



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

January 3, 2022

6:00 PM

PRESENT:

John Cannon, Chairman
Nancy Rollins, Selectman
Janet Kidder, Selectman
Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator
Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Emily Cobb, Police Chief; Will Kidder, Town Clerk- Tax Collector; Lou Botta; Steve Ensign, Nancy Marashio, Janet Miller Haines, John Raby, Celeste Cook, Joe Cardillo, Bob Bowers, John Lewis, Bill & Tina Helm, Phyllis Piotrow, Peter Nichols, Tom Vannatta, Kate Turcotte, Amy Kaplan, Peter & Karen Høglund, Joe Kubit, Steve Allenby, Michael Todd, Peter Bianchi, Pam Perkins, James Cricenti

Selectman Cannon called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Appointments

Bill Helm - Town purchase of property on County Road

New London resident Bill Helm addressed the Board and noted that at the Board of Selectmen's meeting two weeks ago it was stated that it would be allowable to come back to discuss this issue again. Mr. Helm would like to focus on the central issue which is whether the Board of Selectmen will allow the voters of this town to vote on an issue they feel very strongly about. If the voters decided to support the article at town meeting on March 9, 2022, then the Selectmen have a responsibility to negotiate a price for the property after getting an appraisal, to do all the engineering work, to do the financing, pointing that that interest rates are at an all-time low right now, and the town would therefore be able to acquire an asset that we can use for many different purposes for the common good of the town. If the article is defeated, then the voters will have had their say. Mr. Helm is asking the Selectmen to reconsider their vote from two weeks ago and support putting an article on the warrant at the March 9 town meeting to purchase the Cricenti property on County Road. In support of that, Mr. Helm has provided a petition with an additional 70 voters who support this request. Mr. Helm noted that the 70 voters join the over 40 people who sent the Selectmen emails before the meeting two weeks ago in support as well as all of the people who attended the last meeting in person and who were in attendance tonight.

Chair Cannon responded that in his remarks two weeks ago he stated he was inclined to support it with more of a plan and nothing has changed since they last met. There are also a number of residents in town that are opposed, and he is concerned that their interests and voices are not being heard. He noted that he felt that there is a desire to "max out the credit card" and then figure out what to do with the land. For those reasons, he is not willing to reconsider his decision at this time. He

urged the proponents to get together with the committees working on this issue to determine what land in town would work.

Mr. Helm noted that he disagreed that the purchase would “max out the credit card” as the cost of this land would have a small impact on the long-term future of the town in terms of the town’s tax rate. This is a unique opportunity, and we need to act now so we can control this piece of land. Waiting means it could be sold and the result will probably be 30-40 new houses on County Road. It’s easy to say let’s wait for more of a plan but as indicated by the Community Forums this fall it was clear what the priorities are. The next part of the plan would allow for all the different boards, committees and constituents to get to work and work together. He noted that he felt this would be like the King Hill issue which was a missed opportunity.

Joe Kubit pointed out that a \$3.25 million dollar purchase price financed over 20 years at 3.5% interest rate is about \$230,000 a year payment. This works out to \$18 per \$100,000 house. So a \$500,000 house would be a \$90 a year increase in their tax bill. This is a very small incremental increase in taxes for a piece of property that does not exist anywhere else in New London.

Michael Todd stated as Mr. Kubit pointed out, this does not appear to have a great annual increase in the tax bill. You are buying an asset and land in this town is not worth less every year. If we do put it on the warrant and vote to purchase it and we can’t for whatever reason decide what to do with it, it can always be put back on the market and sell it.

Bob Bowers addressed the Board and stated he tends to agree with the underlying theory of improving workforce housing and conserving the land etc. but the problem he is having is it hasn’t been thoroughly thought through as to what all of this might mean.

Mr. Bowers noted that the Cricenti parcel was listed for sale 2.5 years ago. The proponents have had 2.5 years to present a viable plan and clear purpose for this proposal. The stated reasons for the purchase on December 20, 2021 were for workforce housing, conservation and possibly for a new Police Station. The committees, commission and boards established by the town and Selectmen should not be ignored. They should be relied upon for the work they do and the conclusions they reach. To do otherwise would substantially and negatively affect volunteerism in New London. There are 4,400 residents in New London and 3,300 registered voters which means the 100 people that signed the petition make up about 2-3% of the registered voters. That means 96-97% of the people in this town have not signed a petition or asked for this.

