



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES November 1, 2021 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	Bob Harrington, Public Works Director
Will Kidder, Town Clerk - Tax Collector	Jay Lyon, Fire Chief
Adam Ricker, Town Planner-Zoning Admin	Lou Botta, Emergency Management Director
Crystal Schimpf, Tracy Library Director	Anna Konopka, New London Resident
Ron Koron, New London Resident	Joe Kubit, New London Resident
Celeste Cook, New London Resident	Tina Helm, New London Resident
Phyllis Piotrow, New London Resident	Janet Haines, New London Resident
Maureen Prohl, New London Resident	John Ellis, New London Resident
Tim Paradis, New London Resident	Maureen Strachan, New London Resident
Bob Bowers, New London Resident	Kim Lavin, Communications Supervisor
Steve Ensign, Board of Firewards	Lt. David Keith, New London Police
Donna Larrow, New London Dispatch	Detective Lt. Buddy Rowe, New London Police
Officer Stephanie Welch, New London Police	
Officer Joe Walz & Cpl. Eben Lamson, New London Police Benevolent Association	

Budget Committee Members: Colin Beasley, Chris Lorio, Michael Williams, Melissa Leintz, Lyndsay Harkins, Joe Cardillo, Hannah Bianchi, Jerry Coogan

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

Appointments

Request waiver of rental fee at Whipple Hall

Ron Koron, a retired resident of New London, met with the Board to discuss the use of Whipple Town Hall by volunteers of the AARP Tax-Aid; a nationwide free tax service for low-income tax payers and the elderly. The program is staffed strictly by volunteers in the local area. This service has been provided in New London for the past 25 years. All of the volunteers are retired and have to become certified to prepare these returns. They need space to do this work at least two days a week beginning February 1 – April 15. They also need three training days on January 3-5 to train volunteers to update them with the latest codes. Mr. Koron would like to use Whipple Hall but the policy allows the use for up to four times a month for free but after that there is a \$25 fee per use. Mr. Koron is asking for the Whipple Hall fee to be waived. Mr. Koron is aware that the use of Whipple Hall is subject to the towns use and is aware they will have to be flexible to work around that if necessary.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to waive the fees for the AARP Tax-Aid program to utilize Whipple Hall for this purpose. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Police Benevolent Association plans to donate police equipment

Officer Walz and Cpl. Lamson attended the meeting to discuss plans to donate police equipment. Officer Walz stated that their police belts can weigh up to 25-35 pounds and with this extra weight there are long term health risks to their backs, hips and knees. Cpl Lamson modeled an outer carrier vest that would allow them to transfer a lot of gear from their belts to the vest. Switching to these vests would cost approximately \$14,000. This year the Police Benevolent Association (BVA) will be sending out a holiday letter and will be asking for donations to purchase these vests. The Board was in agreement with plans to add this equipment via donations.

Public Comment

Nicholas Orusoff expressed his concerns regarding the lack of Ophthalmology services at New London Hospital. A letter from the hospital was sent to him stating that New London Hospital was eliminating Ophthalmology services in town. He feels there is probably a healthy demand for these services and felt disappointment at receiving the letter about the discontinuation of services. He reached out to the CEO of New London Hospital and spoke with him about it. He understands that the town has very little control over this but wanted the Board of Selectmen to be aware of it.

Dr. Anna Konopka attended the meeting to propose the establishment of a mediation committee to solve problems between neighbors. She suggested a committee comprised of 5 people that would voluntarily serve on the committee and could be made up of 3 citizens of the community and two people from administration. She stated this type of committee exists in other communities and provides an opportunity for an unbiased presentation to hear both sides of an issue. The Selectmen will take this under advisement.

OLD BUSINESS

Consider proposals for AV and acoustic tiles for Whipple Hall as recommended by the BFC

The Selectmen reviewed the proposals presented to them by the Building and Facilities Committee. Selectman Kidder asked if we had adequate electrical capabilities for this AV equipment. Colin Beasley responded that Public Works Director Bob Harrington was going to line up an electrician to make sure it was adequate. She also asked if something breaks down do we pay for travel time from Salem for the technician to come fix it. Mr. Beasley will look into that.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to accept the proposal from the Building and Facilities Committee for audio/visual equipment and acoustic tiles for Whipple Hall. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Review of Community Forums held on October 23rd and 25th

Town Administrator Kim Hallquist reported at the forum held on Saturday, October 23rd there were 56 people signed in and 8 on Zoom.com for a total of 64 people. For the forum on Monday, October 25th, 59 people signed in and 32 were on Zoom.com for a total of 91. Total participants were 155 for both forums.

