



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## NEW LONDON BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, January 4, 2024  
Whipple Memorial Town Hall  
25 Seamans Road  
5:30 PM

### **PRESENT:**

Janet Kidder, Chairman  
Bill Helm, Selectman  
Bebe Hammond Casey, Selectman  
Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator  
Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer

### **ALSO PRESENT:**

Bob Bowers, New London resident  
Sherry Williams, Jerry Coogan and Steve Solomon, Library Trustees  
Peter Bianchi, New London resident  
Colin Beasley, Budget Committee member  
John Ellis, New London resident  
Peter Vedova, Tim Paradis and Jamie Hess, Energy Committee members  
Karen Epstein, New London resident  
Rich Epstein, New London resident  
Bob Lyon, New London resident  
Joe Cardillo, New London resident  
Putnam Kidder, Recreation Director

Chair Kidder called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

### **Steve Soloman, Tracy Library Trustee**

Steve Soloman, Chair of the Library Facilities Committee, and members of the Board of Trustees, met with the Board to request use of \$15,800 from the library trust fund to replace two mini-splits at the library.

**IT WAS MOVED (Bebe Casey) and SECONDED (Bill Helm) to approve the use of \$15,800 from the library maintenance trust fund for the replacement of two mini splits. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY**

The Trustees submitted a memo requesting a bond in the amount of \$375,000 for library roof replacement, roof repair and exterior repairs. Mr. Soloman addressed the need to replace the library roof. He explained that estimates are being secured but the Trustees felt that the size of the expenditure made bonding and paying over the life of the repairs prudent. Selectman Helm observed that the library roof has been on the list for some time and agreed it must be done. He questioned whether bonding was the best way to fund the project given the amount of long-term debt the town currently has, noting that he would prefer to use capital reserve funds for the roof instead of a bond. The Selectmen expressed support for including funds in the FY2025 budget to have the roof done and asked the Trustees to look at the other

work planned to see if it was possible to delay some or all of it. Mr. Solomon agreed and noted that getting the necessary work done is the goal of the Trustees and the source of the funds is less important to them.

### **Jamie Hess, Chair, Energy Committee**

Jamie Hess met with the Board to discuss two goals the Energy Committee is currently working on: (1) the purchase of the town's two investor-owned solar arrays and (2) attaining the goal of 100% renewable electricity by 2030.

#### Purchase of solar arrays

Mr. Hess explained that the Town has two investor-owned solar arrays, a ground mounted array at the sewer pump station at Frothingham Road and one roof mounted on the public works garage on S. Pleasant Street. Having the arrays put up by investors allowed the town to get the arrays at no cost to the town. The town is currently paying the outside investors \$2400 per month or \$28,800 per year for the electricity generated by the two investor-owned arrays. Buying the solar arrays will allow the town to realize those savings instead of going to the investors.

The town will have an option to purchase the solar arrays in January 2026. If it doesn't buy them at the first opportunity it could purchase them the following year. Mr. Hess noted that if the fair market value appraisal is too high, the town could decide not to buy them. The estimated cost to purchase is \$300,000 so in order to have enough money to purchase in 2026, the Energy Committee recommends adding \$165,000 to the capital reserve fund over the next two years to purchase at the first opportunity.

There was a discussion about the timing for the funds. Selectman Helm noted that since the funds won't be needed until January 2026 at the earliest, then funds don't need to be added this year, however if no funds are added, there will be a larger need in FY2026. He noted that given that the library has just expressed an immediate need for \$275,000 for the roof, he feels that no funds should be added to the energy capital reserve fund this year. He pointed out that it may be determined that funds for the purchase should come from a bond issue. Mr. Hess agreed that it did not matter where the funds came from so long as they were available at the time of purchase.

The Board agreed that there is no question that this is a project that the town will do, the only question is when the funding needed will be added to the budget. Selectman Casey observed that savings of \$30,000 per year means the payback will be about 10 years. She asked how long the solar panels last. Mr. Hess noted that the warranty is 25 years, however with no moving parts, they could last up to 200 years although the efficiency does degrade over time. The Selectmen will consider this again when they hear what the Budget Committee feels is an appropriate funding level.