In a recent survey carried out by the Planning Board, 80% of respondents rated small town atmosphere as #1 in importance. This should be kept in mind. The Housing Commission was established in March 2021. This commission should be allowed to do its analysis and report to the town on its conclusions. The opportunity for workforce housing should be spread throughout the town and not spot zoned into a limited selected area. We need to determine how it would affect the town’s infrastructure including water and sewer. If it is appropriate action by the town to purchase property for workforce housing, what other properties would be appropriate for consideration and would the cost involved be lower. Current density requirements would allow approximately 30 units on the proposed parcel in the commercial zone and 70 units in the R-2 zone. The March 2022 town ballot will include zoning changes doubling the number of units that can be built on commercial and R-1 zones along with cluster unit housing and Planned Unit Development housing. That could vastly increase the economic viability for workforce housing developers to construct lower cost housing

throughout the town. Mr. Bowers stated there are many issues that need to be addressed as you don't just buy land and suddenly workforce housing appears. A developer needs to be involved and the town's relationship has to be defined. Will the entire parcel be developed? How will the developer be selected to ensure impartiality and what would be the town's role in the process?

The town has a Conservation Commission and they should be consulted and asked to do an analysis and report to the Selectmen on its conclusions. What is the conservation Commission's list of priorities? Should the town be funding support for those priorities? Has it requested this as one of their priorities? Has the ASLPT been consulted? Are they pushing for this and what land do they think should be put under easement on this parcel? Is this parcel significant enough that they would provide financial support?

As far as a new Police Station, there is a Police Station site review committee and they should be allowed to do an analysis and report to the Selectmen about its conclusions. This committee was designated by the Selectmen to review possible sites. The committee is focusing on the main corridor in town and is looking at many potential possibilities. No decision has been made to build on a new site.

There has been no change in the cost analysis since the last meeting so there is no reason to reconsider this.

Steve Allenby addressed the Board and noted that he serves as the President of Kearsarge Neighborhood Partners which is a group that started in March 2020 to help build community. They have 260 volunteers and this year have volunteered 9,000 hours. The people they work with are the people that need affordable housing. There is a huge housing crisis and the cost of rent is high. There is a good chance this property is going to be purchased if we don't do something; he noted that the property has value. Mr. Allenby stated all the arguments that Mr. Bowers had are great if we want to convince people not to vote for it. At the last meeting a comment was made that we have to be careful of the cost because of the impact on taxpayers but the vast majority of people he is working with are renters and are the ones that need assistance.

Mr. Allenby is also a trustee of the hospital and chair of the strategic planning commission. The number one goal of the plan they just finished is to be an employer of choice in the area. They won't be able to provide quality care or ensure long term viability of the hospital without being able to offer the employees affordable housing.

Peter Bianchi addressed the Board and stated the town budget this year is about \$10 million dollars. To appropriate 30% of that budget to one project does not seem to be a wise fiscal decision. He noted that at the last Selectmen's meeting they heard from Selectman Rollins that the budget is up 10%, additionally, there are other big projects coming up including the water system upgrades. He encourages the Selectmen to not support this article.

Steve Ensign addressed the Board and questioned whether it was worth speaking on the issue as he has been watching the Selectmen and they seldom look at the speakers which suggests to him that they have already made up their minds. He is in favor of having the article appear on the warrant to let the voters have the opportunity to decide whether or not they'd like to purchase the property. He noted that some may want to purchase it just to make sure it doesn't become what the hospital property on Parkside looks like. Mr. Ensign noted that he knows where Chair Cannon stands having

spoken with him as they both chipped ice on their driveway, but he had hoped for more enlightenment on the part of the Selectmen after hearing all the points raised.

Chair Cannon noted that he did speak with Mr. Ensign and heard from him the most cogent argument so far for why the town should purchase the property, however he continued to feel that without a plan, he could not support asking voters to consider the purchase.

Celeste Cook commented that it is the voters of this community that need to make this decision. The voters of this community voted for the Selectmen to represent them so by representing them it should be put out to the town for them to decide. She acknowledged that there are people that don't want this but they need to have the opportunity to vote and by denying the voters of this community that opportunity the Selectmen are doing a real disservice to everybody.

