



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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NEW LONDON BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES Thursday, February 22, 2024 Whipple Memorial Hall 5:30 PM

PRESENT:

Janet Kidder, Chairman
Bill Helm, Selectman
Bebe Hammond Casey, Selectman
Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator
Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Phyllis Piotrow, New London resident
Emily Cobb, Police Chief
Will Kidder, Town Clerk and Tax Collector
Celeste Cooke, Welfare Officer
Emily Campbell, Planning Board Member
Bob Bowers, New London resident
Sherry Williams, Tracy Library Trustee Dir.
Laura Abrahamsen, Interim Tracy Library
Dan Lewis, New London resident

John Wilson, Budget Committee member
Leigh Bosse, Publisher for *The Messenger*
John Ellis, New London resident
Rich Epstein, New London resident
Colin Beasley, Budget Committee member
Bob Bowers, New London resident
Janet Miller-Haines, New London resident
Maureen Prohl, Waste Reduction Committee
Casey Biuso, Elections Volunteer Coordinator

Chair Kidder opened the meeting at 5:30 PM.

Public Hearing

The hearing was held pursuant to RSA 33:8-a, to receive comments on the proposed issuance of bonds or notes in the amount of \$900,000 for the purpose of purchasing property at 27 Seamans Road. The question of whether to issue bonds or notes for this purpose will be placed on the warrant to be voted on at Town Meeting, Wednesday, March 13, 2024.

Chair Kidder noted that the Board of Selectmen voted not to recommend the article because they believe the question is pre-mature when they have not yet fully explored whether to keep the Police Station at its current location or to move the Police Station.

Chair Kidder asked if there was anyone that wanted to make a comment on the bond issue. There was none. Chair Kidder closed the Public Hearing at 5:32 PM.

Introduction of Interim Tracy Library Director

Sherry Williams introduced Laura Abrahamsen, as the Interim Tracy Library Director. She will be supporting the library staff until a permanent director is appointed and a short biography about her background may be found on the library website. The Board of Selectmen welcomed Laura to the community.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Wilson provided his personal summary of Town Meeting warrant article 4, a petitioned article related to the current location of the Police Station and exploration of alternative locations. He asked residents to attend and vote at Town Meeting on March 13th.

Rich Epstein spoke of his concerns with some of the proposed Zoning Amendments. He feels the ballot language is not clear enough regarding some amendments, particularly the proposed changes to the accessory dwelling unit section of the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Epstein has researched information from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, NH Housing and the NH Office of Planning and Development. He would like to know what resources the Planning Board uses when making decisions, and if they have done their own research on the issues. Chair Kidder stated she will not speak on behalf of the Planning Board. There is also a Housing Commission in New London that has worked on providing ideas for more options for affordable housing. She noted that there are resources available for voters to inform themselves about proposed amendments of the Zoning Ordinance and she would prefer to let the voters make their own decision at the ballot.

Letter of thanks from the Town of Sunapee

Kim Hallquist read a letter from the Town of Sunapee Board of Selectmen that thanked the New London Dispatching Center for the service provided in connection with the Prospect Hill structure fire on January 18th and 19th. Responding to the fire required dispatch to contact 24 fire departments to respond.

Grant for Communications Tower Repeater

Chief Emily Cobb presented grant information for a repeater on Mt. Sunapee. She explained that this is phase III of the project that has been in the works for many years to improve communications and interoperability for New London and the towns they dispatch for. There is already a repeater on Mt. Kearsarge. The grant is in the amount of \$135,287 and is from NH Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The town may use 'soft match' funds for its share of this grant which means that equipment purchased by New London and/or the other dispatching towns will count. If needed, they could use the Communications Capital Reserve Funds. Selectmen Casey asked if the repeater will allow the town to bring on other towns to dispatching. Chief Cobb noted that she is unsure at this time as she has not looked at topo maps recently. It was noted that Newbury is aware that the equipment will be added soon; Fire Chief Hank Thomas has been very helpful getting up to the tower to take pictures and view the tower in advance of the installation.

IT WAS MOVED (Bebe Casey) AND SECONDED (Bill Helm) to accept the terms of the Emergency Management Performance Grant as presented in the amount of \$135,287.00 for the communication tower repeater project. Furthermore, the Board acknowledges that the total cost of this project will be \$270,574.00, in which the town will be responsible for a 50% match (\$135,287.00).” THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Janet Kidder, Chair of the Board, is authorized to sign all documents related to the grant.

Appointment of Inspectors of Election

The Board reviewed the list of Inspectors of Election as prepared by Michael Todd, Moderator, for appointment of a term of two years. Chair Kidder noted that these people will help at elections.

IT WAS MOVED (Bill Helm) AND SECONDED (Bebe Casey) to appoint the Inspectors of Elections as proposed by the Moderator. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.
Abatement Request: Kreisler Family, LLC – Map 135-003-000

The Board reviewed the abatement recommendation as prepared by Chief Assessor Kris McAllister that explained that the property owner provided additional information demonstrating that the property is 50% wetlands and 40% +/- wetlands buffer leaving only .16 acres as buildable resulting in an abatement of value of \$798,000 which is \$8,626 in taxes, plus interest.