The Board thanked Jamie and the Energy Committee for all the work they have done on this subject.

#### Attaining goal of 100% renewable electricity

Mr. Hess noted that the Committee is looking into the best way to achieve 100% renewable electricity by 2030. Currently 40% of the town's electricity needs come from solar. Mr. Hess explained that currently the town gets 220 kilowatts DC and would need another 330 kilowatts DC to get to 100% renewable. This could cost about \$1 million dollars. However, the Inflation Reduction Act would pay \$300,000 towards the cost, bringing the net down to \$700,000. Where the solar array will go is something the committee is now looking at: stump dump, fire station roof and three additional locations suggested by Conservation Commission. The Committee will keep the Selectmen updated on potential locations as well as funding sources that may be available.

Selectman Casey asked about the \$44,568 rate of return estimated by the Energy Committee. Mr. Hess noted that the amount reflects the amount of savings on electric bills the town would realize if it used solar panels to produce its electricity. He stressed that the figure is a guess, it depends on how much electricity rates are at that time.

It was noted that the federal municipal rebate program was enacted for a period of 10 years and goes until 2032. Mr. Hess noted that this program enjoys wide bipartisan support so he expects that it will continue to be funded.

Bob Lyon asked about the new building at Colby-Sawyer College and whether it will have solar. Mr. Hess noted that he was unsure but hoped that it would have solar, pointing out that in the past they were in the forefront of adding solar. He will continue to advocate for solar at the college. Mr. Lyon noted that the college roof is huge and asked if the panels needed for the town could be included with the college. Mr. Hess noted that the amount of solar needed for the town to get to 100% renewable electricity is about an acre of land. Joe Cardillo asked if the panels can produce energy that can be sold back and if consideration has been given to use the former landfill on Mountain Road for a solar array. Mr. Hess noted that the closed landfill has been considered, however the electric grid infrastructure on Mountain Road is not very good – it is only single phase and not three-phase. Bringing in three-phase to that location is cost prohibitive. Mr. Hess noted that the excess power is already being sent to the grid and the town is benefiting financially from it.

Mr. Hess noted that Community Power will launch in March. There will be a public information session on Wednesday, January 31st at 7:00PM.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Bob Bowers noted that he spoke with someone at the college who said that the new building will have solar panels.

Mr. Bowers submitted a petition warrant article for inclusion on the Town Meeting Warrant for a bond in the amount of \$900,000 to purchase the property next to the police station and to make safety and security changes to the police facility and site to increase the comfort and well-being of the police officers. Mr. Bowers noted that the petition is the work of many residents who believe strongly that it is important to acquire the abutting property for the future planning of the town. He pointed out that the petition is being brought by 136 residents, many more than the 25 needed.

Mr. Bowers noted that he attempted to contact the owner of the property that is the subject of this petition by sending her a letter and a copy of the petition, however she has declined to speak with him about it.

Mr. Bowers reviewed the history of the town's efforts in planning to improve the police facility starting in 2016/2017 when the selectmen began to discuss moving the police station to the present day. He reviewed how approval of the warrant article could improve the existing police station for use for police, recreation and election functions.

Mr. Bowers asked the Selectmen to vote to recommend the article as they did with the petition submitted last year to buy the former Bewley property on Newport Road. He also asked that the Selectmen contact the property owner to discuss this and to arrange to get an appraisal on the property.

Chair Kidder asked if Mr. Bowers knows if the property owner will be willing to sell to the town. He noted that back in 2016 when the Selectmen asked the property owner if she would be willing to sell, she said while it was not on the market, she would be willing to sell if she found an acceptable place to live in

town. A similar response was given in 2021 when the subcommittee was looking at various sites for a police station. Mr. Bowers understands that the property owner has moved and now rents the property out, however he is not acting on her behalf and does not know if she is willing to sell at this time. Chair Kidder asked if Mr. Bowers felt that if the article passes and the property owner refuses to sell, should the town take the property by eminent domain. Mr. Bowers noted that while eminent domain is an option available to the town, he is not recommending that and understands that in the past the town has had a policy of not taking land by eminent domain.

