



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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NEW LONDON BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, December 15, 2022

Whipple Hall

6:00 PM

PRESENT:

Janet Kidder, Selectman
Bill Helm, Selectman
Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator
Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Will Kidder, Town Clerk - Tax Collector
Steve Ensign, Board of Firewards Chair
Bob Bowers, New London resident
Mark Vernon, Conservation Commission
Nancy Marachio, New London resident
Peter Nichols, Housing Commission Chair
Ron Rakow, New London resident

Jay Lyon, Fire Chief
Joe Cardillo, New London resident
Bob Brown, Conservation Commission Chair
Michael Kennedy, Conservation Commission
Janet Haines, New London resident
Liz Meller, New London resident
Doug Baxter, New London resident

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

Speed feedback signs for Bunker Road

Ron Rakow and Doug Baxter, residents of Bunker Road attended the meeting. Mr. Rakow shared he has been working with his neighbors on trying to curb an issue of excessive speed on Bunker Road. One of their initiatives was to raise money for feedback signs and he is happy to report they have raised the necessary money and have given those funds to Finance Officer, Lynn Lewis. Once the ground thaws they will plan on installing these signs.

Mr. Rakow stated when they looked at this issue last summer, they found that while feedback signs are an important component for slowing traffic speed, signs alone will not work as the signs lose effectiveness over time if there aren't other efforts to reduce speed. Primarily, the other effort needs to be enforcement. He is asking for additional follow through on that because without it, they are risking putting up signs and not having them be as effective as they had hoped. The vote that the Board took last July included both the authorization for them to move forward with the feedback signs but also for their group to work with the New London Police Department (NLPD) to establish an enforcement plan. It has been their observation since that July meeting that there was a little bit more intensive police activity both before and after that hearing, but that has since tapered off. It seemed to have helped curb some of the behavior for a time but it has reverted back to where they started. He would like to formalize what working with the NLPD looks like. He has three requests for consideration to help with this:

1. That the group be allowed to participate in the siting of the feedback signs. They understand the town would have the official say in where they would ultimately go but they would like to provide some input.
2. Data Collection – they have asked Chief Cobb for data in the past that comes from the feedback signs. Chief Cobb has been very cooperative in providing them with summary reports however, the reports don't go far enough in terms of giving them the types of data that they need. They would like to track progress they are making with the feedback signs and other efforts and help the Police Department to do some data analytics.
3. Set up a regular meeting with the NLPD to work through these issues of excessive speed. This can be for just their group or open to anyone else with concerns about speed on their roads.

Town Administrator Kim Hallquist responded to these requests on behalf of Chief Cobb. The Chief doesn't have any problem with getting their input on where to put the signs. Ms. Hallquist stated that once these signs are purchased, everyone would need to understand that there would not be an opportunity for refund of a donation if the location was not agreeable to the person who donated. There may be areas that would work better due to solar/sunlight or there may be people that don't want a sign in front of their house. Chief Cobb also is in agreement with providing the data collected by the signs, it is all public information.

For the third request, the chief would like the meeting to be open to people that have concerns on all roads. The Chief suggests having a meeting before Memorial Day to discuss goals and hear concerns and then again after Labor Day to assess how things went.

Selectman Kidder does not know if they will be successful in getting drivers to slow down but we need to try. She is in favor of meetings with the Police Department and residents that have concerns about speed on their roads and feels this is a good start.

Mr. Rakow responded that he hopes they can do more than a few meetings, but this can be discussed further. He also doesn't want there to be the feeling that this is a goal that they cannot reach. There are other communities in New Hampshire that heavily enforce speed and have a zero-tolerance policy. It is possible to curb the behavior and it takes a focus and continuous effort that includes education and enforcement. In last year's town report there was a significant drop off in the police report in terms of the number of traffic stops. This does not indicate this issue is being taken seriously. This needs to change and their needs to be more focus on the part of the police department with regards to this issue.

Selectman Kidder responded she does not know what our staffing issues are and if we have the enough people required to do this. She would like to hear from Chief Cobb about it and we may realize we need to add another officer.

Doug Baxter shared what they are really hoping for is to have a working partnership with the Police Department. When they were initially discussing the funding for the signs they felt there was great support from the officers and the chief. After the funding through the Police Benevolent Association fell through, it seemed everything changed. There has been a dramatic decrease in police presence in the Elkins/Bunker road area. Kim Hallquist responded that she is surprised to hear that because the Chief has a good relationship with all citizens. The Chief has records that show directed patrols on Bunker Road and they at the same level of all roads or more. The department has focused on that

area and to hear that he thinks enforcement has fallen off due to ill feelings related to the funding issue is unfortunate. While Chief Cobb doesn't direct the officers where to patrol on a daily basis, she can look at the numbers to see if Bunker Road was not getting attention that other roads were and have a discussion with the Lieutenants. Selectman Helm noted that he recently did a ride along with an officer and had the opportunity to talk with him. They are very much aware of the issue but they are getting it from all sides. They patrolled Bunker Road three times while he was in the car.

