

Coös County Commissioners
Regular Meeting
Coös County Nursing Hospital - W. Stewartstown, NH
November 12, 2014

Present: Commissioners Tom Brady, Paul Grenier and Rick Samson; County Administrator Jennifer Fish; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger; Superintendent Craig Hamelin; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Sheriff Gerry Marcou; County Treasurer Fred King; County Attorney John McCormick; and members of the press and public.

Commissioner Brady opened the Commissioners' meeting at 9:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He asked everyone to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Approval of the Agenda:

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to amend the agenda as follows: 12c Granite Reliable Power Discussion and 12d Employee Survey. All approved 3-0.

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

2. Approval of the Minutes of the November 5, 2014, budget work session:

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to approve the minutes of the November 5, 2014, budget work session. All approved 3-0.

3. 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 October 2014 and to authorize the Treasurer, during the month of November, to meet all payroll obligations and pay all other obligations due during the month. All approved 3-0.

4. Correspondence:

Jennifer reported that a letter was received from the North Country Council informing Coös County that it has the authorization under RSA 3646 III to appoint two representatives from the County to the North Country Council. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to appoint County Treasurer Fred King and County Administrator Jennifer Fish as representatives for Coös County. All approved 3-0.

5. Hearing of the Public:

Edith Tucker, *The Coös County Democrat*, noted that the Budget Work Session was informative; however she asked if individuals making presentations in the future would provide copies to the press.

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

COUNTY

- a. The New Hampshire Interlocal Trust will release the health insurance not-to-exceed rates on December 4.
- b. Primex³ has extended Coös County an offer to participate in its Contribution Assurance Program (CAP) for FY 2016 and FY 2017. The County currently participates in the program and the maximum increase has been 7%. The not to exceed rate provided by Primex³ was 9%.

Commissioner Grenier noted that he was comfortable entering into this agreement with Primex³. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to enter the Primex³ Property & Liability Contribution Assurance Program (CAP) for the fiscal years 2016 and 2017. All approved 3-0.

- c. Jennifer was notified by Donna Lane that the CDBG Brookside Apartments weatherization project has requested from CDFA to extend their grant for another year. The project was originally set to be completed by December 31, 2014.
- d. Jennifer received two (2) requests to-date from the food pantries. The Colebrook Food pantry requested \$5,000 and the Pittsburg Food Pantry request \$1,000.

Commissioner Brady asked which towns were notified of the funds. Jennifer replied Colebrook, Pittsburg, Lancaster and Groveton. Representative Hammon has not forwarded any information on the Whitefield Food Pantry. Commissioner Brady suggested appropriating \$1,000 to Pittsburg and \$3,000 to Colebrook as the other towns' requests have not been received. Commissioner Samson suggested \$2,000 for the Colebrook at this time. A motion was made by Commissioner Samson, seconded by Commissioner Grenier, to appropriate \$1,000 to the Pittsburg Food Pantry and \$2,000 to the Colebrook Food Pantry. All approved 3-0.

- e. Based on a discussion during the Budget Work Session, Jennifer stated that a motion would be needed to reject the Commissioners and County Treasurer's proposed 2015-2016 salaries as set by the Delegation.

Commissioner Grenier suggested that the salaries be revisited prior to the March meeting. In his opinion, the Commissioners need to show that the leadership of the County does not want to raise taxes. Commissioner Samson stated that he did not want the increase in salary. The other Board members agreed. County Treasurer King also rejected his increase in salary. A motion was made by Commissioner Samson, seconded by Commissioner Grenier that the Board of Commissioners and the County Treasurer reject the proposed salary increase as of January 1, 2015. All approved 3-0.

County Treasurer King also suggested that the Commissioners concentrate on the required services of the County and not fund all of the outside services requests.

UNINCORPORATED PLACES

- a. Jennifer received one application for the open Alternate Seat on the Planning Board. The applicant's resume and letter of interest were emailed to the Board prior to the meeting.

Commissioner Brady stated that he would prefer an individual from the Whitefield area as it would make the Board more proportional. In his opinion the Board is weighted by individuals in the northern region of the County.

Commissioner Samson stated that he would like to revisit the makeup of the Planning Board. In his opinion, someone from Dixville or Millsfield should have a permanent appointment and not as an alternate. Commissioner Samson also suggested that the Delegation should be asked why Luc Cote was denied based on the Commissioners' recommendation.

Commissioner Brady asked Jennifer to invite John Scarinza to the December Commissioners' Meeting.

Commissioner Grenier stated that based on the information that would be addressed under item 12c later in the meeting; he will not support any Millsfield resident appointment.

County Treasurer Fred King stated that he was part of the creation of the Planning Board. It is an unusual Planning Board. It is not just an Unincorporated Places Planning Board but a County Planning Board. He suggested that the by-laws should be read and not lose the focus of the Planning Board. Millsfield residents have no greater right than other towns.

- b. Jennifer was informed by DRA that they hope to have the tax rates set for the Unincorporated Places the week of November 11.
- c. The Coös County Planning Board will meet again on November 24 to continue working on updating Site Plan and Land Subdivision regulations.

