

COÖS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
Coös County Administrative Offices - Stewartstown, NH
March 9, 2022

Present: Commissioners Tom Brady, Paul Grenier and Raymond Gorman; County Administrator Jennifer Fish; Superintendent Ben Champagne; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Nursing Home Administrator Lynn Beede; County Treasurer Sue Collins; Sheriff Brian Valerino; Captain Keith Roberge; Deputy Jason Huter; HR Coordinator Morgan DeBlois; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Carol Miller and Michael Elliott of National Collaboration for Digital Equity (*remotely*).

1. Commissioner Brady called the meeting to order at 9:02 am, welcomed everyone. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Sheriff Valerino.
2. Approval of the Agenda: A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman approve the agenda as presented. The motion was approved 3-0.
3. Approval of the Minutes of the February 24, 2022, special meeting as presented: A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to approve the minutes of the February 24, 2022, special meeting. 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 February and to authorize the Treasurer, during the month March, to meet all payroll obligations and pay all other obligations due during the month. The motion was approved 3-0.
5. Correspondence: The County Administrator reported that she had received a letter from American Tower on February 10, 2022. American Tower owns the easement for the cell tower located by the recycling center. The correspondence inquired if the County would consider changing the easement agreement to a lump sum payment of \$100,000 instead of the five-year lease which began in 2018 whereas the county receives \$500 per month for six years. The Board requested that the letter be forwarded to the attorney for review.
6. Hearing of the Public:
 - a. Carol Miller & Michael Elliott/National Collaboration for Digital Equity: The individuals introduced themselves to the Board as they were awarded the bid for broadband mapping project. A press release will be sent to the County Administrator for Board approval and to be published in the local newspapers.
 - b. Sheriff Brian Valerino reported that he did not have a chance to explain to the Delegation at the quarterly meeting that the Sheriff's Department had no intent to take the fire services duties from Forest and Lands. The duties that the department would like to take over were explained by Deputy Huter:
 - the timber tax estimates which must be completed in a timely manner.

- Maintenance of the road signs for the Unincorporated Places. Deputy Huter and Linda Harris had developed a system when he was employed at Forest & Lands.

Captain Roberge reported that 911 signage is extremely important and has not been maintained.

- Zoning Permits (building permits): copies of the permits are provided by Linda Harris to be aware of the activity occurring in the Unincorporated Places.

Deputy Huter explained that the theft of fuel and logs does happen, and he had developed a working relationship with the loggers. Law enforcement presence is needed in the Unincorporated Places.

County Treasurer Sue Collins noted that eyes and ears are needed out in the Unincorporated Places. There are lots of people coming to the areas and they need to be made aware of the laws.

Commissioner Grenier stated that Deputy Huter should attend the March 21 meeting and be prepared to answer questions.

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

COUNTY

- a. New England Telehealth Consortium (NETC)-An organization that assists healthcare facilities with applying for and managing the FCC's Rural Healthcare Program's subsidies for IT network and internet expenses. There is an annual fee of \$1,590 fee for services. If the County is approved for this program, the county would be eligible to receive a reimbursement up to 65% of certain eligible IT expenses. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to authorize the County Administrator to sign the agreement with NETC. The motion was approved 3-0.
- b. County House Update: The County Administrator reported that there is water leaking around the chimney in the basement. The Plant Manager thinks it is from spring run-off and recommended excavating dirt away from the foundation wall to assess any damage (repair) and installing perimeter drains.

The Superintendent also suggested installing gutters.

The area will be monitored during the spring weather.

UNINCORPORATED PLACES

- a. Gorham Communications Committee: The Town of Gorham is requesting the Commissioners appoint a representative to sit on a newly formed committee to study the emergency services communication infrastructure in Gorham. The study will help in determining which equipment will give the best radio coverage. The unincorporated places would be included in this coverage area. Commissioner Gorman offered to work with the County Administrator and attend the meeting.