IT WAS MOVED (Bill Helm) AND SECONDED (Bebe Casey) to approve the abatement as recommended by the Chief Assessor. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Kim Hallquist reported that there was a water main break in the area of Spring Ledge earlier in the day and it is expected that if not already back on, the water should be back on shortly. It was noted that the original estimate of no water to the area was 4-8 hours and it actually ended up being more than 10 hours. This main will be replaced in the project scheduled for the summer.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS & REPORTS

Selectman Helm reported that the Water Precinct will hold a bond hearing on February 29th at 12:30 pm at their office. The bond amount is \$4.9 million dollars and is expected to increase the tax rate for property in the Precinct by .48¢ for the duration of the repayment.

Selectman Helm reported that he attended the Budget Committee meeting the previous evening regarding the process for the upcoming budget preparation. He felt that it was helpful. There was discussion of helping new members come up to speed on the budget process, there was support of the Selectmen's one day budget preparation, more attention to the CIP process by the Planning Board and also recognition that the workload of staff should be kept in mind. Selectman Helm suggested the Board meet with the Budget Committee in the Spring to meet the new members. Selectman Casey noted that when she was a new member on the School Board she felt overwhelmed at times and she suggested preparing a packet of information for new Budget Committee members to assist in their orientation.

Selectman Casey reported that she attended a Tri-town Watershed meeting along with Kim Hallquist, Town Administrator. It was a good conversation and included the issue of the septic ordinance that Newbury is seeking to adopt at Town Meeting. She suggested that the topic be included at the next town gathering. The issue of fireworks over the lake was discussed. Newbury will be changing from traditional fireworks to a drone laser show for Old Home Days. Sunapee is also looking into possibly switching to drones as well.

Selectman Casey reported on a recent meeting of the Coalition 2.0 that is following the cases on the issue of funding of an adequate education and the current practice of 29 towns keeping their excess SWEPT funds. The judge found that it was unconstitutional for the 29 towns to keep the excess funds and those funds should be sent to the State. New London collects, and keeps, \$1.2 million. This will be appealed to the Supreme Court. Ultimately the legislature will have to come up with a resolution to fund education. Selectman Casey noted that if New London is required to send \$1.2 million to the State, it would cost an additional .60¢ on the school tax rate to send the \$1.2 million dollars to the Kearsarge School District. She stressed that the \$1.2 million excess SWEPT funds that New London collects now goes to fund education, it does not go to the town's budget for operations. Selectman Casey noted that finding new revenues for education is important and she learned that there is a bill to legalize marijuana with 65% of the revenues going to education. There was a discussion of how the seven-town regional school district that New London is a member of is already doing what the court cases say should be done as far as towns with higher assessed value paying more to assist towns with lower assessed value, pointing out that New London and Newbury collect excess SWEPT that goes to lower the amount to be raised by the other five

towns. John Ellis asked when the amounts for an adequate education was determined, Selectman Casey noted that she thought it was in 2005. The court is now saying that that amount is too low.

Selectman Kidder reported that the Board of Firewards met and Chief Lyon reported that there were five fires that the department responded to last week. Engine 2 has arrived, equipment will be taken from the older vehicle and put on the new – Durgin & Crowell allowed the Fire Department to use their building as it was large enough to lay out the hose. The \$55,000 budgeted for the fire utility vehicle is not enough so there will be an amendment at Town Meeting to raise the amount to \$77,000.

MEETING MINUTES: Approve Selectmen’s Minutes of January 18th and February 8th

IT WAS MOVED (Bill Helm) AND SECONDED (Bebe Casey) to accept the minutes of the January 18th and February 8th meetings. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The next regular Selectmen’s meeting will be Thursday, March 7th at 5:30pm.

Chair Kidder reminded all that elections will take place on Tuesday March 12th from 7am to 7pm at Whipple Town Hall and then Town Meeting will be held on Wednesday March 13th at 7pm at the Kearsarge Learning Center Gymnasium.

OTHER BUSINESS

Town Meeting Warrant Article 4

Selectmen Helm asked that the Board discuss their position on Article 4 (to keep the police station at its current location and to prohibit town resources from being used to investigate other sites) that was petitioned. He asked if the Board should do publicity either as a Board or individual members. Chair Kidder agreed that she felt it was appropriate, noting that the Board has not always been good about getting the word out on its position. Selectman Casey noted that she is in favor of continuing the work of determining the future of the police station. She is concerned that in the words of one of the petitioners that a no vote means you want the police station to go somewhere else while she feels that a no vote means you want to give the selectmen a year to do their due diligence to gather the information and communicate with the citizens on this issue.

Mauren Prohl noted that her sense of the last Town Meeting was that citizens wanted the Selectmen to come back with a well thought out proposal. She felt that the perception in town is that the Selectmen are only looking at an off-site location while she felt that it should be clear that costs of both an offsite location and keeping it at the current location is what the Selectmen will be bringing to Town Meeting. Ms. Prohl suggested that the Selectmen prepare a newspaper article on this topic so that citizens hear from the selectmen.

Tom Manion, New London Hospital

Selectman Helm noted that Tom Manion, President of New London Hospital, will be leaving to accept a position with Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center, and suggested that the Board send him a letter of thank him for his four years of outstanding service to the town.

APPROVAL OF PAY VOUCHERS, PERMITS etc

Items to be signed:

- Payroll Authorization Vouchers
- Abatement
- Raffle Permit

Applications Approved &/or Denied

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:32 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Cara Leone, Recording Secretary
Kimberly Hallquist, Town Administrator
Town of New London

Note: 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, NewLondon.NH.gov, if more than the brief description contained in these meeting minutes is desired.