Phyllis Piotrow stated she has been a little disappointed in the town of New London since she moved here. When she first moved here, seeing the round-about which works very well, she thought it was an exciting, vibrant place that was going places and where people were doing what needed to be done. Since then, it seems the town has limited control on what is going to happen and other organizations from other states are going to come in and control their assets in this town to maximize their profits.

Ms. Piotrow noted that the recent surveys showed the main idea on people's minds was to retain the character of New London. She asked who is in a better position to maintain the character of New London than the town of New London itself? If you care about maintaining the character she asked the Selectmen why they are not willing to assume greater responsibility for protecting it. It is the responsibility of the Select Board and government of this town by not allowing a huge parcel of land to be sold off to someone else to do whatever they choose.

With regards to a lack of a plan, Ms. Pitrow pointed out that it is extraordinarily difficult to draw up a detailed plan on what to do with 40 acres when you don't own it. To develop a plan for land you need site engineers, reviews and to look at alternatives and you can't do that if you don't own the land first. It's an illusion and not realistic to think that there can be a reasonable sense of a good plan for land you don't own. She believes it is not a matter of money alone but of governance and is the responsibility of New London to do the best for all residents of New London, present and future. This really matters for the future of the town of New London.

John Lewis commented he doesn't agree with Ms. Piotrow with regard to needing to own the land to come up with a plan for it – he noted that you can come up with a general plan without owning the land and we only have vague ideas right now. He does think that buying land for workforce housing is a decent reason, however he doesn't think it is a key piece of land for conservation and there are other sites for a Police Station. Mr. Lewis stated in regard to the statement that we should let the voters decide, he feels we elected the Selectmen to make these decisions on our part as they have the expertise. They can take time to look into things where most people don't have all the information to make an informed decision. He stated we can always make offers and don't have to buy the whole piece of property but we need a firmer, more definite vision before we move forward. He still leans towards opposing the purchase.

Janet Haines stated if we recall two weeks ago, the heads of both the college and hospital attended the meeting and implored the Selectman to allow the town to decide what to do with this property as they desperately need employees that can afford to live in New London.

John Raby stated we have heard at length the objections to allowing the citizenry to vote on the proposal as presented by Bill Helm. He asked that you focus on the objection that has to do with the struggle of people with limited means to carry a tax burden. Even though he can relate to this as he has been in that position as well, he would like to discuss the risks if we deny the people of this town to vote on this proposal. Colby-Sawyer College president Sue Stuebner and New London Hospital CEO and President Tom Manion spoke about their struggles to maintain a stable workforce. He asked us to think about what would happen to the economy in New London if they weren't able to continue. Delaying this also runs the risk of higher interest rates down the road.

Nancy Marashio stated she is a relatively new resident in New London. One of the things she has been very impressed with is that the Board of Selectmen appoints citizens to committees to study issues before decisions are made. As Mr. Bowers stated earlier, this property has been on the market for 2.5 years so certainly during that time, people proposing this warrant article could have talked to the heads of committees, which they have not. She noted that she is disappointed that the homework was not done by the proponents of the plan.

Joe Cardillo commented we seem to be going around in a circle. We are talking about workforce housing and while there are solutions, he doesn't feel buying a piece of land is one of them. The problems that have arisen are in our zoning and that needs to be looked at. He understands that many are frustrated with the New London Place project. He also understands, like the college and the hospital, that there is a need for workforce housing. He pointed out that a plan for workforce housing went before the Planning Board and it was shut down completely for an effort to put in 20 apartments; he asked what does that say about our openness to allow workforce housing in town. There are people in town that have experience and we need to draw on that experiences to solve some of these problems. He recalls in the past there was an opportunity to buy a \$500,000 piece of land and it was shot down because a citizen of the town was critical there was no plan. The Selectmen should demand there is a plan before it is put before the voters. He agrees it's difficult to move to New London as it's expensive.

Joe Kubit addressed the pointed raised about whether the town was approached to purchase the Messer Property, he confirmed that Ausbon Sargent Land Preservation Trust (ASLPT) did approach the town and asked for \$500,000 towards the purchase but they would not give the town an ownership interest in it, which is a requirement of the Mary Haddad Fund, which would have been used for the purchase.