Committees/Boards

- NH Association of Counties Executive Meeting March 18
- NH Association of Counties-Strategic Plan Committee TBD
- Coös County Planning Board April 20
- North Country Council Board Meeting March 17
- NH Interlocal Trust Board Meeting March 24
- 45th Parallel EMS Board Meeting April
- Coös County Broadband Committee March 30

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	18
HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS	7
PRETRIAL	11
NH STATE PRISON INMATES	0
OTHER COUNTY INMATES	0
ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAM	0
WORK RELEASE PROGRAM	0
FURLOUGH	0
HELD AT OTHER FACILITIES HOC= HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS PT= PRETRIAL	GRAFTON DOC: 1 HOC FEMALE, 1 PT MALE, 1 HOC MALE NHSP: 3 PT MALE
AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION FEBRUARY	19
MALE DAYS SERVED IN FACILITY FEBRUARY	525
FEMALE DAYS SERVED FEBRUARY	60 (6 females)
FEDERAL INMATE DAYS SERVED FEBRUARY	0
TOTAL INMATES BOOKED FEBRUARY	19
TOTAL INMATES RELEASED FEBRUARY	19

- a. COVID-19 Updates: The department had one new case of COVID-19 in the beginning of February. The department has had no further cases of COVID-19 to date.
- b. The department had a corrections officer resign effective February 24, 2022. The Medical Services Coordinator has submitted her resignation effective March 18, 2022. Recruitment and retention of employees continues to be a major struggle.
- c. An ‘inmate on inmate’ assault took place on February 20, 2022. There were significant injuries incurred by the victim. Fortunately, the DOC medical staff was able to treat the injuries without hospitalization. The case has been forwarded to the Coös County Sheriff’s Department for prosecution.

The Superintendent reported that the prosecution matters being handled by the Sheriff’s Department has outstanding.

- d. Annual Department of Environmental Services (DES) reporting for the Coös County Transfer Station and Coös County Recycling Center have been filed.

- e. The Emergency Narcan Administration policy was presented for review and approval. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to approve the Emergency Narcan Administration policy. The motion was approved 3-0.

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 56. In February, there was one (1) admission and no deaths. Of the 56 residents, five (5) are Private Pay and eight (8) residents are Vermont Medicaid. Three (3) residents are Medicaid Pending for NH. One (1) of these residents was admitted Medicaid Pending under the agreement with NH DHHS to guarantee payment if Medicaid is denied. Of the other two, one is approved but needs to officially switch from community Medicaid to long term care Medicaid and one is a former private pay resident who we are working to transition to NH Medicaid with BEAS assistance.

Admissions were on hold again for four weeks due to a COVID outbreak in our employees. An admission was brought in on February 28 and another scheduled for March 7. There are seven applications on our waiting list that we will be brought in as staffing and COVID allow. The nursing hospital is on the list with the local hospitals to take ICF level admissions that are awaiting Medicaid.

Totals for 2021: Twenty-two (22) admissions and sixteen (16) deaths.

Totals for 2022: Three (3) admissions and two (2) deaths.

- b. STAFFING:

Nursing: To be fully staffed the department has 344 hours open for RN/LPN (8.6 FTE). To maintain two floors and a census of up to 66, the department would need to fill 4 FTE. Currently two contract nurses and several temps are able to fill those 4 FTE. The nursing hospital has hired a total of six (6) RN/LPN temps so far this year.

Currently the department has 1,368 open LNA hours (34.2 FTE). To maintain two floors and a census of up to 66, the department would need to fill 14 FTE. Currently there are five (5) contract LNAs. The department could use one or two more contract LNAs to fully meet this goal.

The nursing hospital also has four (4) full time openings (160 hours) in Housekeeping/Laundry and 150 open Dietary Aide hours plus a 40-hour Assistant Dietary Manager position in Dietary. The Nursing Hospital Administrator is running ads in the paper, on the County Website, and on Facebook for these positions.

The National Guard is working with DHHS to assist hospitals and nursing homes in NH. The nursing hospital has five that have arrived to assist with screening staff and visitors and performing non-clinical tasks. They have been a wonderful addition to our team! Two will be left on March 6 while the other three will complete their time here on March 15. Ms. Mills recognized Pfc Liam MacVittie who not only has been so very good to our residents and helpful with our staff, but also became a true hero when he stopped at a burning house in our community and helped save an occupant of that building!

- c. COVID-19: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have mandated that all healthcare facilities who are funded by Medicare and/or Medicaid ensure that all applicable staff are vaccinated for COVID-19, regardless of clinical responsibility or patient contact. This mandate includes all current staff as well as any new staff who provide any care, treatment, or other services for the facility and/or its residents. The nursing hospital's Mandatory Vaccine Policy was reinstated on January 14, 2022. Currently three (3) employees have received only one dose of a two-dose series. These employees must be fully vaccinated by March 14, or the nursing hospital will be considered out of compliance and subject to deficiencies. "Facilities that do not meet these parameters could be subject to additional enforcement actions depending on the severity of the deficiency and the type of facility (e.g., plans of correction, civil monetary penalties, denial of payment, termination, etc.)." One of these employees who had received the first dose has chosen to resign rather than receive the second dose.

