



TOWN OF
NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MEETING MINUTES
Whipple Town Hall
December 6, 2021
6:00 PM**

PRESENT:

John Cannon, Chairman
Nancy Rollins, Selectman
Janet Kidder, Selectman
Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator
Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Jay Lyon, Fire Chief
Will Kidder, Town Clerk-Tax Collector
Crystal Schimpf, Tracy Library Director
Bob Harrington, Public Works Director
Janet Haines, New London Resident
Lt. David Keith, New London Police Department
Detective Lt. Buddy Rowe, New London Police Department
Officer Stephanie Welch, New London Police Department
Colin Beasley, Budget Committee
Melissa Leintz, Budget Committee

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

The Board noted that it would begin the budget review by discussing outstanding budget items and proposed budget changes as submitted by the Town Administrator:

1. COLA

Ms. Hallquist reported that last year employees were given a 1.5% COLA. The cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security is 5.9% for 2022. Obviously, we are seeing increases in the cost of living that we have not seen in a long time making this year's decision more difficult because of the impact on the budget.

Sunapee has included a 3% COLA in their budget, and the same step plan that New London uses with 2.5% for most steps, and lower in the higher steps. Newbury expects to have a 5+% COLA (they use the CPI that is released in mid-December) and they will likely not include merit on top of that (they do not have a step plan). Towns and cities throughout the state run the gamut for COLAs – some are opting to follow social security and go with 5.9% while others are going with something less, like Sunapee. Most New London employees are eligible for a step of 2.5%, and that amount is included in the budget. Each 1% increase is approximately \$33,500.

Selectman Kidder felt that 2.5% was the appropriate amount for a COLA, Selectman Rollins agreed.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to approve a COLA adjustment of 2.5%. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

2. Request by Chief Cobb to change cruiser request to eliminate purchase in FY2023 and instead purchase in FY2022

Lt. David Keith addressed the Board to explain why the Chief would like to purchase two vehicles in FY2022 and eliminating the planned purchase in FY 2023. Lt Keith noted that the opportunity to purchase two vehicles arose when the dealer contacted the Chief to say he mistakenly ordered two cruisers instead of one. The Chief feels that given the shortages in vehicles and parts, that capitalizing on this opportunity to get two cruisers makes sense. If approved by the Selectmen, the FY2023 budget can be reduced by \$43,000. Lt Keith stressed that the police department is not adding more cars to the fleet.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Nancy Rollins) to approve the recommendation of the Chief to purchase two cruisers in FY2022 and to remove \$43,000 from the FY2023 budget designated for the purchase of a cruiser. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Changes to equipment repair and maintenance lines in highway and transfer station budgets

Ms. Hallquist explained that Public Works Director Bob Harrington recommends an increase of \$28,500 in equipment repairs and maintenance lines (\$23,000 in highway and \$5,500 in transfer station). Some of his repair lines are already overbudget with 7 months left in the fiscal year; the backlog of orders for equipment will likely continue into FY2023 so we should be prepared to have the resources to meet the challenges to keep the town's equipment in good working order.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to approve the recommendation of the Public Works Director to add \$23,000 to the highway equipment repair and maintenance line and \$5,500 to the transfer station equipment repair and maintenance line. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Increase Energy budget by \$450

Ms. Hallquist reminded the Board that during the budget presentation, the Energy Committee representative requested an increase of \$450 to allow the committee to do some public outreach and to participate in meetings and trainings. She noted that the committee is very active and she felt that the increase in funds was appropriate.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Nancy Rollins) to approve the addition of \$450 to the Energy Committee budget. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. Increase town buildings capital reserve fund

Ms. Hallquist reported that the budget includes expenditures of \$93,000 (generators for Whipple and Fire Department roof) that would normally come from this capital reserve fund. The Board has already approved the expenditure of \$120,000 to make AV upgrades to Whipple. These transactions will leave the fund at \$24,773 after the \$50,000 being considered in this budget. If the Board wants to make safety upgrades to the Academy Building and still have funds to address other building issues that may come up during the year, then an increase is advisable.

Selectman Kidder noted that she felt that the original budgeted amount of \$50,000 was sufficient. Selectman Rollins agreed and noted that a broader discussion of town building needs must be held. The Board determined that a deposit of \$50,000 will be included in the budget.

6. Add \$24,000 to computer capital reserve fund

A payment of \$24,000 was made last year to the Computer Maintenance CRF; Mike Williams, IT Officer, recommends that a deposit into the fund be made each year.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Nancy Rollins) to approve the addition of a \$24,000 deposit to the computer CRF. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. Fire Department equipment capital reserve fund deposit increase

Ms. Hallquist reported that the budget includes \$145,000 based on CRF Projection Chart in place at the end of the FY2022 budget year. The Chief recommends increasing the deposit to \$265,000 in order to have adequate funds available when the next purchase is made, or to \$210,000 if the town prefers to go with a lease-to-own model of acquiring the equipment. Whichever method the Selectmen select, there should be an increase in this line item from the original amount included in the budget.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Nancy Rollins) to approve a deposit of \$210,000 into the Fire Equipment CRF and to support the purchase of the engine via a lease to own plan as recommended by the Fire Department. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

8. Increasing Selectmen annual stipend

Ms. Hallquist noted that the Selectmen currently receive \$3,000 per year, the Health Officer and Welfare Officer each receive \$5,000 per year, the Treasurer receives \$3,000 per year. She suggested that the Selectmen increase the stipend to match the Health Officer and Welfare Officer, observing that while people don't run for the office based on the compensation, the amount paid should be fair and reflect the significant amount of time that is required for the position. This will help to encourage people to run for the office in the future.