### **FY2025 budget**

#### COLA

Selectman Helm informed the Board that he researched the New England CPI and found that the November rate is 2%. He noted that in the past the Selectmen have not used the same measure each year to come up with the COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) and he felt that doing so is a good idea to avoid guessing every year. He suggested using the November New England CPI. Selectman Casey noted that she called around other towns and was considering a 2.5% COLA however using a standard that can be used each year is something that she would like to think more about before making it the Board's policy. Kim Hallquist noted having a reliable point to use will likely be welcome to employees as some years it appears that the selectmen select a low amount due to budget constraints. Lynn Lewis noted that as an employee and knowing that using the same metric each year makes it easier for employees to accept and results in less resentment. Chair Kidder noted that she hoped that the employees would see with the wage study and setting wages at the 75th percentile that the Selectmen want them to be paid adequately.

**IT WAS MOVED (Bill Helm) AND SECONDED (Bebe Casey) to set the COLA at 2%. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### Capital Reserve funds

Selectmen Helm noted that he asked that the topic of capital reserve funds be added as a housekeeping item as he has heard from some Budget Committee members who felt that the Selectmen had not actually made decisions on various items. He noted that the earlier discussion on the library could make additional changes necessary.

1. To close the DPW Capital Reserve Fund and put the balance to General Fund

It was noted that a vote of Town Meeting would be needed to close or to make changes in capital reserve funds.

**IT WAS MOVED (Bill Helm) AND SECONDED (Bebe Casey) to close the DPW Capital Reserve Fund and put the balance into the general fund. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. To close the Recreational Van Trust. It was noted that this fund will not require a vote of Town Meeting as it is a private fund, not town funds. The balance in the fund will be used on the recreation van.
3. To make the Selectmen Agents to Expend for the following Reserve Funds:
  - General Cemetery Maintenance Fund (1983): Balance: \$120,644
  - Sewer Department CRF (2007): Balance: \$66,413
  - Sidewalk CRF (1996): Balance:\$132,642
  - Transfer Station Improvement Fund (2002): Balance: \$45,035

It was discussed that making the Selectmen agents to expend will allow the funds to be used for the purpose of the fund without a vote of town meeting pointing to the recent cemetery fence issue as an example of why agents to expend is important. The cemetery fence needed repair and maintenance and because the Selectmen were not agents to expend, the work could only be done using funds from the operating budget or wait until Town Meeting.

**IT WAS MOVED (Bill Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to include a warrant article to ask voters to appoint the Selectmen as agents to expend the four funds identified. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. Not to vote at Town Meeting to change current stated purposes of any Funds, but by memorandum accept Budget Committee “understanding” of the purposes of selected funds.

The Board agreed that a memorandum of understanding with the Budget Committee was preferable to asking for Town Meeting votes to change the purposes.

5. To defer additional Transfers to Reserves to the following Funds until such time as a specific need for additional transfers has been established: Bridge Maintenance, Conservation, Energy Conservation, Computer Maintenance, General Cemetery Maintenance, Gravel Roads, Master Plan Update, Police Equipment, Records Management, Recreational Facilities, Town Vehicle and Equipment Repair, Transfer Station Improvement.

Selectmen Helm noted that the discussion with the Library Trustees and Energy Committee earlier may result in changes to those funds, however with respect to the remaining funds that the Board discussed, a decision was made not to put any money into those funds in the FY2025 budget. Selectman Casey noted that the Budget Committee will be having discussions of capital reserve funds so there may be a need for more discussions by the Selectmen. She asked about the GIS fund and the computer maintenance funds noting that those funds were included in the subcommittee report. Selectman Helm noted that he did not include them as he understands that the GIS fund may be needed in the future and for the computer fund, there has been suggestion that an IT fund may be needed in the future. As a result of these potential future changes, he suggests no changes at this time.

