

Coös County Commissioners  
Budget Work Session  
Coös County Nursing Hospital - W. Stewartstown, NH  
November 2, 2011

Present: Commissioners Bing Judd, Paul Grenier and Tom Brady; County Administrator Suzanne L. Collins; Director of Finance Jennifer Fish; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger; Superintendent of Corrections Craig Hamelin; Sheriff Gerry Marcou (*arrived at 9:15*); County Attorney Bob Mekeel (*arrived at 9:30*); Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Joyce Brady; Dave Fuller; Scott Mason; Stan Connect and a member of the press.

Commissioner Judd called the budget work session to order at 9:05 a.m.

Sue noted that there were several changes throughout the budget pertaining to salary line items. The Local Government Center provided correspondence stating that the guaranteed maximum rate increase for health insurance rates for the period 7/1/2012 through 6/30/2013 is an average of 4.7%. The workers' comp rates increased 16.7%. Sue explained that there a couple of high cost claims at the nursing homes which caused increase. She stated that representatives of Primex<sup>3</sup> would like to meet with the Board relative to workers' comp and the Contribution Assistance Program. Primex<sup>3</sup> will be invited to the next meeting.

Department of Corrections:

Commissioner Brady asked about the radios being reprogrammed. Supt. Hamelin explained that it was a mandatory upgrade.

Commissioner Judd asked why 2-3 employees were estimated in the training salaries line item. Supt. Hamelin explained that he is foreseeing replacing at least two officers. One officer gave a one day notice today and the Community Program Officer position has already been posted.

Supt. Hamelin proposed constructing a sound barrier wall outside of his office. At this time, there is no confidentiality as the inmates can hear everything that goes on in his office. He obtained an estimate from a contractor of \$4,000. Commissioner Grenier suggested that the building repairs line item be level funded at \$20,000. Commissioner Judd stated he had reservations about building the wall. Sue asked if the Board would support half of the work in 2011 and half in 2012. The Commissioners were in favor as long as there was sufficient funding left. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to level fund the building maintenance line item at \$20,000. All approved 3-0.

There was discussion on the purchase of new jackets. Commissioner Judd asked why new jackets were necessary. Supt. Hamelin explained that some of the jackets are old and need replacing. He will assess who needs them and they will be replaced as needed.

The Department of Corrections total budget was \$2,023,400; a decrease of \$15,500 from last year.

Sheriff's Department:

Sheriff Marcou informed the Board that the Operation Stone Garden grant application had been approved in the amount of \$95,000. Sue suggested there should be one fiscal agent for the County and participating agencies. The grant will be added to the 2012 budget. The Sheriff's Department does not have a fuel contract with the State this year. In regards to the vehicle purchase line item, a 2005 Crown Victoria and Mitch's SUV will be sold or traded in and a 2012 SUV will be purchased instead. Commissioner Grenier suggested getting a price on the car and putting it out to bid.

Sheriff Marcou also stated that he has spoken with Representative Richardson about meeting with the criminal justice subcommittee to discuss his budget prior to the March meeting. Sheriff Marcou left the budget work session.

Sue presented three letters to the Board for signatures per Commissioner Judd's request. These letters were addressed to Senator Jeanne Shaheen, Senator Kelly Ayotte and Congressman Charlie Bass. This letter expressed concern that the new port of entry in Pittsburg has been named the "Beecher Falls Port of Entry via Pittsburg, NH". The Board requested if something could be done to rename it the "Pittsburg Port of Entry" as it is the State's only port of entry. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to approve and sign the letters. All approved 3-0.

Sue presented information that Jennifer had researched on the right-to-know law. This research was done as a result of the cancelled Granite Reliable Wind Park tour. Based on the information obtained from the Local Government Center this tour did not constitute a meeting.

Sue presented two bids for the plowing and sanding of the County complex in W. Stewartstown. Commissioner Judd read the bids at follows:

- Belknap Septic: \$80 per hour for snow removal and sanding; \$80 per hour for snow removal with pale loader.
- Santa's Tree Farm LLC: \$55 per hour per piece of equipment for plowing; \$80 per 2 yard load of sand, spread; and \$75 per hour for push-backs and snow removal as deemed necessary by the contractor.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to award the plowing/sanding bid to Santa's Tree Farm LLC. The County will deem when necessary to have snow removed or pushed back. All approved 3-0.

#### County Attorney:

Attorney Mekeel requested an increase of \$3,965 in the Assistant County Attorney salary line item. Attorney Mekeel stated that Assistant Attorney John McCormick does a fantastic job and almost lost him to another county this past year. This increase would bring him closer in wages to the other assistant county attorney salaries. The Board agreed to discuss this request at their meeting in February prior to presenting the final budget.

A grant of \$14,850 for a state-wide computer system for County Attorneys is included in the budget and offset by revenue. Attorney Mekeel stated he would have more information on this system in a couple days.

A request of \$2,700 for a new copier/scanner is also included. This piece of equipment will have the capability to scan files to disk which will save paper and space.

The request for 8 additional hours for the Victim/Witness clerk was tabled until the February meeting.

Prior to leaving, Attorney Mekeel stated that he is working with Dan Hebert on the courthouse issue. He left the meeting at 10:12 a.m.

