

COÖS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
Coos County Administrative Offices – W. Stewartstown, NH
September 15, 2021

Present: Commissioners Tom Brady, Paul Grenier and Raymond Gorman; County Administrator Jennifer Fish (via zoom); Superintendent Ben Champagne; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Nursing Home Administrator Lynn Beede; Sheriff Brian Valerino; Captain Keith Roberge; HR Coordinator Julie Brunault; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Representative Robert Théberge; and, a member of the press.

1. Commissioner Brady called the meeting to order at 9:00 am, welcomed everyone. Representative Théberge led The Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Approval of the Agenda: A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to amend the agenda as follows:
 - Add Town of Whitefield to item 13b
 - Add 13d. Discussion and approval of the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Loan
 - Add the September 8, 2021 Joint Meeting minutes for approvalThe motion was approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to approve the agenda, as amended. The motion was approved 3-0.

3. Approval of the Minutes from the August 20, 2021, regular meeting and the September 8, 2021, joint meeting with the Delegation, as presented: A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to approve the minutes of the August 20, 2021, regular meeting and the September 8, 2021, joint meeting with the Delegation. The motion was approved 3-0.
4. Approval of Payrolls and Disbursements: A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to approve the Payrolls and Disbursements for the month of August and to authorize the Treasurer, during the month September, to meet all payroll obligations and pay all other obligations due during the month. The motion was approved 3-0.
5. Correspondence: The correspondence received will be discussed under Other Business.
6. Hearing of the public:
 - a. Representative Robert Théberge reported on the Governor's upcoming visit to Lancaster, NH.
 - b. Commissioner Grenier commended the County Administrator on a job well done regarding the Administrative Office Building.
7. 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	20
HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS	9
PRETRIAL	11

NH STATE PRISON INMATES	0
OTHER COUNTY INMATES	1
ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAM	0
WORK RELEASE PROGRAM	0
FURLOUGH	0
HELD AT OTHER FACILITIES HOC= HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS PT= PRETRIAL	GRAFTON DOC: 6 PT FEMALE, 1 PT MALE NHSP: 3 PT MALE, 2 HOC MALE
AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION AUGUST	22
MALE DAYS SERVED IN FACILITY AUGUST	675
FEMALE DAYS SERVED AUGUST	182 (11 females)
FEDERAL INMATE DAYS SERVED AUGUST	0
TOTAL INMATES BOOKED AUGUST	25
TOTAL INMATES RELEASED AUGUST	25

- a. COVID-19: The department continues to monitor staff and inmates for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. There have been no known or suspected cases of COVID-19 identified. Current COVID-19 vaccination rate for corrections staff is 81%.
- b. The annual staff uniform order has been completed.
- c. Plumbing within the facility has been an increasing problem. The department has had several issues to deal with, some of which have caused damage around the facility. These issues have mostly been due to the age of the plumbing and not misuse or tampering.
- d. The 115th NHAC Corrections Academy is scheduled to begin September 13, 2021. Corrections Officer Sedrick McKinnon will be attending.
- e. The Coös County Board of Commissioners semi-annual facility inspection is scheduled for September 15, 2021.

At the meeting, Commissioner Brady noted that the facility inspection had gone well. He commended the corrections' staff on a job well done. This was Commissioner Gorman's first walk-through of the jail and he was impressed with the young crew.

- f. The department currently has two vacant corrections officer positions. These vacancies are very straining on staff. Recruitment has been exceptionally difficult.
8. 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 54. In August, there were two (2) admissions and three (3) deaths. There no changes so far in September. Of the 54 residents, four (4) are Private Pay and eight (8) residents are Vermont Medicaid. Two (2) residents are Medicaid Pending for NH.

Totals for 2021: Eighteen (18) admissions and thirteen (13) deaths.

- b. STAFFING:
The Nursing Department has 228 hours open for RN/LPN (5.7 FTE). Due to low census, most of these positions will not be filled at this time, but at least one 3-11 position needs to be filled. A

new RN temp has been hired and three applications have been received and are being looked at, two LPN and one RN.

One contract LPN has been covering gaps on the 3- 11 and 11- 7 shifts and a second contract LPN is set to arrive on October 4. If the anticipated hires work out, the second contract should be able to move to the Berlin nursing home.

