



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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## BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES

March 22, 2021

6:00 PM

Via Zoom

### PRESENT:

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

### ALSO PRESENT:

Bob Harrington, Public Works Director  
Emily Cobb, New London Police Chief  
Will Kidder, New London Tax Collector  
Heidi Tobin, New London resident  
Carol Foss, New London resident  
Liz Meller, New London resident  
Janet Haines, New London resident  
Steve Ensign, New London resident  
Marilyn Kidder, New London resident  
Paul Gorman, Planning Board Chair  
Building and Facilities Committee members: Bob Bowers, Colin Beasley, Joe Cardillo  
Rip Cross, Peter Bianchi, Phil Sherman

Jay Lyon, New London Fire Chief  
Celeste Cook, Welfare Officer  
Donna Larrow, New London Police Depart.  
Pat Daragon, New London resident  
Rob Prohl, Budget Committee Chair  
Bill Helm, New London resident  
Maureen Prohl, New London resident  
Steve Theroux, Treasurer  
David Royle, Planning Board member

Chair Kidder called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Chair Kidder noted that the Selectmen typically vote on chairmanship of the Board at the first meeting after town meeting. Although town meeting was not held in March as usual due to the pandemic, she recommended that the Board go ahead and vote on this so the new chairman will be able to serve for the full year.

**IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Nancy Rollins) to nominate John Cannon to serve as chairman of the New London Board of Selectmen. Nancy Rollins: yes, Janet Kidder: yes, John Cannon: yes. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### Appointments

#### **Bill Helm - Petitioned warrant article to purchase Stahlman Building**

Bill Helm attended the meeting to provide an update on the Stahlman petition effort. Mr. Helm stated that as noted in the most recent *Municipal Matters* and in the minutes of the February Citizen's Advisory Committee, he, along with 34 other town voters, submitted a petition on January 28, 2021 to ask voters to approve the town's purchase of the Stahlman Building. He stated the postponing of town meeting works out well as it gives the town some additional time before the vote to consider possible uses for the Police Department in particular. Mr. Helm notes that in the report from the Building and Facilities Committee their analysis of the potential cost of relocating the Police Department to the Stahlman site as opposed to

renovating the Buker building for the future use of the Police Department results in an incremental impact on the tax rate on the average home of \$24 a year or less than \$2 per month. This does not appear to be a cost issue. A significant issue in the discussion of the future Police Department and regional dispatch center is the continuing strong position of the Police Chief that a renovated Buker building is not the right solution for the Police Department now or in the future. Given this opposition, it is his opinion that the voters of New London will never approve a \$3.5 or \$4 million-dollar bond issue to renovate Buker for a Police Department and Dispatch center that the Police chief does not think is suitable. It is time to recognize that some solution other than Buker needs to be considered as the Harriman Study concluded in its October 2018 report. If it is decided that Stahlman is not suitable for the Police Department, it may be a possible site for workforce housing, another big issue the town is facing, a future town space for recreation and expanded senior services, Emergency Management or other town uses. He would like the Board of Selectmen to do the following three things:

1. Support and endorse the purchase of the Stahlman building, including meeting with the current owners to negotiate a purchase agreement that would be contingent on town meeting approval in just 11 weeks.
2. Request the Building and Facilities Committee to develop non-Buker solutions to meet Police Department and Dispatch needs.
3. Ask the Building and Facilities Committee to develop plans for the future use of Buker for activities other than the Police Department.

This will help the town move forward in meeting the needs of multiple departments and activities.

Selectman Kidder thanked Mr. Helm for spearheading this effort. She agrees that the use of Buker is not a good use for the Police Department as it was not designed for that. It also does not have adequate parking or adequate traffic control. There are many uses that Buker could be put to, such as a community room. A space is also needed for the Recreation Department. This is an opportunity to repurpose this space for use by the community. She stated that Stahlman is a wonderful opportunity for the town and we should pursue it.

Selectmen Rollins stated this is still very premature as we have not had a town hall meeting to discuss what the options are. There are several people involved in the meeting tonight that have already made up their mind and it is unfair to the citizens of New London that ultimately need to make this decision. We need to get a sense from the town on how they want to proceed.

### **Building & Facilities Committee Report: Buker Building Update and Stahlman Building Analysis and Recommendation on Purchase**

Bob Bowers, Chair of the Building and Facilities Committee, introduced Phil Sherman who chaired the subcommittee that reviewed this issue and presented a report to the full committee. This report was sent to the Selectmen.

