



# TOWN OF NEW LONDON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

375 MAIN STREET • NEW LONDON, NH 03257

## **SB-2 Study Committee Meeting Minutes For: September 10, 2025**

Attendees:

Colin Beasley  
Debbie Stanley  
Michael Todd

Ashley Seybold  
Will Kidder  
Celeste Cook

Carolyn Fraley  
Linda Jackman  
Ann Bedard

The meeting started at 10:00 AM

First on the agenda was a discussion about SB2 with the Election group, consisting of the Town Clerk (Will Kidder), Town Moderator (Michael Todd), Assistant Town Moderator (Ann Bedard) as well as the Supervisors of the Checklist (Celeste Cook, Carolyn Fraley, and Linda Jackman). After affirming all meeting participants were New London residents and registered voters, we opened the conversation questioning whether the participants were familiar with the SB2 form of government and, if so, what their thoughts were on the topic. Comments were made about tradition and the town meeting being one of the only remaining community activities remaining.

The recent Sunapee (an SB2 town) vote resulting in a default budget and its consequences on town management and staff was also discussed. Additionally, there was a comment about the seemingly constant change in election-related rules at the state level adding to the workload. The group referenced the SB2 Study Committee Excel spreadsheet (which summarizes the Committee's analysis/interviews of other SB2 towns), focusing on citizen participation levels at the deliberation meeting. Michel Todd referenced a 2012 study listed in the SB2 Study Committee's reference material, illustrating deliberative attendance levels being low. It was noted by Colin that we don't have information on what those towns' attendance levels were at the Town meeting before changing to an SB2, and the same applies to the towns researched by the SB2 Study Committee. Not having a baseline to reference, it was discussed anecdotally that some of the towns researched indicated that the attendance levels were low both at the deliberative session, as well as, at the town meeting before the adoption of the SB2 form of government. It was generally agreed that town meeting attendance increases when there is a controversial issue, citing examples of Croydon, the recent Kearsarge School vote and the New London police facility issue over the last few years.

There was discussion on whether and, if so, how various responsibilities might change under an SB2 form of government highlighting the need to develop and present a default budget, to develop the budget material about a month earlier, and to understand the impact of SB2 on the voting process (voting for the budget at the polls vs. at the town meeting, the number of pages on a ballot and that impact on voter time at the polls, ballot processing, absentee ballot processing, ballot testing, etc.). There also was discussion about the need for better voter information (e.g., voter guide) being available regardless of the form of government in New London (the current Town Meeting form of government or an SB2 form of government).

The last topic addressed concerned the possible cost impact of adopting an SB2 form of government. Examples that could cause increased cost pressures include: Ballot size; absentee ballot processing (could be more requests for absentee ballots [note: Will mentioned that there has been up to 2,000 absentee ballot requests during a presidential election and up to 500 for the local (March) elections when there is a competitive election, which is likely the upper end of the expected absentee ballot in a March election if New London adopted an SB2 form of government]); ballot may be longer, impacting the ballot printing costs; time to count the ballots (ballots are counted twice so a longer ballot may increase labor costs); the time it would take for a voter to complete voting and feeding the ballot into the machine may take longer (this also could impact whether the current space (Whipple Hall) is adequate (in which case, there would need to be an alternative location like the SAU school facility)); time to test ballot machines may increase; possible need to test more machines; and, ballot machines needing more frequent cleaning due to the dusts that cumulates from processing ballot pages.

Will Kidder floated the idea of perhaps, assuming the SB2 were placed as an article on the warrant, placing a separate article which would follow the SB2 vote appropriating money for implementation so as not to burden the present budget assumptions. This article would be proposed should the SB2 article pass.

There also was some discussion about whether an SB2 form of government would result in more signs being posted around town for or against one or more articles and the cost pressures associated with ensuring the signs were being properly posted.

The session with the Election Group ended around 11:45.

The committee approved the minutes for the September 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Regarding the action items:

Colin referenced his call with Lynn Lewis during the week, highlighting that while the HB 475 question raised at an earlier meeting was no longer relevant, he and Lynn did discuss the likely need for Lynn to understand what should go into the operating budget should SB2 be approved and what separate articles should be proposed where, in the case of a default budget, trading off ballot size and budget flexibility would be worth considering.

Regarding the committee's meeting with the chair of the Budget Committee, Chris Lorio was not able to attend today's meeting; Colin reached out to an alternate as well as Lynn Lewis; neither of them could participate so the committee will need to discuss whether such a meeting should be scheduled.

The meeting ended at 12:00 PM.

### **Action Items:**

From July 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting:

Colin to contact Lynn Lewis regarding HB 475. **CLOSED**

Action Items from July 16 Meeting:

Colin to monitor Budget Committee calendar and schedule interview with elected Budget Committee Chair. **OPEN**

Colin to coordinate interviews with selected Town staff on August 1<sup>st</sup> (30 minutes each) and distribute some info in advance of those sessions. **OPEN with change:** Per above, August 1<sup>st</sup> meeting did not occur; future meetings with individuals will depend on outcome of group meeting with Will Kidder, Moderator and Supervisors of the Checklist.