



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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NEW LONDON BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 8, 2025
Whipple Memorial Town Hall
6:30 PM

BUDGET COMMITTEE PRESENT: Chris Lorio (Chair), Lou Botta (Vice Chair,) John Wilson, Mark Christensen, Charles Kelsey, Karen Epstein, Megan Brown, John Tilley, Lyndsay Harkins, Bebe Casey, Selectman Representative

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Sam Clarke, Department of Public Works Director
Adam Ricker, Planning & Zoning Admin.
Fire Chief Jay Lyon
Mark Vernon, Conservation Commission
John Ellis, New London resident
Rich Epstein, New London resident
Lisa Cohen, CFO, New London Hospital
Richard Tutwiler, Library Director
Peter Nichols, Housing Commission Chair
Charlene Baxter, CASA
Charlie Hafner, New London resident
Jackie Christensen, Recreation Commission Chair
Beth Hayword, CAP
Suzanne Hammond, Garden Club -co president
Kathy Thomas, Little Sunapee P.A.
Julie Corey, Recreation Commission
Tara Stone, Recreation Commission

Putnam Kidder, Recreation Director
Police Chief Emily Cobb
Will Kidder, Town Clerk-Tax Collector
Rob Prohl, Conservation Commission
Joe Cardillo, New London resident
Kelley Keith, COA
Derick Aumann, Ambulance Director
Howard Hoke, New London Resident
Cara Leone, Recreation Commissioner
Mary Rakow, New London resident
Tom Carely, Library Trustee
Elizabeth Harper, LSPA Executive Director
Michael Brown, King Solomons Lodge
Sandy Schmidt, Garden Club Co-President
Audrey Chijner, Messer Pond P.A.
Kim Ilg, Recreation Commission

Chair Lorio called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

Review of Minutes: December 18, 2024

John Wilson noted that on the first page, right under where it says Approval of Minutes, the Committee had a discussion about the proposed new Tahoe police car and it says it was clarified, he questioned if it was sufficiently clarified. He explained that his understanding is that initially we had an \$80,000 item in for the Tahoe including the upfitting of additional items that need to be installed. That number was reduced by the Chief to \$60,000 and the list price of the car was somewhere around \$55,000. The difference between \$55,000 and \$60,000 was to be part of the contribution to upgrading the car for the police, the remainder of which would come out of a police revolving fund.

Chief Cobb noted that Dr. Wilson's review was mostly correct. She explained that the all-in total cost is going to be approximately \$80,000, so her plan was to request \$60,000 in the operating budget and that will pay for the

vehicle and then the remainder needed for the upfitting of the cruiser, will come from the Police Detail Revolving Fund. Chief Cobb will submit a memo with additional information on this topic.

Dr. Wilson noted that a correction to page 2 is needed to clarify the information on the fire department discussion of unplanned expenses. The minutes should reflect that Chief Lyon pointed to the foam take back program as an example of an unplanned expense because the town had to pay \$2,500 to dispose of the foam which contained contaminants.

Dr. Wilson noted that on page 5, the discussion of the Landfill Monitoring category should be clear that it applies to the Mountain Road facility, which is the old landfill, which is different from the Shepards Pit and the Stump Dump.

Consideration of approval of the minutes of December 18, 2024 will be taken up at the next meeting.

Selectmen's Report

Selectman Casey provided the following report:

- The Selectmen finalized the septic health regulations. The regulation requires that all residents in town with a private septic system must pump the tank once every three years. There's a waiver process for individuals who use less than 50% of the capacity of their tank. An example is a five-bedroom house with only one to two people living in it. We will have a waiver approval process put in place ahead of the effective date on January 1st, 2026. The Selectmen will taking this first year to educate the residents of the new regulation.
- The selectmen and members of the Police Facilities Advisory Committee will be working on presentations that will be delivered to residents over the next two months, leading up to Town Meeting on the police station project and projected costs. We will be discussing that tomorrow at our tomorrow night's selectmen's meeting.
- The Selectmen have invited members of the Water Precinct to their next meeting to begin the conversation about water conservation activities.
- And finally, hopefully all of you attended the school district deliberative session on Saturday. Almost 1,600 people showed up for the meeting. A petition article that would have capped per student costs at \$27,000 was soundly defeated with a vote of 1,435 no votes and 113 yes votes. Selectman Casey expressed her opinion that it was a very well-run meeting; all the comments from all of the people there were made civilly. Selectman Casey reported that she just learned that there will be a presentation by the New Hampshire School Funding Fairness Project scheduled for January 28th at 6.30 at the high school. She noted that she has seen this presentation before and it is very informative.