Update on Bog Project

Bob Brown, Chair of the Conservation Commission attended the meeting to provide an update on the Philbrick Cricenti Bog walkway project. About a year and a half ago the Commission came to the conclusion that something needed to be done in the bog in terms of a secure and safe walkway. The access path or entrance that runs from the stairway on Newport Road to the junction where the trail splits is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of boardwalk and it is wet in that area. Last year they requested funding from the Mary Haddad fund to cover the cost of building the first 350 feet of board walk. This was completed on time at the end of June and at the price quoted.

Chair Brown reported that trail use has increased significantly which means more wear and tear on the trails and there have been reports of people falling. They are proposing to fix another portion of the trail and have a quote in the amount of \$82,000. They will try to do private funding to cover the cost and have already received donations but want to finish this by next year so would need to get the materials ordered soon. The Conservation Commission is asking for approval tonight for a withdrawal of up to \$48,000 from the Mary Haddad fund.

Selectman Kidder asked what was left in the Mary Haddad fund. Lynn Lewis will have to research this as some of the funds have already been committed for other things. As part of the Haddad Trust requirements this request would meet the criteria. The Board of Selectman will gather more information and table this until the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bob Bowers, resident of New London stated that three years ago, on September 5, 2019, the Building and Facilities Committee (BFC) filed a report with the Selectman which included its review of the Fire Department. It noted that Chief Lyon informed them that the Fire Department will need a new roof within 3-5 years and recommended that solar panels be installed at that same time. The BFC made that recommendation to the Selectmen. This spring, after additional inspection by Chief Lyon, it was recommended to the Selectmen that the roof be repaired as soon as possible and it was replaced in November. Mr. Bowers stated he attended the Energy Committee meeting last Wednesday and inquired about the status of the committee's work on installing solar panels at the Fire Department. They informed him but they had heard from the Chief initially but had not heard anything from the Selectmen about this. The Energy Committee further noted that not only is this high on their priority list but that a new electricity contract was going to be renegotiated and it was essential to have this tended to before a new contract is signed. Mr. Bowers strongly urged the Selectmen to engage with the Energy Committee on this right away as this is an essential part of the town's energy and sustainability efforts and that they budget the appropriate funding to ensure this is carried out in a timely manner.

Update on P&S for former Bewley property (County Road and Newport Road)

Kim Hallquist stated that last week Joe Hogan contacted the Selectmen's office to ask if the Selectmen would like to purchase only the land across from Hannaford, instead of the three lots that they originally asked them to purchase. Instead of spending \$600,000 it would be much less. The Selectmen met on Friday and agreed to move forward with just purchasing the one piece of property. Once a sale price has been decided, they will work draft the purchase and sales agreement.

Selectman Helm noted that the Energy Committee is interested in this land acquisition, and it is their belief and they have done some work that indicates that the town's entire energy needs could be met by doing solar work on this property if it is acquired.

Review proposed revenues for FY2024 budget

Selectman Helm noted this is the first time the Selectmen have looked at the revenue part of the FY2024 budget. Lynn Lewis reported the estimated revenue amount is \$4,098,232. This is down a bit from the estimate last year but some of the capital reserve requests have been pulled out as well as the bond that was in there. Selectman Helm inquired about the possible revenues from New London Place. Kim Hallquist stated the biggest thing that will happen with that project will be sewer connection fees which will go directly to the sewer account. Selectman Helm stated if the housing project on the Cricenti land proceeds there would be a current use tax penalty from that project that should be added to revenues. All of that land is under current use.

Selectman Helm also noted that since the Whipple Bond amount was coming out, shouldn't the proposed bond for the land go in since it's already in the principal and interest calculation? Lynn Lewis responded yes and will make that correction. Kim Hallquist stated it's important to remember that these will all change in October when actual amounts are posted and are just estimates for now.

Consider MOU for Professional Services related to Coalition Communities 2.0

Kim Hallquist asked the Selectmen if the town wants to continue their association with the group known as the Coalition Communities 2.0. Their charge is to look at the legislation that is coming about the school funding issue and to advise the coalition communities so action can be taken. New London joined this in 2021. The cost to be a part of this is \$7,175. The past few years it has been in the \$3,000 range. The group is hiring new counsel and is participating in a case filed in court.

IT WAS MOVED (Bill Helm) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to approve the agreement to continue working with Coalition Communities 2.0. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Merrimack County proposed 2023 budget; 2.9% increase in property taxes

Kim Hallquist stated this is an annual occurrence, similar to the town budget.

Department of Revenue report on median ratio of town assessed valuation is 62.5%

Kim Hallquist stated the median ratio of town assessed valuation of 62.5% is not good and it has been a very long time since it has been that low. This is a reflection of what is happening with the real estate market in the entire state. Kris McAllister will be working with all towns in the tri-town assessing district to bring those numbers up. The town's ratio is typically in the 90% range.

