

Coös County Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Coös County Nursing Hospital - W. Stewartstown, NH
March 8, 2017

Present: Commissioners Tom Brady, Paul Grenier and Rick Samson; County Administrator Jennifer Fish; Superintendent Ben Champagne; Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Finance Director Carrie Klebe; Deputy Sheriff Jerry Marcou; Captain Keith Roberge; County Treasurer Sue Collins; County Attorney John McCormick and Fred King.

1. Commissioner Brady opened the Commissioners' meeting at 9:07 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Deputy Sheriff Marcou led the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Approval of the Agenda: A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to approve the agenda, as presented. All approved 3-0.
3. Approval of the Minutes of the February 8 2017, regular meeting, as presented: A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2017, regular meeting, as presented. All approved 3-0.
4. Approval of Payrolls and Disbursements: A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to approve the Payrolls and Disbursements for the month of February 2017 and to authorize the Treasurer, during the month of March 2017, to meet all payroll obligations and pay all other obligations due during the month. All approved 3-0.
5. Correspondence: There was no correspondence.
6. Hearing of the Public:
 - a. Fred King, as member of the Planning Board, reported that the planning board would be back in session soon relating to the Balsams project. Mr. King asked if the Board, as Selectmen of Dixville, had any concerns regarding the project.

Commissioner Brady stated that he also sits on the Planning Board. He has assisted in any way possible to move the project forward. Commissioner Grenier stated that he supported the project 110%. It is a responsible project. The State will make money with the rooms and meals tax.

Commissioner Samson stated that he was not against the project but would not support the project at this time as proposed. He cannot support the project if State or County taxpayer money is involved in any way. If the project is beneficial, why are they having problems getting investors from private sources? He did not think it prudent obtaining money from the State. He was not in favor or opposed at this time. Commissioner Grenier stated he resented the comment. He has been working closely with the Balsams group to get the project going. Commissioner Samson stated that Commissioner Grenier had a conflict of interest and should recuse himself. Commissioner Grenier replied he had no conflict of interest. Commissioner Brady did ask Commissioner Samson what County money he was referring to that would be offered to the developer in Dixville. Commissioner Samson replied he said "if". Commissioner Brady asked once again if any County funds have been discussed or proposed. Commissioner

Samson replied no. Commissioner Brady stated that no County taxpayer money has been proposed to be used in the Balsams project. Mr. King stated that he is favor of the project. It will help the town of Colebrook and other area towns.

Commissioner Brady stated that as a member of the Planning Board, the Planning Board exists to assist not hinder people with projects they want to put forth. As a Selectmen of Dixville, he went to Concord to assist with the project. The project is an opportunity for the North Country to have a better future and to have jobs available. New developments, like the Balsams and the proposed projects in the Mt. Washington area, would affect property assessments county wide.

- b. County Attorney John McCormick reported that the phone system in his department failed in February. There is an issue with the phone board. The cost to repair would be \$1,000; however the system is outdated. A new updated system would cost \$2,887. Commissioner Grenier recommended purchasing the new system after the budget meeting with the existing budget. He suggested that Attorney McCormick obtain Delegation approval and that budget transfers may be needed at the end of the fiscal year.

7. Report of the County Administrator Jennifer Fish. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:

- a. CDFA representatives came for a site visit on February 17 regarding the CDBG grant application for the county water system. They will notify the county if the grant is awarded in early April.
- b. HB 2 - County payments to state for intermediate nursing care and home based care. The total billings to all counties are currently level funded for the State's FY 2018 and FY 2019. The total would not exceed \$115,268,000 for the next two years. The county paid \$6,139,970 to the state in 2016 and \$5,996,658 in 2015.
- c. The Coös County Zoning Board of Adjustment met for its organizational meeting on February 21, 2017. PJ Cyr was elected chair, Scott Deblois was elected vice chair and Jim Brady was elected clerk. The next meeting has been scheduled for March 21, 2017 at 6 pm in Lancaster.
- d. The Coös County Planning Board will meet next on March 22, 2017 at 6 pm in Lancaster.

