



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## **Budget Committee Meeting Meeting Minutes of December 7, 2016**

**BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Rob Prohl (Chair), Joe Cardillo (Vice-Chair), Phyllis Piotrow, Colin Campbell, Bruce Hudson, Lyndsay Lund, Chris Lorio, Nancy Rollins (Board of Selectmen's Representative)

**BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:** Tyler Beck, Suzanne Jesseman

### **STAFF PRESENT:**

Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator  
Wendy Johnson, Finance Officer

### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Richard Lee, Public Works Director  
Jay Lyon, Fire Chief  
Ed Andersen, Police Chief  
Peter Bianchi, New London Resident  
Donna Larrow, Police Department Administrative Assistant  
Lou Botta, Emergency Management Director  
John Raby, *The Intertown Record*

Chair Prohl called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

### Approval of Minutes

These would be reviewed at the next meeting.

### Selectmen's Report

Selectman Rollins said the Selectmen met prior to that evening's meeting. They are interested in having a reconciliation meeting at the end of this budget process. Chair Prohl proposed having this meeting on February 1<sup>st</sup> at 7:00pm. The public hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, February 8<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, and February 9<sup>th</sup>, if necessary.

### Public Safety Budgets

*Emergency Management Committee – Lou Botta, Director*

Storage unit: Mr. Botta said the Emergency Management Committee is looking at the most efficient way to store the emergency materials within the town; the budget proposal is to purchase a storage container. Having a container with wheels would make it most easily used/moved, however that is not the type being proposed in the budget. They have emergency equipment in many locations currently and would like to have it centralized and mobile if necessary. They plan to store it at the Public Works Department. Currently they are looking at a 30' trailer and if they can get a grant they would like something larger. If

adding wheels makes the cost too high, they can settle for a trailer without wheels. It will be between \$3,000 and \$6,000 for the trailer.

Mr. Prohl asked what vehicle they could use to pull this trailer. Mr. Lee said a  $\frac{3}{4}$  or 1 ton-pickup could pull it. Mr. Lorio asked how long the trailer would last. Mr. Botta said about 20 years. They are made of steel and aluminum and are weatherproof. Mr. Botta said it is essential in an emergency situation to know exactly where the emergency equipment is, and have it clean and ready to go.

Chief Lyon said they are the only town in this area that has this emergency equipment available and if they need to use it elsewhere because of municipal building damage, it can be moved and used elsewhere with the use of this trailer.

Ms. Piotrow asked about staff for the Emergency Management Department. Mr. Botta said they have a repository of some of the best minds in the town. Colleagues from the Police, Fire, and Public Works Departments, the Health Officer, someone who specializes in pet rescue (New London is the only town that has cages for this purpose), two representatives from the hospital, and a representative from the Kearsarge School District. They meet monthly and coordinate activities, discuss lessons learned and best practices. They recently had an active shooter exercise at Colby-Sawyer College. Mr. Botta has found the Town Office staff to make him feel at home and included in everything. The Police and Fire Departments have been incredible; this is all a joint effort.

With no questions with regards to the budget for the Emergency Management Department, Chair Prohl asked the Committee if they wanted to vote on each department as it comes along or wait until the end. It was decided to vote on things if they had all the information available.

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Lyndsay Lund) to accept budget for the Emergency Management Department, as presented.  
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### *Police Department*

Ms. Larrow handed out a packet of information to the Budget Committee members which showed the information about the Dispatch Department that Chair Prohl had requested earlier.

Chief Andersen explained they dispatch for six police, fire and EMS agencies, New London ambulance, and water precinct, the highway department and ambulance for Springfield, highway departments for Sunapee, Sutton, Newbury and Croydon, and Sunapee water and sewer. The total agencies served are 27. Chief Andersen explained that the towns are charged a user fee plus a percentage of the Dispatch budget based on calls for service made. He explained how calls are counted for each town and some of the special circumstances which decrease the calls coming into New London from other towns.

Chief Andersen said no dispatch center has a good formula that can be carried over to be used for other towns. Some use a flat fee per resident, some are done by town valuation, population and a straight user fee, and some charge a user fee and straight calls for service. The Town of New London has tried to come up with a suitable formula. Chief Andersen has done extensive research; he has figured out what it would cost for the member towns to leave and go elsewhere. Their formula is within a few thousand dollars of these figures so it wouldn't cost much more for the towns to stay where they are now versus moving to another agency. New London's rates are competitive. They feel they are at a good point with their rates and fees. To answer Mr. Lorio's question, New London is ahead of Merrimack County as far as equipment and technology go, so these are not reasons towns would leave New London Dispatch.

Chief Andersen said they have completed phase 1 (a repeater on Mt. Kearsarge), phase 2 (a tower at New London Police Station), and phase 3 (a repeater at Mt. Sunapee) is pending approval. The space on the tower is available; an engineering study is being done to insure the tower can hold the equipment. They will write a grant for this and they will look for funding from each town looking for help to complete this phase. They have not looked for other towns yet to add to the member service.

