



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES Wednesday, March 23, 2022 6:30 PM, Whipple Town Hall

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Jay Lyon, New London Fire Chief, Emily Cobb, New London Police Chief, Adam Ricker, Town Planner, Will Kidder, New London Tax Collector, Bob Harrington, Public Works Director, Jerry Coogan, Joe Kubit

Chair opens meeting – welcomes new members

Chair Lorio welcomed new members Lou Botta, Mark Christensen and John Wilson. Colin Beasley suggested they address selecting a Budget Committee chair before moving on with the agenda. He feels this would be appropriate since the Selectmen started their meeting with a new chair and stated the Budget Committee should do the same. Chair Lorio stated the difference is that the Selectmen had no standing chair for that meeting where we do have one at this meeting.

Joe Cardillo agrees with moving it up to the first item on the agenda as they have done this in the past. He understands the Selectmen were faced with the issue of having no seated chairman and he has no concerns about the capabilities of the seated chair at this meeting. Bill Helm stated in the spirit of civility he would support the motion.

It was moved (Colin Beasley) and seconded (John Wilson) to move agenda #7 (Election of chair and vice-chair) up to the first order of business tonight. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Joe Cardillo nominated John Wilson for chairman. Mr. Wilson is a returning budget committee member who had served for 12 years in the past and has the experience and knowledge of the budget process. Mr. Cardillo feels John Wilson has the temperament to keep efforts on track and balanced. Mr. Wilson has the time to devote to being chairman to this committee.

Melissa Leintz asked about John Wilson's qualifications and why Mr. Wilson should be chair over Chris Lorio? Mr. Cardillo reiterated some of his previous comments and stated he has been fortunate to have worked with Mr. Wilson in the past. Mr. Wilson understands the information completely and is a good mentor. We have new members on this committee and we will be in need of a good mentor. He has seen attendance issues and challenges on the budget committee and having a strong chair is important. Lou Botta noted that Mr. Wilson has not served on the board for the past six years and has concerns that continuity is not there. Ms. Leintz asked if Mr. Wilson has remained involved and participated in town meetings or Board of Selectmen meetings throughout the years. Mr. Wilson

responded that he has stayed in touch with what is going on in town. He understands things have changed since he last served. Mr. Cardillo stated he has seen Mr. Wilson be totally engaged in events and issues related to the town and has contributed in many ways.

Lyndsay Harkins nominated Chris Lorio for chairman. Lyndsay Harkins stated in reference to the attendance comment made there are many personal reasons where meeting attendance may be brought into question but in her case, she was in contact with department heads and as a budget member was aware of the process. Chair Lorio has never not been present when his accountability was necessary.

Bill Helm stated we are getting off to a difficult start and there is obviously some tension with this particular issue. He is going to be a stickler on this committee to keep people from arguing about procedure etc. The role of the committee is to determine what monies the town should appropriate. We need to be civil. Mr. Cardillo stated his purpose for his nomination was to restore civility to this group. He has watched what has gone on in recent years and felt comfortable moving forward with an individual who is in touch with the town and doesn't get caught up in social media. Social media has been a concern of his. John Wilson stated he does not like the way this is going and is removing himself as a nominee. Civility is the number one thing they need to focus on this year. Mr. Helm stated they are not going to look back but are going to move forward.

It was moved (Lyndsay Harkins) and seconded (Lou Botta) to elect Chris Lorio as the Chair of the Budget Committee. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

It was moved (Colin Beasley) and seconded (Lou Botta) to elect Joe Cardillo as the Vice Chair of the Budget Committee. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Approval of Minutes of January 5th and February 2, 2022

It was moved (Joe Cardillo) and seconded (Colin Beasley) to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2022 meeting. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Lyndsay Harkins asked Town Administrator Kim Hallquist when we would be able to post audio files of the minutes. Ms. Hallquist stated once Whipple Hall has the appropriate audio/visual equipment installed they will be able to record the meetings and post them. People should also be able to watch the meetings live or watch the meetings at a later date.

It was moved (Joe Cardillo) and seconded (Colin Beasley) to approve the minutes of the February 2, 2022 meeting with one correction. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Selectmen's Report

Selectman Helm reported that at the last Board of Selectmen's meeting, Nancy Rollins was elected as the Chair. Janet Kidder will continue to be the Selectmen's representative for the Planning Board and Mr. Helm will be the Selectmen's representative for the budget committee. These assignments are statutorily required. There was a discussion with the state department of transportation about the park & ride expansion that is planned near exit 12 and will start next April. The project will hopefully be completed by August.