8. Report of the Superintendent of Corrections Ben Champagne. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:

TOTAL IN FACILITY	22
HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS	14
PRETRIAL	8
NH STATE PRISON INMATES	0
OTHER COUNTY INMATES	0
ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAM	0
WORK RELEASE PROGRAM	0
FURLOUGH	0
HELD AT OTHER FACILITIES	13
HOC= HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS PT= PRETRIAL	BELKNAP DOC: 1 PT FEMALE CARROLL DOC: 1 PT MALE GRAFTON DOC: 3 HOC FEMALE, 1 PT FEMALE NHSP: 7 HOC MALE
AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION FEBRUARY	25

MALE DAYS SERVED IN FACILITY FEBRUARY	689
FEMALE DAYS SERVED FEBRUARY	130 (6 females)
TOTAL INMATES BOOKED FEBRUARY	11
TOTAL INMATES RELEASED FEBRUARY	11

- a. Much discussion was had at the February Superintendent Affiliate meeting in reference to the *Amended RSA 265-A:7 effective January 1, 2017*. Basically under this RSA, DWI arrestees reserve the right to have their blood tested by a person of his or her own choosing within the first two hours of the initial breath sample taken by police. The reason this has been a topic of discussion amongst the superintendents is if the person should be incarcerated and becomes a county inmate, who takes responsibility for the process, testing, chain of custody? All superintendents strongly opposed facilitating any blood draws under this RSA, and the discussion is ongoing.
- b. Trainee Officer Brandon Marsh is continuing through the Field Training Program and has been reported to be doing very well. His anticipated release date from the FTO program to a solo officer is on March 19, 2017 and he will be assigned to third shift.
- c. Guidance Counselor Colleen Clogston from the Canaan School system reached out to the Department of Corrections and extended an invitation to join in a mock alcohol related crash they are putting on for their high school students on March 2 & 3, 2017. Some of the agencies invited are Jenkins Newman Funeral Home, Vermont State Police, Essex County Sheriffs' Department, Vincent Illuzzi of the Essex County State Attorney's Office. Superintendent Champagne and Corporal Covill spoke in reference to what kind of impact incarceration has on people's lives and provided understanding as to the department's role within the criminal justice system. It was a great opportunity for the department.
- d. The Department is still actively seeking applicants for the two available officer positions. Staff has been working very hard filling shifts, moving days off and working overtime. The staff's dedication has been amazing, and is much appreciated.

Commissioner Grenier spoke of an email message sent to County Administrator Jennifer Fish on Monday, March 6, 2017 which he read. *I had a message this morning from one of my state representatives who has been speaking to a Coos County representative and was asking if it would be possible for Coos County to enter into an agreement with Grafton to house all of the inmates (males and females) from Coos. I have heard a few references to this in the past couple of months but it seems more from a delegation level. I spoke with Superintendent Elliott who has heard rumblings as well but had no conversations with anyone regarding this. I'm just wondering if from an administrative level if you have any knowledge or insight on this?* The email was from the Grafton County Administrator Julie Libby.

Commissioner Grenier asked if the Department of Corrections were to close, what would the answers be to the following:

- the cost of the payment of accrued sick time and personal time to all DOC staff;
- the estimated cost of unemployment insurance;
- the decrease of revenue to the nursing home;
- the effect on the nursing home staff;
- the recycling center agreement with the towns;

- the increase of transports and staff at the Sheriff's Department; and
- the total fiscal impact on the first day of operation of the closure.

Superintendent Champagne asked if the Board supported keeping the Department of Corrections. Commissioner Grenier strongly opposed closing the DOC. Commissioner Brady also opposed the closure. Once the figures are brought forward it will not make economic sense. Deputy Sheriff Marcou replied that there would be a ripple effect.

Commissioner Grenier stated that the Delegation has not asked the Board for a study. Commissioner Brady and Commissioner Samson have also heard rumors about the Nursing Hospital closing as well. Commissioner Brady stated that there is a revenue problem. The Berlin Nursing Home is helping its revenue problem by becoming a skilled facility. The Nursing Hospital needs to find other means of revenue. Commissioner Samson wondered which delegate requested the information from Grafton. He also added that discussion of closing either facility should start with the Commissioners and not the Delegation. Superintendent Champagne agreed to obtain the information but does not support closing the DOC.

Commissioner Samson asked how many staff are employed at the DOC. Superintendent Champagne replied 18. Commissioner Samson stated that more costs will be shifted to Coös in the long run. Any discussion of closing either facility should begin with the Board not the Delegation. Everything should be done to keep both places running effectively.