FY2026 Budget Review

New London Hospital Ambulance: \$191,910 (revised)

Lisa Cohen, CFO, and Derick Aumann, Ambulance Director, presented the request for ambulance funding. Ms. Cohen explained that the reduction in the budget request was the result of a change in the methodology used to determine the fee; they took a five-year average of all the calls from all of the towns that we serve and based upon that, New London received a decrease in their cost for 2025.

Karen Epstein questioned the information provided that shows that the ambulance operates at a loss and she questioned if that trend will continue and how the hospital deals with it. Ms. Cohen agreed that overall, the service line does lose money. However, the hospital feels that it is a very important service to provide to the community. The hospital partners with all of the seven towns that we work with to try to create sort of a unique plan where we optimize the hospital setup with the towns to create a cooperative that can keep the service going.

The hospital does sustain losses, those losses the hospital kicks in for. The hospital looks to the communities for help to address those losses.

Ms. Cohen addressed a question of sustainability by noting that while all costs are increasing, the hospital is able to optimize utilizing the ambulance staff in the Emergency Department when they are not going out on ambulance calls. That has a combination of several benefits. Number one, they utilize their skills as they are working in the ED with the doctors from Dartmouth-Hitchcock so they're performing care when they're not out in the field. The second point is that the hospital is able to get some reimbursement from Medicare, funds that are included in the profit & loss statement. Ms. Cohen concluded by stressing that the hospital is dedicated to continuing to provide this service to the community and it is not something that they foresee changing in the future.

Council on Aging (COA): \$38,500

Kelley Keith, Executive Director, explained that New London seniors are the largest group of any of the nine towns. There are currently 32 seniors from New London on their transportation services that take people from New London to Concord, to Dartmouth, to Manchester, wherever their medical needs may take them. COA supplies durable medical equipment to New London seniors. Ms. Keith estimated that of the 3,000 members, 60% are from New London. A question was raised about how they could withstand higher costs without asking for more from the town. Ms. Keith noted that an increase was requested a few years ago, after 18 years of level funding. It is expected that an increase will be requested next year.

Lake Sunapee Visting Nurse and Hospice: \$12,748

There was no one in attendance from the organization and no questions from the committee.

Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA): \$2,000

Charlene Baxter presented the budget request on behalf of CASA. She explained that CASA is an organization statewide that recruits and trains and supports advocates who represent children through age 21. When children find themselves in the family court system as a result of abuse or neglect, CASA volunteers are appointed to represent those children in court. There are several other CASA volunteers who live in New London. The \$2,000 request is about the cost of supporting and training a CASA volunteer for a year. Ms. Baxter reported that CASA saves the state about \$3.5 million a year by training advocates to do this job. They are the only nonprofit organization in the state that does this work. Currently, there are 642 volunteer advocates statewide.

Lyndsay Harkins inquired if the state requires CASA volunteers to attend all court proceedings. Ms. Baxter noted that CASA volunteers took 78% of cases; their goal is to take 100%, so they are looking for more volunteers. When CASA can't attend, Guardian Ad Litem are appointed, they are typically attorneys.

Community Action Program (CAP): \$6,000

Beth Haywood represented CAP's request for funding. She explained that funding allows CAP to have year-round resource centers that people can come to. The request this year is the same as last year. New London residents received about a little less than \$89,000 in services this past year. They are able to support 113 residents and another new number this year is meals. So that's 3,491 meals, and that is meals made up of congregate meals, meals on wheels, summer food meals. Those are the three. They helped 56 New London households in the past year.