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

Although another employee tested positive on February 25, the nursing hospital was cleared of outbreak that day. Coös County continues to have a "substantial" Transmission Rate, so the facility continues with twice a week testing of unvaccinated and not fully vaccinated staff. The nursing hospital is also now required to test all employees who are "not up to date" (have not received the booster dose) on the same twice a week schedule. While the booster dose is not required, the routine testing is required. All staff continue to be required to wear the shields in addition to the masks which still must be worn.

- d. FACILITY ISSUES: The facility continues to have intermittent IT issues as SNS upgrades and updates equipment and servers.
- e. QAPI: Staff continues to make progress on its QAPI Plan. COVID responses are included in the process. Staff has also added tasks from the Survey Plan of Correction to include audits on using the infrared thermometer, falls investigations, the use of paid feeding assistants, and lift sling inspections.
- f. Committee Reports:
- NHAC Executive Committee: Attending meetings remotely.
 - NHAC Nursing Home Affiliate: We are meeting weekly via Zoom.
 - Workforce Development: The next meeting is scheduled for March 15.
 - UCVH Board of Directors: The next meeting is scheduled for March 31.
- g. Nursing Hours at the Department of Corrections: CCNH nursing staff is currently not going over to the DOC.

10. 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 66. The average daily census for February 2022 was 67.0; Admissions 0, Readmissions 0; Deaths 4, 1 after transfer; Discharges 0; Transfer out 2; Transfer in 1. Year to date average daily census 68.2.

- b. Nursing Shortage: The Army National Guard end date is March 15, 2022; two are leaving this week. The nursing home lost 9 employees due to the vaccine mandate. The department recruited 6 Agency LNAs and 3 Agency Nurses. The department continues with multiple shifts below minimum staffing. Staff are offered up to double time rate to bring us to minimum staffing, using a tiered approach. The nursing home also continues to offer salaried nurses to pick-up for double-time rate to meet minimum staffing.
- c. Business Office: NHRS audit in progress.
- d. QAPI: Survey Entrance and COVID-19 Focus Survey Updates; COVID-19 Policy Updates; Weight Loss; State Mandated Reports – 1; Medications; Exit Interviews; Music and Memory Program (Tele); Employee Retention; Fall Risk.
- e. Building Repairs/Maintenance: The generator has a fuel leak, parts and repair quote was \$4,700. The Nursing Home Administrator asked if the cost could be added to its 2022 budget? Commissioner Grenier asked that the County Administrator to include the \$4,700.
- f. The Maintenance Department recommends purchasing televisions for all residents (100); quoted: \$16,999 through Amazon or \$33,049 through Direct Supply. This would reduce the workload on staff and would be helpful to residents/families when admitting a loved one into our Home (need to purchase specific size and mounting bracket; staff need to learn to operate various types of electronic equipment – frequent issues, would reduce stress and improve workflows).
- g. HEB to manage bid process and job oversight for propane tank project - no update.
- h. SNS continues working on IT upgrade: pending moving server to new tower; Mike is removing old cable. Identified some computers are still on Windows 7 operating system. Call bell server upgrade needed for 2022.
- i. COVID-19: State funding for testing through the Public Health Lab will terminate at the end of March. Employees who are not “boosted” are tested twice weekly at this time. The nursing home has 41 staff who chose not to receive their booster dose, with a possible additional 10 if those currently not eligible for a booster decide not to receive one when due. The nursing home has an active contract through a lab that will charge just over \$60/specimen; there is no current reimbursement system for specimen collection for staff testing.
- j. Nonpublic: Request for nonpublic 91-A:3, II (a) (c).
- k. Meetings/Committee Reports:
 - NHAC Nursing Home Affiliate, meet weekly via Zoom
 - Executive Committee – Monthly Zoom
 - NHAC Legislative Update – Weekly via Zoom
 - North Country Health Care Workforce Meeting – Zoom