The results of the four police station options were as follows, in order of preference:

Build a new building on a new site:	56%
Renovate existing facility – move Recreation:	27%
Purchase an existing building on a new site:	12%
Do nothing/little:	5%

Participants were also asked to rate their top four priorities from the 10 listed during the Master Plan charrettes held in 2019¹; receiving the most 1st place selections were:

Police station: 30%,
Workforce Housing: 28% and,
Housing Opportunities 13%.

Ms. Hallquist stated she received positive feedback from people who felt the forums were well run and provided good information.

Selectman Rollins thanked everyone who came out to the forums and she felt they were successful. She would like to discuss next steps and feels it is clear that building a new building on a new site is at the top of the list. Selectman Kidder agrees the forums were well run and informative. Selectman Kidder commented that she believes that a committee is needed to look at every site and possibility in this town for a police station and suggested that a new group of people be assigned the task. Selectman Kidder pointed out that the Building and Facilities Committee were thorough in working with the Police Department but did not acknowledge the problems that existed within the Buker building. Selectman Kidder reasoned that having a fresh set of eyes on this issue would be better and the Selectmen should think about who should be on this Committee, but it should not include members of the Building and Facilities Committee. Chair Cannon disagreed and stated the Building and Facilities Committee has done a lot of work to address many of the concerns and came up with alternative solutions; he felt that going back and forming a new committee would be reinventing the wheel and he is opposed to doing that. Selectman Rollins stated she is concerned about the comment made by Selectman Kidder, pointing out that the volunteers on that committee have put a great deal of effort and commitment into the work that was done and to make that comment is appalling. She feels the Building and Facilities Committee needs to be very involved with this process and we do not need another committee.

Janet Haines stated she hopes that the discussion is not an either/or but rather a combination. The work of the BFC should not be thrown out but asking for representatives of the community as well as members of the BFC would be the most appropriate and productive way of handling it.

Colin Beasley stated that 70% of the people voted for something other than the Police Department in the ten-priority selection. There needs to be clarity about what the objective is and how it will be played out.

Celeste Cook applauds the work that the BFC has done but agrees that a new committee is needed. She is not opposed to having some of the members of the BFC on it but it should also include women as well. The process needs to move forward and she agrees with Selectmen Kidder that we need a new committee to address the police station.

¹ The 10 priorities of the 2019 charrettes and the 2021 Community Forums were: Police Station, Workforce Housing, Parking Enhancements, Commuter Amenities, Conservation Land Expansion, Housing Opportunities, Community Center, Agriculture & Commercial, Mobility Enhancements and Sustainability & Resiliency

Police Chief Emily Cobb commented that she thinks it would be valuable to have representatives from the BFC, the Planning Board and the Police Department as well as citizens.

Maureen Strachan feels it would be going backwards to go back to the BFC for this project when so many people came out to the forums to vote for a new police station. The BFC did a lot of work, but new people should be on the committee.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (John Cannon) that the Building and Facilities Committee begins to work with the Planning Board and the Police Chief to look at what potential sites might be available for a new police station. Nancy Rollins: yes, John Cannon: yes, Janet Kidder: no. THE MOTION CARRIES.

With regards to workforce housing, Selectman Rollins noted that the town has a Housing Commission, and she would like to make sure the Housing Commission and the Planning Board are working together so we are not all reviewing the same zoning regulations etc. That work needs to proceed as soon as possible, and a more planned and thoughtful process is needed for the development of workforce housing as we move forward.

Chair Cannon noted with regards to the numbers, workforce housing and housing opportunities exceeded the votes for the police station. Chris Lorio wanted clarification on this statement since at the forum it was made clear that these two items were separate and disagreed with Chair Cannon combining them is appropriate now. Mr. Lorio pointed out that workforce housing and housing opportunities were not combined at the Community Forums so should not be considered as one; the highest number of #1 votes were for the Police Station, indicating it as the number one priority. Chair Cannon explained that workforce housing and housing opportunities are both interrelated. Mr. Lorio feels that Chair Cannon is making an assumption on that since it was stated at both meetings these were two very separate items.

