

**Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**August 6, 2011**  
**7:30am**

**Meeting Attendees:**

Mark Kaplan (Chair, Selectmen), Peter Bianchi (Selectman), Kim Hallquist (Town Administrator), Jack Harrod, Terri Bingham, Will Kidder, DJ Lavoie, Rob & Maureen Prohl, Ann Loeffler, Dave Payne, Vahan Sarkisian, Hardy Hasenfuss, Peter Hoglund, Renate Kannler, Jack Sheehan, Donn Klingler, Rick Anderson, Joe Cardillo, Bud Dick

Chair Kaplan called the **MEETING TO ORDER** at 7:30 AM.

He introduced Ms. Hallquist and indicated that during her short time with the town, she had already hired a new person to replace Ms. Fraley. Her name is Wendy Johnson and she will begin her training the following Monday. Ms. Hallquist said that she is well-qualified and is a native of New London. Mr. Bianchi said that she has a Master's in Accounting and is the daughter of "Winnie Williams." It was noted that Ms. Johnson also does the bookwork for both Ausbon-Sargent and for COA and both organizations were happy with the work she has done.

Chair Kaplan asked for suggestions on topics of discussion. Mr. Sarkisian suggested not having a CAC meeting on the same day as Hospital Days. Mr. Bianchi apologized for the overlap of events. The schedule was created in February and this was an oversight. He assured the group that they would make every effort for it not to happen again.

Mr. Klingler said that he saw the police checking for parking passes in the Bucklin Beach area several times this July, which was good. Ms. Loeffler said that there were still a lot of cars without stickers parked at Elkins and questioned what happened to the discussions of having resident only beaches. Mr. Bianchi noted that the Board went with resident stickers instead as a way to make sure that residents had access to parking at the beach. Ms. Loeffler noted that one day the Masonic Lodge parking lot was closed and trailers were parked all up and down the road and it was a real mess. Mr. Payne said that there had been a Bass fishing derby put on by Fish and Game that day, which was found to be a mistake, as Pleasant Lake wasn't a good lake for Bass.

Ms. Loeffler asked if the Town was required to have a certain amount of parking spaces for boat trailers if they have a boat launch. Chair Kaplan said that they are not legally bound to provide parking for the trailers. Mr. Bianchi noted that the town has an agreement with the Masonic Lodge to allow people to park trailers there when the Lodge is not using the parking for their functions.

Ms. Bingham asked if there was a place where non-residents could park and if it was well-marked. Mr. Bianchi said there was not any such parking in the area. Mr. Prohl said that people who have received a ticket by parking at the beach without a pass have figured out that they can park at the Masonic Lodge and walk to the beach. This parking lot seems to be the loop-hole. Mr. Dick shared that another town he is aware of successfully solved their parking problem by using their Boy Scouts to valet park the cars and net \$60,000/year.

Mr. Bianchi called to attention the unique situation at Elkins, where they must also have parking available for the post office and the beach. Chair Kaplan said that Mr. Denning (Recreation Director) will meet with the Board of Selectmen at the end of the summer with results from the survey they took throughout the season on usage of the beach, as well as suggestions for making things work better the following summer.

Mr. Sarkisian said one of the most important things they have to face in the community is the Middle School. He said that Fred Downey has met with various organizations in town and has worked hard in other communities to create a community center with success. He has acquired a 50 year lease on the building for \$1/year. Mr. Sarkisian believed that the town has expressed interest in having a Community Center and that every organization in town needs more room. His opinion was that the Board of Selectmen should be spear-heading this project, not Mr. Downey, who is in his late 80's. There is a need, the building is there, and it needs to be taken care of.

