

COÖS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL MEETING  
Coös County Administrative Offices  
34 County Farm Road – Stewartstown, NH  
February 27, 2024

Present: Commissioners Thomas Brady, Raymond Gorman, Robert Théberge; County Administrator Mark Brady; Superintendent of Corrections Ben Champagne; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger(*zoom*); HR Coordinator Morgan DeBlois; Captain Keith Roberge(*zoom*); Ray Berthiaume, County Forester; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; and a member of the press.

1. The meeting was called to order by Chairman Brady at 9:02 a.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Superintendent Champagne.
2. Approval of the agenda: A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to approve the agenda, as presented. The motion was approved 3-0.
3. Hearing of the Public:
  - a. Melissa Elander, Energy Circuit Rider for Clean Energy NH presented information to the Board relating to The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program. She noted that Coös County is eligible for \$76,080 in formula funding. She explained that there are two options available: technical assistance voucher limitations and equipment rebate limitations.

Projects must follow reporting requirements which include the use of Davis Bacon Wages and NEPA & Historic Preservation guidelines. She noted that if a solar array is considered, she advised a roof mounted array if possible.

The next steps that she suggested was to watch a recorded webinar, sign up for office hours and emailing the DOE for an appointment.

Commissioner Gorman asked if she would be available to assist with a possible solar array for the administrative building. Ms. Elander replied that she is available but would need to work with someone who is the direct lead of the project.

The County Administrator will contact Ms. Elander to determine the next steps.

4. Review/Action Proposed 2024 Coös County Budget: The County Administrator reported that the county tax dropped from 9.7% to 5.76%.

The budget includes a three percent cost of living adjustment and an 11.41% health insurance increase.

WSNH (Coös County Nursing Hospital) increased the census by five. He noted that in 2022 the inhouse nursing staff was 79% and contract nurses were 21%. In 2023, inhouse nursing staff was 69% and contract nurses were 31%. The NHA reduced the nursing budget for a cost savings of \$250,000. A \$274,000 from the 2023 budget. The revenue was also increased: an additional \$500,000 due to the census increase as well as \$40,000 in the NH Quality Incentive Payment as suggested by the County Treasurer at a prior meeting.

BNH (Coös County Nursing Home) increased the census projections to 80 as compared to a census of 65 in 2022, and 71 in 2023. 80 represents a 13% increase year-over-year..

It was also noted 2022 the inhouse nursing staff was 70% and contract nurses were 30%. In 2023, inhouse nursing staff was 56% and contract nurses were 44%.

There was a \$65,000 reduction in the activities department budget.

The Sheriff's Department showed an increase of \$160,000 due to two additional grants.

Department of Corrections showed a decrease of \$240,000. The heating project costs were significantly lower than projected.

5. Review/ Action Proposed 2024 Unincorporated Places Budget: Most of the changes related to the proposed three percent cost of living. Dispatch services also increased in certain Unincorporated Places.

The total entire budget showed a reduction of \$92,762 from 2023.

Commissioner Théberge inquired about the projections for 2025. The County Administrator reported that federal and state funds are drying up. He continued that 80% of the county's budget is healthcare: nursing homes and state assistance programs. The BerryDunn report will be used as a guideline for the nursing homes. Budgets will be kept tight.

The hiring of a grant administrator will protect the county from claw backs and be aggressive in to looking for other monies.

Commissioner Gorman thanked staff for the work on the reductions. Chairman Brady also thanked staff for all of their hard work.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to recommend the 2024 Coös County Proposed Budget, as amended, to the Coös County Delegation for approval. The motion was approved by roll call 3-0.

Commissioner Gorman - Yes	Commissioner Théberge - Yes	Commissioner Brady - Yes
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A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to recommend the 2024 Unincorporated Places Proposed Budgets, as amended, to the Coös County Delegation for approval. The motion was approved by roll call 3-0.

Commissioner Gorman – Yes	Commissioner Théberge – Yes	Commissioner Brady - Yes
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6. Other Business: There was no other business to discuss.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to adjourn the meeting at 9:52 a.m. The motion was approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Commissioner Robert Théberge, Clerk