Mr. Sherman stated this was a narrow focus and the focus was to look at Buker. The Building and Facilities Committee updated the 2020 Buker analysis and reviewed the Stahlman proposal for the sole purpose of providing advice to the Selectman on Stahlman. The subcommittee held 7 meetings in February and March followed by a review and approval by the full committee and Chief Cobb attended most of these meetings as well. Her assistance was appreciated in this process.

Their task was to review some outstanding Buker issues from the 2020 Mires report, some other Buker issues that have been brought up in the interim, to review the Stahlman proposal and to provide a recommendation as to whether to proceed deeper with the Stahlman analysis. This was oriented only toward the Police Department use of that building.

The first phase of the analysis was conducted without the assistance of an architect or other outside professionals, was based on available information, the expertise of Chief Cobb and the knowledge of the subcommittee. They reviewed site issues for both Buker and Stahlman such as traffic conflicts and parking. A resolution for all issues identified is available at each site but there are still some unknowns. Next, they reviewed space issues for both sites remembering that the Buker proposal includes the Police Department use of the current recreation department space. A revised Buker sketch was developed that is part of the report that addresses several issues left unresolved in the Mires report including the provision of a dedicated breakroom, increased lobby size, a second vehicle bay and additional current and future office space. The proposed upgrades to Whipple Hall will accommodate larger training functions. There is no intent that Whipple Hall will be dedicated to the Police Department, but it is a large assembly space available for their use periodically.

The Stahlman proposal includes an 1800 square foot addition which would bring the area to approximately the same area available at Buker. As with Buker, desired functions have sufficient space and Frank Anzalone has provided a first pass at interior layout which Chief Cobb found generally acceptable. They then looked at work process and flow issues. Based on the acceptance of the Stahlman approach, several issues previously thought unacceptable at Buker were now found acceptable, including the use of a two-story building, an interviewing room remote from the building lobby and the location of most officers in the building being remote from the building entrance, from vehicles and from the prisoner area. The reworked Buker sketch shortens the distance between dispatch and the prisoner area although the planned use of dispatchers to assist lone officers in trouble needs review beyond the scope of the Building and Facilities Committee.

They believe the use of the Police Department space in the basement of Whipple Hall as an animal shelter during a disaster is not appropriate and other space should be found for this purpose. If there is no forward movement soon on a larger project, three issues have been identified at Buker as safety issues that should be addressed soon:

1. Completion of fire sprinkler system throughout Buker and Whipple Hall
2. Protection of existing communications equipment by a simple water-resistant shield addresses the concern of water spray damage to the equipment from a sprinkler riser.
3. No decision has been made on bullet proofing, but they seem to be nearing a consensus on this issue.

The committee took a first pass at costs for the Buker renovation and the Stahlman purchase and renovation. Many of the costs in the comparison are bookmarks and will need further analysis to finalize.

The revised Buker sketch with an upgraded Whipple Hall provides for all functions that were identified by the New London Police Department during the Mires analysis. While the Stahlman building could house the identified Police Department functions, an 1800 square foot addition is required to do so. If Stahlman is purchased and renovated for the Police Department, the future disposition of Buker is a significant issue with financial risks that need to be understood. No current or future need for 9,000 square feet of this type of space was identified during the work of the Building and Facilities committee over the past few years. They conclude the best approach would be to demolish Buker, other than the Whipple Hall lobby.

The cost to purchase and renovate Stahlman is estimated to be more than \$1 million dollars, almost 30% higher than a renovation of Buker. The Building and Facilities Committee sees no reason at this time to pursue the Stahlman analysis further but are willing to do so if instructed by the Selectmen.

Selectmen Rollins feels the report is thorough and she appreciates all the work they have done.

Maureen Prohl encourages the Board of Selectmen to hold a town hall meeting to discuss the future of the New London Police Department, so voters are informed before they have to vote on it. Chair Cannon agreed and stated the voters should be well informed.

Steve Ensign commented if the opportunity exists to acquire a property in the center of town that could serve a variety of different purposes, they should take advantage of it. He suggested that the building should not be looked at only as if it will be a Police Department or not, there are other uses that the town could benefit from locating at the site. He felt that the town would miss an opportunity if it did not acquire the property.

Celeste Cook is in agreement with Bill Helm is purchasing Stahlman for a Police Department but if that doesn't work out it may be a good place for workforce housing.

Joe Cardillo stated they were originally looking at the Stahlman building for the Police Department only and he was in agreement with that. He stated the thought of buying it for other uses is premature and thinks the focus should be on if it is appropriate for the Police station.