Selectman Kidder stated there is a grain of truth is what everyone has presented tonight. The issue is that we need to trust the people of this community who are thoughtful, caring individuals to have an opportunity to vote on this potential purchase and it would be wrong not to do so. The Buker addition would never have been added on to Whipple Hall if there had been another place to have the Police Department. It was done as there was no other available property. In her opinion there will be a time in the future the town of New London when there will be a need for property to do various things. If we have the opportunity to secure a piece of property that would be valuable to the community, we should do it. We can always figure out exactly what we want to do with it. Selectman Kidder pointed out that the town should add on to the Cricenti Philbrick Bog, keep the

field open for agriculture and the beautiful view, use some of the land on County Road for workforce housing and have the rest open space so if the town decides to use some for the Police Station they would have the option. She urges her colleagues to put it on the warrant and let the community vote on it.

Selectman Rollins thanked everyone that spoke tonight and stated she continues to listen. No one has ever denied that workforce housing isn't a critical issue in New London and that's why there is a Housing Commission that is focused on workforce housing. She remains unchanged from the comments she made at the last meeting and doesn't think this is the direction to go at this time. There is not a well thought out plan for workforce housing or for a site for the Police Station, both of which have a subcommittee working on them. Should those groups come forward with ideas relative to having a warrant article of this nature she would consider it but it is still premature at this time.

Bill Helm stated once the town clerk certifies the 70 signatures on the petition, he assumes this will be on the agenda for the January 24, 2022 Board of Selectmen meeting to consider and by that time maybe some of these issues that people still feel about plans can be brought forward. The Selectmen could decide to either change their mind then or to support the petition and allow the budget committee to also weigh in on it. Mr. Helm stated there are a lot of people depending on the Selectmen to allow them to have a voice at town meeting.

Housing Commission - Request for funds for consultant

Tom Vannatta, Chair of the Housing Commission, attended the meeting to request funds from the Selectmen which would be the beginning of addressing many of the questions that were raised tonight. In December 2020 the Commission developed a strategic plan that is a multi-phase plan that will provide direction. The goal is that by September 2022 they will be able to make recommendations. They will need to hire professional for planning and development help and currently do not have the funds to do so.

Peter Nichols stated they have selected consultant Mark Fougere and are asking the Board tonight to allow the town to enter into a contract with him noting that he is highly regarded, has a great deal of experience and has written the guidebook for housing commissions in the state of New Hampshire on how to conduct their business. Mr. Fougere provided the Commission with a two-phase plan; the Housing Commission would like to begin with phase one so funding in the amount of \$8,000 is needed. If the Selectmen approve it will also mean approval for use of the FY2023 funds to complete phase two.

Kate Turcotte explained that she is working on obtaining grant funding which may reduce the amount of funds needed overall. Ms. Turcotte stated the grant is a municipal technical assistance grant and are available through the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority. She has drafted the grant and the hope is to get funds to help pay for phase two. They will also be doing community outreach to educate the public.

Selectman Rollins stated she is impressed at the skill and the experiences that members of the Housing Commission bring to this effort. This is what is needed in order to have a planned, thoughtful movement relative to those things that we desire in this town. This town has consistently said we care about the identity of this town and how it looks so having everything focused in one area is probably not in everyone's best interest. She applauds the work of this group.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to enter into an agreement with Fougere Planning and Development and to fund the first phase of the proposal up to the \$8,000 request. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Public Comment - None

NEW BUSINESS

Appointment of Peter Nichols as town's representative to the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee RPC
Town Administrator Kim Hallquist stated that Upper Valley Lake Sunapee RPC representative Liz Meller's 4-year term is up in 2022 and she is not interested in reappointment. Ms. Hallquist met with Peter Nichols several times to see if he would be interested and after doing some research Mr. Nichols has agreed to this commitment. Ms. Hallquist recommends that he be appointed for the four-year term.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to appoint Peter Nichols to the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Will Kidder, Town Clerk-Tax Collector: request for mask mandate for Town Office building.

Will Kidder stated that compliance with mask wearing has gone down over time. They have many people coming into the town office every day not wearing masks and it is concerning to the employees. He is asking the Selectmen to require masks in the Town Office building. Chair Cannon thinks it makes sense given the lengthy and close involvement with people conducting business in the town office building. There is currently no mask mandate in New London, but the Selectmen can require people who come into the building; staff have been wearing masks since September. If someone was unwilling or unable to wear a mask, the town office staff would make accommodations to help them either outside or at another location. The town offices are in no way denying the services they provide there. If someone demands entrance to the building without wearing a mask, the Police would be notified. Chief Cobb stressed that if the police were called they would first try to de-escalate the situation and encourage the person to put the mask on or have services provided outside, if not, it would be a trespass issue or disorderly conduct at that point.