The nursing department has 1,192 open LNA hours (29.8 FTE) and one 32-hour LNA out on Medical Leave. A request for contract LNAs was submitted and one came in but are not getting any other responses. The facility continues to have a wing closed and admissions have been put on hold until LNA staffing improves.

There are two full-time openings in Housekeeping/Laundry and several open positions in Dietary.

- c. LNA CLASS: An LNA Class was scheduled to start in August but there were not enough applicants to run the course. Staff will continue to collect applications and plan to run it once we have a few.
- d. COVID-19: As of this date, 123 employees/contracted staff are fully vaccinated for a 79.9% vaccination rate. The nursing home administrator still hopes for the rate to increase. Continue to educate staff and encourage the vaccine with some results. Unfortunately, several employees have resigned over a possible COVID vaccine mandate coming from CMS. In addition, 51 residents are fully vaccinated for a 94.4% vaccination rate.

The nursing hospital continues to work with UCVH to offer the COVID-19 vaccine to new admissions and new staff. Employees are also referred to Walgreens.

The nursing hospital continues with Surveillance Testing of unvaccinated and not fully vaccinated staff. Fully vaccinated staff are no longer required to undergo routine testing, only being tested if they show symptoms or if the facility returns to Response Testing due to a positive employee or resident. Due to an increase in the County Positivity Rate, the facility had to move to twice a week testing for the weeks of August 10 and August 17. All were negative. The facility was able to decrease testing to weekly and will continue testing weekly until the positivity rate remains below 5% for two weeks in a row. All staff have been negative so far. Thirty (30) tests were sent out Wednesday morning and all came back negative.

The County Transmission Rate has remained at substantial transmission so staff continue to be required to wear the shields in addition to the masks which still must be worn.

Staff is looking into the booster vaccinations. The nursing hospital was one of the first homes to receive the Pfizer vaccine on December 30, 2020 and January 20, 2021 so staff and residents will be coming up on their 8-month post second vaccine the day the boosters may become available. Staff wants to make sure they are prepared.

- e. SURVEY: Staff are expecting survey any day. The nursing hospital has not seen surveyors for a full survey since February 11, 2020 and the last Infection Control Survey on November 16, 2020. The facility is due.

- f. Family/Resident/Staff Concerns: Two Ombudsman Reports were filed this month related to unwitnessed falls. None were suspicious in nature and none with serious injuries.
- g. FACILITY ISSUES:
- There are a few issues to clean up with the phones and internet migration. The new phones are in place and on the new internet cables.
 - The facility was scheduled to “go live” with the new Mitel telephone system on September 7 but hit a snag with the porting of the main number. The new “Go Live” date is September 15.
 - The boilers are leaking again. Maintenance has received the parts and DHI will be in to change them out. It is believed to be the newly repaired portion so it should be under warranty.
- h. QAPI: Staff continue to make progress on the QAPI Plan. COVID responses have also been included into the process.
- i. Committee Reports:
- NHAC Executive Committee: attended the regular Zoom Meetings. Did not attend the in-person meeting in Concord but was able to listen in remotely.
 - NHAC Nursing Home Affiliate: meeting weekly via Zoom.
 - Workforce Development: the next meeting is scheduled for September 21.
 - UCVH Board of Directors: the next meeting is scheduled for September 30.
- j. Nursing Hours at the Department of Corrections:

	2020	2021
	Minutes	Minutes
January	2	Testing time not documented
February	69	Testing time not documented
March	155	0
April	41	0
May	55	0
June	2+ (time not documented)	0
July	19+ (time not documented)	27
August	103+ (time not documented)	35

- k. Requested Non-Public sessions under RSA 91-A:3 II (c).
9. Report of the Berlin Nursing Home Administrator Lynn Beede. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:
- a. Census: The current census was 76. Private Pay 11; Medicaid Pending 1; SNF: 2 and Hospice 4. Average daily census for August was 77.4; Admissions 4; Readmissions 0; Deaths 1; Discharged 3; Transfer out 1; Transfer in 1. Year to date average daily census 77.6.

- b. Nursing Shortage: 8.5 RN/LPN FTEs; 30.4 LNA FTEs, with 3pm to 11pm shift is the most difficult to staff. Two Nursing Assistant Students enrolled. Request permission to continue double time pay for same day pick up, to include salaried nurses.