Marilyn Kidder supports the purchase of the Stahlman building for a police department but feels it is forward thinking to purchase it for other needs if that does not end up working out.

Bill Helm noted that starting a conversation with the owners of the Stahlman property does not commit the town to buying the building. It would simply allow the town to get more information for the voters.

### **Building & Facilities Committee Draft Charter**

Bob Bowers stated that the Building & Facilities Committee submitted a proposal for a draft charter to the Selectmen for consideration. There are two parts to the proposal. The first is the purposes section and the second is the charter framework itself. It stems from a dilemma in that there has not been a specific vote by the Selectmen to outline and establish the purposes of the committee. On March 18 Selectmen Rollins brought forth a list of things that the committee should be attending to. On May 20th when the committee was actually formed, there was a reference to those same items in a more general statement and no vote establishing that these were the purposes. The committee went forward on the assumption that the purposes outlined in March 18 were the purposes it should be attending to. On occasions there were instances when it was not clear as to whether they were exceeding their role or not fulfilling their functions fully. It has raised questions as to how you establish a committee and make clear what the structure and purpose should be.

The Committee reviewed the meeting minutes from the March and May meetings, parceled out the specifics and incorporated them into the proposal they have now drafted. It is not intended to be a directive for the Selectmen but more for their thoughts and consideration. The charter portion of the draft was an attempt to put some formality to it.

Mr. Bowers addressed a memo that was sent by Town Administrator Kim Hallquist. Mr. Bowers stated the tone of the memo seemed to indicate that the Building and Facilities Committee was not listening to the Department Heads. He finds that bothersome as he felt they listened, asked questions and responded to questions. He felt the process worked quite well. If a different conclusion was made after these discussions, that is simply a difference of opinion and they won't always agree. The purpose of the committee is to provide data collection and do an analysis of what is being discussed and requested. It is important for the Selectmen to hear all sides, so they have all the details. Ms. Hallquist also expressed concern that the Department Heads felt the Building and Facilities committee carries too much weight. Mr. Bowers is unclear on what this means exactly. He feels it is important to provide facts, information and analysis presented to the Selectmen and if that happens to carry weight that is because it is based on facts, analysis and data. Other things in the memo were perplexing to him and seemed to be a misunderstanding or was redundant. Mr. Bowers stated one of the suggestions was to have non-residents on the committee. Mr. Bowers stated having non-residents analyzing needs of the town and tax impacts

does not seem appropriate. Another suggestion was that the Selectman representative and the Budget Committee representative be non-voting. Again, this is up to the Selectmen but when the question was previously asked, they were told they should be voting members. The goal of the Building and Facilities committee is to be helpful.

Ms. Hallquist clarified that she did not suggest that the Selectmen and Budget Committee representatives should not be voting members, she suggested that they be considered ex-officio members, ex-officio members are full voting members.

Selectman Rollins feels that a charter is necessary as it gives direction. Selectman Kidder thanked Bob Bowers for his work on this. Once they have had more time to consider it they can weigh in more thoughtfully.

### **Public Comment – None**

### **Old Business – None**

### **New Business**

#### **Refinancing of some town debt with NH Bond Bank**

Kim Hallquist stated that this is something that Steve Theroux and Wendy Johnson had been working on and now Lynn Lewis. It is in regard to rolling over some of the towns existing debt. Finance Officer Lynn Lewis reported that they are looking to refinance at least three bonds that go out to year 2035 which adds up to about \$1.8 million. The average interest rate on those is 3.15% and the bond bank is offering 1.38%. This would save a little over \$200,000 over the term of the loans. They are also asking if they would provide a quote on the 4 loans that mature in the next 5-7 years. This requires approval from the Selectmen to move forward.

Ms. Hallquist asked if they could schedule the public hearing on April 7, 2021. All were in agreement.

**IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Nancy Rollins) to authorize the New London Treasurer and Finance Officer to pursue refinancing some of the town debt with the New Hampshire Bond Bank.** Janet Kidder: yes, Nancy Rollins: yes, John Cannon: yes. **THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Fund Balance Policy**

Kim Hallquist reported that everyone should have gotten a copy of this Policy a few weeks ago. On our audit each year one of the recommendations is to have a fund balance policy. Wendy Johnson worked on this policy with the auditors to ensure it contained the information they recommend. When the tax rate is set each year the unreserved fund balance is looked at to decide how much will be used to reduce taxes.

**IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to adopt the fund balance policy as proposed.** Janet Kidder: yes, Nancy Rollins: yes, John Cannon: yes. **THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Proclamation declaring April as Donate Life Month**

Kim Hallquist reported that the Selectmen have done this for the past two or three years (with the exception of last year due to COVID). This relates to donor designation rates and people being donors for medical issues.

**IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to adopt the proclamation declaring April as Donate Life Month.** Janet Kidder: yes, Nancy Rollins: yes, John Cannon: yes. **THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **Request of Housing Commission for thoughts of Selectmen on Workforce & Affordable Housing issues**

Selectman Rollins is a representative on the Housing Commission and stated at the last Housing Commission meeting she reiterated that the Board of Selectmen are supportive of the work to be done with regards to looking at and analyzing the need for workforce and affordable housing in New London. They are looking for a reaffirmation that this is a direction of interest from the Board of Selectmen. Chair Cannon and Selectman Kidder were in agreement.

## **Town Administrators Report**

Ms. Hallquist provided the following report:

- The health insurance rates were received and came in at 6.2%. Lynn Lewis will work on changing all of the budget figures to reflect that.
- The bond hearing for the \$1.1 million Stahlman warrant article needs to be set. It was decided to hold the hearing on April 19, 2021.
- Ms. Hallquist will be meeting with the Trustee of Trust Funds on Thursday. The subcommittee of the Whipple Hall renovations want an idea about what parts of the renovation would be covered by the Capital Reserve funds.

## **Committee Meetings & Reports**

**Planning Board** – Selectman Kidder reported the Planning Board met on February 21, 2021. Proudstone Corporation submitted a conceptual site plan request for the construction of an outdoor dining pavilion. They discussed lighting, noise and drainage.

**Tri Town assessing meeting** – Selectman Kidder reported the Tri-Town assessing meeting was held on March 17, 2021. Currently Newbury is being reassessed. All towns are now transitioning to Avitar so they are all on the same system.

**Housing Commission** – Selectman Rollins reported that the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Housing Commission was held last Tuesday. Tom Vanatta is the Chair of the committee. Kate Turcotte provided an analysis of employee need potential in New London and provided a lot of information. There are several different groups in the region that are working on workforce and affordable housing.

## **Meeting Minutes**

**IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Nancy Rollins) to approve the minutes of the March 8, 2021 meeting.** Janet Kidder: yes, Nancy Rollins: yes, John Cannon: yes. **THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED.**

## **Upcoming Meetings & Special Events**

- Next regular Selectmen's meeting – Monday, April 5<sup>th</sup> – 6:00 PM via Zoom
- Planning Board – Tuesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup> – 6:30 PM via Zoom
- Energy Efficiency – Wednesday, March 24<sup>th</sup> – 8:30 AM
- Buildings & Facilities Committee – Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup> – 6:30 PM via Zoom
- Trustees of the Trust Fund – Thursday March 25<sup>th</sup> – 8:30 AM
- Citizens Advisory Committee – Saturday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7:30 AM

Please see the calendar on the town website for a complete listing of other meetings, including subcommittee meetings, of the various town boards: [www.nl-nh.com](http://www.nl-nh.com)

## **Items to be signed**

- Accounts Payable Voucher
- Fund Balance Policy
- Employee Birthday Cards
- Yield Tax Levy/Timber Cut
- Application for Property Tax Exemption/Credit
- Wastewater Tax Abatement Request, James and Joyce Anderson, 50 Pebble Ln. Amt of \$1,446.50  
3/19/21

### **Applications Approved &/or Denied**

#### Sign Permits – approved

- Permanent Signs 21-004 – Gray Ledges Rentals and Property Management LLC, 9 Newport Rd, Suite 3, TM 073-048-0-0-0. Approved

#### Building Permits

- Mark Brunelle, Route 103A, TM-117-016-0-0-0, build new single family home with garage. BP-21-015, Approved 3/11/2021
- Robert Magg Revoc Trust, 315 Wilder Ln, TM 112-006-0-0-0. Interior reno, laundry room, closet, wine closet. BP 21-020 Approved 3/19/2021
- Theresa Sienkiewicz Revoc Lvng Trust, 247 Columbus Ave, TM 081-004-0-0-0. Build 12x8 Shed. BP 21-021 Approved 3/19/2021
- William & Lynn Hoyt Family Trust, 450 Hall Farm Rd, TM 076-001-0-0-0. Rebuild existing deck. BP 21-023 approved 3/19/2021

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:16PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson  
Recording Secretary  
Town of New London