Superintendent Champagne has spoken with the Grafton Superintendent who does not support housing the Coös County inmates. Commissioner Brady stated that an agreement would need to be in place.

9. Report of the West Stewartstown Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:

- a. Census: The census was 70. Occupancy for the month of February was 75.8%. In February, there were four (4) admissions and four (4) deaths. Three (3) admissions are being worked on. Of the 70 residents, thirteen (13) were private pay. Nine (9) residents were Vermont Medicaid. Three (3) residents were Medicaid Pending for NH. One (1) resident was Medicaid Pending for VT. *Totals for 2017: Four (4) admissions and seven (7) deaths.*

Commissioner Brady asked Laura if Vermont residents are a revenue stream or a cost to Coös County. Vermont pays whatever rate is submitted by NH Medicaid. If not for the Vermont residents there would be six or more empty beds with no revenue. There are fixed costs no matter how many beds are filled: laundry, kitchen, heating, lights.

Commissioner Samson asked who pays the difference between the cost and Medicaid rate. Laura replied that MQUIP comes into play. The county picks up the shortfall. Commissioner Samson stated that some representatives feel that the Vermont residents are getting a free ride. Laura agreed; but she added that the County in turn has to pay for all County residents no matter which home they are located in. But the County does not pay anything additional on the Vermont residents.

Commissioner Brady also stated that Laura will be asked if she is still staffing for 90 residents when there are only 60+. Laura replied that she has cut back and budgets for 75 residents.

- b. Nursing Staff: The nursing department continues to have 100 hours open for RN/LPN. Two (2) contract nurses are covering the open hours and a third will be needed until the new hire has been oriented. Currently there are no open LNA hours but two (2) 32 hour LNAs were currently out on FMLA and one (1) on the Tuition Loan Program.

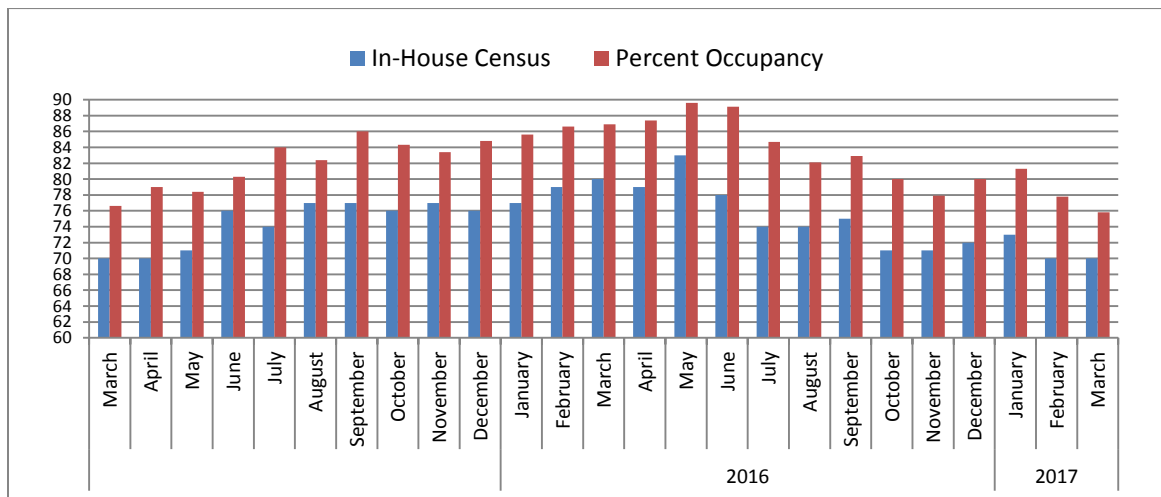
Two long-term nurses (each with over 27 years of service) will be retiring in the next few months. Sandy Harrington retired on February 28 and Deborah Wells will be retiring on April 14.

Commissioner Samson is concerned on how retirements are handled. When staff retires after 20-30 years of service, there should be something from the Commissioners. The clock is nice but a letter would be more personable. He suggested that the Board sign a letter prior to the retirement recognizing staff. The Board agreed to the suggestion.