The State of New Hampshire looks at all assessments and comes up with a ratio for each town. They will equalize it up to 100% and they use that figure when they portion things like school and county numbers that the town of New London pays for based on valuation. This is happening statewide and is a result of people purchasing properties way over the assessed valuation.

Selectmen's meeting schedule

Selectman Helm proposed meeting in January on the 5th, 19th and 26th and for February on the 9th and 23rd. Selectman Kidder agreed.

TOWN ADMINISTRATORS REPORT

Kim Hallquist reported the following:

- The employee holiday party was held on Friday, December 9, 2022.
- The Public Works Director will be prepared to speak on January 4, 2023 at the Budget Committee meeting about the fire department cooling control system.
- The Town Clerk – Tax Collector's office will be closed tomorrow.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS & REPORTS

Selectman Kidder reported that a Planning Board meeting was held on November 15, 2022. Twin Pines Housing came in and asked for a continuation. They were supposed to come back on January 10, 2023 but may need to postpone again. Paul Gorman resigned as chairman as the Planning Board. He will still remain on the Board but Tim Paradis was voted in as the Chair.

Another Planning Board meeting was held on December 13, 2022. There was a final site plan review for 374 Main Street. They are reconfiguring the building, putting in a bakery and will rent out the basement. There was also a subdivision and annexation on Lakeshore Drive. The public hearing to review warrant articles that the Planning Board will propose in conjunction with Housing Commission will be held on January 10, 2023.

Selectman Helm reported that the Waste Reduction Committee has continued to meet every two weeks. In the first eight weeks of the composting trial they have collected just shy of a ton of compost. Maureen Prohl has surveyed the people who are in the test group and they are satisfied and excited about it. The committee would like to go before the Selectmen in January and report on where they are and potentially ask for a warrant article to expand to a larger composting program in the town.

Whipple Hall Project Committee – Kim Hallquist reported on behalf of Chair Rollins. The committee was due to meet on Monday but had to cancel that meeting. The committee had planned to give an update tonight on chairs and tables but will instead will plan to attend the January 5, 2023 meeting to give that update.

MEETING MINUTES: Approve the Selectmen's Minutes of November 9th & 15th and December 9th

Selectman Kidder was not at the November 15, 2022 meeting so they will only approve the minutes of November 9th and December 9th.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Bill Helm) to accept the minutes of the November 9, 2022 and December 9, 2022 meetings. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & SPECIAL EVENTS

- Next Regular Selectmen's meeting – TBD
- Town Clerk's Office Closed – Friday, December 16th

- Conservation Commission – Wednesday, December 21st – 8:30 AM – Syd Crook Room
- **Town Offices Closed – Monday, December 26th**
- Budget Committee – Wednesday, January 4th – 6:30 PM – Whipple Town Hall
- Recreation Commission – Thursday, January 5th - 5:30 PM – Whipple Town Hall
- Planning Board, Tuesday, January 10th – 6:30 PM – Whipple Town Hall

APPROVAL OF PAY VOUCHERS, PERMITS etc.

Items to be signed:

- Accounts Payable Forms
- Sewer Expansion (2)
 - Bloch/Lowe (signed previous)
 - Joel & Megan Brown
- Intent to cut

Applications Approved &/or Denied

Building/Zoning Permits – approved

- Robert & Lorraine Castaldo, TM 098-017-0-0-0. Build 8x10 garden shed. **BP 22-117**. Approved. 11/15/22.
- Michael Hansen Trust, TM 128-014-0-0-0. 16x18 addition to SFH & detached 24x30 2-bay garage. **BP 22-123**. Approved. 11/15/22.
- Emily Baldwin, TM 073-086-0-0-0. Finish above garage area w/bedroom & bathroom, interior reno, adding 120sq ft to deck. **BP 22-127**. Approved. 11/18/22.
- Maria Lackstrom, TM 062-007-001-0-0. Build new 1500sq ft ranch home. **BP 22-131**. Approved. 11/18/22.
- Joseph Lackie, TM 071-026-000-005-S05. Renovate 1st floor kitchen, dining, living, powder room & primary bedroom/bathroom. **BP 22-140**. Approved. 11/18/22.
- Mary Michels Revocable Trust, TM 094-020-0-0-0. New 4-bedroom home, 4614sq ft w/attached porch, garage, shed. **BP 22-138**. Approved. 11/18/22.
- Dianne & Henry Phillips, TM 058-004-0-0-0. Interior renovations of kitchen & 3 bathrooms. **BP 22-141**. Approved. 11/18/22.
- Scott & Susan Ellison, TM 093-011-0-0-0. Roof mount solar 10.8kW. **BP 22-142**. Approved. 12/8/22.
- Margaret Weathers, TM 073-030-0-0-0. Roof mount solar 8.4kW. **BP 22-143**. Approved. 12/8/22.
- Peter Bloch & Kathy Lower, TM 056-013-0-0-0. New 6,752sq ft home with basement & attached garage. **BP 22-139**. Approved. 12/12/22.

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Trina Dawson
Recording Secretary
Town of New London