



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## **BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES Wednesday, December 7, 2022 6:30 PM, Whipple Town Hall**

**BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chris Lorio, (Chair) Joe Cardillo (Vice Chair), Hannah Bianchi, Lou Botta, Lyndsay Harkins, John Wilson, Mark Christensen, Colin Beasley, Bill Helm (Selectmen's Representative)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Mark Christensen

**STAFF PRESENT:** Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator, Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer

### **OTHERS PRESENT:**

Emily Cobb, Police Chief  
Will Kidder, Town Clerk-Tax Collector  
Bob Harrington, Public Works Director  
Jay Lyon, Fire Chief

### **Approval of Minutes of November 30, 2022**

**It was moved (John Wilson) and seconded (Lou Botta) to approve the minutes of the November 30, 2022 meeting. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Selectmen's Report**

Selectman Helm noted that he had no report to give.

### **FY2024 Budget Review:**

#### Public Safety: Police & Dispatch

Police Chief Emily Cobb informed the Committee that since the Selectmen's budget meeting, she has decreased the general equipment line of her budget by \$14,000 by reducing the number of pistols to be purchased and also due to updated pricing. She also noted that she could potentially remove the computer replacement line by \$3,500 if the Selectmen agree to purchase it out of the capital reserve fund. There were no changes to the dispatching budget.

Selectman Helm noted that the Selectmen have not yet met to discuss the computer capital reserve fund, but he could not see why the selectmen would not allow it. Colin Beasley asked procedurally will the use of the funds need to go to Town Meeting. Kim Hallquist noted that the selectmen are agents to expend so they may vote to expend the funds without a vote of Town Meeting.

John Wilson pointed out that revenues are down this year from last year and noted that during the subcommittee meetings there was a discussion of holding off on expenditures this year if possible. The cruiser and the pistol purchases were identified as possible expenses to put off this year. Joe

Cardillo agreed and noted that he would like to explore putting off the purchase of the cruiser this year if possible. Chief Cobb assured the committee that she prepared her budget with consideration to increases and decreased areas where she felt she could safely do so. She stressed that staying on the current replacement vehicle schedule is important in terms of avoiding high maintenance costs and getting more for resale. The Chief pointed out that this year the command vehicle is being requested and she stressed that having a command vehicle available on-site is important to police operations.

Mr. Cardillo asked how many vehicles are in the fleet. Chief Cobb responded that the department has six vehicles as follows:

- 2015 Dodge Durango – Command Vehicle, estimate 70,000 miles;
- 2019 Dodge Ram Pickup - Detective vehicle, estimate 28,000 miles;
- 2019 Tahoe - K9 Unit, estimate 75,000 miles;
- 2020 Tahoe – estimate 40,000 miles;
- Two 2022 Dodge Chargers, each under 10,000 miles

Mr. Beasley stressed that questions should not be seen as a challenge to the department. He noted that he looks at expenditure requests in terms of wants versus needs. He asked if it was a state law that off-duty pistols are provided to officers. Chief Cobb noted that it is not a law, each department makes its own decisions on this and New London has decided to provide officers with pistols for the past several years.

Mr. Beasley noted that the Chief's two departments represents 24% of the budget and the police department is asking for an 11% increase and asked the Chief to consider putting off the expense of off-duty pistols. He suggested the Budget Committee members consider the red dot sights and whether that is a want or a need. Chief Cobb agreed that her budgets are a large part of the town's budget and noted that they are a 24/7 department that provides many important services to the town in addition to enforcing the laws.

Lou Botta noted that he suggests the committee trust the Chief's expertise when discussing whether pistols need to be replaced as it is a safety item.

There was a discussion of computer support and licensing fees for the police and dispatching departments and the increase in costs over the past few years. Chief Cobb noted that she feels much more confident in the safety and security of her department's computers since VC3 was engaged as the town's computer support company. Kim Hallquist noted that over the past few years as we have seen the usage from the various departments, the allocation of costs has been adjusted between departments.

Mr. Beasley noted that it seems odd that capital reserve accounts have been funded and line items in budgets appear to fund the same things. Ms. Hallquist noted that capital reserve funds are for larger capital expenditures not the day-to-day maintenance items, CRF are for things beyond the day-to-day expenses. Mr. Beasley asked to have the capital reserve fund sheet updated to show which accounts list the selectmen as agents to expend. He noted that if it is possible to have the selectmen use those funds so that decreases could be made in the operating budget as a way to save money this year, he would like to explore it. Ms. Hallquist pointed out that department heads worked hard this year in preparing their budget during high inflation, and the budget is up only 2.4%. Mr. Beasley noted that the operating budget is up 9% and he appreciated the work of the selectmen in getting down to 2.4% by reducing capital reserve payments. Ms. Hallquist noted that she did not expect next year to be easy either so putting things off for next year was not advisable in her opinion. Chief Cobb noted that

she would like to avoid a balloon effect where there is a year when there are many purchases needed because they have been delayed from prior years.

