



TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES September 27, 2021 6:00 PM

PRESENT:

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

ALSO PRESENT:

Adam Ricker, Planning & Zoning	Marguerite Francis, New London Resident
Sheri Cote, Recreation Commission	Putnam Kidder, Recreation Director
Peter Hoglund, New London resident	Karen Hoglund, New London resident
Joe Cardillo, New London resident	Ken Jacques, New London-Springfield Water Precinct
Michael MacDonald, New London resident	Anne MacDonald, New London resident
Crystal Schimpf, Tracy Library Director	Celeste Cook, New London resident
David Cook, New London resident	Maureen Prohl, New London resident
Peter Smith, New London Outing Club	Colin Beasley, New London resident
Eula Kozma, Library Board of Trustees	Steve Soliman, Library Board of Trustees
Matt Flanders, Eversource	Leigh Bosse, <i>The Messenger</i>

Selectman Cannon called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Appointments

Eversource pole replacement project impacts to property and lack of notice

Mag Francis of 605 Wilmot Center Road attended the meeting to continue the discussion of the issue she addressed with the Board on July 26th. She explained that Eversource holds an easement on her land that allows them to operate within the power corridor that runs through her side yard. In July of last year, Eversource came on to the property and constructed a new, mostly impervious access road as well as a 10,000 square foot construction pad on top of the hill. She was unaware that major construction was going to occur on their property prior to seeing the construction vehicles on her property.

Ms. Francis contends that the work was completed without the appropriate authorizations or permits. The wetlands permit that they got from DES had maps that showed access roads, but those maps do not reflect what was ultimately constructed. The alteration of terrain permit that DES approved did not include all properties in New London. The rules say that if property is part of a larger project, it needs to be included. This all means that not only did the State not approve the work done but neither did the town. What was left on her property was a large, basketball court size area on top of a hill with very little vegetation. The water goes down the steep sloped new road that was built and dumps into the wetlands. The road was built by extracting 12-15 very large boulders, so the natural terrain of that land is gone, and it created a direct chute. The difference between what the town and DES thought was done and what was actually done is significant. The Planning Board did not get involved with this in terms of approving a site plan

even though this was a major construction project. Eversource came in and started major construction without the town or property owners being adequately informed about what was going on.

Michael MacDonald and his wife Anne, of 151 Forty Acres Road also attended the meeting. Mr. MacDonald stated that no one from the town communicated with them regarding this project. A subcontractor for Eversource showed up at his door asking if he could use their property to land his helicopters for the duration of the upgrade work. They have two ponds on their property that are home to a variety of wildlife. Mr. MacDonald did not want to risk the helicopters spilling fuel on his property and questioned who would make sure that the property was returned to its original condition if that did happen. After a lengthy discussion he told the subcontractor no.

Last week Eversource came back to remove tons of gravel they had laid to build an access road to the worksite. It took months of emails, phone calls and threats of legal action to get them to come back to start the process of returning the property to its original state. Mr. MacDonald also discussed the trail system that many, including Ausbon Sargent, have spent hours maintaining. Eversource managed to ruin them in the course of one summer. Mr. MacDonald questioned what could be done to make sure this never happens again in this town.

Matt Flanders of Eversource addressed some of the concerns expressed. Regarding the land zone for the helicopter, Eversource does rely on their contractors to find their own landing zones. Mr. Flanders apologized for some of the notification gaps. Letter for this project were mailed to abutters in late March 2020. A “start construction” letter is mailed to everyone whose land is crossed as well as to everyone that may hear or see the construction. An email is also sent. The MacDonald’s stated they did not receive any of these notifications. Work started in the months after that, but this was just as COVID hit and they weren’t able to do any door hangers or door to door notifications. They did work with both property owners this spring when reseeded of the property was done but it didn’t take well as it was put down late in the season. Mr. Flanders stated he met with Ms. MacDonald regarding the trail system in June and will work on restoration. Typically, at the end of a project, Eversource sends out a close out letter but in this case other work is being done back-to-back so this hasn’t been sent yet. This letter gives landowners an opportunity to raise any concerns they have.