Request of Conservation Commission for an expendable trust fund of \$10,000 for management of waterflow issues on conservation lands

Kim Hallquist explained that the Conservation Commission would like an expendable trust fund that would allow them to access funds needed in the event they have issues with beavers that need to be addressed, or other issues needing their attention such as weather damage, without using their operating fund. Selectman Helm noted that he agrees that beaver issues must be addressed, however he felt that creating another fund for this purpose is not the best way to handle it. He felt that such a small amount could be dealt with existing funds. Colin Beasley suggested that consideration be given to expand the purpose of the conservation fund for ‘infrastructure maintenance’ that would allow the fund to be used for these types of projects. The Board expressed support for this idea.

Other FY2025 Budget items

Mr. Beasley asked Selectman Helm to share his work on the debt issue with respect to the library that was discussed earlier. The information will be forwarded to the Budget Committee.

Mr. Beasley asked where the \$40,000 for the police station relocation study would come from. Kim Hallquist noted that the Selectmen have said that it will come from the operating budget; it will likely

come from several lines that are not totally spent. Chair Kidder noted that it could also come from ARPA funds. It was noted that the town's ARPA funds of just over \$400,000, 25% has been committed to the water precinct, 25% to the sewer department and the remaining 50%, less the amount spent on the bleachers for the school and the body cameras for the police department, are accounted for, remains available to the town.

Mr. Beasley asked if the Selectmen intend to add any funds in the budget for the police station. The Selectmen noted that they have not yet made any decisions on that and will advise as soon as possible. Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer, reviewed updates to the budget sheets from the last Selectmen's meeting. She noted that wages lines have been updated to reflect the wage study changes that the Selectmen approved and the COLA of 2%. The \$150,000 line in the Executive that was a placeholder for the wage adjustments and COLA has been removed, it was more than enough to address the adjustments to the department lines. \$1,000 has been reduced from the Assessing budget and the library was reduced to \$709,895 as the Trustees amended it. She also spoke to Bob Harrington about his overtime budget after the Budget Committee raised questions about it and that line has been reduced to \$49,000. The total budget is now \$12,175,200 which is \$71,406 lower than the budget that was previously approved by the Selectmen.

#### **Moderator request for appointment of Inspectors of Election**

**IT WAS MOVED (Bill Helm) AND SECONDED (Bebe Casey) to appoint the Inspectors of Election as recommended by the Moderator. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **Consider opposing HB 1479 relative to prohibiting the use of federal, state, or local funds for lobbying activities as requested by the NH Municipal Association (NHMA)**

Kim Hallquist explained that if the bill passes, New London will no longer be able to contribute to NHMA. NHMA has been assisting NH municipalities for more than 80 years and gives information to legislators on bills affecting towns and cities. This is considered lobbying. If this bill passes, only private companies will be able to give information to legislators to attempt to encourage them to vote in a certain way. She noted that Karen Ebel opposed the bill; she was unable to speak with Dan Wolf prior to the meeting. Ms. Hallquist recommended that the Selectmen vote to join many other communities and NHMA and oppose HB1479.

**IT WAS MOVED (Bebe Casey) AND SECONDED (Bill Helm) to oppose HB1479 as requested by the NH Municipal Association. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Consider appointment of Cara Leone and Julie Corey to the Recreation Commission

Putnam Kidder, Recreation Director, met with the Board to recommend Cara Leone and Julie Corey as Recreation Commission members. Both candidates met with the Recreation Commission and discussed the importance of meeting attendance to achieve the goals of the recreation department. Both are motivated and excited to join.

