



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES March 3, 2012

PRESENT:

Mark Kaplan, Chairman
Tina Helm, Selectman
Peter Bianchi, Selectman
Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Hardy Hasenfuss, Jack Harrod, Renate Kannler, Sue Little, Peter Høglund, Don Klingler, Rick Anderson, Howard Hoke, Jack Sheehan, Beth Swanson, Terri Bingham, David Payne, Phyllis Piotrow, Bob MacMichael, Celeste Cook, Carolyn Lockhart

Chair Kaplan called the meeting to order at 7:30am.

Chair Kaplan announced that after 15 years as a member of the Board of Selectmen and two years on the budget committee, he would not be running for office again this year. The CAC applauded Chair Kaplan for his service to the town.

Chair Kaplan asked Mr. Bianchi to give a recap of what has happened in the town since the last CAC meeting. Mr. Bianchi said they had met with the engineers relative to the Pleasant Lake Dam. Quite a few residents were present to see the presentation. They plan to continue meeting with their engineer and the people of the State Dam Bureau to come to an understanding of what may be needed in terms of upgrading the Dam. Mr. Bianchi added that the Board of Selectmen met with the Budget Committee on February 13, 2012 and discussed the budget. The Budget Committee will meet again the following Monday night at 7pm. Ms. Helm noted that Recreation and Fire Departments will be the topics of discussion at that budget meeting. Mr. Bianchi said that the past Tuesday night there was a meeting of the Planning Board. The college is trying to create a new definition of the Institutional Recreational Zone. Many abutters attended the meeting. They have since heard that the college will not pursue these zoning changes this year but will go forward with their plans to install a turf field, but without lighting. This field can go in pending site plan review. It was noted that the college is very sensitive to the wishes and concerns of the town. Ms. Helm noted that the Planning Board also approved the final site plan review for the college's upgrading of the Ware Campus Center. It was approved pending the college addressing seven issues.

Mr. Bianchi shared that on February 21st the Board of Selectmen met with William Rose from the State, who talked them through the procedures that must be followed with the Transportation Enhancement Grant (Elkins project). At a meeting the previous Thursday, the Board of Selectmen and two representatives from the Elkins Subcommittee met with five firms who were interested in doing the work in Elkins. Each firm was qualified and the interviewers rated each firm. They ended up with a list of firms ranked in order. The next step is for the State to approve their interview process so negotiations with the firms can proceed. They will move forward after getting approval from the State. Mr. Bianchi

said they informed the engineers that there must be community input as a part of the project. The firms were willing to comply with this request.

Mr. Bianchi said that they have received a report from Jay Boeri regarding the hydro-electric power study he did at the Pleasant Lake Dam. This study was paid for by a grant. The study was supposed to be done in July, but was extended until December. They just received the report this week. It was noted that the engineer was diverted from the project due to tropical storm Irene. Mr. Boeri will be at the regularly scheduled Board of Selectmen's meeting on Monday morning to discuss the analysis he did. Mr. Bianchi felt it was a thorough analysis and the results indicate that hydro-electric power was probably not an idea to pursue at this time. Chair Kaplan said that under current circumstances, the cost of doing this would not be cost effective. Mr. Harrod said that part of the rationale for doing this study was that it was a pilot project for the entire state to see if it was a feasible concept. The grant was \$15,000 and it was felt that the report was comprehensive and interesting. Mr. Bianchi said that Mr. Boeri claimed that when the power was brought into the area in the 1830's, they did exceptionally well to determine the need for power and how to calculate their needs. Mr. MacMichael suggested the book *Reflections in a Pond* which was a great history of Elkins and gave good information about the dam.

Chair Kaplan said that per state regulation, the dam has to be able to withstand two and a half times a 100-year storm. The estimated costs to do this ranged from \$350,000 to \$500,000. He wondered what happened if they lower the level of the lake so when a storm comes the additional space is allotted for the extra rainfall. It was noted that lowering the lake level has a tremendous affect on the people who live on the lake. Chair Kaplan noted that today, with advanced weather forecasting capabilities, we know about hurricanes and storm systems enough ahead of time so that they may be able to compensate for the extra rainfall by opening the dam and letting water out in advance of the storm. He felt it was something to consider.