Selectmen Rollins asked if the Town was aware of the project. Ms. Hallquist noted that the town did receive notification and pointed out that Eversource is good about keeping in contact with the Town, often sending emails about projects, calling or coming into the office to meet. She noted that she believed that discussions on this project happened during the summer of 2019 at which time she urged Eversource to keep property owners informed of the project to avoid these kinds of issues; Eversource staff said that property owners would be notified. This project has been planned for a while. It was a surprise to her that property owners were unaware of the project. Ms. Francis asked why a project of this magnitude didn’t have to go before the Planning Board. Town Planner Adam Ricker stated that typically, pole replacement is not subject to site plan review however going forward they have asked Eversource to present a conceptual plan to explain any projects they will be doing in New London.

Mag Francis noted that the DES rule is to have 85% coverage within one year. She asked Mr. Flanders to speak to all the other restoration work in New London. A representative from DES responded that depending on the underlying permit, the target might be 75% or 85% vegetative regrowth. Ms. Francis stated it mostly looks like grass right now and doesn’t look like it will ever look like it did before. Mr. Flanders stated they put down contractor seed and do have success statewide in getting gravel roads to revegetate. It isn’t landscaped area but with time and good precipitation a lot of these areas will start looking better.

Ms. Francis stated she is totally in support of this project, but they didn't go about communicating or permitting the correct way. What was built and what they said they were going to build was very different and that's a problem. Selectman Rollins agreed and felt this is about communication. Community relations was poor, and she would ask that Eversource review its policies and procedures with regards to that. She also has concerns about the subcontractors and the community relations there. They need to listen to consumers and customers and find a better way to work together. Selectman Kidder asked what they could do differently based on what happened with this project. Mr. Flanders responded it sounds like better communication is needed, more clarity on the scope of the project and what is required to support the work and better restoration plans.

David Cook addressed the Board and noted that he did not speak up while the discussion with Eversource was being held because he couldn't hear anything (poor acoustics and lack of microphones). Mr. Cook noted that he lives in the area of the construction, and he observed the work on a daily basis. He wanted to let the Selectmen know that while mistakes were made on the project due to lack of notice, but the workers he spoke with during the project were very receptive to his requests for restoration of parts of the trail impacted during construction. He felt that overall, the construction was done very well.

Outing Club Update: Request for funds

Pete Smith attended the meeting to request funds from the Town. He reported that last spring, the town of New London voted to fund the Outing Club's request of \$40,000. The funds will go towards programs and the Directors salary. The Outing Club has collaborated with the New London Recreation Department and submitted a report to the Board of Selectmen. The report outlines all the numbers for all the programs that were successfully completed. Sheri Cote of the Recreation Commission stated they are in full support of this, and the Outing Club has done everything they had committed to doing.

Selectmen Kidder asked about other towns and whether they will participate financially. Mr. Smith responded they have made a request to three towns so far and will continue going down the list. All three towns have a different process, so they are currently navigating that.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to approve the request from the Outing Club for \$40,000 with the approval of the Recreation Commission. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.

Update on Recreation Department

Sheri Cote provided an update on behalf of the Recreation Commission. Beach Director Putnam Kidder did a great job with the beaches; they didn't have swim lessons, sailing lessons but they hope to bring those activities back in 2022. Summer camp was not offered by the Recreation Department as the Outing Club took it over. Putnam Kidder has signed on as the part-time Recreation Director. Fall activities are being planned and will include Pumpkin People and Trick-or-treating on Main Street. Work will be done to develop a plan of activities for the coming year.

Request for \$15,000 CRF for roof repairs

Tracy Memorial Library Director Crystal Schimpf attended the meeting. She is requesting the use of the capital reserve fund for roof repairs. On July 7, 2021, they became aware of a significant leak in the roof. An insurance claim was filed which covers the water damage but not the repair of the roof itself. They got quotes for the repair and after reviewing the quotes they went with the option that best met their needs. This was not budgeting or anticipated so they are requesting \$15,000 from their capital reserve, library maintenance fund.

IT WAS MOVED (Nancy Rollins) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to accept the request for \$15,000 from the CRF for roof repairs. THE MOTION WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Public Comment - None

Letter from residents of Bunker Road regarding excessive speed on town roads

Kim Hallquist stated she received a letter from residents on Bunker Road asking that steps be taken to address speeding cars on the road. She spoke with Police Chief and the Public Works Director, and they will be meeting to discuss some options. Ms. Hallquist noted residents are complaining more frequently about speeders and the Police Department is attempting to address the areas with police officers in the area to stop cars. The Selectmen will take this under advisement.