There was a question about how people access CAP's services. Ms. Haywood explained that have six resource centers. Since COVID, the face-to-face contact is much more rare with most people calling. Staff email an application, whether it's for fuel assistance, electric assistance, they can come and get food at, we have four food pantries. The one in Warner is not run by Community Action, but there is a food pantry right there. Staff make sure that applicants get in contact with the right people to get assistance.

King Solomon's Lodge: \$6,000

It was noted that this is the first time for King Solomon's Lodge to make a funding request. Michael Brown represented the request. He noted that attending with him are lodge members Charlie Haffner and Howard Hoke. The Lodge is applying to the town for funds as they provide resources to the town for parking for Pleasant Lake. They also provide our facilities for the bandstand across from Pleasant Lake for different events there. Mr. Brown noted that they also provide Thanksgiving meals to the community. As Masons, they value community outreach and have worked with different New London organizations, such as Kearsarge Neighborhood Partners.

Lyndsay Harkins asked if the Lodge offers a boat wash area on the Lodge property. Mr. Brown noted that it is Elkins Fish & Game that does the boat wash area on the Lodge property.

Karen Epstein noted that she recalled a discussion at the Selectmen's meeting concerning the mayhem that would result if boat trailers could not park in the Lodge parking lot. She asked if they had an idea of how many trailers park in their lot in the summer. Mr. Brown estimated that during the height of the season, 4 or 5 boat trailers per day park in their lot.

Care of trees: \$4,000

Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator, explained that Dave Carey is the town's Tree Warden, and the funds are used to maintain the town's trees and to plant new trees.

New London Garden Club: \$1,500 (revised from \$2,500)

Sandy Schmidt and Suzanne Hammond, co-presidents of the Garden Club presented the request, noting they were requesting \$1,500, not the \$2,500 they received last year. Ms. Schmidt noted that the Garden Club had a successful garden tour this summer, and we know that there are other people and agencies and groups that need money, so they are happy to request \$1,500. Mark Christensen asked if \$1,500 would be enough for the group to do all that it does for New London. Ms. Schmidt responded that the group is in good shape right now and if they needed additional funds, they would come back and ask.

Karen Epstein asked about plans from last year to install hanging baskets on Main Street with the PWD possibly helping with watering. She asked if now that the Main Street water main project was completed, did the group have plans to install the hanging plants and if not, did they anticipate having funds left over. Ms. Schmidt noted that hanging plants on Main Street is complex and would take more resources than the Garden Club has – they maintain 14 gardens around town and the costs for plants and materials has gone up so she did not think there would be unspent funds.

Messer Pond Protective Association: \$3,900

Audrey Chijner, President, presented the Messer Pond request. She explained that this is a program that works with the New Hampshire Lakes Association. The Lake Host program includes people who check boats at the boat launch, and they educate boaters about making sure they clean their boats before and after they go from pond to pond so they don't bring invasives into our pond or take something into another pond. They also keep records of boats coming in and out for the New Hampshire Lakes. Their volunteers with matching funds have clocked 250 hours in 2024, and that well exceeds the 100% grant match. Lake hosts, comprised of volunteers and paid staff, are present on the weekends and holidays.

Pleasant Lake Protective Association: \$7,000

Charlene Baxter represented the Pleasant Lake request, noting that she and her husband Doug manage the Lake Host Program at Pleasant Lake. She explained that they have four lake hosts, and they staff the boat launch from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day, 8am to 6pm. They are there all of the time to check boats that are going into the lake, and as they come out of the lake. This summer, we inspected 1,819 watercrafts. 691 of them were motorized. 1,128 were kayaks and paddle boards. The association a little over \$19,000. \$2,850 came from the New Hampshire Lakes Association grant that we submitted to them, \$7,000 came the town and the balance was \$9,497 which came from the Pleasant Lake Protective Association, and the members of the PLPA

The lake hosts did not discover any invasives on boats going into the lake, and as Audrey mentioned, for Messer Pond, the same is true.