#### Cooperative Extension:

Mrs. Brady thanked Commissioner Judd for inviting the group to the meeting. They expressed their concern in regards to the budget cuts facing UNH and Cooperative Extension. She explained that the State of NH cut 45% of its funding to UNH and UNH has cut 23% of the extension budget. There is talk of regionalizing extension programs. Everyone employed by the university system will need to reapply for their jobs but only in a specialty area. Coös County may possibly have no services at all. Mr. Fuller stated that Coös County is going through a lot economically. Once these people are gone the expertise and services will also be gone. Commissioner Judd stated that it all comes down to the dollar. He supports the extension office. No one asked the foresters, farmers, and users their opinion on the new proposal. They need to prioritize what will be offered and structure around that. Mrs. Brady stated that New Hampshire is the only state left with extension programs in each county. Mrs. Brady asked Sue when the memorandum of agreement between the County and UNH is up for renewal as the conditions of the contract should be verified. Commissioner Grenier suggested that this group show solidarity by coming to the Commissioners' meeting on 11/9 when representatives from Cooperative Extension in Durham meet with the Board. The group left at 10:30.

#### West Stewartstown Nursing Hospital:

Prior to discussing the nursing homes' budgets, Commissioner Judd expressed that he was not in favor of any new positions being added to the budget at this time as the population has not changed.

Louise stated that the increase of hours was based on a suggestion from the NH Retirement System. Currently people in these positions are scheduled for 32 but often work 35 which means they would qualify for NH Retirement. Sue suggested that they work no more than 34 hours and Commissioner Brady agreed. Commissioner Grenier suggested that all hours be revisited in February. Commissioner Judd stated that the Board is not against new positions if they are justified. He also agreed to revisit the proposals in February. Laura expressed that her biggest focus are the hours requested by the Activities Department.

Commissioner Grenier commented that the Nursing Hospital's total budget increase was \$119,000. He asked if Laura could split that figure in half. Instead of having the Commissioners' review each line item he asked that she cut \$86,000 between the operating budget and the specials. Some of the cuts made during the meeting included:

- Specials: order 5 beds instead of 10 beds -10,000
- Specials: Car -30,000

The Board discussed various options on the purchase of a new vehicle. Commissioner Judd replied that a new car was not needed. It was agreed that a pre-owned vehicle could probably be purchased for \$20,000.

Commissioner Brady agreed with Commissioner Grenier that Laura come back to the 11/9 meeting with cuts to her budget. Commissioner Grenier estimated that the net increase after cuts would be \$65,000.

#### Berlin Nursing Home:

Commissioner Grenier also asked if Louise could cut \$30,000-\$40,000 from her budget. She replied that she could not do \$30,000-\$40,000 but will revisit and come up with a figure for the 11/9 meeting. Louise did cut a floor scrubber (\$6,205) from the specials line item. The second floor scrubber in the amount of \$2,489 was moved to the housekeeping new equipment line item.

Commissioner Grenier also suggested that an additional resident be budgeted in revenues.

Louise expressed that the 4 hours per day for an MNA was her top priority. Commissioner Grenier stated that these hours will be top priority in February discussions on the budget.

County Administration:

Commissioner Grenier noted that after reviewing this budget it appears that 2012 will be the year that Sue is planning on retiring. Sue added that she was not quite sure if she was ready to retire yet but included the information in the budget.

Commissioner Brady added that the Delegation would be discussing the County Administrator's house at a future meeting.

Cooperative Extension:

Sue will need to verify the Memorandum of Understanding as the County is paying for four educators but only three are currently employed. Sue Buteau retired in June and has not been replaced. Commissioner Grenier noted that a request could be coming in for additional funds. This budget could also be a new target for the Delegation as Strafford County has eliminated funding for extension altogether.

Commissioner Judd switched the conversation to the accrual of sick time for County employees. He proposed that sick time accrual be cut from 720 hours to 480 hours. This would not affect current employees but new hires. A motion was made by Commissioner Brady, seconded by Grenier that effective January 1, 2012, sick time accrual will be 480 hours for newly hired non-union employees instead of 720 hours. All approved 3-0.

Special Appropriations:

Before discussing the special appropriations, Jennifer distributed a financial analysis she prepared on the Tri-County Community Action financial statements. Her conclusion was that they put money back into the community. They do not have a high amount of savings. The food pantry did not submit an application and the community contact line item was zero.

Commissioner Brady suggested cutting the potato program line item. Commissioners Judd and Grenier replied it was staying in the budget.

Coös Economic Development:

Commissioner Grenier suggested that the funds remain in the budget until next week's presentation. He'd like to hear what CEDC has to say. Commissioner Brady agreed. A lot of work has been done and also agreed to listen.

Sue mentioned to Commissioner Grenier that no funds had been requested by Tri-County CAP for Max Makaitis. He replied he would verify.

Federal Funds:

Sue reported that the Notre Dame CDBG had been approved conditioned on receiving their other grants. She asked if the Board wanted another placeholder for next year and Commissioner Grenier replied yes so \$500,000 CDBG for some future project was added to the revenue and expenditure budgets. Commissioner Judd mentioned that Pittsburg may apply for its water system.

Transfer Station:

Sue stated that the contract is up in 2012 and will recommend increasing the fee to cover expenses.

Revenues:

Based on the cuts made in the budget during the meeting; there is a possible 9% increase in the county tax.

Laura questioned if the private pay rate should be increased.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II (b) at 12:10 p.m. All approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to come out of non-public session at 12:40 p.m.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to adjourn the meeting at 12:40 p.m. All approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas M. Brady, Clerk