Mr. Sarkisian thought it was time to work together to put this project into action. He felt the leadership should be from the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Bianchi said he is on the board for the new Community Center. Although he is on the board, he made it clear to Mr. Downey that he would not advocate for money from the town. He understood that the lease has been obtained but that there were stipulations on the lease: having to raise \$300,000 by a certain date, which may have already passed. Mr. Downey has worked hard and has a nice presentation and some good ideas and plans. Mr. Bianchi thought the Town should support Mr. Downey's efforts, but was not sure they should fund money for it at this point in time. In the future, perhaps they could, as they do for the VNA and COA. He believed that Mr. Downey had his 501(c) (3) status, but the lease will not be realized until he gets some money.

Mr. Hasenfuss asked if the lease offer terminated at some point in time if the money was not raised. Mr. Bianchi said it did but couldn't recall when. Mr. Cardillo said that there are benchmarks involved in the offer, and he has also been contacted by Mr. Downey regarding the Community Center. He opined that the decision to move forward with a Community Center revolves around control and who will have to give it up. There is not a single group spear-heading this; it is an idea. People won't give money to an idea, but need something to take shape. Mr. Cardillo believed that Mr. Downey has great ideas and designs, but they need to raise the money to get it off the ground. The lease should have technically already expired. By late July he was supposed to have escrowed \$300,000. There are some donors who are willing to put up large sums of money. Mr. Cardillo didn't think they should give up this opportunity as many groups in the town need more space.

Mr. Cardillo said that other regional school systems have given their buildings to the towns they sit in for \$1 but that hasn't happened in New London. Bradford turned their building into a Community Center, while others have turned them into the town offices.

Ms. Prohl asked if perhaps it would be helpful to form a board of the different groups to be responsible to spear-head this project. Mr. Cardillo said he didn't know why this wasn't done and commented that this was another example of something that was not followed through with, such as a request that was made earlier in the year about seeing whether or not the Recreation Department and the Outing Club were duplicating efforts or could work together on some things. Ms. Prohl said that putting a committee together to represent the ideas for a Community Center would encourage people to donate to the cause. No one wants to give money to an idea when people can't agree on what is going to happen. Mr. Dick thought they needed a spokesperson from the community who was recognizable and who could promote the idea.

Mr. Cardillo said that through the years there have been donors who have agreed to contribute money but the effort has always dissolved. Mr. Sarkisian thought that the Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee had been against the idea of a Community Center, but thought it went to Town Meeting and was passed. Mr. Bianchi said that he didn't think it went to Town Meeting. He thought that Mr. Downey had made a presentation to the CAC and it was supported by that group. For some reason, the movement splintered and dissolved. Chair Kaplan said that an earlier plan was to have a community center next to Bittersweet and the selectmen were in favor of it, with the organizers raising the money for it, so no town

funds would be required. However, the organizers were never able to raise sufficient money to follow through with the plan. The Town wants to have a Community Center, but doesn't want to put money into it. Chair Kaplan said that all the organizations in town were created voluntarily by people and then once they are up and running and need some help, the Board of Selectmen look at them to see if they can/should help them financially. Mr. Harrod said that there were some issues with regards to the Pleasant Street location, including there being wetlands involved, as well as traffic increases on the street.

Mr. Cardillo said the plan has been whittled down to a project that will cost under \$1 million dollars. He said that if there was anyone there who would want to work on the project, he would put them in touch with Mr. Downey.

Ms. Kannler asked if the gentleman expected any money from the town. Mr. Bianchi said that perhaps, many years down the road he would ask for some assistance. He would like community support and claimed that one supporter who was willing to give a sizable amount previously, hasn't been as excited about the project of late.

Ms. Prohl thought it sounded like money wasn't an issue; they just needed people to work on the cause. Mr. Cardillo commented that, for example, if the Recreation Department used the building for some activities, that some of the Recreation Department's budget could go towards the building.

Mr. Anderson said it would be useful for Mr. Downey to come back and give the presentation again. He thought something to think about was the operating costs. Mr. Bianchi said that Mr. Downey has built these costs into the bottom line as well as losses for a couple of years.

Mr. Cardillo said that the Outing Club has the same issues with regards to covering operating costs. Some people who use the building don't feel they should pay to do so, as they still see it as a public school building. The Outing Club, however, is still paying utilities to keep it running. Sustainability is a real issue.