Nancy Rollins brought up the subject of civility among the selectmen and among all the committees in the town. She passed out information from other towns and the municipal association about

civility. All three selectmen are committed to try to maintain civility in the town's activities and will try to set an example.

Selectmen Helm shared they also decided to change the meeting place for the Board of Selectmen meetings to the Professional Development building until Whipple Hall receives the audio/visual upgrades that are needed. The meetings will now be on Thursday nights and the next meeting will be held on March 31, 2022 at 6:00pm.

Discussion of Colin's motion for monthly meetings

Chair Lorio stated all budget committee members should have received a copy of the motion presented by Colin Beasley. Mr. Beasley stated the purpose of the motion is to request that members get more engaged and meet with department heads over the course of the year with the intention that they will be more informed. This past year this was only done during two meetings and Mr. Beasley does not think that is enough. Time needs to be spent between members and department heads to understand the budget.

Lyndsay Harkins agrees with Mr. Beasley that two meetings for some of these department budgets may not be adequate, but she doesn't want to put any more strain on their already busy schedules. Ms. Harkins stated that she has personally been encouraged to call and ask department heads questions directly and has never been denied a meeting with them. Melissa Leintz responded that since she is new to the board, she would rather hear the questions and learn the answers as part of a group. Mr. Beasley stated he doesn't disagree that you can have a face to face with any of the department heads, but it is a learning process and we should all learn together. His view of oversight requires an appropriate understanding of the details so they can press, push, pull and work with the department heads to look for creative ways to control costs.

Mark Christensen stated he is very concerned about micromanaging our department heads. He feels strongly that they are the experts and we need to treat them as experts. He does not believe that reviewing contracts is in our charter as a budget committee. Lyndsay Harkins stated they are department heads, but they are also personnel. It is a job and it is part of their role to divulge budget information but there has to be some sort of limit to our requests to them continuously. The amount of meetings and communication that they have to go through already is astronomical and impedes the role and position they are in. Mr. Beasley is not suggesting a lot of meetings. The budget committee can outline a series of budget meetings for each department to go into greater detail and could be spread over 5-7 months. He also feels that the budget is part of the department heads job and he doesn't have an issue asking them to fulfill their responsibilities to the town. Lou Botta stated we need to let the department heads do their job as they are the experts.

Chair Lorio stated last year they met with the Selectmen 5-6 times to have the department heads present their budgets and to ask questions. They also offered to set up time for anyone who wanted to meet with department heads. Training is also offered. For new members a tour of the facilities can also be arranged to learn more about their departments. Chair Lorio also noted that many areas of discussion towards the end of Mr. Beasley's motion that he doesn't feel are part of the budget committee's responsibilities. Many are the Selectmen's responsibilities.

Mr. Helm commented that it would be beneficial to all to have an early discussion about revenue. Very little time is spent on this and it is done last. The Selectmen will want to have a chance to talk through what their agenda will be for the upcoming year. Mr. Helm also noted that Kim Hallquist is the Town Administrator and she works for the Selectmen. Everything the department heads and committees do then goes through her. We need to determine what the process is going to be so it is

clear. Chief Lyon feels that meeting earlier in the year isn't a bad idea so then it isn't so busy near the holidays. John Wilson feels that Colin's motion is spot on and we need expand and understand the departments we are involved with.

Colin Beasley feels they need to do budget analysis. This is their responsibility, so they know how the costs are impacting taxes. It's more than taking tours and asking questions. We need to be able to communicate this to taxpayers and this requires analytics. Mr. Beasley agrees that some of these items are the Selectmen's responsibilities, but the Selectmen need data to make decisions. Joe Cardillo stated it is important that the budget committee group meets as a whole to go through the process together. The goal is not to make the department heads spend any more time in meetings than they have to.

Mr. Beasley is not beholden to the exact words of the motion but his intent behind the motion was to start this very conversation. Chair Lorio stated there needs to be more discussion about the meeting schedule, the timing of those meetings and the objectives of the meetings.

It was moved (Colin Beasley) and seconded (Mark Christensen) to hold a meeting in a month where the focus of that discussion will be the process for this year and to lay out the schedule and subcommittees. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Discuss training needs of members

Chair Lorio asked new members if they would like training and if any current members require any additional training. Joe Cardillo asked Kim Hallquist to provide members with information about training that is available to them. Ms. Hallquist will also send the current manual out to the budget committee members.

Other Business

The next meeting will be held on May 10, 2022 at 6:30pm.

Motion to adjourn

It was moved (John Wilson) and seconded (Lou Botta) to adjourn the meeting. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 7:57PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson,
Recording Secretary
Town of New London