Ms. Baxter stressed that their group intends to staff the boat launch next summer at the same level from Saturday of Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day. For that to happen, they rely on the support of the Town of New London. There's just no question that you all understand how protecting the quality of our lakes enhances property values, enhances the quality of our environment, and certainly the sense of community that people enjoy here, so profound thank you to the Town of New London for this support.

Little Sunapee Protective Association: \$7,000

Kathy Thomas, Treasurer of Little Sunapee Protective Association represented the request of their group. She thanked the Budget Committee for its support in the past. She pointed out that their numbers are very similar to Pleasant Lakes. We interacted with upwards of 2,000 boats during 2024. The one change for us is that we would like to man the boat launch past Labor Day because there continues to be boats well into October, and so we're hoping to man the boat launch all the way to Columbus Day weekend.

Charlie Kelsey explained that he and his wife have frequent discussions about all of the protective associations, around what difference is it really making other than we feel good, and we provide a resource, and we're welcoming, and our incidence of invasive species aren't dramatically high, but there are concerns, and generally there's also the concern about the health of our water bodies, the watershed itself. Mr. Kelsey asked Ms. Thomas what she felt the difference is that these host programs actually create. Ms. Thomas replied that she thinks the education portion of interacting with the boat owners is priceless, and she thinks especially since they're dealing with both motor boats, the fishermen tend to be pretty well educated, but we've seen an awful lot of smaller boats as well, and these people don't necessarily know that it's an issue taking a kayak from one lake to another, concluding that she felt that the education component is crucial.

There was agreement on the importance of the lake host programs in educating boaters to keep the lakes free of invasives, which would negatively impact an important part of the town's tax base,

Lake Sunapee Protective Association: \$8,000

Elizabeth Harper, Executive Director, represented LSPA's request. She noted that the previous speakers represented the need for the programs very well, so she would not repeat those points. She explained that they have provided lake host program on Lake Sunapee since 2000. It is one of the lakes in the state that remains free of invasives. This last year, having the funding for our lake host program meant that we were able to catch curly leaf pondweed, and find a small patch that it established, and hire divers, and to be able to eradicate that before it spread. In 2024, LSPA had 12 paid lake hosts that staffed five boat launches on Lake Sunapee with over 2,600 hours of lake hosts that conducted over 5,500 inspections. Ms. Harper concluded her remarks by noting that the lake host program is a very important part of our ability to prevent invasive species spread in the watershed. They get the same level of funding from Newbury and Sunapee.

Chamber of Commerce: \$15,000

This is an increase from the \$12,500 in FY2025. There was no representative from the Chamber present. Ms. Hallquist noted that the funding is primarily for staff the information booth and suggested the increase was the result of the higher costs everyone is experiencing. Less funding might result in less coverage at the information booth. It was also noted that the Chamber partners with the Recreation Department.

Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region Planning Commission (RPC): \$7,309

There was no representation from the RPC present and no questions from the committee.

Town Departments and Boards

Health Administration: \$6,271

Charlie Kelsey pointed out that the town recently adopted septic regulations and he questioned if administering

the regulations would increase the work of the Health Officer. Kim Hallquist explained that she is hopeful that the town will make improvements to the software used to track building permits and other permits, so the septic regulations will be tracked that way. Selectman Casey observed that the Health Officer's time may be impacted, but to the extent that the regulations result in fewer failed systems because of better maintenance, there could be a decrease in his time investigating failed systems.

Karen Epstein asked about the communication between the State DES and the Health Officer regarding the hazardous waste contamination site (on Newport Road) that was discussed a few months ago, noting that she wanted to close the loop on the communication piece. Kim Hallquist explained that DES sends information to the Health Officer. The Health Officer is in touch with the Selectmen as needed and the Selectmen will decide if a public hearing is required, or information posted to the website to keep citizens updated. She noted that the budget does not include funds to address the cleanup of the site as that is for the State to address with the property owners, however the town budget would be used for the expense of meetings and notices to keep citizens updated.