- c. New Director of Nursing: Kirsten Lyons joined the facility as the new Director of Nursing on February 20.
- d. Out of State Educational Opportunity: Nancy Gooch, Quality Director/Infection Preventionist received a scholarship to attend an Epidemiology Conference in St. Louis, MO March 28-31. The conference, meals and lodging, and air fare are covered by the scholarship. Laura requested the Commissioners' approval for the out of state conference. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to approve the out-of-state travel. All approved 3-0.
- e. Meeting on Future Healthcare Needs in the North Country: The next meeting was scheduled as a phone conference on March 3. The group continued to discuss the shortage of health care professionals in the North Country and what can be done to encourage these professionals to come north as well as how to encourage locals to go into the health care field and stay in the area. The group is planning a joint Job Fair to be held in Bedford, NH on April 20. The group is doing its best to include all Coös County health care agencies.
- f. Nursing Hours at the Department of Corrections:

	2016		2017	
	Minutes	Hours	Minutes	Hours
January	93	1.5		0
February	37	0.5		0
March		0		0
April		1.5		
May	0			
June				

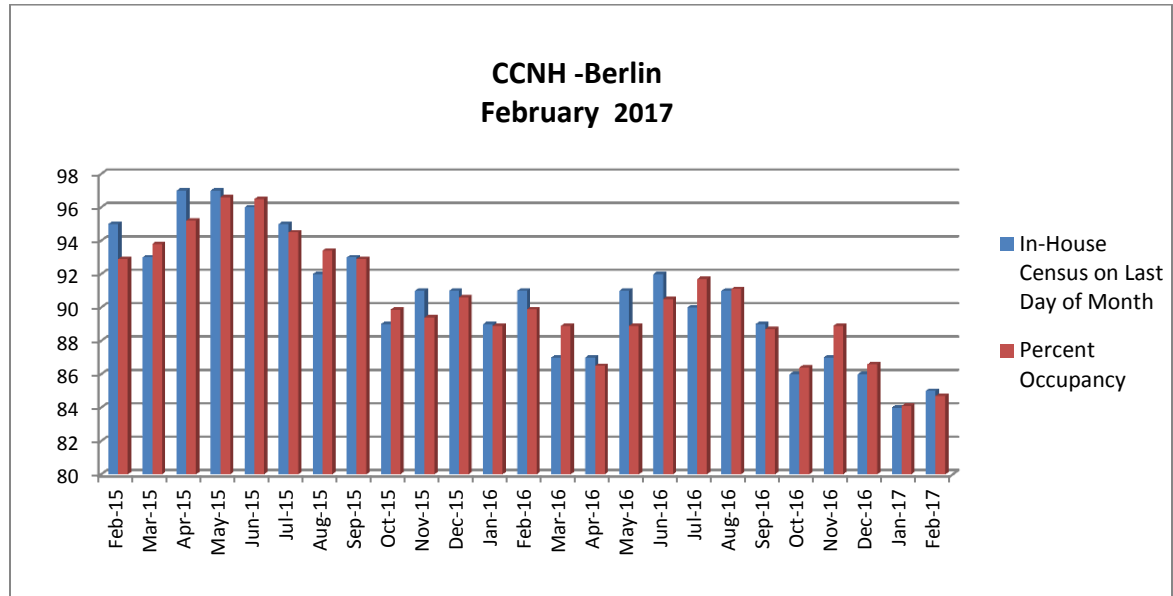
g. Occupancy:



10. Report of the Berlin Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:

- a. Census: The current census was 86. Seven (7) residents were private pay; six (6) residents were Medicaid pending. The average daily census for February was 84.7; there were three admission, and two deaths in February. Referrals are being received weekly for skilled services; once admissions for skilled services begin the census will improve considerably. Year to date: average daily census is 84.4, admissions 5 and 6 deaths.
- b. Helen Couture, Assistant to the Administrator will be retiring on May 31, after 21years of employment with our home. Helen's knowledge of the day to day operations will be missed by all.
- c. Nursing Department Update: The nursing department currently has 160 hours of open nursing (RN/LPN) positions and also 1 FMLA 40 hours. Two agency LPNs are covering 80 hours of the open positions. There are 252 hours of LNA open positions, and one agency LNA is helping to cover open positions. The Nursing Home will be hosting an LNA course in April; candidates for the LNA course are needed.
- d. Moving forward as a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF): The new office for the billing position has been completed, and the position has been filled. Vicky Nason accepted the position and will join the team on March 16. Ms. Nason has 29 years of experience in billing Medicare, Medicaid, and secondary insurances. The Meditation room which is located on the right as you enter the front entrance, has been set up as an office for the RN Skilled Admissions Coordinator. This position has been assigned to Lucie Wyatt, RN. Ms. Wyatt has been employed with Coös County Nursing Home since 1996. Training by Harmony Healthcare International has been scheduled for April 5, 6 and 7. Point Click Care computer software needs to be integrated with the facility's pharmacy, this has not been scheduled as yet. Select Rehabilitation and Point Click Care integrated on March 6. The business office/biller will utilize the financial management portion of Point Click Care, however we will have to configure the software to meet our needs, and this will be completed by Ms. Nason in mid-April. The open 20 hours in the Social Services department has been filled. This position will now be held by an RN and the hours have changed to 16 instead 20 hours.