The third phase will help the towns of Sunapee, Croydon, and Newbury or when New London is doing back-up in the Sunapee area. It completes the 95% of coverage for the towns. Sutton and Newbury are interested in helping to pay for 50% of the grant New London would be responsible for. The grant would be less than \$100,000. The repeater on Kearsarge was \$78,000 and was paid for only by the Town of New London. He feels strongly that New London will get financial support from the other towns to pay for the Mt. Sunapee repeater. This would be done in FY2019.

Mr. Cardillo asked if everyone is paying a flat fee and New London handles approximately 54% of the calls, they should be responsible 54% of the budget. Ms. Hallquist said they bill on a three year average percentage and New London's share for 2017 is 65%. Mr. Cardillo thinks they are off with their calculation. Ms. Hallquist explained that each October the Chief prints the calls for service for all the towns. They get the total number of calls and then find out what percentage each town is responsible for. New London was responsible for 65% for the latest billing cycle. The billing is based on the approved Dispatch budget. If the budget is not spent the funds are not reimbursed to the towns; the extra goes toward unassigned fund balance.

Mr. Lorio asked how easy it is for a town to move to another dispatch service. Chief Andersen said it is not that difficult; there are steps that need to be taken but isn't a major overhaul. Mr. Lorio noted that losing a town would have a large impact on the Town of New London. Chief Andersen said if Croydon moved to Newport, Croydon would save some money but are happier staying with New London's service and don't want to leave. New London is charging the maximum amount Croydon will pay, however, so they need to be careful when trying to increase costs for towns.

#### *Dispatch Budget Discussion*

Currently they have four full time and three part time employees. They are looking to hire another part time dispatcher and have a conditional offer on the table.

Mr. Cardillo asked about the training wages line; it doesn't look like the \$5,500 is being used. Chief Andersen said a lot of the training hours went into overtime in error. This year they are doing a better job assigning training hours towards the correct line item.

There is ongoing fire-only training happening currently. There are some dispatchers who are shadowing fire-only call centers. There is also online training and classes that dispatchers attend. Chief Lyon said fire calls are usually more complicated than police calls. This fire-specific training is important.

Mr. Cardillo asked about the line for equipment repair. Chief Andersen said this line hasn't been touched lately because they replaced equipment instead of repairing it. This fund will be used if there is a lightning strike or other equipment emergency that would require repair.

Chief Andersen said the Police Department is on borrowed time with their phone system. They have to purchase replacement parts on eBay at this point. He hesitates to get a new system, however, as he likes the current system. Additionally, the chairs used in dispatch are also very expensive and need regular replacement; they are occupied 24/7.

The Capital Reserve contribution of \$34,000 per year for 20 years will pay for equipment replacement for dispatch (consoles). Ms. Lund asked if there was insurance on this kind of equipment. Chief Andersen said there is.

The \$10,000 for Equipment Repair in FY2017 he wasn't sure he was going to spend. He does intend to purchase two good chairs. This covers their key pads and doors. One door started smoking once and the service company had to come from Rutland, VT to repair it. He just doesn't know if they will need to spend this money on these kinds of things or not.

Chief Andersen said he would like to see the repeater on Mt Sunapee go up in the spring of 2018.

Selectman Rollins said they have not yet resolved the health insurance and Library salaries so they may want to hold off on approving those sections of the budget at this point.

#### *Police Budget*

Ms. Piotrow asked about part time hours and how many hours the \$35,000 in the budget for that item would cover. Chief Andersen said the part time budget covers about 33 hours/week on average. They use these hours during Hospital days, etc. The part-time officers are used for different things; in particular, one is good with cell phone/computer research. Another part-time officer worked for State Police on major crime for 7 years and he is called to assist the detective with some cases. Another officer helps with the in-car cameras and recorders in the Police Department. On top of helping in these specialized fields, each of these officers cover patrol during Halloween and Hospital Days.

Mr. Bianchi said the increase in the Police Department budget is about \$106,000. \$60,000 of this is wages, not benefits or health insurance. The increase in overtime has gone up drastically (40%+) and the top line has gone up 11%. Does this have anything to do with sending a police officer to be trained for the K9 program? Chief Andersen said depending if they go through the State of NH or Castle K9, the money raised can be used over time to offset wages. If the cost of the dog is \$8,000 the money raised can be used to pay overtime to cover the training.

Mr. Cardillo asked if Chief Andersen if he was happy with 8 full time officers. Chief Andersen said he would ideally like a 9<sup>th</sup> full time officer. For the safety of the officers, he would prefer to have a second person working midnights. Mr. Cardillo asked if there was much activity between 2am – 6am. Chief Andersen said there is and he is considering having someone on call during those hours. The major concern for him is someone coming into the dispatch office and not having an officer present in the building.