Ms. Bingham observed that Mr. Sarkisian was trying to coalesce people to get together as the effort wasn't organized. Mr. Sarkisian thought someone should be the leader. It has to come from all the Board of Selectmen to say that they are for it. They need to get rid of the negativity and start fresh. He wanted to know if the Board of Selectmen would bring the issue to the forefront again and then have the Town give its support, although not financial, to create a committee to get it going. He felt a small town should be able to get together to reach a common goal. Mr. Harrod said in his eight years of living in New London he has felt that a Community Center was a good idea but didn't think it would ever come to fruition. Mr. Sarkisian said they need to come together and cooperate.

Mr. Payne said that having it be a multi-community project was a problem. People outside of the New London area will not give money for a center within New London. Mr. Sarkisian said that the outside communities look at New London as having a lot of money and that they don't want outsiders to come in. Ms. Prohl said that not everyone feels like this and she didn't like that sentiment. Mr. Cardillo said that each time they have a situation, like the Community Center, or when there is no midway at Hospital Days, they need to stop thinking that things won't work if they have to go outside of the town for help. They can't keep putting up barriers to not let others use their resources or be involved. Not allowing open discussion and allowing other towns to participate will only hurt New London in the end. People used to schedule vacations during Hospital Days throughout the Sunapee Craftsman's Fair. This year, Hospital Days will be different and it could affect lots of people, including those who rent their homes and the town's businesses.

Ms. Piotrow suggested advertising the meeting that Mr. Downey would come to give his presentation so that perhaps more of the public would attend.

Mr. Dick suggested that the group discuss the needs of businesses with regard to signage. He noted that the town is "shrinking" and related a situation that he became aware of where a restaurant placed a small sign "serving dinner" and they were told it must be removed as they were in a residential district and signs were not allowed. He felt it seemed that if they try to operate a business that brings people to town, they are discouraged to do so. He opined that these kinds of issues make it difficult to operate a business. The hospital and college people use the inns in town to house people coming in. They need variety in town and not fewer, but more places for people to stay and eat. He wondered if they can do more to make the town a more viable community. Instead of barriers, they need to welcome people.

Mr. Sarkisian wondered why people were not allowed to park on Main Street at night. He understood that this was appropriate in the winter, but not in the summer. Also, a sign was asked to be taken down at the New London Barn Playhouse that was put up to congratulate someone, and they were asked very quickly to take it down. He felt the Town was very quick to stifle and thought they have to lighten up a bit.

Mr. Bianchi said that if people vote at the Town elections and look through the last 10-15 years, there are anywhere from 2-10 zoning amendments pages. He thought that zoning was a good thing, but is a double-edged sword. Mr. Harrod noted that the zoning amendments are overwhelmingly approved each year at Town Meeting. Mr. Bianchi thought that the balance was difficult; no one wants to buy a house with a pig farm next door. They want to encourage the town to grow. Taxpayers can meet with the Planning Board if there are concerns about the sign ordinance, etc. Anyone can have their voice heard. Mr. Bianchi opined that too many regulations stifle everyone and he felt they needed to tone back some of the regulations. Certain regulations don't help the town as a whole, rather just a few people.

Ms. Bingham wondered if this zoning was part of the master plan surveys that came out. Chair Kaplan said that no one complained about the zoning in the survey. He asked how anyone else felt about zoning in New London. Mr. Cardillo said it was beneficial to have zoning in place. The attitude has been an evolution. Part is real, part is not. He's gone into the Town Office and has been dealt with fairly and objectively. Mr. Cardillo felt that there was room for less stringent situations to allow people to operate more, such as allowing temporary signs. The group discussed various situations where a temporary permitting process would have been appropriate. Mr. Bianchi noted that citizens may bring these suggestions to the Planning Board for consideration as a zoning amendment for Town Meeting voting.