Mr. Anderson said lowering the lake level would accommodate the water but the real issue is about 16" of rainfall in a day. Even if the lake level was a foot and a half lower, it would still top the dam. It isn't the issue of the level of the dam, but the water would wash away the soil behind the dam and the entire dam would collapse and send even more water downstream. Mr. Anderson said he heard the key words "armor" and "stabilize" in the meeting, which were important in keeping the dam in place. Mr. Payne said that lowering the lake would make many lakefront homes not lake-front any more.

Mr. Hoke said that 6" lower volume is more cubic yards of water at the top than at the bottom. Instead of bringing it down a foot, they could bring it down just 6". Chair Kaplan said these are the questions he would like to ask of the engineers.

Ms. Piotrow asked if there is data showing how often there is a 100-year storm and if there has ever been a two and a half times a 100-year storm. Mr. Anderson said that it would probably never happen but if it did, they would have bigger problems than just the dam. All over town there would be flooding and washed out roads. The State's point is that there is potential loss of life downstream and the dam needs to be stabilized.

Ms. Helm said she read in the Intertown a letter from Bill Andrews saying they should petition the State to make these repairs and then give the dam to the State to maintain. Mr. Hoke said that he would not like to see this happen. The owners of the dam have flowage rights which allow them to raise and lower the water level as they see fit. If the State has these rights, he would personally lose 3.6 acres of property as it would be under eminent domain. He felt that 50% of the owners on the lake would feel the same as he does about this issue.

Mr. Hoke said that the Town owns the flowage rights and they do not have to consult with anyone else to raise and lower the lake. They do consult with the lake association which is courteous, but it isn't needed.

Ms. Little asked what the purpose of the dam was. Chair Kaplan said it is to hold back water and control the flow so the mill in that area at the time would be able to utilize the flowing water as energy. It was noted that if there wasn't a dam, the lake would be much lower than it is today. Mr. Hoke said the mill owned the dam and sold it to PSNH who sold it to the Elkins Fish and Game club for \$1 in the 1930's. They in turn couldn't afford to make repairs or maintain the dam, so they sold it to the town in the 1990's for \$1.

Mr. Sheehan said that in September on Little Sunapee, the State dropped the level of the lake a foot and a half before Irene hit. Mr. Anderson said that Pleasant Lake was also lowered before Irene but not as much or as quickly as they would have liked due to some delays.

Mr. MacMichael said that he took care of the dam after Percy Thurston died. They used a crank, then a wheel to raise the level. He remembered having to go down to the dam with an ax to chop the ice out of the way. He also recalled getting calls from people the same day telling him the level was perfect, too high or too low. It was hard to determine when the level was just right as everyone has different ideas and reasons why the lake should be at different levels. He has seen the dam fixed many times and they used to lower the level of the lake so they could work comfortably on it. He remembered there was a marker in the lake that belonged to Mr. Smedley that showed how far out their property actually went, although most of the time it was covered in water.

Mr. Bianchi said that he would not like to give the dam to the State. He feared that they could allow it to breach, which would not be a popular outcome. Ms. Helm agreed that the State owning the dam would not be ideal.

Ms. Piotrow said whatever they work out, they need to make sure they are protected. Other towns further downstream can't be allowed to come back and sue New London for damages. Mr. Bianchi said they can only do what the State tells them they can do. Chair Kaplan said that as long as they own the dam, they are liable.

Mr. Bianchi said whatever happens it appears that they will need to spend a lot of money. The figures Chair Kaplan gave above don't account for additional engineering and a feasibility study. Right now they know of no grants or federal money for this work. Last year, the Town was \$2.2 million dollars in bonded indebtedness. They have increased this to \$7.8 million dollars due to the sewer and the library bonds. Chair Kaplan felt it would be a minimum of \$500,000 to do this work. They need to put some money away for several years, if allowed, and be permitted to extend the finish date for the project. If they show good faith in their plans to complete the upgrades, they may get an extension.

Ms. Helm noted that the Elkins project and the dam project are both supposed to be started in 2013. Mr. Bianchi said that the people from the State said they would be happy to work with the Town on phasing these projects to help eliminate waste and get them done in an appropriate order. They would be flexible on the timing and the grant will still be available.

Ms. Piotrow thought this was perhaps a national problem happening with many dams throughout all the states and felt there would be some federal infrastructure stimulus coming along. She recommended talking to Senator Jeanne Shaheen about getting this funded at the local level. She felt it was a climate change and national problem.

