

To the New London Board of Selectmen:  
Nancy Rollins, Janet Kidder, Bill Helm

Monday, May 16, 2022

We are writing to express our concern over the proposal for changes in New London's governance, specifically the dissolution of both the Buildings and Facilities Committee (BFC) and the Solid Waste Committee (SWC.) We ask that this letter be entered into the record.

We are very troubled by the way that Bill Helm is approaching town governance. He appears intent upon settling his own priorities for the Town with little to no room for input or dissent from other Town committees and residents. We first witnessed this with his proposal to purchase the Stahlman building as a new site for a police station, followed thereafter by a pitch to purchase the \$3.5M Cricenti property for the same—both proposals directly to the selectboard with no input from town committees who have valued information to consider on the many issues that would significantly impact both the Town and residents. This may work in business but is no way to build community consensus.

As you know, the BFC was established by a former Selectboard to identify and advise town officials on the status and needs of the many Town properties and buildings. This committee is comprised of town residents who have invested their time, energy, and expertise to provide assessments back to the Selectboard, to help them may make informed decisions about any changes to these properties and facilities. **We'd like to understand what specifically is your opposition in working with the BFC, Bill?**

At the last Selectboard meeting (May 12<sup>th</sup>) you mentioned Bill, that there were just 2-3 priorities you wanted to discuss with Janet and Nancy to work on over the next year. **Where does that leave all the other priorities that were requested by Town residents in the most recent Master Plan, as well as from last fall's community forums with much resident input?** Obviously, not every issue that comes before the town is going to be solved, but it's our understanding that the function of a Selectboard is to address and continually work on all issues affecting the Town, not just a few pet projects.

We believe that Town residents anticipate that all Selectboard members will address *all* issues that come before the Town, not just your 2-3 priorities. It appears that both Bill and Janet are promoting exclusiveness, rather than inclusiveness of all Town residents, especially of those who may be of a different demographic.

At Town Meeting in March, Bill proposed that the amount of money to be spent on rehabilitating Whipple Hall be significantly lowered, without offering any informed justification. When a representative of the BFC educated the assembly with what the work Whipple required and why, Bill's amendment was almost unanimously defeated. Bill, you appear to continue with this style of making decisions, then trying to find facts that fit.

Any major expenditure approved at Town Meeting is going to necessitate real work. We need

to know what is proposed, how it fits into the Master Plan, and what alternatives have been considered. What better resources to help than the BFC and CIP? **We ask that the Selectboard please respect the efforts and work of the BFC and to communicate and collaborate with them (along with other committees, including the energy committee) in decisions on all property investments and needs.**

According to the New Hampshire Municipal Association (a non-partisan, non-profit membership association that works to strengthen New Hampshire cities and towns and enhance their ability to serve the public) *“In towns, powers are apportioned among the town meeting and a long list of boards and individual officials charged with certain duties.”* New London is not the only town with many committees, rather we are fortunate to have so much resident participation and talent.

Finally, we don’t understand the justification to disband the Town’s SWC (other than perhaps to distract from targeting the BFC.) You’d have to be living under a rock not to appreciate that climate change has evolved into a climate *crisis*, of which solid waste plays a major role. At the May 12<sup>th</sup> Selectboard meeting, it was stated that the SWC had not met since November 2020. Perhaps both the pandemic and other priorities took precedence. Instead of suggesting that the SWC is worthless, it appears that communication and revitalization are in order.

It is our understanding that the SWC oversees the solid waste of every Town resident coming into the transfer station. What New London contributes in solid waste all ends up in landfill space. Landfills produce volumes of methane gas, which is the worst greenhouse gas (GHG), so much so that it’s 40 times worse than carbon emissions. The Town needs to be an active participant in minimizing this with oversight of the facilities and processes, as well as with education and communication residents.

There are two landfills in Bethlehem, New Hampshire that are both overloaded, and it’s virtually impossible to consider that another landfill will be built. What does this have to do with our Town? We should consider how our solid waste affects landfills. We should be diverting food scraps to compost (which a minority do in their own gardens.) About 40% of all food produced ends up in landfills—that’s a lot of methane percolating and being expelled into the air we breathe.

It’s also vital that the Town encourage (if not make mandate) recycling for residents and tourists alike to also minimize landfill slug. (Vermont mandates that home food scraps be routed to compost facilities and that recycling is mandatory.)

New Hampshire laws about solid waste are constantly changing; it is not a static system. In the past, the Town has collaborated with The Northeast Resource Recovery Association (NRRRA) in Epsom, New Hampshire, which partners with communities to help them manage their recycling programs and to directly connect sellers of recyclable commodities to purchasers of those commodities. It appears that the last report from the NRRRA for New London was done in April 2016.

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We ask the Selectboard for your thorough, objective consideration in preserving the Town's BFC and SWC, and the valuable service of dedicated and talented residents who invest in them.

Respectfully submitted,

*KC & Barry*