

## BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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A significant challenge for the New London Board of Selectmen is to balance the rural character of our Town with the reality of upgrading infrastructure to be responsive to 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges. All the while remaining good stewards of tax payer dollars. In order to meet these challenges, it takes the approval of tax payers to support such efforts. To that end the Board continues to encourage citizens of New London to participate and engage in the planning and proposals for projects coming before the Board on a regular basis.

This year the Board focused on several capital projects that have been in the offing or continuing for some time. Final work was completed on the Academy building with the changes to the heating and cooling systems and the addition of a fire suppressant system.

Completion of the sewer lagoon project was delayed due to heavy water saturation through the summer and fall. Final inspection by the Department of Environmental Services is anticipated to be completed this spring.

Final work on the Pleasant Lake Dam was also delayed because of the extremely wet late summer and fall. Excessive rainfall prohibited the ability to lower lake levels sufficiently to work on the submerged wall and facing of the dam.

Lead by the efforts of the Solid Waste Committee a wetlands study of the Transfer Station was commissioned. This information will be critically important as the Town moves to determine next steps in re-configuring the Transfer Station to maximize efficiency and safety. Meanwhile the Board of Selectmen's request to the Department of Transportation to utilize land immediately in front of the property off Route 11 was denied. The denial was based upon the State's reluctance to sell or lease property that potentially might be needed for future expansion of the Exit 12 off ramp. The Board will determine whether appealing that decision is necessary once all wetland and land use studies have been completed.

A considerable amount of the Board's attention this past year was the issuance and completion of a feasibility study to determine the efficacy of the Harold W. Buker Jr. Municipal building for continued use by police, dispatch and recreation departments.

Six responses to the request were reviewed and three companies were invited to present at the July 2<sup>nd</sup> Board meeting. Following the presentations and public discussions the decision was made to contract with Harriman an architectural, engineering and planning group out of Portsmouth.

Over a period of several months Harriman conducted their feasibility study and provided several presentations at Board meetings. The study resulted in several scenarios for re-configuring the police and dispatch departments. The results demonstrated that to meet the health, safety, and business needs of our police force it would be cost-prohibitive to try and retrofit the existing building on its current site do to many factors including space limitations.

The site is limited because procuring land that abuts on to the Town green property is not feasible as it is deed restricted. The residential property immediately behind the Buker building on Seamans Road could potentially become available and provide additional space but would need Town approval to fund the purchase. The property currently shares a driveway with the police department. It could be used to expand the police station but that choice would likely exacerbate the parking challenges that are now experienced by visitors to the police and Whipple Hall. The Board believes that acquiring this property for parking is important to the long term use of the Buker facility and historic Whipple Memorial Town Hall, used for town voting as well as many meetings and social functions throughout the year. Town approval to fund the purchase will be required. Completing a 'new' build on the existing site would require the temporary re-location of three departments now using the space, leading to additional costs. This is an example of trying to manage aging infrastructure using a building that does not meet 21<sup>st</sup> century law enforcement environmental standards nor adequate room for a recreation department at a single site

The Board has concluded that addressing the needs of the police/dispatch department is the first priority and will need a 'staged' approach to acquire citizen support to fund both a new site and building. The immediate next step is to issue a request for proposal to address life safety issues in the existing Buker building, including water infiltration, leakage, mold, air circulation, heating, and cooling, ventilation, and space limitations. Addressing these concerns will be the subject of a warrant article this year. These issues must be addressed immediately while a longer-term plan is developed and implemented.

Going forward, the next phase of this project will be to determine potential sites and cost estimates for a new build of a police/dispatch building that meets law enforcement health, safety and business needs now and into the future.

Finally, I would be greatly remiss if I do not recognize a significant personnel change that took place this year with the retirement of Richard Lee as Director of Public Works. Richard worked for forty-five years for the Town of New London.

The Board instituted a citizens committee to review resumes, conduct interviews and make recommendations to the Board. The Board hired Bob Harrington as the new Director. Bob is a twenty-year public works employee and he seamlessly stepped up to the task.

In conclusion, I wish to thank all Town employees for their continued dedication and commitment to maintaining, protecting and managing our Town. I would also like to thank our citizens of New London and encourage you to attend the Annual Town Meeting, Wednesday, March 13, Kearsarge Learning Campus, 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Nancy L Rollins*

Chairman

New London Board of Selectman



*New London Town Offices. Photo courtesy of Dianne Bottari.*