Joe Cardillo noted that asking hard questions are not a reflection of the value of a department, it is sometimes passing on questions that citizens ask Budget Committee members. He pointed out that at a recent Citizens Committee hard questions were asked about the budget. He noted that the committee is not debating, they are asking questions.

Lyndsay Lund noted that she is well aware of the of the tax burden from the budget decisions they are making. She observed that she does not see the detailed questions and requests for compromise on items from Jay (Lyon) or Bob (Harrington). It appears to her that some departments are held to a different standard than others. She does not want to debate items that fall under the expertise of department heads and that she has no expertise on.

Fire Chief Jay Lyon stressed that questions are important, but he appreciates it when citizens come to the Fire Station to ask questions because sometimes questions that are not asked directly to the department heads, but instead are passed on by others, can get lost in translation. The Chief noted that department heads have expertise and welcome the opportunity to answer questions from any citizens that have questions. He pointed out that an item may seem like a want, until it is used and then it becomes a need. Chief Lyon noted that in the recent past he and Chief Cobb had worked together on several serious incidents where having a command vehicle is critical. He questioned the value of the committee getting into the minutia of red dot sights versus iron sights as he relies on the expertise of the Police Chief in selecting the equipment she feels is needed. Mr. Beasley noted that he asked the questions because the Chief opened the door on it when she outlined the differences in each. Chief Cobb noted that there was an incredible amount of research and analysis done prior to completing her budget.

#### Dispatching

Mr. Beasley asked why the Town of Croydon left New London Dispatching. Chief Cobb noted that they went to Hanover, she was assured that it was not because of the quality of service, it was because their Fire Department got dispatching from Hanover. Mr. Beasley noted the revenue sheets do not appear to include all of the dispatching revenues. Ms Hallquist noted that aside from Croydon paying only a portion of the full year of service, she was not aware of any town that did not pay its full years' bill. Lynn Lewis noted that she would check to ensure that the payments were recorded to the proper account.

Mr. Beasley noted that calls overall are going down but costs are going up. Selectman Helm noted that there are costs whether the phone rings or not. He pointed out that the selectmen have agreed to have more of a deep dive into the dispatching cost allocations in the coming weeks. It was noted that early budget sheets had higher payroll amounts; Ms. Lewis noted that she neglected to remove a "place holder" employee cost. Mr. Wilson noted that the communications capital reserve fund could benefit from further discussion. He asked how the CRF impacted the subscribing towns. Ms. Hallquist pointed out that the operating budget plus the CRF is paid by the towns who get dispatching services from New London, based on the percentage of calls for services.

Mr. Cardillo asked for an update on the Police Detail Revolving Fund. Chief Cobb noted that it has worked very well. Salaries for police officers who do details comes from the fund and the Chief has also been able to purchase new tires for cruisers as they are used for details too. Mr. Beasley asked about the CAD software for the dispatching center. Chief Cobb confirmed that she did not add it to

the budget this year as she has applied for a grant for it; she hopes to get the grant for it or possibly use some other funds to purchase it.

Ms. Hallquist pointed out that committee members were provided with revenue information. She noted that revenues that will reduce taxes are not down in the range of \$1 million as suggested earlier as much of the revenue shortfall are revenues that had a corresponding expenditure and thus did not reduce taxes. Examples include reimbursement of insurance costs, capital reserve funds and bond revenues. She agreed that estimated revenues are down about \$200,000 due to decreases in state rooms and meals tax revenue, which is down by about \$182,000, less funds from CRF due to lower purchases and sale of town property. Ms. Hallquist stressed that aside from grant funds which the town can work to increase by applying for more grants, which departments do their best to get, most revenues are out of control of department heads. She pointed out that Town Clerk Will Kidder cannot increase the revenues from car registrations as they are set by law, all staff can do is to encourage citizens to buy new cars. Similarly, revenues from current use and timber tax are not dependent on staff efforts. Ms. Hallquist stressed that staff have never misrepresented revenues in order to make it appear that the tax rate will be lower than it actually is.

**Motion to adjourn**

**It was moved (Joe Cardillo) and seconded (John Wilson) to adjourn the meeting.  
THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:39PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly Hallquist  
Town Administrator