Chief Lyon said it is helpful to have an officer on duty during those hours to get on the scene and give an update on needs should a fire event be called in. If the Fire Department toned every single fire alarm activation, they would not have a part-time fire department with only two full-time employees. Out of 680 calls they are about 125 alarms when everyone is toned out. Officers can report in those early hours and size up the situation and direct the best avenue to attack a potential fire, etc. The Fire Department is appreciative to have a patrol on duty during those early hours.

Chief Andersen added that between the hours of 11pm – 7am are very busy; people run out of fuel because they think the Irving is open 24 hours (it is not). He noted that there are fewer break-ins in New London versus other neighboring towns because he feels their patrols are a deterrent for criminal activity; they are visible.

Chief Andersen feels the New London Police Department is too small to have a good schedule for the officers. Two officers every week have to work two midnights. Their sleep pattern has to switch each time. He can't keep officers if he keeps someone permanently on midnights. Officers always work weekends, 3-11, nights; home life is not good when this happens. Having a 9<sup>th</sup> officer would help regulate the schedule.

Ms. Lund said they are roughly at \$800 difference in pay when considering overtime pay versus hiring a full-time officer. Mr. Lorio reminded Ms. Lund that a fulltime officer would also need to be paid benefits and healthcare. These costs would make the difference between the over-time pay and another full-time position much greater.

Chief Andersen said that multiple officers are leaving this coming year and six part time officers will need to be juggled to fill the hours. One part-time officer is leaving as well. No officers are leaving because of salaries paid by the Town.

Ms. Piotrow said every year she has heard that eight full-time officers would be ideal. Now Chief Andersen is asking for nine. She also realizes that there are 100 fewer students at the college currently which should make the police officer's job easier.

Mr. Cardillo asked about Special Detail wages. He wonders how this number is determined; how do they know how many details they will participate in? He sees some revenue coming in for these things. Chief Andersen said they charge for the cruiser. Mr. Cardillo said this year they are already way over budget. Chief Andersen said he would like to start a revolving fund (through a warrant article at Town Meeting) to remove these costs/revenues from the budget. Mr. Cardillo said if revolving funds are used appropriately, this is fine. There are fewer eyes on the figures if funds go into a revolving fund.

Chief Andersen said right now he is over by \$5,000 and is not half way through the year yet. He cannot overspend his budget even if there is revenue coming in on the other side. A revolving fund would solve this issue. Police detail is one of the allowed functions that a revolving fund can be used for because this is a common problem in towns.

Mr. Cardillo asked where the Police Department was with the life of their computers. Chief Andersen said they have a contract with Competitive Computers and are billed monthly for computer support. They have tried multiple companies and this company understands their computers and is approved by the state to work with the sensitive materials on them. They pay about \$695/month.

When asked, Chief Andersen said he is not in favor of cameras on police officers. The State just passed a law that makes using these kinds of cameras a liability for the department and the officers.

Mr. Hudson asked about vehicle maintenance. Last year they spent \$11,000 and had \$10,000 to spend. Chief Andersen said he plans to keep it at \$10,000 this year.

It was noted that the New Employee Expense may need to go up due to the fact that two officers are leaving and will need to be replaced. Chief Andersen said at the time that he was budgeting, he knew of only one leaving. It is true that they will need to budget for two officers coming into the department and being outfitted.

#### *Fire Department*

Chair Prohl noted there is money requested in the budget to replace the trim on the fire house.

Chief Lyon said a full-time firefighter left half way through the year and had he stayed they would have about \$4,000 left in the budget. He highlighted salary and wage increases which are based on the salary review. The Selectmen had a discussion about the part time employees and what they should be paid. Mr. Cardillo asked if there is an adjustment to the on-call pay. Chief Lyon said they are keeping it at the same rate as last year, which reflects a recent adjustment. He said he is a salaried employee but also takes on-call hours, which costs the town nothing. He is budgeting for when he doesn't take these hours himself.

Mr. Cardillo asked about \$3,500 in the budget for training. Mr. Lyon said last year no one took the Level 1 class. This year, they have three firefighters who will be going through the certification which is \$800 per student and runs from January 12<sup>th</sup> through May. They compensate the individuals for the training only, not the 200 hours they spend at the station. There are also other officers taking Level 2 classes. The State of NH has cut back on Level 2 classes and other certifications and the classes haven't been available.

Chief Lyon said firefighters are compensated at a half hour rate instead of a two hour minimum like other town employees. Ms. Hallquist said governments are not required to pay a minimum of two hours like private industry.

There is a reduction in equipment repair because last year they had an expensive repair to their extrication hydraulics and won't need to do this again.

The Board of Firewards budget is for the clerk's wages. They have not reached the \$500 so an adjustment was made to be more in line with actual.

**IT WS MOVED (Bruce Hudson) AND SECONDED (Nancy Rollins) to approve the Board of Firewards budget of \$270. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

With no other business, Chair Prohl asked for a motion to adjourn.

**IT WAS MOVED (Joe Cardillo) AND SECONDED (Lyndsay Lund) to adjourn the meeting. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:02pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristy Heath, Recording Secretary  
Town of New London