Helm said that the Committee had said it would be helpful at the fundraising level if the Selectmen could move forward with whether they would or would not present a warrant article at Town Meeting, and what the verbiage would be. Mr. Homan felt that as a taxpayer he would want to know that there were private funds paying the majority of the expense for the building. Ms. Helm felt there was a lot of benefit presenting this to the town in a warrant article at Town Meeting. There is a lot of interest and excitement about the public/private funding proposal for the building. Mr. Homan agreed and would like this to be on the ballot and not the warrant so people could have an opinion. Ms. Hallquist said the matter cannot be included on the official ballot (used to elected officers and vote on zoning amendments). Mr. Homan said they could do a non-binding referendum. Ms. Hallquist said they could, but not on the official ballot. The Selectmen could decide to conduct a survey or poll residents.

Ms. Helm said the 1941 committee was hoping that since the Board of Selectmen was in favor of exploring the use of the building, that they would make some indication of how they might word the article. She said she could go back to them asking for more direction.

Mr. Cardillo felt that the committee needed to decide on a dollar amount that the town could contribute. He wondered if the committee was aware of the time constraints they have to work under. Ms. Helm said that they were aware of the timeline. She understood that Chair Bianchi would like a figure for the creation of a warrant article.

Ms. Kidder suggested that the Board return to the discussion of the Recreation Department budget and leave the issue of the 1941 building until the committee makes its report to the Board.

The Board decided to defer further discussion of the Recreation Department's budget until after the Recreation Commission meeting the following Monday. At that meeting the Commission will be asked if they would like to make any adjustments to their request.

Dispatch Budget

Chair Bianchi said that the budget went down .4% by his calculations.

IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to accept the Dispatch budget of \$323,175. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

General Government Buildings

Mr. Wheeler noted that he; Bruce Parsons and Frank Anzalone have volunteered to put together an inspection list for the Town's buildings and come up with a priority list and estimates for repair. He had no idea how long it would take but it would be free. Ms. Hallquist suggested that the Board consider including the funding for a part-time position for someone to oversee the town buildings in the FY2014 budget, without waiting for the building inspections to be completed. She noted that the building inspections report will assist in directing the new employee and also in scheduling the larger jobs to be done by contractors, but the report is not necessary to budgeting for the part-time position. She observed that between the CAC feedback and other comments she has heard many people want a person hired immediately to deal with building issues on a consistent basis. Ms. Kidder suggested this person could man the transfer station on Sundays and could work two more days during the week doing repairs around town. Mr. Wheeler thought they could add hours to a part-time employee or hire a new part-time person.

Mr. Wheeler said once they come up with a spreadsheet of what things need attention through the next few years, they could look at what kind of need they will have. They may need to subcontract some of the work and then just hire someone to do smaller maintenance projects. Ms. Helm felt it would be beneficial to have someone available to call to do things around the buildings that need attention. There is always something that needs to be done. Chair Bianchi thought they should put a dollar amount in for a part-time position in some line item with a job description to be determined. This money could also be used to subcontract a service if need-be.

Chair Bianchi thought they should add \$25,000 for a part time maintenance facility person to the Government Buildings budget.

Mr. Homan thought someone from the Highway Department could probably do this work as they are busier in the winter than in the summer and that is when these projects would be done. Ms. Hallquist said that Mr. Lee has already given up one full-time employee and she did not believe he could give up more. Asking him to assign one of his people to be a part-time buildings person will mean he has less personnel to assign to highway projects. Mr. Wheeler said that if Mr. Lee could handle the Highway Department buildings, then they would only have to hire someone for the other town buildings and might need to only pay them \$6,000 for example.

The Selectmen agreed they should put a line item under Public Works for this position.

The Government Buildings budget is \$146,172 which is down \$34,000 from last year. Ms. Johnson said she made some changes on the hydrants and she changed the heating fuel amounts as well. They reviewed the changes that were made on the new sheets. The total came to \$172,246.00. It is down a little over \$9,000 from last year.

IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to approve the Government Buildings budget as \$172,246 as presented. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Cemetery Budget

It was noted that \$26,623 was the total for the cemetery budget. It went up 14% due to an increase in Equipment Repairs and Maintenance. Ms. Hallquist said that Mr. Lee would be replacing two mowers. They are two years old and are not in good shape. Mr. Homan suggested looking into zero turn mowers. After some discussion of this idea, it was decided that they would defer the discussion until they speak with Mr. Lee. Ms. Kidder read from Mr. Lee's memo referring to these mowers which said if they decided to go with that kind, he would ask for \$4,900 for each. He thought they could get perhaps six years out of the mowers but they would need some repairs throughout that timeframe. If the Board wants to try this option (zero turn mowers) then \$6,600 should be added to the amount already requested in his budget.

Insurance Not Otherwise Allocated

\$84,133 was the figure for this fund without the Worker's Compensation adjustment.

Chair Bianchi said they went over the reevaluation of the buildings in town. He wondered if it would affect their insurance premium. Ms. Johnson said they received a refund for the Highway Building but nothing else. Chair Bianchi wondered if they were insured enough and thought they should be insured enough to replace any of their buildings if necessary. Mr. Wheeler thought they could contact some other insurance agents to get some bids.

Ms. Johnson said she was OK with the rest of the budget except the Worker's Compensation portion. Ms. Hallquist wondered if they wanted to increase the deductibles from this past year as they have budgeted for two claims and they are up to four claims this year. It was decided to leave it as-is because the additional claims were believed to be an anomaly.

**IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to approve the Insurance Not Otherwise Allocated budget consisting of Unemployment, Insurance Property, and Insurance Claims and excluding Workman's Compensation.
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Hudson wondered if they had been considering the computer support for the whole town versus having separate support for each building. Ms. Hallquist said they have begun a program to use one computer vendor for the Police and Administration and it is working well so far. The Library has also retained the same vendor.

Review Employee Leave Time Policy

Chair Bianchi said that they would be approving the employee policy later on but this policy was pressing since there are new hires on the horizon. He went through the LGC study on leave time and compared vacation days. Some towns combine personal, vacation and sick days. New London is the only town of 120 towns that offered 17 vacation days the first year. The majority is about 10 across the board for towns of all sizes in New Hampshire.

Ms. Helm said she found Amy Rankins' report showing the policies of surrounding towns to be helpful. It appeared that New London's vacation time is quite high, particularly in the first year and in total. They are also the only town that offers a 50% buy-back for sick leave accrued over

240 hours. Donna Larrow offered that New London's first year only offers 10 days of vacation, not 17. The policy gives 10 vacation days, three personal days, and four sick days. She explained that when the leave time policy was changed in 2007, time was added to vacation and taken away from sick time. Their current sick policy does not allow for those extra sick days (family emergency or sick child) so those days were put with the vacation days to make 17. Ms. Hallquist noted that within the first year each employee could take 17 days off, without using any sick days and without being sick. Ms. Larrow confirmed that this was correct.

Ms. Larrow said the only way to make a fair comparison to the other towns is to add all the categories for sick/leave/personal time together. Ms. Kannler wondered if they could lump sick, personal and vacation time together. Ms. Hallquist said some towns and organizations do this. However, since the majority of people do not take all their sick time each year, lumping it together into one pot of "leave time" would allow them to take the time off, where today they do not since they are not sick. This may result in more time out of work and would increase the amount of time that has a cash value to it (vacation time does but sick time does not).

Chair Bianchi asked if there was any desire to modify vacation days for new employees for their first year. There was some talk about increases in time off after various milestones for employees.

IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to change the personnel policy for new employees' vacation days from 17 to 10 in their first year, and after 5 years, 15 days off, after 10 years, 20 days off, and after 15+ years, 25 days off.

Mr. Homan thought it should be changed for all employees at once. Ms. Kidder said that she is not in favor of changing the vacation policy for existing employees.

Ms. Helm said if there is strong data to show that the town is not competitive and has difficulty in filling positions or keeping employees, they can always revisit it. They want to be able to attract and keep employees in the town. She thought what they were proposing was perfectly reasonable in comparison with the other towns.

Chair Bianchi called for a vote.

THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

With regards to sick time, Chair Bianchi said he had no problem with keeping it at seven days. He would like to do away with the buy-back program. There are some other towns in the State who offer this benefit. Once they get to 30 days of sick time not used, they will buy back 50% of the sick time. Ms. Johnson said this year they paid about \$5,000 in the sick time buy-back. It could potentially increase each year as more employees reach the 240 hours maximum accrual.

Chair Bianchi felt this was a fringe benefit and if the people are sick they should not come to work. However, not being sick should not be something people are paid for.

Mr. Hudson said that in every job he has had, you either use sick time or lose it. Some companies allow people to accrue it but there is never a payment made.

Chief Lyon thought healthy people who do not abuse sick time are not saving up their sick time to get paid. If they use their sick time, they get paid for it anyway because it is a paid day. It is a way to thank the employees for being healthy and not abusing the sick time.

Chair Bianchi said that it would be nice to have a sick time bank to donate sick time to be used for other employees who may become very sick and had no sick time remaining. Ms. Hallquist noted that the employee committee identified this as one of the benefits they would like to explore adding.

Ms. Helm said she would be in support of eliminating the sick time buy-out for everyone and would also be in favor of a sick time bank.

IT WAS MOVED (Tina Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to eliminate the policy for sick time buy-back to be effective immediately for all employees.

Chair Bianchi would like the personnel committee to come up with a policy for the sick time bank.

Mr. Hudson thought they would need to take into consideration long and short-term disability insurance, as you have to use all your sick time before the insurance will kick in. It was noted that 240 hours of sick time is the maximum that an employee can accrue.

Chair Bianchi called for a vote. **THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Town Administrator's Report

Ms. Hallquist said there was a Joint Sewer meeting (New London and Sunapee) on Thursday at 5:30pm at the Sunapee sewer plant.

Ms. Hallquist asked for dates and times the Selectmen would be available to schedule the interviews for the Interim Recreation Director. It was decided that Thursdays, January 10 and 17 would be possible dates. The Recreation Commission will be contacted to see about their availability.

Ms. Hallquist said that Chief Seastrand would like to make a current part-time officer a temporary full-time officer while they are down two people. This person has done this before for the department. It is a temporary fulltime position and would include insurance benefits. The Board had no objection to this plan.

Minutes of December 17, 2012

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Tina Helm) to approve the minutes of December 17, as amended. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The next Selectmen's meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 7 at 8:30am.

The Kearsarge Regional School District's Deliberative Session is being held on Saturday, January 5th, at 9:00am at the KRHS in Sutton.

Application for Building Permit:

- John Rogers, 47 Dixie Lane (Map & Lot 084-031-000) exterior renovations – Permit #12-124 – Approved.

Application for sign permits:

- Permanent sign: Ben Dulac, 1047 King Hill Road (Map & Lot 130-005-000)
DENIED

Application for use of Town Commons:

- LS Region Chamber of Commerce – Hospital Days Midway – set up 7/31 take down 8/4 – Approved.

Other Items to be signed:

- Disbursement voucher
- Police Department Highway grants – (2)

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London