



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

375 MAIN STREET • NEW LONDON, NH 03257

DRAFT

New London Budget Committee – Meeting Minutes - Wednesday, September 15, 2025, Syd Crook Room, New London Town Office 6:00 PM

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Chris Lorio (Chair), Lou Botta (Vice Chair), Richard Anderson (Select Board Representative), Megan Brown, Karen Epstein, Lyndsay Lund Harkins, Charles Kelsey, Cynthia Ruis (via Zoom), and John Tilley. Absent: Kim Ilg

TOWN STAFF PRESENT: Lynn Lewis, Finance Officer, Ashley Seybold, Town Administrator

ALSO PRESENT: New London Residents: Robert Bowers, John Ellis, Richard Epstein

AGENDA: - Welcome, - Select Board Report, - Align Committee Members to departments and meeting times, - Discuss the department meeting process, - Align meeting dates for the rest of the year/session, - Vote for Chair and Vice Chair, - Review and approve previous meeting minutes, - Other business, - Adjourn

Chris Lorio called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM, gave a summary of the agenda topics, and started by asking for the Select Board Report from Richard Anderson.

Select Board Report: Richard Anderson stated that the septic situation at Mount Sunapee was the number one priority facing the three towns (New London, Sunapee and Newbury). Richard reported that at a recent meeting, the Select Board decided to make the Department of Public Works (DPW) building, including a new Police Facility, the top priority for New London and to postpone the study of the Dispatch Center. Richard acknowledged that the study is appropriate to identify the pros and cons of keeping it or outsourcing to another center, such as Hanover. Richard further stated that hiring a consultant to perform this assessment was not minimal dollars and resources are not immediately available. Further Richard stated that a RFP by Town Administration includes examining the present DPW site including easements and the feasibility for a new DPW and Police Facility on the existing site. This decision has been met with vocal disappointment by several persons. Richard Anderson further stated that Dispatch will be examined before any decision on a new Police Station. Richard Epstein voiced concern that the Select Board is ignoring hundreds of thousands of dollars of expense to the town and urged that the Select Board conduct the assessment/study. Chris Lorio responded to Richard Epstein stating that use of the words “time and time again” (in reference to the study of Dispatch) may be misconstruing and while it may be his highest priority the Select Board can’t do everything at once, but there is a commitment to do a study (in the future). Cynthia Ruis shared a conversation she had previously with Richard Anderson, questioning why the design of a new DPW and Police Facility would be performed before determining a decision on Dispatch due to the space and cost implications associated with Dispatch.

Richard Anderson commented on the new lights installed at the Kelsey Fields, commenting on how effective they are in mitigating light glare/spillage and the general positive ambiance they create, including

the opportunity for other community events. Ashley Seybold commented that plans are underway with Dean McCurdy to organize a new London resident community event for the fall.

Chris Lorio called for a review and approval of past meeting minutes for February 5, 2025, February 12, 2025, April 2, 2025, and July 14, 2025. Chris noted that because the meeting had one member (Cynthia Ruis) attending remotely, the approval required members to vote individually, clearly stating their name and vote.

Approval of Minutes:

February 5th minutes, IT WAS MOVED (Charles Kelsey) and SECONDED (John Tilley to approve the minutes as recorded. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED as follows: Lou Botta - Yea, John Tilley - Yea, Richard Anderson – Abstain, Charles Kelsey - Yea, Chris Lorio - Yea, Cynthia Ruis - Yea, Karen Epstein - Yea, Megan Brown - Yea, Lyndsay Lund Harkins -Yea.

February 12th minutes, Karen Epstein amended page 1, paragraph number 2 of four revenue entries to: “In the Interfund Operating Transfers from Capital Reserves, \$1,634,606 was included, and it should be \$817,303”. IT WAS MOVED (Charles Kelsey) and SECONDED (John Tilley to approve the minutes as recorded. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED as follows: Lou Botta - Yea, John Tilley - Yea, Richard Anderson – Abstain, Charles Kelsey - Yea, Chris Lorio - Yea, Cynthia Ruis - Yea, Karen Epstein - Yea, Megan Brown - Yea, Lyndsay Lund Harkins -Yea.

April 2nd minutes, Charles Kelsey amended the titling at the top of pages 2 and 3 to reflect April 2, 2025. IT WAS MOVED (Charles Kelsey) and SECONDED (John Tilley to approve the minutes as recorded. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED as follows: Lou Botta - Yea, John Tilley - Yea, Richard Anderson – Abstain, Charles Kelsey - Yea, Chris Lorio - Yea, Cynthia Ruis - Yea, Karen Epstein - Yea, Megan Brown - Yea, Lyndsay Lund Harkins -Yea.