Consider the adoption of Records Retention Policy

The Board noted receipt of the Record Retention Policy and retention schedule as recommended for adoption by the Records Retention Committee.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to accept the municipal records retention policy. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

NEW BUSINESS

2021 Tax Rate

Kim Hallquist reported the 2021 tax rate is set by the Department of Revenue and is \$15.39. The town municipal rate is \$4.48, the county is \$2.59, local education is \$6.44, state education is \$1.88, and the New London Springfield tax rate is .73. The Warrant for 2021 property taxes is based on this rate.

Joint meeting of the Selectmen and Budget Committee on the FY 2023 Budget: Public Safety: Police, Fire, Dispatch, Emergency Services

Public Safety

Police Department: Chief Emily Cobb provided an overview of Police Department budget. The number of full-time police officers will remain at 9 as that is a good staffing level for the Police Department at this time and provides adequate coverage.

The telephone line item will be decreased due to the upgrading of the telephone system. There was a promotional deal on the phones so most of the phone's cost 1cent. The old phones were so antiquated it was difficult to find parts and they were malfunctioning. It was a source of frustration for the dispatchers and the phones were unreliable.

The dry-cleaning services are not used a lot, but Chief Cobb would like to keep some money in that line item. It has been decreased but it's important to keep money in there for when they need it.

Vehicle maintenance and new cruiser line items both saw an increase. They work hard to manage the vehicle maintenance line item but some of the vehicles are getting older and the cost of parts is increasing. Chief Cobb uses the detail revolving fund to help offset some of these costs, for instance, they will pay for tires out of this fund. The new cruiser line item has increased as the new cruiser they purchased cost \$28,000 and it costs about \$14,000 to outfit the cruiser.

The Other Professional Services line item includes the fee that is paid to the Merrimack County Attorney's office for prosecutor services; there was a 15% increase across the board.

The Conferences and Training line item saw an increase due to the increase in the cost of ammunition that is needed to firearms training.

There was a decrease in investigation supplies in the amount of \$500.

Dispatch – Chief Cobb stated she is requesting a fifth full time dispatcher this year. New London Dispatch has received 22,000 calls to date, and it continues to increase over the years. The communication center has grown substantially; dispatching services is provided to 6 police departments, fire departments, New London ambulance service and several highway departments. The dispatch center is operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and answers emergency and non-emergency calls and coordinates the response of those services. Even with the part time dispatchers, the staffing level is not sufficient. The dispatchers are facing extreme fatigue and burnout. Hiring another dispatcher will help provide better coverage for vacation and sick time. Although the full-time wages line was increased, the part-time line item was decreased by \$40,000. The overtime wages line item was also increased but Chief Cobb is hoping this doesn't have to be used as much if the fifth full time person is hired and there is more flexibility with scheduling.

Lyndsay Harkins asked if members of the communications center in attendance wanted to add anything. Communications Supervisor Kim Lavin stated they have been understaffed and have been working 60 hours per week, noting that if they had another dispatcher that would cut down in the overtime.

Detective Rowe commented that the dispatchers are working long hours and overnights and are not able to use their vacation time. Their quality of life and time with their family is important and that is what we value here in the Town of New London.

Fire Department - Fire Chief Jay Lyon reported the Fire Department budget has gone up a little over 2%. The New London Fire Department is made up primarily part-time employees as well as three full-time employees. Staffing and employee retention is always challenging.

Dues and subscriptions increased substantially due to software that is used. They are looking to use a different vendor and Chief Lyon is hoping to get some of this free from the State of New Hampshire with regards to fire inspections as well as maintenance records for their apparatus and inventory list.

Another line item that increased was office supplies. A computer that is used to enter monthly data will need to be replaced. Uniforms and safety equipment also increased. The personal protective clothing and accessories required to outfit a firefighter is expensive.

There hasn't been any modification in part time wages since 2018 so this line item has been increased. Selectman Rollins asked if the wages and salaries were sufficient, asking if an increase in wages is needed in order to retain employees. Chief Lyon stated for years, the issue of recruitment and retention has been an issue in fire service, noting that he did an analysis and looked at other fire departments and New London is in line with other agencies. Chief Lyon commented that people don't join the fire department for the monetary value, they join because they want to help their community.

