



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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NEW LONDON BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 14, 2025
Whipple Memorial Town Hall
6:30 PM

BUDGET COMMITTEE PRESENT: Chris Lorio (Chair), Lou Botta (Vice Chair), Charles Kelsey, Lyndsay Lund Harkins, Karen Epstein, Megan Brown, John Tilley, Kim Ilg, Cynthia Ruisis, Richard Anderson, Selectman Representative

STAFF: Ashley Seybold, Town Administrator; Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer

ALSO PRESENT:

Bebe Casey, Selectman
Will Kidder, Tax Collector/Town Clerk
Chief Lyon
Mag Francis

Peter Ruth
Colin Beasley
John Ellis

Chair Lorio called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

Chair Lorio welcomed all members, the new Selectboard Representative, and the new Town Administrator

Selectmen's Report

Selectmen Anderson and Casey reported that there should be no differences in this year's budget process from last year's. There is hope to repeat the two-day 'Budget Jamboree', which will be the first opportunity for Department Heads to present budgets to the Selectboard sometime at the end of October.

Budget Committee Process Improvement Recommendations-

Chair Lorio presented a document outlining possible recommendations for improving the budget process based on input from committee members.

Charlie Kelsey, Budget Committee Member, presented the objectives:

- Improve the budgeting process, spreading it over a longer time frame with a long-term strategic approach.
- Reduce time demand on department heads, streamline data requests, better educate budget committee members, and gain a deeper understanding of budget challenges.
- Align the budget committee's process with its purpose: independent budget oversight, annual operating budget preparation, and assistance to voters.
- Foster a mindset that values asking questions, challenging priorities, and seeking alternatives with

public input.

Mr. Kelsey went on to propose a meeting schedule:

- Meet in July before department heads begin the budget process in August
- Propose meetings to discuss inquiries and data requests, and review current budget versus actual status..
 - Meeting with Lynn Lewis, Finance Director, to review the year-end budget versus actual (1 meeting)
 - Committee reports on department reviews (3 meetings)

Mr. Kelsey outlined a proposal for each committee member to volunteer as a 'Subject Matter Expert'.

- Assign volunteers to serve as subject matter experts by collaborating with departments for in-depth reviews.
- Prepare questions to guide discussions with department heads.
- Submit a written report by the committee member on the department review, including answers to questions, challenges, and issues.

Lou Botta, Budget Committee Member, supported the concept of the proposal. He continued to emphasize the importance of adopting a forward-looking 5 to 10-year outlook budget plan.

Lyndsay Lund, Budget Committee Member, cautions against the number of overall meetings and against overburdening the Department Heads. She expressed her appreciation for the list of questions.

Chair Lorio stated that the goal is to reduce back-end work by doing upfront work, aiming to streamline the process and avoid asking the same questions repeatedly.

John Tilley, a Budget Committee Member, warned against voting on any of the proposed meetings, saying that while the meetings could be helpful, he was concerned that the questions and their purpose tended to reflect personal bias. He expressed support for the 5-10 year strategic plan. Mr. Botta expressed that he believed the budget committee could respect the operational autonomy of each Department Head while still achieving the goals assigned to the elected committee members.

Will Kidder, Tax Collector and Town Clerk, sought clarification about the purpose of the process. He wondered whether the Department Head would see the report being delivered to the Budget Committee and have a chance to provide input. Several committee members assured him that the report would be prepared and presented together.

Cynthia Ruis, Budget Committee Member, requested that the budget discussion be grouped with related topics, but to avoid bringing up other departments not on the agenda. Chair Lorio assured her that this was never the intent.

Committee Assignments:

Police- Lou Botta

Water- Karen Epstein

DPW- Chris Lorio

Planning- Charlie Kelsey

Finance- John Tilley

CIP- Charlie Kelsey

Fire-Kim Ilg

Recreation- Cynthia Ruis

Library- Lyndsay Lund Harkins

Mr. Tilley stressed the importance of including a focus on building maintenance in the document.

Mr. Botta emphasized the importance of a strategic plan with metrics for a 5- to 10-year timeline. Mr. Kelsey agreed that he also recognizes the significance of a strategic plan, but felt that the process he is proposing will provide ‘knowns’ on which to build a long-term plan. Ms. Seybold noted that someone had been contracted to initiate the strategic plan, but that this individual had emphasized that creating a municipal strategic plan is more challenging than a corporate one.

Regarding the capital improvement process, the committee will be asked to provide a forecast of capital expenditure estimates, including detailed scope and expense assumptions, such as compounded inflation rates. Mr. Kelsey mentioned that Adam Ricker, Town Planner & Zoning Administrator, has already begun significant work to help address those questions.

Regarding the recommendation to create a 5–10-year budget forecast with estimated tax rates, Mrs. Lewis, the Finance Director, mentioned that Questica wouldn't be able to provide a 5- to 10-year tax rate estimate. However, she is working on a worksheet to assist with those estimates, which will enable members to model different scenarios.

Next steps:

- Town Administrator, Department Heads, and Selectmen review the proposed document to make suggestions, changes, or revisions.
- Budget Committee members go through the framework and questions to make suggestions

IT WAS MOVED (Charlie Kelsey) AND SECONDED (Chris Lorio) to adjourn. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.
Respectfully submitted,

Ashley Seybold
Town Administrator

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.