7. Report of the Superintendent of Corrections Craig Hamelin. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| TOTAL IN FACILITY | 50 |
| HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS | 31 |
| PRETRIAL | 19 |
| NH STATE PRISON INMATES | 0 |
| OTHER COUNTY INMATES | 1 |
| ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAM | 0 |
| WORK RELEASE PROGRAM | 0 |
| HELD AT OTHER FACILITIES | 15 |
| HOC= HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS PT= PRETRIAL | GRAFTON DOC: 1 HOC MALE, 1 PT MALE, 6 HOC FEMALE, 5 PT FEM. SULLIVAN DOC: 1 HOC MALE NHSP: 1 HOC FEMALE |
| AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION OCTOBER | 46 |
| MALE DAYS SERVED IN FACILITY OCTOBER | 1427 |
| FEMALE DAYS SERVED OCTOBER | 315 (19 females) |
| TOTAL INMATES BOOKED OCTOBER | 26 |
| TOTAL INMATES RELEASED OCTOBER | 27 |

- a. Graduation of the 97th NHAC Corrections Academy was held Friday, November 7 at the NH Police Standards and Training Council. At the time of the report, Officer Anthony Havalotti was in his fourth week of the academy and has since graduated on November 7.

- b. The annual meeting to present the Coös County Recycling Center budget to the member towns was held on October 30. The member towns in attendance voted to approve the presented 2015 budget with one change related to the amount of surplus funds applied to the 2015 budget.
 - c. Superintendent Hamelin has been asked to be present at the next Police Standards and Training Council meeting to address the issue of Coös County officers continuing to be allowed courtesy bed space in the PSTC facility during academies. The next Council meeting is scheduled for November 18.
 - d. The 2014 NHAC Annual Conference was very informative. Various sessions offered education on leadership and management, behavior in the workplace, arbitration and Health Care Reform issues. Primex³ also had their Police Force Options Training Simulator on site. Congratulations to Louise Belanger for receiving the Nursing Home Administrator of the Year Award.
 - e. The DOC Staff were pleased to have Senator Jeff Woodburn stop by to visit and tour the facility on October 9.
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 76. The occupancy for the month of October was 82.8%. In October, there were three (3) admissions and no (0) deaths. Of the 76 residents, thirteen (13) are Private Pay and eight (8) residents are Vermont Medicaid.
- Totals for 2014: Twenty-four (24) admissions, five (5) discharges, and seventeen (17) deaths.***
- b. NH Medicaid: A meeting with Commissioner Toumpas was held November 6 at WMCC in Berlin. He discussed Phase 2 (now Step 2 of Phase I) of Medicaid managed care for the nursing homes. Although the details still have not been worked out and questions have not been answered, the State does plan on moving forward. A date of July 2015 was given for enrollment and September 2015 for "Go Live".
 - c. NHAC Conference: Laura attended the NHAC Annual Conference on October 27 and 28. Educational opportunities included infection control principles, appropriate behavior in the workplace, and the affordable care act insurance issues.
 - d. Coös County Farm Water System: On Thursday, November 6, Laura finally received the first quote for capping of the reservoir. The quote was from PSI Pump Systems for \$135,000 but does not include removal and demolition of the current building.
- At the meeting, Laura reported that the above quote combined with the filtration system that has been discussed would have an approximate cost of \$185,000. The amount currently budgeted. Laura stated that a discussion will be required to discuss the needs of the facility.
- e. Nursing Hours at the Department of Corrections:

| 2013 | MINUTES | Hours | 2014 | Minutes | Hours |
|-----------|---------|-------|-----------|---------|-------|
| January | 267 | 4 | January | 22 | <0.5 |
| February | 534 | 9 | February | 37 | <1 |
| March | 632 | 11 | March | 31 | 0.5 |
| April | 846 | 14 | April | | 0 |
| May | 670 | 11 | May | 175 | 3 |
| June | 361 | 6 | June | 70 | 1.2 |
| July | 383 | 6 | July | 22 | <.5 |
| August | 388 | 6 | August | 219 | 3.5 |
| September | 359 | 6 | September | 0 | 0 |
| October | 263 | 4 | October | 32 | 0.5 |

9. 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: Current census was 93. Thirteen (13) residents were Private Pay. Three (3) residents were Medicaid pending. The average daily census for October was 90.5; there were 3 admissions in October, and 3 deaths.

Year to Date Totals: Admissions 31, deaths 30 and 1 discharge home. (Total deaths in 2013 was 27, and admissions 22)

- b. New Entrance Canopy/Parking Lot Update: The project was essentially complete. However, the ceiling panels just prior to the entrance doors will be replaced on November 17 and 18. Wendy Smigelski, Life Safety Code Specialist for the State of New Hampshire, visited the facility on October 29 to review the front entrance and no issues were found.
- c. Gastrointestinal illness: Many employees and residents experienced the gastrointestinal illness that was widespread in the facility towards the end of October into the beginning of November.
- d. Power Outage Update: Schneider Electric will be coordinating their visit with PSNH. The electricity to the facility will have to be disconnected at the street pole, prior to work being done. No date has been set.
- e. Annual Harassment workshop was presented by Primex³ on October 2 to all employees.
- f. Louise requested a Nonpublic Session per RSA 91-A: 3 II(c).