Mr. Anderson said there is a Zoning Board of Adjustments (ZBA) and exceptions can and are made. He believed that having strict zoning regulations with an exception process was better than loose zoning. He found the Town to be pretty reasonable to deal with in the past. Mr. Anderson observed that the process to do things in town can be lengthy, but when he understood the reasons for having to fill out forms, for example so that the police and fire departments would be made aware of the function in the event emergency services are needed, he was OK with it and it made sense.

Mr. Sheehan brought up the transfer station hours that had been mentioned during the recent Board of Selectmen's meeting where non-resident taxpayers were encouraged to attend. He wondered if it would make sense to have a container of some sort placed at the Stump Dump during the summer to collect the trash from people who are visitors during the weekend so they would not have to bring their trash home with them. Since the stump dump is already opened on Sunday's there would not be an added expense of man-power. Mr. Sheehan thought that might address the transfer station issue for the next few months. Mr. Bianchi thought the transfer station should be open both days of the weekend. That was how it was

when they first opened and he felt it worked the best. Mr. Bianchi said that if a container was added at the Stump Dump to accept trash, he would consider this as having the transfer station open because all residents would be able to bring their trash in, not just non-residents.

Chair Kaplan asked about SKIT and their request to help pay for blinds and drapes at Whipple Hall. Mr. Dick said that there used to be blinds and drapes in the hall to allow for afternoon performances without problems of sun or glare coming into the room. They would like to be able to see the hall used in the afternoons. SKIT has some money and is willing to share the cost. Mr. Bianchi said that if the SKIT group would want to come during the budget process, they would be welcome to do so. Mr. Dick said he would get estimates to get a better idea of what may be asked of the Town.

Ms. Prohl asked about the Old Mill Pond Dam in Elkins and the history of how it came to be as it is currently; deficient. She noted that she reviewed the Minutes from August 2010 and wonders what has happened since then. Mr. Bianchi said that it was voted at Town Meeting that the Board of Selectmen could take over the Mill Pond dam as a gift and could either repair, take it down, or leave it alone. After several discussions, the State came with a letter of deficiency that didn't allow for it being left alone. The Town Attorney advised against accepting the gift of the dam, as there was a building on it and the expense and liability were too great. Chair Kaplan said that the State changed its criteria for dams making it more expensive to maintain. Mr. Bianchi said that once they looked into it, they found they had to either tear it down or rebuild it. The cost was between \$300,000 and \$700,000. The Town said they would not take advantage of the Town Meeting vote to get the property gifted to them, as it was such a large liability and they'd have to fix it. Ken Miller, the dam owner, has since taken the building down.

Chair Kaplan said that one of the reasons for the letter of deficiency was because there were three buildings that would be flooded, should the dam breach including the Mesa building. After getting legal advice, the Town was advised NOT to take the dam. Since then, he has heard that the State has downgraded the classification of the dam, meaning it is less of a hazard. The Town is also trying to negotiate a downgrade of the Pleasant Lake dam and is having engineering done. If they can lower the classification of the Pleasant Lake dam, it would be a lower cost to the Town in terms of emergency planning and other requirements and it will affect the Mill Pond Dam and help Mr. Miller out as well. They have started a contract with Wright-Pierce to do this study.

Mr. Sheehan said that if the State downgrades the criteria and they think they can do it now, be careful that at some point in time, they don't go back to the old criteria and put them back in the same boat. Chair Kaplan said that for the future, they would be better off tearing it down and letting the stream run through. Mr. Bianchi said that anything to be done with the dam would need to be brought to the taxpayers with new, more relevant information. Ms. Prohl asked if they could take the dam down to 6' so they'd have a Mill Pond, but could be breached if there was a storm. Mr. Bianchi didn't recall that as one of the options available to the Town.

Mr. Bianchi reminded the CAC that there was a Hazardous Waste Collection day being held on August 20 from 9:00am to 12:00pm at the Town sheds. He suggested they arrive early due to the fact that there were about 20 participating towns in the event - it will be busy.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary  
Town of New London