



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES February 27, 2024 Whipple Memorial Hall 5:00 PM

PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Will Kidder, Town Clerk/Tax Collector
Janet Miller-Haines, New London Resident
Dan Lewis, New London resident
Bob Lyon, New London resident
Karen Epstein, New London resident
Maureen Connelly, New London resident

John Wilson, Budget Committee Member
Colin Beasley, Budget Committee Member
Rich Epstein, New London resident
Nancy Marashio, New London resident

Chairman Kidder called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM and announced that the meeting is being held to discuss the Board's positions on various warrant articles that will be voted on at Town Meeting on March 13, 2024.

Article #3

Selectman Helm noted that with regard to the purchase of the "McEnrue Trust Property", the property is not for sale and thus it did not seem to be a good use of town resources to attempt to buy it and the police department are not interested in the site for their purposes. Selectmen Casey agreed with Selectmen Helms' thoughts and noted that there is no plan for the property at this time, pointing out that if conditions change in the future the town could revisit the issue and try to purchase it but until then, the \$900,000 could be put to better uses. She concluded by noting that the McEnrue home is currently being used for housing which the town desperately needs.

Article #4

Selectman Casey explained that she and Town Administrator Hallquist met with Tony DiLuzio of Colliers and discussed the proposed outcome and timeline for this project. They talked about the need for increased communication with the town residents about the project. Next step is for the Selectmen to select an architect from the ones that responded to the RFP. When Colliers has completed their work, the Town will have the following to consider:

- Updated feasibility study of the Buker building that was done by Dennis Mires as building codes have changed as well as police procedures. It will show what the building can support both structurally and related to the historical significance.
- “Blue Sky” thinking as used by Mr. DiLuzio – if we didn’t have to force the various police functions to a set layout, how would it look if we designed it with the best flow possible: ie: the police officer parks his car, goes into the building to the locker room, gets ready for his shift and then goes out on the road, as well as the flow of the public coming into the building.
- Using this “Blue Sky” idea, applying this geographically to the town map to find an area that best fits onto any of the already decided upon sites.

Selectman Casey explained that better communication for the town residents is needed and will be offered via “fireside chats” with Mr. DiLuzio, which will allow residents to call in and discuss various topics. Mr. DiLuzio explained that this method is often preferred over holding a meeting that citizens must go to. She also added that Mr. DiLuzio is willing to attend the Town Meeting if the Board would like.

Selectman Casey noted that her recollection of what was said at the 2023 Town Meeting was that people wanted the Selectmen to get more details before asking to purchase land and come back to Town Meeting with the information. She recently listened to the tape recording of the meeting, and she heard Bob Bowers, Bob Lyon, Colin Beasley, Peter Stanley and John Cannon making those points. She also heard people who do not want the police facility to leave its current location. She stressed that she felt that the Selectmen are trying to do what Town Meeting voters instructed them to do last year and get more information.

Selectman Casey noted that she disagreed with a letter to the editor in the *Intertown Record* by a proponent of the article that said if you vote yes you want to keep the police station at its current location and if you vote no you want to move it. She noted that a NO vote may also mean “I want more information before I make a decision on what we should do with the police station”.

Chair Kidder noted that she has heard some people say that her mind is made up, and when she hears that she thinks about the of the Harriman report from 2018 that listed reasons why a new site was needed. She expressed her understanding that the citizens of New London want the best for the police and to give them a place that is adequate and safe for their needs. She is hopeful that Colliers will provide this much needed information so voters can make informed decisions.

Selectman Helm pointed out that an important thing they have all heard is it’s a ‘great deal of money’. The Board has heard often that people want real dollars and cents and the piece meal approach of first finding land and then working on the facility has not been accepted so they must change the approach. Whether the town stays at the current site or moves, the Selectmen must have a full-blown plan with all the facts and figures to be presented to the voters at Town Meeting in 2025. This deserves the work from an independent party who can provide the information to voters.