Welfare Administration: \$16,598 & Welfare Vendor Payments: \$40,000

Kim Hallquist explained that she recommended changing the Welfare Officer from a stipend position to hourly to better reflect the increased amount of time that the Welfare Officer is spending on increased requests for assistance. She also recommends increasing the vendor budget to \$40,000 which will align with current spending.

Karen Epstein inquired if the town is seeing more intensive need or more frequent short-term needs; is it a volume or a need or a combination? Kim Hallquist responded that it is a combination, noting that someone might need assistance one time to someone who needs assistance for many months. There was a discussion of whether an increased stipend would be better than an hourly rate, it was noted that the Selectmen would have the option to approach it in either manner.

The lack of affordable rental housing and lack of state support for people who need assistance were identified as reasons for increasing local expenditure.

There was consensus that Celeste Cook, Welfare Officer, who has been in the job for many years, does an excellent job for the town, a job that is not an easy one, and her efforts on behalf of the town were noted and appreciated.

Recreation Department: \$236,796 (Selectmen approved \$186,929)

Putnam Kidder, Recreation Director, who was joined by Recreation Commission members Cara Leon, Kim Ilg, Tara Stone, Jackie Christensen and Julie Corey.

Putnam presented his FY2026 budget noting the following highlights:

- A reduction in waterfront staff expense of \$9,657 which is in line with projected actual expenditures. What the ideal coverage is for the beaches. And that would be four guards at Elkins and three guards at Buckland. And due to staffing issues and availability of lifeguards and beach attendants, we don't always get that ideal number, but we do always make sure that we can safely cover the beaches. The ideal coverage for the beaches is four guards at Elkins and three guards at Buckland.
- Increases in starting wage for waterfront staff to help in recruiting.
- Increase in beach equipment maintenance to replace swim lines, swim line markers and hardware.
- Increase in lifeguard and swim supplies to replace first aid supplies and provide staff uniforms.

Discussion of lifeguards at beaches:

Charlie Kelsey asked for clarification of why we staff the lifeguard ratio and attendant ratio that was given

earlier. He added related to that is, what's a need, what's a want, what's an obligation, noting that his understanding is the town is not obligated to provide waterfront staff, however the town has created a structure that we now support, despite it not being an obligation. Mr. Kelsey explained that he was coming from the standpoint of not just the recreation budget, he was coming from the standpoint of the whole budget. And this gets me to the place of what I want versus what we absolutely need.

Putnam responded that the staffing levels of four at Elkins and three at Buckland Beach are numbers that were given by our consultant, who is a lifeguard certified trainer, and he's also a water safety instructor. Putnam explained that he proposed to do three at Elkins and then two at Buckland to still safely cover those times and those areas. He added that if there is some wiggle room that if a kid gets sick or if a kid doesn't show up, then we don't have to close the beaches because we're not able to, we can't just have one guard stay on all day, because that's not safe. Mr. Kelsey responded by noting that the town is providing a lifeguard service, and attendant service in a defined set of hours, on defined days of the week. He observed that the town is not obligated to do that, so he does not understand why we can't adjust our staffing downward and still provide that service for some of those hours, versus what a consultant tells us. Mr. Kelsey explained that he is looking at this in terms of trying to find ways to adjust our budgets to help allocate money in other areas that are absolute needs, not absolute wants.

The committee engaged in a lengthy discussion on the issues of staffing the beaches:

Support for current staffing levels:

- Reduces instances when beaches are not guarded due to staff shortages.
- Reflects community demand for staffed beaches as a key quality-of-life feature.
- Addresses the importance of safety, referencing drowning statistics among school-age youth.
- Eliminating lifeguards was previously considered but rejected by both the Selectmen and the community.
- Staffing levels are set to align with safety needs and community expectations.
- Eliminating or significantly reducing lifeguard coverage would undermine public trust and the quality of life in the town.
- Reduced lifeguard coverage would compromise beach safety and discourage families from using the beaches.
- Lifeguards not only enhance safety but also provide additional services like distributing equipment and maintaining the beaches.