July 14th minutes, John Tilley asked whether the listing of Committee Assignments on page 2 labeled Finance included Town Administration. After discussion, it was agreed with Ashley Seybold’s recommendation that the minutes be amended to replace Finance with Town Administration. IT WAS MOVED (Charles Kelsey) and SECONDED (John Tilley to approve the minutes as recorded. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED as follows: Lou Botta - Yea, John Tilley - Yea, Richard Anderson – Abstain, Charles Kelsey - Yea, Chris Lorio - Yea, Cynthia Ruis - Yea, Karen Epstein - Yea, Megan Brown - Yea, Lyndsay Lund Harkins -Yea.

Charles Kelsey noted that the meeting of September 5, 2025, was a Select Board meeting, not a Budget Committee meeting. That was acknowledged, and Ashley Seybold said she would ask for the minutes to be corrected accordingly and reposted on the town website.

Chris Lorio initiated a discussion on **electing committee Chair and Vice Chair** positions for the next budget year. Chris noted that he has enjoyed the role, but his job is particularly demanding and would not allow him to dedicate his best effort at this time. Chris MOVED A MOTION NOMINATING Charles Kelsey for the Chair position and SECONDED by Lou Botta. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED as follows: Lou

Botta - Yea, John Tilley - Yea, Richard Anderson – Yea, Charles Kelsey - Abstain, Chris Lorio - Yea, Cynthia Ruis - Yea, Karen Epstein - Yea, Megan Brown - Yea, Lyndsay Lund Harkins -Yea.

Chris Lorio put forth his willingness to serve as Vice Chair in the event Charlie were unable to attend a meeting, stating his familiarity with the role and process would help sustain and further the committee's work. Lou Botta MOVED A MOTION NOMINATING Chris Lorio as Vice Chair and SECONDED by John Tilley. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED as follows: Lou Botta - Yea, John Tilley - Yea, Richard Anderson – Yea, Charles Kelsey - Yea, Chris Lorio - Abstain, Cynthia Ruis - Yea, Karen Epstein - Yea, Megan Brown - Yea, Lyndsay Lund Harkins -Yea.

Chris Lorio moved the discussion to the **new process for meeting with department heads and other town officials**. Chris explained the recommendation to assign meetings with two committee members (one experienced, one new), with each department head to gather the information, and that a common set of questions (some 20 in number) plus an additional set of questions would be used to guide the conversations and record the information. The discussions will document the responses in written form and ensure accuracy with the respective department head before presenting the information back to the full committee. It was agreed that the information would be shared with all parties, including the Select Board and the public. John Ellis asked how the information would be current, given changes that might occur following the Select Board budget review. Charles Kelsey answered, indicating any changes would be updated in the original document and made available to all parties. John Ellis also asked if the meetings with department heads were open, allowing for attendance by interested parties. Kelsey answered by saying the intent was that these were not public; however, members of the public might attend to listen and observe but not comment. He further stated these meetings were to obtain information and data to inform the budget committee performing its role. Charles Kelsey summarized the process and its intent as: first using a standard set of questions to engage in discussion and gather information; second compiling the information into a written report; sharing the draft written report with respective department heads/leads for editing and accuracy; fourth sharing the final report with the Budget Committee, Departments Heads, the Select Board; lastly the information may inform additional ideas and requests to department heads/leads prior to their individual budget presentation meetings. The intent of this process is to inform and educate all parties about the operations of the town and factors influencing costs, both near and long-term, including the resources to meet them. John Tilley asked if the department head/lead responses to the questions were verbal or in writing. Chris Lorio responded by referring to Chief Cobb's comments from the last meeting with the Select Board, in which she said her intent was to provide a written response. However, it is at the discretion of the respective department head / lead how they wish to address the questions. There was discussion about remote attendance of the meetings in the event a member was unable to attend at the scheduled time and location. It was agreed that this was acceptable.

Discussion ensued on assigning committee members the responsibility for conducting and recording the information with the Department Heads / Leads.

