



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## NEW LONDON BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES December 3, 2025 Whipple Memorial Town Hall - 6:00 PM Approved 12, 17, 2025

**Budget Committee Present:** Charles Kelsey (Chair), Lou Botta, Karen Epstein, Megan Brown, John Tilley, Cynthia Ruis. **Absent:** Richard Anderson, Kim Ilg, Chris Lorio, Lyndsay Lund

**Staff Present:** Will Kidder, Town Clerk & Tax Collector, Putnam Kidder, Recreation Director, Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer, Ashley Seybold, Town Administrator, Adam Ricker, Town Planner, Sam Clarke, Director of Public Works, Jay Lyon, Fire Chief.

**Agenda:** Consent Agenda: Approval of November 19, 2025 Meeting Minutes, Budget Review Presentations for Department of Public Works, Town Administration, Finance, Tax Clerk and Tax Collection, Planning & Zoning, Health Services, King Solomon Lodge (added to the agenda for the next meeting), Public Input, Discussion about the Budget Committee schedule, status of review, outcomes and timeline.

Chair Kelsey called the meeting to order, acknowledged the absence of members due to work related conflicts, receipt of a letter from Jay Lyon, Fire Chief regarding overtime expense calculation and justification for the FY 2027 Budget, and that the Energy Committee request for \$150,000 capital reserve for FY 2027 would be reviewed by the Select Board and defer consideration by the Budget Committee pending the Select Board review. Noting a quorum Kelsey asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda which included the minutes from the November 19, 2025 Budget Committee meeting.

**1. Consent Agenda: Approval of November 19, 2025, Meeting Minutes: It was moved (Lou Botta) and Seconded (Meg Brown) to approve the Minutes of November 19, 2025. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**2. Public Works Budget** review presentation by Sam Clarke, Director. The highlights of the presentation included: **Government Buildings** budget request represents the most affected area of the budget which was informed by the recent Anzalone & Associates building assessment report. The costs projected in the budget are vastly different (less) than the Anzalone report estimates by utilizing (in-house personnel to perform the associated work). All safety related issues red-flagged in the report are addressed in the budget. Projects like electrical upgrades at Buker and the Fire Department are being postponed pending decisions on building use. All public buildings are equipped with fire suppression. A significant investment in maintenance and repair in this budget may lead to level or lower funding in subsequent years. Deferred maintenance is being addressed with a focus on proactive care to avoid future large-scale issues and expense. John Tilley raised a discussion about the assessed values of town structures and the relationship to maintenance, repair and replacement expense, and the continuing need for a long-term strategic plan. The town owns 31 structures, excluding small sheds. Sam mentioned the importance of looking at all buildings even more closely and on a continuous basis.

Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer will provide the assessed value of all town buildings and stated that the auditors look at this information and incorporate it in the audit report documents.

**Highway Administration** Budget includes a “modest 4.6% increase” primarily due to cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) and health benefit cost increases. The CDL training line item was zeroed out to offset increases. Part-time wages are now being tracked to isolate where and at what expense employees work in other areas / departments other than highway related work. (This will help in determining the true cost associated with this type of work). The NH retirement request is reduced due to retirement of more senior staff at higher wage rates.

**Highway Streets**, calcium chloride and street painting are on an ‘off year’ in FY 2027 (every other year expense), resulting in a break-even in the budget. Control of expense is planned by prioritizing projects to maximize efficiency, especially in paving services.

**Culverts:** Culvert budget was zeroed last year due to a surplus. The budget will be increased in FY 2027 but includes the use of surplus of culverts.

**Transfer Station** waste disposal has a 10% increase due to a new state mandated surcharge. Trash hauling fees have decreased due to an inter-municipal agreement with Meredith. Revenues have increased to offset increases in waste disposal costs.

**Solid waste cleanup** laws have changed mandating a new procedure for recycling used motor oil.

**Hydrants** \$32,500 expense is paid to the New London-Springfield Water Precinct for them to perform routine maintenance and access to the hydrants.

**Public Works temporary trailer units** carry an annual rental expense of \$28,800. Discussion ensued on whether the town’s insurance has provisions for business interruption reimbursement that could help offset the rental expense. This will be verified by Lynn Lewis and Ashley Seybold.

**Asset Replacement Criteria:** Discussion ensued on the criteria used to determine asset replacement versus repair decisions. Vehicle replacement is based on the cost to repair versus replace, how functional the vehicle or equipment is, and rent / lease options. Building assets are more complex and factor safety, age, current and future use, and community needs. An example of a decision to retire a piece of equipment and lease for future use was the roadside mower which had low usage and high maintenance.

**Wastewater** budget increased due to the percentage fees negotiated and to be paid to Sunapee.

### **3. Executive Budget Presentation (Ashley Seybold, Town Administrator).**

Highlights: Town meetings resulted in overspending last year. This year’s budget is higher and reflects moving Town meeting to Colby Sawyer College and includes a rental fee. Increased advertising costs are due to requirements of additional and effective advertising media. Discussion ensued regarding the Select Board’s Discretionary Fund increase to accommodate unanticipated needs during the year. Dispatch study is placed into a separate line item. Cost for a Dispatch Study is budgeted at \$30,000 and now estimated to be as high as \$40,000. Discussion ensued regarding alternatives for outsourcing a study versus using in-house resources. Ashley Seybold shared that the complexity and scope of the study and the potential bias certain parties bring to a study warrant using an outside organization.