Support for consideration of revised staffing levels to reduce costs:

- The town is not legally obligated to provide lifeguard services at beaches, making it a more of a “want” than an absolute “need.”
- Given the broader town budget constraints, reducing lifeguard staffing could help reallocate funds to more critical needs.
- Beaches already operate without lifeguards during early morning and evening hours.
- Since lifeguard staffing is a community choice rather than a requirement, it is worth reassessing the investment.
- Staffing coverage during non-peak hours could be an area for alternative staffing patterns.

The discussion of the staffing levels and need for lifeguards ended with the agreement that Putnam would give additional information detailing why the staffing levels proposed are required, identifying why one guard could

not guard the beach. The safety value of lifeguards was acknowledged, however the staffing levels needed was unresolved.

Selectman Casey explained the Selectmen's position in reducing the recreation budget by \$50,000. She explained that there was some discussion of whether it would be better to have two part-time positions to handle summer and winter activities, noting that in the summer a full-time person is needed to run the beaches however the winter might work with less time. It was noted that the recreation director has been part-time previously (before Scott Blewitt was hired full-time and before Putnam Kidder was hired full-time).

There was discussion of the need and value of robust programming year-round and the value of recreational opportunities for the citizens.

IT WAS MOVED (Lyndsay Harkins) and SECONDED (Lou Botta) to add the \$50,000 back in to the Recreation Director salary to \$75,080. Vote on the motion: In favor: Casey, Harkins, Botta, Lorio, Christensen, Tilley, Brown. Opposed: Wilson, Kelsey. Abstained: Epstein.

Charlie Kelsey wanted to make it clear that his opposition is not an opposition of a full-time position, instead, his request as a Budget Committee member is for Putnam to reevaluate his operating budget. He pointed out that he has conveyed one area, which is staffing at the beaches, to be considered when he comes back with a recommendation.

Library: \$756,695

Richard Tutwiler, Director, presented the library budget, emphasizing the library's commitment to providing information, entertainment, and lifelong learning services for all ages. He expressed enthusiasm about the library's new strategic plan, which aims to support senior citizens and teenagers through targeted programs and resources. Mr. Tutwiler outlined a proposed 3% year-over-year budget increase, including a 6.6% increase in town appropriations, attributing this to reduced library capital reserves and a need for realistic revenue assumptions. He highlighted efforts to improve the library's infrastructure, such as repairing the roof, addressing deferred exterior maintenance, and exploring ways to repurpose underutilized spaces for teen engagement.

The committee also discussed previous issues, including the successful repair of a stone wall at minimal cost, praised the library's award-winning garden, and acknowledged the building's ongoing renovation and maintenance needs. Future considerations may include a capital campaign to support larger-scale renovations. Mr. Tutwiler addressed various budget items, including travel and grounds maintenance, explaining adjustments due to changes in staffing and service contracts. He assured the committee that staff wages were in line with the town's standards and that security systems were sufficient, noting the community's relative safety compared to his prior experiences.

Boards, Committees, Other

Patriotic Purposes: \$300

Reviewed, no questions raised.

Archives: \$1,000

Reviewed, no questions raised.

Energy Committee: \$900

Reviewed, no questions raised.

Housing Commission: \$6,500

Peter Nichols, Chair of the Housing Commission, presented the budget requested. He noted that the budget has been reduced from last year by \$10,000, pointing out that the town was fortunate to get a grant from the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority to do some very exciting work. Mr. Nichols informed committee members that on April 5th, the Housing Commission will have its second community forum at Colby-Sawyer,

probably in the morning, and asked members to mark their calendars. The budgeted amount will allow the Housing Commission to have funds should needs arise that are outside of the grant funds.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held at 6:30pm, on Wednesday, January 15 ,2025 at Whipple Memorial Hall – the budgets to be reviewed will be capital reserve funds and warrant articles and review of the entire budget for approval.

IT WAS MOVED (John Wilson) and SECONDED (Lou Botta) to adjourn the meeting. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 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, [New London.NH.gov](http://NewLondon.NH.gov), if more than the brief description contained in these meeting minutes is desired.