The **department meeting assignments** were agreed to as follows:

Police & Dispatch: Lou Botta & Karen Epstein

Department of Public Works (Transfer Station, Highway) Chris Lorio & Cynthia Ruis

Town Administration (Town Clerk, Tax Collector, Finance, Town Administrator): John Tilley & Charlie Kelsey

Fire: Kim Ilg & Lyndsay Lund Harkins

Library: Lyndsay Lund Harkins & Megan Brown

Recreation: Chris Lorio & Cynthia Ruis

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Committee: Charlie Kelsey & John Tilley

Water Precinct: Karen Epstein & Charlie Kelsey

John Tilley asked about the format and any guidelines for the written report. Charlie Kelsey responded that one had not been discussed and suggested that it be left to the discretion of each team, but that the purpose is to ensure as much and complete data and information to help inform all parties.

Ashley Sebold requested that the Budget Committee member connect with the department head/lead to schedule the time and location for the meetings. Ashley also requested that the meetings be scheduled as soon as possible and considerate to upcoming vacations and the onboarding of 3 new staff members.

Chris Lorio turned the attention of the meeting to **establishing the meeting schedule for the Budget Committee for the remainder of the (fiscal year).**

Charlie Kelsey distributed the draft schedule and sequence of meetings from the Recommendations for Improving the Budget Process document from July 2025 as the basis for discussing a meeting schedule. The committee was reminded of other dates that might influence their schedule and process, including the all-day meeting with the Select Board in which the individual department/area budgets will be presented on October 17, 2025. Ashley Seybold noted that the final budget recommended by the Budget Committee will be needed no later than the first week of February to meet the printing schedule of the Town Annual Report. The public deliberative session for the Budget Committee's budget will need to be sometime in late January 2026. Charlie Kelsey agreed to take the input of the discussion and re-draft a schedule. He will forward this to Ashley Seybold who will provide feedback and guidance. (The draft schedule will then be shared with the full budget committee for review, agreement, website posting, and dissemination to department heads/leads.)

Further discussion ensued on both the sequence of budget reviews by the Committee and possible options to combine some departments. Lyndsay Harkins Lund recommended that the committee first review the budgets and appropriation requests of the many town committees, associations, and organizations, such as the Garden Club, Lake Associations, Conservation Commission, New London Hospital, Recreation, etc., and by doing so, place more importance on the groups and their (vital) work. The committee agreed to this recommendation. Lyndsay Harkins Lund questioned the process and depth of review needed for the library, given the role of the Select Board and the Library Board of Trustees. Richard Anderson and Lynn Lewis clarified that the Select Board has the discretion to approve or

disapprove the total appropriation request from the library since it is a separate entity that is not in the purview of the Select Board. Charlie Kelsey added that, from his perspective, the library budget has received little to no inquiry other than the presentation of prior year expenditures compared to the budget request for the next year. He further suggested it would be beneficial to have a more complete understanding of the library's operations and factors driving their expenses beyond the known fact that the building is old, requiring a lot of money. He suggested it would be helpful to understand the impact of the master strategic plan conducted about a year and a half ago on current and future resource needs, including current and future programming, capital, and related costs. Ashley Seybold indicated that the library's budget will be presented to their Board of Trustees next week.

Chris Lorio asked if there was any other business for discussion. Charlie Kelsey proposed for consideration adopting meeting norms / ground rules to help guide the committee's conduct and effectiveness. He gave examples of norms that might be established and how they could be used to further the committee's effectiveness. Lou Botta agreed with most of Charlie's comments and added the importance and value of establishing a vision for the committee to serve as a guide to its actions. Charlie also offered that he would undertake drafting a Governance document to address how the committee performs its role, including procedural aspects. Charlie will draft a document and present it to the committee for its consideration at a future meeting. Charlie will also bring a draft proposal of norms to the committee's next meeting.

Chris Lorio asked if there were any additional topics to discuss, and Charlie requested that the committee set its next meeting date. The committee agreed to **meet next on Wednesday, October 1, 2025, at 6:00 PM** (with location and agenda to follow). Some members noted potential attendance challenges due to scheduling and travel conflicts. It was noted that Zoom attendance could be accommodated.

Chris Lorio called for a motion to Adjourn. Charles Kelsey MOVED A MOTION TO ADJOURN and SECONDED by Lou Botta. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED as follows: Lou Botta - Yea, John Tilley - Yea, Richard Anderson – Yea, Charles Kelsey - Yea, Chris Lorio - Yea, Cynthia Ruis - Absent, Karen Epstein - Yea, Megan Brown - Yea, Lyndsay Lund Harkins -Absent.

Meeting recorded on Zoom with the written minutes compiled by,

Charles Kelsey, Lou Botta, Ashley Seybold