Mr. Hasenfuss commented that the town's employees have done a great job during this last snow storm. He thought this should be well-known. He asked if they have a snow policy with regard to the CAC meetings. Ms. Helm suggested they could have a phone tree. Many suggested that an email being sent out by 7am would work, as they could check their email before leaving for the meeting.

Mr. Bianchi said they have two beautiful beaches but that they are small. He said there was a piece of land for sale on Pleasant Lake, known as "the point." If they weren't in so much debt, he thought it would be a good investment for the Town to purchase that property. There is already a boat launch there and he felt it would solve several problems in the town all at once. It was noted that the price of the property was very high. Ms. Piotrow said that if the owners of the property took a loss on the sale of it to the town, they could get a large tax break.

Ms. Helm asked how people felt about charging a fee to use public buildings such as Whipple Hall and the Syd Crook Conference Room. Many felt it was appropriate and was a good idea. Mr. Payne suggested that they should not waive the cost for anyone as it would set a precedent and defeat the purpose of deciding to instill a fee. It was noted that someone using Whipple left an air conditioner on in the past causing pipes to freeze in the winter and making expensive repairs needed. It was also noted that some organizations have left rooms in such disarray that they needed to be cleaned before the next organization could make use of the space.

Ms. Swanson suggested notifying the regular people (whose fees are usually waived) that there would not be any more waiving of the fee. Ms. Helm said that these fees would help the Town pay for the cleaning of the room, at least. It was noted that the bridge group that uses the Syd Crook Conference Room for weekly bridge games does give a voluntary donation to the town every year for the use of that space.

Mr. Bianchi said they are still working on the sewer project. They have a town-paid engineer to oversee what is going on in Sunapee. The engineer is from Underwood Engineering and they will advise the town on certain things that may come up with the design.

Mr. Bianchi reminded everyone that the school election would be on March 13th at Whipple Hall. Town Meeting would be the second Tuesday in May.

It was asked if it was possible to get an absentee ballot for the school vote. It was voiced by many that this was not possible or hadn't been in the past. Ms. Hallquist wasn't sure why absentee ballots would not be allowed as it is an election, and would check on it and e-mail members with the results. Mr. Bianchi said that the School Board and Municipal Budget Committee totals were identical this year. It was also noted that the town office sign-up is March 21st to March 30th. If anyone wanted to run for office, they should come in and sign up within that timeframe.

Mr. Bianchi said that the ambulance study was still on-going and they are waiting to hear more on it. No final resolution has been made between the towns and the hospital as of yet.

Mr. Bianchi noted that they will be reviewing the New London Personnel Policy, which was last amended in 2007. This will be discussed during one of their regular meetings and would be on the agenda.

Ms. Little suggested using the electronic sign to advertise the school vote and encourage people to stop and vote. Ms. Hallquist said she ask Richard Lee to put it up. Many felt this was a good idea.

Mr. Payne applauded the Board of Selectmen for demanding first class service for the ambulance. He knows what they want is expensive, but with the demographics of New London, he felt it was important to make sure it is first class.

Ms. Lockhart said she wondered if there was anything that addresses the issues of the outdoor wood furnaces. She felt they produced smelly smoke and that there should be prohibited from town. Mr. Hoke said the furnaces are the same thing as a wood stove and is no different, unless people are burning things that they shouldn't be. Ms. Hallquist noted that the difference between these outdoor furnaces and a chimney on a house is the outdoor furnace buildings sit on the ground, and have short smoke stacks, so the smoke comes out at a much lower level than a chimney on the roof of a house. If these furnaces are placed close to other buildings, the smoke from them could go into other people's yards. In 2008 the state legislature addressed this, adopting RSA 125-R. Towns can regulate these furnaces via zoning, although at this time, New London does not. Even if the Town doesn't regulate them, there are State laws with regards to the heights of stacks and there are setback laws. If someone has one of the furnaces next to their home and it is bothersome because of smoke, they could do something about it through the Town if it is a nuisance. Ms. Hallquist said the furnaces also heat hot water so they are used year-round; not just in the winter months like chimneys used for in-home wood furnaces and fireplaces. The Planning Board is the place to go to suggest zoning changes .

The meeting was adjourned at 8:56am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary
Town of New London