The Nursing Home Administrator announced that the MDS and Restorative Departments are reducing hours by 25% to aid on the floors. Also, six nurse managers will be taking call days moving forward.

A meeting has been scheduled with the bargaining unit management team to discuss moving day shift LNAs to begin taking shifts on 3-11. She realizes that this will be difficult for some day shift employees; however, 3-11 shift needs to be filled.

- c. COVID-19: There are no active COVID-19 cases. One resident is on quarantine as they are unable to wear a mask; two family members reported COVID-19 symptoms and tested positive within 48 hours of visiting resident. Resident is vaccinated and has had COVID-19 in the past.
- d. Testing will not be covered by the State after September. The NHA has not heard if this will be extended.
- e. QAPI: COVID-19; Family Communication; Weight Loss; Ombudsman Reports; Medications; Exit Interviews; Music and Memory Program; Wheelchairs; Antibiotic Stewardship; Care Planning; Employee Retention; Dementia Training.
- f. Facility Repairs/Maint: The problem with the new food delivery carts (specials) has resolved and are working great. Steamer has been replaced by the company at no cost to the county.
- g. Resident Activities: Residents continue to cohort, no mixing between floors. They are enjoying outdoor live entertainment once again. Men's' and Women's' breakfasts were happy events. Resident Council is held on each floor monthly, with the two floors using Zoom to connect with each other. Store is open one day per week and is run by a volunteer. Residents' families had a presentation by Magdalana Grace Siegel on September 9, it was well received. The program offered supportive tools for stress reduction and managing emotions (such as guilt, grief, worry) while maintaining a sense of humor.
- h. Request for Non-Public: Title VI, Chapter 91-A:3 II (a) and (c).
- i. Meetings/Committee Reports:
 - NHAC Nursing Home Affiliate: weekly via Zoom.
 - AV Workgroup Meetings: reduced to monthly; more frequent if needed.
 - Executive Committee: monthly Zoom, meeting minutes reviewed, have not been able to attend.
 - NHAC HR Affiliate: Christine Labelle via Zoom, there have been no recent meetings, however, she is in email communication with her affiliate.
 - NHAC Billing Affiliate: Vicky Nason and Jane Ryan. Next meeting TBD.

10. 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 budget process has begun.
- b. The DRA forms MS-45- Financial Report of the Budget, MS-42 Appropriations of the County, MS-46 Budget of the County have been submitted for September 1. The Department of Education forms for Millsfield & Cambridge, MS-22, MS-26 and DOE 25 and DOE24 have been submitted.
- c. The Coronavirus State & Local Fiscal Recover Funds (ARPA) interim report which covers the award to July 31, 2021 was submitted on August 31, 2021. The next report is due October 31, 2021.
- d. The auditors have received all our information and are in the final portion of our regular audit and for the Single Audit for 2020.
- e. As of this date, the county has drawn \$1,000,000 from the Tax Anticipation Note line of credit. As of September 10, 2020, the county had drawn \$2,500,000.
- f. The Director of Finance attended the NHMA Academy for Good Governance, Course 3 - How to Run an Effective Meeting (And Comply with the Right-to-Know Law) on 9/8/2021.

Attend biweekly NHAC Administrators Affiliate updates virtually.

Attended the NHAC Executive Committee meeting virtually on 9/10/2021.

11. Report of the HR Coordinator Julie Brunault. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows.

HR Activity Report: 8/01/2021 – 8/31/2021

- a. New Hires: 7

<u>Department:</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Positions</u>
Nursing Home	4 (2 PT, 2 Temps)	RN's, LNA's
County	3 (2FT, 1 Temp)	County Finance, VW Coord, Transfer Station

- b. Separations: 13

<u>Department: #</u>		
Nursing Home	6 (2 PT, 4 Temps)	LNA's, UA, Activity Aide
Nursing Hospital	5 (2 FT, 3 PT)	LNA's, Diet Aide. Lndry Aide
County	2 (FT)	VW Coord, Correctional Officer

- c. Change in Status: 5

<u>Department:</u>	<u>#</u>	
Nursing Home	5 (PT)	LNA's, Diet Aides

- d. Reasons for separation/Change of status:

6 New employment
 3 Moving out of the area
 1 Did not meet job requirements
 3 Returning to High School/College

2 Quit-did not work out notice
3 Personal reasons

e. FMLA/Leave of absences/ADA/WC:

Nursing Home	7
Nursing Hospital	3
Corrections	1
County	1

- f. On September 8, 2021, the delegation was presented with a proposal to pay a stipend to essential workers through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The original proposal for paying the stipend was for the Nursing Hospital employees in West Stewartstown, the Nursing Home employees in Berlin, the full-time employees at the Sherriff's Department and the Department of Correction employees. After much discussion the delegation voted to include the Part time Sheriff's Department and the County Attorney's office in the payment of the stipend. Excluded from the stipend are the Registry of Deeds employees, the Soil Conservation Administrator and the County Finance employees, a total of 12 employees. At this time 376 employees are receiving the stipend and 12 employees have been excluded. The HR Coordinator requested that the Board of Commissioners review the oversight to include the 12 employees in the payment of the stipend.

The estimated cost would be \$20,669. The Director of Finance stated that ARPA funds cannot be used but there are funds available in the HR Coordinator line item that could be used.

Commissioner Brady stated that only 12 employees out of 300+ employees not receiving the stipend was a problem. Commissioner Grenier stated that the next round of stipends will only go to the eligible employees. Strictly frontline employees per ARPA guidelines. Commissioner Brady noted that the Delegation may not approve the next round. Commissioner Gorman stated that he has had an issue with the stipend. The stipend is meant for frontline employees. The next round of stipends will need a well thought out plan. More information will be needed prior to another request.

Commissioner Brady reiterated that the Director of Finance had available funds for the \$20,669. Ms. Klebe replied in the affirmative. A budget transfer from the County Administration HR Coordinator salary line item to the Registry of Deeds, Conservation District and Finance employees. Commissioner Grenier stated that Delegation approval was necessary.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to renumerate the request for the 12 employees to receive the stipend from the specified budget line item in the amount of \$20,669.

Commissioner Grenier noted that his sole responsibility is to the nursing home administrators. They are the ones fighting this task and need his full undivided attention. Anything pulling away from this task will be told so.

The motion was approved 3-0.

- g. The HR Coordinator reported that she had submitted her retirement letter to the County Administrator to be effective in December. The County Administrator is working on a process.

Commissioner Grenier stated that the position needs to be advertised. Ms. Fish stated that it would need to be posted internally for five days. It will then be advertised. She plans on creating a panel for interviews: one Commissioner, one Delegation member, Nursing Home Administrator, Superintendent and possibly Primex³. The Commissioners will vote on the hiring.

12. Commissioners' Committee Reports:

- a. Commissioner Gorman reported that the CEDC had recently made changes to its bylaws. The Commissioner's seat is now allowed an alternate. The CEDC will need to be notified as to the name of the alternate. It was decided that both Commissioner Brady and Commissioner Grenier would be alternates and whoever is available at the time would fill in for Commissioner Gorman.

Commissioner Gorman reported that Brendan Prusik had retired from the Cooperative Extension and the process for hiring is ongoing.

Commissioner Grenier revisiting the selling of the woodlots owned by the County. The price for land is at a good price. This would be a good way of reducing taxpayer liability and the funds could be used for capital improvements. Commissioner Brady noted that the Delegation are the only ones to allow the purchase and selling of land. Rep. Th  berge noted that it is worth discussing. Commissioner Brady asked the County Administrator to prepare information on the county lands for the October meeting.

13. Other Business:

- a. Budget Transfers: The following budget transfers were presented to the Board for approval:

Co  s County Nursing Hospital:

To:	01-05195-2000 COVID 19 Expenses	1,210.00	
From:	01-05195-2370 COVID 19 Testing		1,210.00
To:	01-05100-6800 Communications	5,600.00	
From:	01-05100-1200 Admin Health Insurance		5,600.00
To:	01-05100-2000 Legal Services	1,220.00	
From:	01-05100-1200 Admin Health Insurance		1,220.00
To:	01-05170-0800 Housekeeping in lieu of health	1,000.00	
From:	01-05170-1200 Housekeeping Health Insurance		1,000.00

Co  s County Nursing Home:

To:	02-05640-2300 Contract Nurses	173,000.00	
From:	02-05640-0200 RN Salaries		173,000.00
To:	02-05642-0200 RN Salaries	13,021.00	
From:	02-05642-0100 Staff Development Director		13,021.00

- b. ARPA funds request/Town of Stratford and Town of Whitefield: Commissioner Grenier read information provided by the County Administrator on the criteria to qualify for ARPA funds:

USES OF FUNDING: Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds provide eligible state, local, territorial, and Tribal governments with a substantial infusion of resources to meet pandemic response needs and rebuild a stronger, more equitable economy as the country recovers. Within the categories of eligible uses, recipients have broad flexibility to decide how best to use this funding to meet the needs of their communities. Recipients may use Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to:

- Support public health expenditures, by funding COVID-19 mitigation efforts, medical expenses, behavioral healthcare, and certain public health and safety staff;
- Address negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency, including economic harms to workers, households, small businesses, impacted industries, and the public sector;
- Replace lost public sector revenue, using this funding to provide government services to the extent of the reduction in revenue experienced due to the pandemic;
- Provide premium pay for essential workers, offering additional support to those who have borne and will bear the greatest health risks because of their service in critical infrastructure sectors; and,
- Invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure, making necessary investments to improve access to clean drinking water, support vital wastewater and stormwater infrastructure, and to expand access to broadband internet

Commissioner Grenier suggested that the Town of Stratford apply for a SAFER Grant through FEMA for the fire department air packs. He noted that Rep. Kuster's office would be able to assist with the grant.

The summary of requests for ARPA funds from the County Administrator included:

- Northern Borders Dispatch \$17,000
- Town of Stratford \$126,000
- Millsfield ATV Club \$200,000
- Town of Whitefield \$79,000

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to deny the requests for ARPA funds for Northern Borders Dispatch, Town of Stratford, Millsfield ATV Club and the Town of Whitefield as the requests do not fit the ARPA criteria. The motion was approved 3-0.

Commissioner Gorman asked that the criteria be included in the letter of denial.

Commissioner Gorman asked if the funding for Northern Borders Dispatch could come from the Unincorporated Places. Commissioner Grenier replied that a presentation outlining the calls in the Unincorporated Places will be needed. The County Administrator also noted that the funding will need to be budgeted.

Commissioner Gorman questioned if a letter should be sent to the towns about the ARPA funds including the criteria to meet for funding. Commissioner Brady asked that a letter be sent to the towns informing them of the funding and criteria. He suggested that the document outlining all of the criteria be placed on the website. Commissioner Grenier specified that the towns must use their ARPA funds first.

- c. Discussion of County Operations: Commissioner Grenier stated that the Delegation had appropriated \$50,000 for an audit of county-wide operations, leases and properties at the budget meeting. The Commissioners did not follow up on the request. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman that the County Administrator obtain and provide a RFQ for an audit of county operations. The motion was approved 3-0.
- d. Discussion and approval of the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Loan: The correspondence submitted to the County Administrator acknowledged the completion of the Coös County Complex Water System Interconnection Project. The amount of \$866,020.38 was disbursed on the loan. The county complex is eligible for \$190,890 in principal loan forgiveness which will be granted at the first payment. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to accept the SRF Repayment Schedule and to execute the supplemental loan agreement. The motion was approved 3-0.

14. Unincorporated Places: There was no business to discuss.

15. Any other public input:

- a. The Finance Director suggested that a panel be put together to work on the proposed changes to the salary schedules. She suggested the Nursing Home Administrators, one Commissioner, one Delegation member as well as the County Administrator.

Ms. Beede stated that most of the prep-work has been done and could be presented in a 20-minute presentation at the October meeting.

16. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to enter nonpublic sessions per RSA 91-A:3, II (a) (c) at 11:03 a.m. The motion was approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to come out of nonpublic sessions at 11:24 a.m. The motion was approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to create a new salary line schedule in the Berlin Nursing Administration to include MSN, APRN, FNP-BC, NHA. Ms. Beede will begin at step 4 at a rate of \$71.03/hour. The motion as approved 3-0.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for October 12, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. at the North Country Resource Center in Lancaster, NH.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to adjourn the meeting at 11:29 a.m. The motion was approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Commissioner Raymond Gorman, Clerk