



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

375 MAIN STREET • NEW LONDON, NH 03257 • NEWLONDON.NH.GOV

NEW LONDON BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

Whipple Memorial Town Hall

6:30 PM

BUDGET COMMITTEE PRESENT: Chris Lorio, (Chair), Colin Beasley (Vice Chair), John Wilson, Hannah Bianchi, Mark Christensen, Lyndsay Harkins, Lou Botta, Bebe Casey, Selectman Representative

BUDGET COMMITTEE ABSENT: Melissa Leintz, Charles Kelsey

STAFF: Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator; Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer

ALSO PRESENT: Selectmen Janet Kidder and Bill Helm; Robert Harrington, DPW Director; Police Chief Emily Cobb; Fire Chief Jay Lyon; Adam Ricker, Town Planner and Zoning Administrator; Putnam Kidder, Recreation Director; Will Kidder, Town Clerk and Tax Collector; Karen and Richard Epstein; John Ellis; Janet Miller Haines; Rob Prohl and Mark Vernon, Conservation Commission members; Peter Nichols, Housing Commission Chair; Bob Lyon; Janet Miller Haines; Philip Sherman; R. Peter Bianchi; Megan Brown; Travis Sniffen.

Chair Chris Lorio opened the meeting and asked Town Administrator Kim Hallquist to start with a summary of the FY2025 budget.

FY2025 Budget Summary

Kim Hallquist thanked Lynn Lewis for her work on the budget packet and gave an overview of the fiscal year 2025 budget and process. She noted that the budget recommended from this hearing will be voted on at the second part of Town Meeting on March 13, 2024. There are three petitioned warrant articles this year. One is a zoning amendment which will be voted on Tuesday, March 12, 2024, and two will be voted on at Town Meeting Wednesday, March 13, 2024:

1. \$900,000 to purchase the property next to Whipple Hall and the Buker Building. If it passes, any funds remaining after the purchase are to be used to make improvements to the current police station. Because this is a bond issue in an amount over \$100,000, there will be a public hearing ahead of Town Meeting and polls will be open for one hour at Town Meeting.
2. \$30,000 to be placed into the Conservation Land Acquisition Fund

The general operating budget is up 7.1%, a lower increase than last year, and represents just over \$9 million dollars of the 12.9-million-dollar budget up for discussion. The operating budget includes funding to run all town departments including such things as: legal fees, town debt, boards and committees, town insurance etc. The Town is continuing to experience a rise in costs, which is reflected in the budget. The increase in spending that will impact the tax rate is 13%.

To help soften last year's increases, the Budget Committee and the Selectmen reduced payments to the capital reserves by just over 50%. Those payments have been restored in this budget and that is reflected in the 115% increase to capital reserves. That is inclusive of approved transfers of 1 million dollars, as well as the \$30,000 petitioned warrant article.

The \$900,000 petitioned warrant article is included in the budget with principal and interest payments. If it does

not pass at Town Meeting, those amounts will be removed from the budget and will not affect the tax rate.

Capital purchases use funds from the capital reserve accounts and do not impact the tax rate. Capital purchases for FY2025 include \$60,000 for Tracy Memorial Library; \$150,000 for a one-ton dump truck with sander and plow; \$341,000 for the purchase of a six-wheel dump truck with a sander and plow; \$50,000 for ventilation equipment at the sewer plant; \$22,600 for cemetery maintenance; \$55,000 for the purchase of a fire utility vehicle; \$132,303 payment for the Fire Truck lease purchase that was entered into at Town Meeting a few years ago.

Estimated revenues are included in the budget and will be revised in October when the Selectmen set the tax rate. Revenues are up over last year largely due to the potential \$900,000 bond. The bond is also shown as a capital outlay, under expenses. Kim Hallquist noted that the Town tries to be conservative with revenue estimates to present an accurate impression of the Town's financial situation. Motor vehicle registration accounts for over \$1,000,000 of the estimated revenues.

The preliminary audit results have been received and posted on the town website. Kim Hallquist thanked Treasurer Steve Theroux for his oversight and Lynn Lewis her day-to-day work on the town's accounts and noted the Town is in excellent financial condition. She thanked the Department Heads, the Budget Committee, and the Selectmen for their hard work on the budget and thanked the three outgoing committee members for their efforts over the last three years.

Chris Lorio opened the meeting to public comment and questions.

Public Comment

R. Peter Bianchi expressed concern with the 13% increase to the budget and noted he felt a 2-3% increase would be more appropriate. He commented on the transfers to the capital reserve funds as well as the recent revaluation to property tax assessments.

Bob Lyon asked for details on what is included under the culture and recreation section of the budget. Lynn Lewis noted that includes parks and recreation as well as \$709,000 for the Tracy Memorial Library budget.

Conservation Commission Petitioned Article

Chris Lorio asked Bebe Casey for the Selectmen's recommendation on moving \$30,000 into the Conservation Commission capital reserve account. Selectmen Casey shared that the Board voted not to recommend the article, in a 2 to 1 vote.

There were no comments from the Budget Committee on the article.

IT WAS MOVED (Lyndsay Harkins) and SECONDED (Mark Christensen) to recommend the Conservation Commission petitioned warrant article. Vote on the motion: In favor: Casey, Harkins, Bianchi, Lorio, Botta, Beasley, Christensen. Opposed: Wilson. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED 7-1

Approval of Minutes

Colin Beasley suggested a clarification of his comments on page 3 of the January 24th minutes.

It was noted that in the minutes from January 19th, there were typos on pages 3 and 4.

MOTION WAS MADE (Colin Beasley) and SECONDED (Hannah Bianchi) to approve the minutes of January 19th & 24th, as amended. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chris Lorio thanked outgoing committee members Colin, Melissa and Hannah for their service volunteering their time for the budget committee the last 3 years.

No candidate forums have been finalized yet for the upcoming elections.

The next meeting will be February 21st.

IT WAS MOVED (Lyndsay Harkins) and SECONDED (Hannah Bianchi) to adjourn the meeting. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

The meeting adjourned at 6:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cara Leone

Recording Secretary

Note: RSA 91-A:2, II provides that “*Minutes of all such meetings, including nonpublic sessions, shall include the names of members, persons appearing before the public bodies, and a brief description of the subject matter discussed and final decisions.*” A video of the entire meeting may be available for viewing on the town website, [New London.NH.gov](http://NewLondon.NH.gov), if more than the brief description contained in these meeting minutes is desired.