- e. Roof replacement and HVAC upgrades: 97% completed, a few minor things will be done in the spring to complete the project.
- f. Occupancy:



11. Report of the Director of Finance Carrie Klebe. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:

- a. The loan documents for the Tax Anticipation Note were signed by the Commissioners.
- b. There were four auditors from Melanson Heath in the West Stewartstown office on February 27, 28 and March 1. All went well and the auditors were pleased with all the documentation provided to them. All business office employees and department heads were very helpful to provide what was needed for them. The auditors will continue to work on our audit from their office, but a good portion of the audit has been completed.

12. Commissioners' Committee Reports:

- a. Commissioner Grenier reported that he would be attending his first Coös Economic Development meeting Wednesday evening.
- b. Commissioner Samson reported that he is working on setting up a Farm Advisory Board meeting.

13. Other Business:

- a. Budget Transfers: There were no budget transfer requests.
- b. Approval of the recommended changes to the 2017 Proposed Budget: At the February meeting, Commissioner Grenier had asked for a half percent reduction from the budget. The Finance Director provided \$177,136 in adjustments which he supported. Commissioner Grenier also proposed the following reductions:

- Use \$222,590 of the undesignated fund balance;
- Reduce the State Assistance Programs line items by \$439,433 (Home and Community Base Care \$1,350,000 and Intermediate Nursing Care \$5,000,000).

Commissioner Grenier also supported reinstituting the \$12,725 request from the Cooperative Extension as well as the \$6,000 reduction in the Sheriff's Department budget.

Commissioner Samson proposed that all other special appropriations line items be reduced by 10% with a total reduction of \$17,520.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to approve the recommended proposed cuts proposed by Commissioners Grenier and Samson and the use of the undesignated fund balance of \$222,590. This motion does not include the add backs for the Cooperative Extension and the Sheriff's Department. All approved 3-0.

14. Unincorporated Places:

- a. Request Authorization to Contract for Mortgage Searches for Levy 2016 Tax Liens: Linda Harris requested authorization to contract with Attorney Jay Riff for mortgage searches relating to the Levy 2016 Tax Liens for the Unincorporated Places of Dixville, Millsfield, Odell, Success and Wentworth Location. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to authorize Linda Harris to contract with Attorney Jay Riff for the mortgage searches on 2016 tax liens. All approved 3-0.
- b. Discussion of Zoning Board Alternates: Commissioner Brady requested names from his fellow Commissioners for Zoning Board Alternates to be discussed at the next meeting.
- c. Approval of the Commerford Nieder Perkins 2017-2018 Revaluation Contract (first half) and 2017 General Assessing Services Contract: Linda Harris presented the contract for the first half of the 2017-2018 Revaluation. The 2017 Data Verification Contract in the amount of \$59,000 will be for the properties in Atkinson & Gilmanton, Cambridge, Dix Grant, Dixville, Erving's Grant, Millsfield, Second College Grant and Wentworth Location. The 2017 General Assessing Services Contract in the amount of \$3,450 will be for up to 30 pickups not included in the data verification. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to approve the 2017 Data Verification Contract and the 2017 General Assessing Contract pending the Delegation's final budget approval. All approved 3-0. The contracts were signed.

Superintendent Champagne inquired about the status of his nomination to the NHAC Executive Committee. Commissioner Brady replied that he will need to be nominated at the next NHAC Executive Committee meeting in April.

The April meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 19, 2017, at the North Country Resource Center in Lancaster, NH at 9:00 a.m.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to adjourn the meeting at 11:10 a.m. All approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Samson, Clerk