**Assessing** costs are shared among the towns of Sunapee, Newbury and New London. Personnel compensation is paid by Newbury and reimbursed by New London.

**Legal** expenses have increased substantially related to current lawsuits and inquires requiring legal counsel. The town previously benefited in lower legal expense from Kim Halquist (prior Town Administrator) being an attorney.

**Personnel** cost increases are significant in health, dental, life and disability expenses.

**4. Finance Budget Presentation (Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer).**

Highlights: Increases in health benefits, software, computer support, and licenses. Postage line item reduced to reflect prior usage. The Select Board is be provided the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) data at its December 18th meeting. The present budget includes 1.5% for COLA. Ashley Seybold has consulted other towns regarding their COLA increases all of which are at or near 3%. If the Select Board adopts 3%, the aggregate impact on the budget will be approximately an additional \$62,000.

**5. Town Clerk/Tax Collector Budget Presentation (Will Kidder, Town Clerk & Tax Collector).**

Highlights: Election expenditures are up. Ballot booths and equipment need replacing which has been a 4-year plan. Tax Clerk Certification training to be done. Will Kidder has been selected to serve on the State Association Board which will give New London positive exposure and access to information.

**6. Health / Welfare budget (Asheley Seybold, Town Administrator).**

The FY 2027 budget includes a significant increase. The Town is statutorily required to help any person(s) seeking assistance regardless of being a resident of the Town. We are trending to surpass this FY budget. Ashley Seybold met with pastors of the local churches and ‘houses of worship’ who have been directing parishioners ‘in-need’ to New London's welfare officer regardless of their town residency. Ashley made pastors aware of the obligation of support and encouraged them to refer parishioners ‘in-need’ to the welfare office in their town of residency. For this budget year a part-time employment model versus stipend compensation will help assure flexibility to meet the growing needs more effectively. There was discussion about how to accurately forecast welfare expenses obligations.

**7. Planning and Zoning budget (Adam Ricker, Town Planner).** There are no material changes to the budget year over year other than health insurance and other benefit cost increases. Engineering Review is budgeted at \$4,000 with little to no expenditure in previous years. Adam advised that we should keep this amount in the budget to be able to ensure third party review of a Planning Board decision that can be appealed. Should this occur there is offsetting revenue paid by the appealing party.

**8. Committee Meeting Schedule, Status of Review, and Outcomes:**

Chair Kelsey reviewed the remaining meeting agenda and dates and proposed a change the process of establishing a budget. The recommendation was for each member to review the budget and determine any motions they may have and provide these in advance of the January 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> meetings. Devoting these meetings to more deliberation and discussion of key adjustment proposals will better inform decisions. Kelsey characterized the past process of approving a budget as challenging and pressured by time, disallowing any substantive discussion and deliberation. He suggested that a revised process would address this including more public input and engagement with Department Heads. Kelsey solicited the reaction and input of each committee member. John Tilley presented the potential challenges the process might present including conforming to regulatory requirements and assuring the provision of the motion information to the public in a timely manner. Challenges were acknowledged. The committee agreed unanimously to adopt the proposed approach. Kelsey will document the process for compiling the motions, timeframes and supporting data for motions including the rationale for them. Kelsey agreed to assemble the motions into a single document for the committee prior to the January 21<sup>st</sup> meeting assuring the provision of the motion(s) and information to the public in a timely manner. It was noted that the timeline did not preclude a committee member presenting additional motions or questions at any time up to the end of the meeting of January 28<sup>th</sup>.

**9. Public Comment** – There was no public comment.

A motion was made to adjourn. **IT WAS MOVED (Cynthia Ruis) AND SECONDED (John Tilley) to adjourn. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.** The meeting adjourned at 8:04PM.

**Action Items:**

1. Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer will provide the assessed value of all town buildings.
2. Charlie Kelsey will generate an email containing the proposed change in the process of developing a budget as discussed and unanimously agreed to by the committee.
3. Follow up on previous action item regarding the Recreation Revolving Fund and determine how the fund can be used and for what specific expenses budgeted / anticipated in the 2027 budget appropriation request.
4. Follow-up on previous request by committee members to accommodate meeting attendance remotely if circumstances prevent in-person attendance.

Note: Meeting minutes prepared by Charles Kelsey, Karen Epstein, Cynthia Ruis, John Tilley, Ashley Seybold, and with assistance from HyNote meeting translator conversion. The minutes do not reflect comments and conversations verbatim but capture the essence of intent and data. The entirety of the meeting can be accessed and viewed on the town website at <https://newlondon.nh.gov>

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](https://newlondon.nh.gov), if more than the summary description contained in these meeting minutes is desired.