Lyndsay Harkins asked when modifications would need to be made for new apparatus to fit in the fire house. Chief Lyon stated this is contingent upon when apparatus no longer fits. The current facility was constructed in 1972 and at that time the height of doors was lower. Due to federal emission standards and other requirements the height of apparatus has been increasing. When apparatus no longer fits, the plan is to re-truss the roof of the spare bay to accommodate it. This would probably be within the next ten years. Ms. Harkins was just inquiring as to whether it makes sense to put a new roof on if they need to elevate the roof line.

Board of Firewards

Steve Ensign, Chair of the Board of Firewards, reported that the Board of Firewards budget remains unchanged at \$292.

Emergency Management

Lou Botta, Emergency Management Director, presented the Emergency Management budget. He noted there have been many challenges due to COVID and as a result, there were several things they were not able to do as they were dealing with COVID. He explained that Code Red is a reverse 911 that people can sign up for and in the case of emergencies, people are able to get a message directly into their homes via text or email.

Equipment repair and maintenance provides for maintenance of the towns emergency generators which are getting old and require maintenance. In the future, these will need to be replaced.

Since the state of emergency has been lifted, all personal protective equipment is our responsibility to purchase. The CERT team budget has been reduced as the team has gone through the training.

Fire Chief Jay Lyon explained that the Emergency Management group assists Police and Fire during emergency events and do things like set up shelters, block off roads, etc. This volunteer group does things that the fire department and police department don't have the staff or time to assist with during these events, allowing fire and police staff to concentrate on other issues.

Joe Cardillo stated that although it was decided at the forums that a new site needs to be identified to build new police station, he has concerns about what happens between now and then. We've had things brought before our Selectmen for years and no actions have been taken to address them. He asked what has happened to the conversation about bullet proofing the dispatch center and securing it. It's important to protect our police department reminding everyone of the incident that occurred in Newbury where a shooting took place, and wonders if securing the building is a priority. He doesn't want things to fall through the cracks as we wait for a new police station.

Town Administrator Kim Hallquist responded that they are looking at hardening the Academy building since it is most vulnerable building, especially given that the Newbury incident occurred at their town office. Work is being done to get pricing to start implementing some of these safety measures, noting that the expansion of the Town Clerk-Tax Collector will need to be settled before the safety measurers can be implement, to avoid installing equipment only to have to remove it. The Police Department does have some safety procedures in place already including locked doors, cameras, and bullet proof glass; they certainly need more but are not as vulnerable as some other buildings in town. In terms of priority, Ms. Hallquist felt that the Academy Building is in most need at this time.

Town Administrators Report

Ms. Hallquist provided the following report:

- There is an open position in the town office for a full-time land use and assessing clerk. The job has been posted on the NH Municipal Association website, typically the best place to advertise municipal positions, but only two applications have been submitted so far.

Committee Meetings & Reports

Planning Board – Selectman Kidder reported that the Planning Board met on October 26, 2021. There was a tree cutting application and the Board discussed lighting at a dentist office in town as there were concerns about light pollution. The plan that was presented addressed those concerns.

Meeting Minutes – October 4th, 18th, 29th

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to approve the minutes of October 4th, 18th and 29th meetings. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED. John Cannon recused himself from the vote regarding the October 4th meeting minutes as he was not in attendance.

Upcoming Meetings & Special Events

- Recreation Commission – Tuesday, November 2, 2021 @ 5:30pm-Whipple Hall
- Trustees of the Trust Fund – Thursday, November 4, 2021 @ 8:30am-Syd Crook
- Citizen’s Advisory Committee – Saturday, November 6, 2021 @ 7:30am-Whipple Hall
- BOS/BC Joint Meeting – Monday, November 8, 2021 @ 6:30pm-Whipple Hall
- Joint Loss Wellness Committee – Tuesday, November 9, 2021 @ 10:00am-Syd Crook
- Planning Board – Tuesday, November 9, 2021 @ 6:30pm-Whipple Hall
- Emergency Management – Wednesday, November 10, 2021 @ 9:30am-Whipple Hall
- THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2021 – ALL OFFICES CLOSED – VETERANS DAY

Items to be signed:

- Accounts Payable Voucher
- Intent to cut
- Birthday Cards (December)

Applications Approved &/or Denied

Zoning Permits-approved

- Northeast Investments, TM 085-044-0-0-0. Interior renovation to retail/offices. ZP 21-10. Approved. 10/28/2021.

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson
Recording Secretary
Town of New London