**IT WAS MOVED (Bill Helm) AND SECONDED (Bebe Casey) to appoint Cara Leone and Julie Corey to the Recreation Commission. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Consider request of Recreation Commission to allow alcohol at Whipple Hall for Winter Carnival

Putnam Kidder asked the Selectmen to allow alcohol in Whipple during the adult spelling bee during Winter Carnival. Flat Iron Catering will be the organization that will be responsible for serving. The Board instructed Mr. Kidder to discuss this further with Police Chief Cobb.

**IT WAS MOVED (Bill Helm) AND SECONDED (Bebe Casey) to allow alcohol to be served in Whipple for Winter Carnival pending the approval of Chief Cobb. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

Kim Hallquist noted that the office has heard from some elderly people regarding difficulty in paying taxes. There is a program called the “Elderly and Disabled Tax Deferral” where the person applies to defer property taxes which will be paid once the property is sold. The interest on the deferred amount is less than the usual unpaid taxes interest. Taxes can be deferred up to 85% of the equity value of the property. Selectman Helm asked for more information on the types of properties that have reached out for help. Ms. Hallquist noted that many of the property owners who have reached out are those on the lakes with the more modest homes and camps.

Ms. Hallquist noted that the police, fire, public works and planning departments met with the Water Precinct, the State Department of Transportation, and the engineers for the water main replacement project to discuss the upcoming project. She did not attend the meeting but asked Chief Lyon, who attended the meeting, to summarize the discussion. Chief Lyon explained that the RFP is expected to go out tomorrow with bid opening in early February to have a project total to bring to the Precinct annual meeting for a vote in March. The project is expected to start in April 2024 and end by November 2024, with final completion in the spring of 2025, all dependent on weather. There will be three phases, 5,800 feet of pipe to be replaced. Consideration of businesses and parking, the Barn Playhouse, college graduation in May, Hospital Days in August were discussed. The project is expected to have a big impact on the town, but on the positive side, it won’t have to be done again for another 65 years. There will be some nighttime operations but not every night.

Chief Lyon noted the new fire truck is in Vermont and is due in New London in the next week or so.

**COMMITTEE MEETINGS & REPORTS** – there were none.

**MEETING MINUTES:** Approve Selectmen’s meeting minutes of December 14th and 21st – deferred to the next meeting.

The next Selectmen’s meeting will be held on January 18th. All were encouraged to attend the School meeting on Saturday, January 6th. The Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed zoning amendments at its next meeting on January 9th.

#### **APPROVAL OF PAY VOUCHERS, PERMITS etc.**

Items to be signed:

- Payroll Vouchers
- Wastewater Tax Abatement request – in the amount of \$261.00 – ML 045-041-0-0-0, M & P Kayle, 14 Conifer Lane, malfunctioning reader pad. (PW Director recommended)
- Wastewater Tax Abatement request – in the amount of \$215.00 – ML 059-016-0-0-0, B & J Leavitt, 126 Hilltop Place, meter is inactive. (PW Director recommended)
- Supplemental Warrant for Wastewater Charges – in the amount of \$72.00
- Use of Town Common – Center for the Arts Festival, August 10th, 2024, 10AM-6PM

- Use of Whipple Hall – New London Barn Playhouse, July 12th, July 26th, August 16th, 8:30am-5:00pm

**Building/Zoning Permits – Approved**

- Robert & Sarah Henley, TM109-001-0-0-0. Amended permit, 23-108A, add 336sf addition. Approved 12/22/23
- Michael Hansen, TM128-014-0-0-0. Amended permit, 23-113A, to include 16x16’ entryway on new barn. Approved 12/22/23
- Christina Donovan, TM072-013-0-0-0. BP 23-89, add mudroom, Approved 12/19/23
- Barry & Gretchen Fougere, TM043-019-0-0-0, BP23-138, Roof mount solar, Approved 12/20/23

**IT WAS MOVED (Bebe Casey) AND SECONDED (Bill Helm) to adjourn. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:01 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kimberly Hallquist  
Town Administrator

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, NewLondon.NH. gov, if more than the brief description contained in these meeting minutes is desired.