IT WAS MOVED (John Cannon) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to require masks for everybody entering the Academy Building (town offices) until further notice. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Solid Waste Transportation Agreement

Public Works Director Bob Harrington stated they received notice of early retirement for the gentleman that has been hauling trash for the town of New London for more than 10 years. The town brings trash trailers to the Meredith Public Works Department where it is picked up by the contractor and taken to the disposal site in Berlin. Working with the Town of Meredith who issued a Request for Proposal to have a contractor continue with this procedure, a contractor was selected. Kim Hallquist provided the Selectmen with a contract that with the exception of the cost for each haul which has increased, is the same as the contract used in the past. She also noted that unlike the previous contract, the price will not increase each year of the contract. Mr. Harrington feels it is a reasonable price and the contractor has the resources and equipment to handle the job. He recommends that the Selectmen approve this contract.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Nancy Rollins) to accept the contract with Jeremy Hiltz Excavating. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Changes to Selectmen's approved FY2023 budget

Finance Officer Lynn Lewis reported there were a few typos so changes were made.

Equipment repairs and maintenance in Emergency Management went from \$10,802 to \$8,202. Changes in Equipment repairs and maintenance for both highway and transfer station are going down and the trash hauling fee was increased.

IT WAS MOVED (John Cannon) AND SECONDED (Nancy Rollins) to accept the changes to the FY2023 budget. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

FY2023 Budget Revenues

Finance Officer Lynn Lewis reported they have done their best to estimate what to expect but it is early in 2022 so it is a best guess. The Selectmen will have the opportunity to amend the figures in October 2022 during the tax rate setting process.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to approve the revenues for the FY2023 budget. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

TOWN ADMINISTRATORS REPORT

Town Administrator Kim Hallquist reported she will be following up with the company providing shades for Whipple Hall; they were hoping to have them installed by the end of the year but they are not in nor has she heard from them. The estimated timeframe for the audio/visual equipment is March 1, 2022, best case scenario; supply chain issues are expected to impact this project.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS & REPORTS

MEETING MINUTES: Approve the Selectmen's Minutes of Dec. 20th – Deferred until the next meeting.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & SPECIAL EVENTS

- Next Regular Selectmen's meeting – Monday, January 24th – 6:00 PM - Whipple Town Hall
- Police Station Site Review Subcommittee – Tuesday, January 4th – 1:00 PM – PD Training Room
- Housing Commission – Tuesday, January 4th – 6:00 PM – Syd Crook Room
- Energy Committee – Wednesday, January 5th – 5:30 PM – Syd Crook Room
- Budget Committee – Wednesday, January 5th – 6:30 PM – Whipple Town Hall
- Planning Board – Tuesday, January 11th – 6:30 PM – Whipple Town Hall
- TOWN OFFICES CLOSED: Monday, January 17th – Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Conservation Commission – Wednesday, January 19th – 8:30 AM – Syd Crook Room
- Building and Facilities Committee – Thursday, January 20th – 6:30 PM – Syd Crook Room

APPROVAL OF PAY VOUCHERS, PERMITS

Items to be signed:

- Accounts Payable Vouchers

- Solid Waste Transportation Service Contract between Town of New London and Jeremy Hiltz Excavating
- Two property tax credit applications

Applications Approved &/or Denied

Sign Permits – approved

- Temp Sign-TM 084-007-0-0-0. Lake Sunapee Chamber of Commerce “Shop Local” sandwich board. Approved. 12/7/21

Building Permits-approved

- JARPIM, LLC, TM 116-015-0-0-0. Build new Guest house and Barn total 6,040sq ft. BP 21-143. Approved. 12/30/2021.
- JARPIM, LLC, TM 116-016-0-0-0. Build new Main & Glade house total 9,690sq ft. BP 21-144. Approved. 12/30/2021
- Frank & Leigh Tappen, TM 035-030-0-0-0. Add 2 car garage with living space above, car port demo old garage. BP 21-147 Approved. 12/30/2021
- May Lee Low & Martin Sheerin, TM 043-010-0-0-0. Renovate kitchen, remove fireplace, add ¾ bath. BP 21-157. Approved. 12/312/2021

IT WAS MOVED (John Cannon) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to adjourn. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 7:38PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Trina Dawson
Recording Secretary
Town of New London