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. 2022 Tax Anticipation Note documents were presented to be signed by Commissioners & Treasurer.
- b. There are two 2021 budget transfers to sign to help clear up final year-end adjustments.
- c. The Berlin Nursing Home received \$229,642.39 on 2/24/2022 for the Phase 4 Provider Relief Fund (PRF).
- d. The NHRS is currently auditing the Berlin Nursing Home. The audit began on January 20.
- e. The 2020 Financial Audit and Single Audit is complete. The 2021 Financial Audit and Single Audit work has begun.
- f. The finance department also needs to complete a full valuation of the County's OPEB and related GASB 75 disclosures as of December 31, 2021 in order to complete the 2021 financial audit. KMS Actuaries completes the evaluation for the county, but it requires a large amount of information compiled regarding employees, retirees, insurance and other benefits. This will be worked on over the next couple of months.
- g. The second Provider Relief Fund (PRF) reporting period is now open until March 31. This reporting is for the Cares Act funding received from July 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020 for each Nursing facility. The reporting data includes financial data from 2019, 2020 and 2021 along with nursing facilities employee and resident statistics.
- h. March is a very busy month in the Finance Department with the 2022 budget to be finalized, two Nursing Facility cost reports to complete, 23 Unincorporated Places MS535s to complete, PRF reporting due for both Nursing Facilities, 2021 audit work and full Actuary report to complete, all along with the "regular work" of the Finance Department.
- i. The Director of Finance attends biweekly NHAC Administrators Affiliate updates.

12. Report of the HR Coordinator Morgan DeBlois. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:

HR Activity Report: 2/01/2022 - 2/28/2022

a. New Hires: 8

Department:	#	Positions
Nursing Home	0	
Nursing Hospital	8 (2PT, 6 Temp)	4 Dietary, 3 Unit Aide, 1RN

b. Separations: 15

Department:	#	
Nursing Home	10 (7PT, 3Temp)	1 RN, 4 LNA, 3 Unit Aide, 1 Activity Aide, 1 Maintenance
Nursing Hospital	4 (3 FT, 1 Temp)	1 Restorative Aide, 2 LNA, 1 Laund/Hsekeep,
County	1 (1 FT)	1 Correctional officer

c. Change in Status: 1

Department:	#	
Nursing Hospital	1	FT LNA to Temp LNA

d. Reasons for separation/Change of status:

- Retiring 2
- Vaccine Mandate 9
- New Employment 2
- Personal reasons 2

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

- Nursing Home 1
- Nursing Hospital 2
- Corrections 2
- County 0

f. February has been a challenging month with a high volume of resignations. The nursing homes have been fortunate for Temp employees who have covered an incredible number of hours as well as our National Guard members. We are grateful for their efforts as well as the continued efforts of our permanent staff.

g. The HR Coordinator continues to take trainings through PRIMEX³ that are proving very beneficial in her day-to-day practices. Most recently she completed an FMLA training and next will participate in an Employee Misconduct & Performance training. She continues to take the SHRM certification course every Monday and will take the exam in July. She noted appreciation for the County’s continued support in furthering her education.

13. Commissioners’ Committee Reports: There were no committee reports.

14. Other Business:

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

To:	02-05620-3700 Provider Assessment	4,070.00	
From:	02-05610-9000 Principal: Long Term Debt		4,070.00
To:	02-05640-2300 Contract Nurses	4,560.00	
From:	02-05640-1200 Health Insurance		4,560.00

15. Unincorporated Places:

- a. CAI Technologies Approval of Tax Map Maintenance Contract 2022-2023: A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to approve the CAI Technologies Approval of Tax Map Maintenance Contract 2022-2023 in the amount of \$1,000. The motion was approved 3-0.
- b. Androscoggin Valley Regional Refuse Disposal District Appointment/Reappointment of District Representative: A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Brady to appoint Commissioner Grenier as the District Representative for three years and

appoint Commissioner Brady and Commissioner Gorman as alternates. The motion was approved 3-0.

- c. Commerford Nieder Perkins LLC - Approval of 2022 General Assessing Contract: A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to approve the 2022 General Assessing Services in the amount of \$2,750. The motion was approved 3-0.
- d. Gorham Communications Committee - Commissioner Representative: This item was discussed under the County Administrator's report.

16. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to enter non-public sessions under RSA 91-A:3 II (a) (c) at 10:10 a.m. The motion was approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to come out of non-public sessions at 10:10 a.m. The motion was approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to seal the minutes indefinitely. The motion was approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to allow the Berlin Nursing Home Administrator to hire Diane Labrecque as a temp employee. The motion was approved 3-0.

17. Any other public input: There was no public comment.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 13, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. at the Coös County Administrative Offices in Stewartstown.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to adjourn the meeting at 10:22 a.m. The motion was approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Commissioner Raymond Gorman, Clerk