IT WAS MOVED (John Cannon) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to approve the change to \$15,000 to the Selectmen's annual stipend. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Board reviewed the budget by section:

Executive

Ms. Hallquist noted that there are two new recommendations in the Executive budget: \$15,000 for a salary study and \$30,000 to begin the digitization of the town's records as recommended by the Building and Facilities Committee. Ms. Hallquist noted that the last salary was done in 2016 and the current employment environment is making recruiting and retaining employees very difficult. Currently there is a fulltime opening in the Selectmen's office and the response to the want ad has been less than enthusiastic. A salary study can help the Board to compensate employees at a level needed to attract and keep employees without paying higher than conditions require.

Selectman Kidder suggested that the \$30,000 for beginning the digitization of the town's records be delayed for a year. Chair Cannon suggested that the amount be reduced to \$10,000 so that the project can be started. Ms. Hallquist noted that spending small amounts will likely not be the most effective way to approach the project as getting the materials together to either send out to the company for digitizing, or to have a firm come in and do the work on-site, will be a large use of staff time, and starting and stopping process several times will only increase the costs and disruption of staff.

The Board decided to keep the \$15,000 for the salary study and to remove the \$30,000 for the records retention project.

Total approved: \$340,724

Elections and Registration: Total approved: \$107,888

Finance: Total approved: \$358,885

Assessing: Total approved: \$92,447

Legal: Total approved: \$10,500

Personnel Administration: Total approved: \$97,794

Zoning & Planning: Total approved: \$106,234

Ms. Hallquist noted that the engineering review includes fees to allow the Planning Board to hire consultants to advise them on applications, these fees are paid by the applicant, and \$15,000 for a consultant to perform a Main Street Corridor Study in support of the Master Plan. There is no RFP yet, the Planning Board is working on it. Selectman Cannon questioned whether this is needed at this time. Selectmen Kidder and Rollins agreed, noting that there are several big projects in the budget already and this is one that could be delayed. The Board asked that \$15,000 be removed from the budget.

General Government Buildings: Total approved: \$200,175

Cemeteries: Total approved: \$31,619

Other Insurance: Total approved: \$98,823

Advertising & Regional Association: Total approved: \$18,818

Police: Total approved: \$1,304,744

Fire: Total approved: \$585,808

Firewards: Total approved: \$292

Emergency Management: Total approved: \$31,812

Dispatch: Total approved: \$500,047

Highway Administration: Total approved: \$1,020,664

Highway & Streets: Total approved: \$568,300

Street Lighting: Total approved: \$9,500

Transfer Station: Total approved: \$473,918

Solid Waste: Total approved: \$17,000

Health Administration: Total approved: \$6,340

Health Agencies:

Selectman Kidder suggested that the Board increase the CASA payment from \$1,500 to \$4,000 as she spoke with Clara Sheehy who volunteers for CASA and learned that it costs about \$2,000 to train each CASA volunteer; Selectman Kidder noted that funding at a level that two volunteers could be trained is appropriate. She noted that mental health issues are so important to the safety of the children in our schools so she feels that this organization should be assisted.

Selectman Rollins noted that she is not opposed to increased funding for CASA but wants to be clear on what CASA does: they provide court appointed special advocates for children who are coming to court as part of an abuse and neglect petition.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (John Cannon) to approve funding to CASA in the amount of \$4,000. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Total approved: \$244,684

Welfare Administration: Total approved: \$5,470
Intergovernmental Welfare: Total approved: \$6,000
Welfare Payments: Total approved: \$16,000
Recreation: Total approved: \$192,177
Library: Total approved: \$584,480
Patriotic Purposes: Total approved: \$300
Archives/Culture: Total approved: \$26,000
Conservation: Total approved: \$19,946
Energy Committee: Total approved: \$900
Other Conservation: Total approved: \$27,900
Housing Commission: Total approved: \$16,302
Debt Service Principal: Total approved: \$364,708
Debt Service Interest: Total approved: \$103,214
Transfers to Capital Reserves: Total approved: \$937,510
Capital Outlay – Vehicles & Equipment: Total approved: \$717,639
Capital Outlay – Buildings: Total approved: \$93,000
Capital Outlay – Improvements: Total approved: \$248,000
Sewer Operating: Total approved: \$1,079,015
Sewer Capital Outlay – Vehicles & Equipment: Total approved: \$110,000
Sewer Transfer to Capital Reserves: Total approved: \$20,000

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (John Cannon) to approve the budget as amended by vote during the meeting. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Selectmen's budget will be forwarded to the Budget Committee

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:11PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly Hallquist
Town Administrator
Town of New London