Bob Lyon informed the Board that he does not feel the police are being disrespected if the station stays in the current location and stressed the importance of knowing the cost and tax implications considering water taxes being raised and other future issues coming before he town. He suggested that Colliers be asked to provide an ‘eyeball” budget for the options without the need for any more work. Chair Kidder explained that there is an existing contract with Colliers and that funds have been set aside for doing the preliminary work and while his concerns may be financial, others in town

want to actually see what the building will look like. These questions need to be answered. Colliers is the project manager – they put an RFP to the architects to design a plan. In the next phase, if allowed to continue, the Selectmen will select the architect to provide this information. Up to this point Collier has been paid by ARPA funds, grant based monies from the federal government which must be spent by the end of the year.

John Wilson thanked the Selectmen for their work thus far and encouraged town members to attend Town Meeting to give clear guidance related to the police department. He reiterated what he felt Article #4 is saying in a YES or NO vote: YES: The present location is what you want for the police department. NO: a new police station in another location is what you want. Selectmen Casey asked what town resources meant to him, is it money, is it employee's time and Selectmen's time? Wilson replied: all three.

Colin Beasley asked about the remaining ARPA funds as the Budget Committee was told that the funds would be used. It was noted that the Selectmen voted to use the remaining funds for the police station project and any remaining money is for safety/office upgrades at the Academy Building.

Nancy Marashio expressed concerns about the lack of bullet proof glass at the police department and would the Selectman consider spending money for this. While it's been named in several meetings, Chair Kidder responded that Chief Cobb has not yet provided the Board with a financial number. Selectman Helm noted that he did tour the new communications center recently and he discussed with Chief Cobb the windows on the Main Street side that need to be replaced with bullet proof glass; the Chief will have a proposal so that the work can be done.

Karen Epstein asked about the "Blue Sky" thought from Colliers and questioned whether this means an all-encompassing design as opposed to looking at the specific needs of the department. Selectman Casey understands her hesitation and will go back to Collier for better understanding of the "Blue Sky" thought of budget constraints and efficiencies of the Police Department vs a budget less facility, not the gold-plated facility. Chair Kidder pointed out that they will also need information on the Buker Building: what will be the cost and what will be done with that building once the police vacate the building.

The Board discussed options to get the word out to voters about their position using the *Kearsarge Shopper* and *Intertown Record* to inform town's people and the public about why we are in favor of Colliers to give us a holistic approach for the police department. Selectman Helm noted that the Board should stress the need to attend Town Meeting. Chair Kidder suggested ideas be submitted to Town Administrator Hallquist for the submissions to both publications. The Board agreed.

Bob Lyon questioned why Article #4, if passed, would stop the Selectmen from spending the ARPA funds if they are not tax dollars. It was noted that the article seeks to prohibit the selectmen from using any resources, which ARPA are, even if they are not raised by taxes. Maureen Connelly expressed her confusion and suggested that the Board make the issue of funding using ARPA funds versus tax dollars clearer as she was not aware that no tax funds would be needed for what the Selectmen plan to do next. Rich Epstein noted that he does not doubt that a new station somewhere else would be better than the current site, however to him, understanding what is missing in the current police department versus what would be included in a new state of the art police department, will be very important so people know if getting the missing items is worth the expected cost. The Board agreed that this information will be needed. Selectmen Casey said monthly sessions will be

presented for people to ask those types of questions. A FAQ (frequently asked question) packet will be compiled by Colliers to assist people to help them understand what's happening. She stressed that we all want to do our due diligence and be fiscally responsible for the community.

Town Administrator Hallquist was asked to explain a recent *Intertown Record* article that stated that the Town of Newbury's budget is down 6%. Ms. Hallquist reported that she has been told that the reporter misinterpreted what was said at a Newbury meeting which was that the 2023 budget was underspent by 6%. Their 2024 budget is actually up slightly.

Next meeting: Thursday March 7, 2024.

Selectman Casey will not be in attendance. Accommodation will be made to allow her to participate remotely. Town Administrator Hallquist to check with the school to see if the Professional Development Center is available where remote attendance is possible.

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

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer M. Sweet
Recording Secretary

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, New London.NH. gov, if more than the brief description contained in these meeting minutes is desired.