Town Administrators Report

Ms. Hallquist provided the following report:

- Information was distributed to the Selectmen regarding \$3 million dollars in state funds for electric vehicle fast charging stations. The Energy Committee will be talking with one of the vendors at their next meeting. One area they are considering for a location is the Park and Ride.
- The Selectmen's Community Forums are being planned and Ms. Hallquist would like to start getting information out. Work is still being done to set the time and coordinating the audio/visual equipment. It is difficult to hear in Whipple Hall so they may need to look at other options. Joe Cardillo asked about other options including the SAU building or Colby-Sawyer College. Ms. Hallquist noted that while Colby-Sawyer's auditorium would be an excellent venue, their mask rules would prohibit the Town from using it as the Town could not deny entrance to people who refused to wear a mask. Selectman Rollins noted that the college no longer has a mask requirement and asked that the venue be investigated for use by the Town, and if not available the SAU.

Committee Meetings & Reports

Planning Board

Selectman Kidder reported that at the last meeting, New London Hospital presented their proposal for an Express Care clinic. The Emergency Room will still be open 24/7.

The final site plan for a farm stand and tearoom/bakery was approved.

Meeting Minutes

IT WAS MOVED (John Cannon) AND SECONDED (Janet Kidder) to approve the minutes of the August 16, 2021 meeting. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED.

IT WAS MOVED (Janet Kidder) AND SECONDED (Nancy Rollins) to approve the minutes of the September 13, 2021 meeting. John Cannon recused himself as he was not in attendance. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED.

Upcoming Meetings & Special Events

- Planning Board - Tuesday, September 28, 2021 @ 6:30pm-Whipple Hall
- Housing Commission - Wednesday, September 29, 2021 @ 6:00pm-Whipple Hall
- Building & Facilities – Thursday, September 30, 2021 @ 6:30pm-Syd Crook
- Citizens Advisory Committee – Saturday, October 2, 2021 @ 7:30am-Whipple Hall
- Board of Selectmen – Monday, October 4, 2021 @ 6:00pm-Whipple Hall

- Board of Selectmen/Budget Committee – Monday, October 4, 2021 @ 6:30pm-Whipple Hall
- Recreation Commission – Tuesday, October 5, 2021 @ 5:30pm-Whipple Hall
- Energy Committee – Wednesday, October 6, 2021 @ 7:00pm-Syd Crook
- Flu Shot Clinic – Friday, October 8th, 2021 @8:00-9:30am – Whipple Hall

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

Items to be signed:

- Accounts Payable Voucher
- Wastewater Tax Abatement Request (2)

Applications Approved &/or Denied

Building Permits-approved

- New London Barn Playhouse, TM 073-041-0-0-0. Demolish a portion of 2 structures. BP 21-116. Approved. 9/14/2021.
- Clara & Patricia Cantor, TM 049-015-0-0-0. Build screen room on existing deck with deck above, kitchen & flooring renovation. BP 21-114. Approved. 9/16/2021.
- New London Barn Playhouse, TM 084-009-0-0-0. Remove & replace fire escape & front steps after drainage repair. Add cupola supports. BP 21-115. Approved 9/22/2021.
- Patrick & Amy Drummond, TM 129-020-0-0-0. Build 10x14 shed. BP 21-119. Approved. 9/22/2021.
- Ballin Family Trust, TM 073-058-000-001-002. Add sink & toilet to laundry room. BP 21-122. Approved. 9/22/2021.
- Volunteer Realty Trust, TM 087-013-0-0-0. Install roof mount solar 10.32kw. BP 21-117. Approved. 9/22/2021.
- David Law, TM 123-026-0-0-0. Extension of building permit BP20-083. BP 21-120. Approved. 9/22/2021.
- Holly Sethness, TM 121-007-0-0-0. Build 24x28 (2) story pool house. BP 21-118. Approved. 9/22/2021.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:35PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Trina Dawson
Recording Secretary
Town of New London