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. It is the time of year to review the Investment Policy. Carrie also drafted an Anti-Fraud Policy for the Board's review and acceptance.

At the meeting, Carrie distributed copies of the Investment Policy for the Board's review and approval. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to approve the Investment Policy as presented. All approved 3-0.

The Board stated the Anti-Fraud Policy would be discussed at the December meeting.

- b. The Tax Warrants were mailed to the towns on October 24th and County taxes are due on December 17.
- c. To date, \$5,500,000 has been transferred from the Tax Anticipation Note. Carrie did not anticipate having to draw any more from the Tax Anticipation Note. One County Tax Payment was received November 6.
- d. Carrie presented a new form to address the motion made at the September meeting to remove \$6,080 from the Coös County Facility Fund for the new front entrance doors at the Coös County Nursing Home in Berlin. The Delegation amended the door project to include the interior doors and voted to move funds totaling \$12,200 from the Delegation's Contingency line item to the Facility Fund. Carrie requested authorization from the Commissioners to transfer the \$12,200 from the Facility Fund to pay for the new doors at the Berlin Nursing Home.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to approve the transfer of \$12,200 from the Coös County Facility Fund to the Coös County Nursing Home. All approved 3-0.

Commissioner Grenier suggested that the Commission complete the order of business and review the 2015 budget changes at the end of the meeting. Commissioner Brady and Commissioner Samson agreed.

11. Other Business:

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

Coös County Nursing Hospital:

| | | | |
|-------|-------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| To: | 01-05130-9700 Dietary New Equipment | \$3,500.00 | |
| From: | 01-05110-9200 Interest on Notes | | \$3,500.00 |

| | | | |
|-------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| To: | 01-05140-0300 LPN Salaries | \$30,000.00 | |
| From: | 01-05140-0200 RN Salaries | | \$30,000.00 |

| | | | |
|-----|--|-------------|-------------|
| To: | 01-05140-2300 Contract Nurse | \$12,400.00 | |
| | 01-05140-1200 Nursing Health Insurance | | \$12,400.00 |

Sheriff's Department:

| | | | |
|-------|---|-------------|------------|
| To: | 03-04140-0300 Deputy Special Details | \$11,270.00 | |
| From: | 03-04140-0701 Deputy OHRV Patrols | | \$2,285.00 |
| From: | 03-04140-0800 Deputy Forest Patrol Salaries | | \$8,985.00 |

Coös County Nursing Home:

| | | | |
|-------|--|------------|------------|
| To: | 02-05660-1200 Health Insurance-Laundry | \$2,500.00 | |
| From: | 02-05670-1200 Health Insurance-Housekeeping | | \$2,500.00 |
| To: | 02-05650-8200 Equipment Repair | \$2,500.00 | |
| From: | 02-05650-6500 Fuel | | \$2,500.00 |
| To: | 02-05650-9700 New Equipment-Plant Operations | \$3,000.00 | |
| From: | 02-05650-6500 Fuel | | \$3,000.00 |
| To: | 02-05640-9700 New Equipment-Nursing | \$4,850.00 | |
| From: | 02-05600-9700 New Equipment-Administration | | \$4,850.00 |

The Board approved and signed the budget transfers.

- b. Commissioner Brady recognized that Louise Belanger had been awarded the Nursing Home Administrator's Award at the NHAC Conference in October.
- c. Discussion of the Granite Reliable Wind Park: Commissioner Grenier asked Jennifer to describe the chain of events that have led to the discussion.

Jennifer reported that she had received a phone call from a law clerk in Quebec who had questions pertaining to map and lot numbers for Granite Reliable's land leases in Dixville and Millsfield. Jennifer asked Linda Harris to join the conversation since Linda was aware of the information. The individual explained that a Windpark Border Agreement was in place with eleven property owners in Millsfield and requested copies of their property tax bills. It was explained that tax bills for 2014 were not available yet. Linda asked for a written request which was provided to the office. Jennifer reported that she read the agreement and forwarded a copy to Jonathan Frizzell and to the County Commissioners. The agreement, which was signed in 2009, indicates that Granite Reliable would pay these eleven residents' property taxes for the term of the County's PILOT agreement.

Commissioner Grenier was displeased with the information. The Millsfield residents have accused the County of bad management. The Commission appealed the DRA's assessment of the wind park and Delegation passed state legislation to pass a bill requiring DRA to use the PILOT agreement figure to protect the Millsfield and Dixville taxpayers. In his opinion, the Millsfield residents lied to the Commissioners, Delegation and the press. Commissioner Brady added that he and County Treasurer King also met with the Governor to discuss the DRA issue. It appears that the County protected the utility.

Commissioner Samson stated that he was opposed to the wind park from the start. He stated that he would need to review the information carefully and discuss the information at a later date. Commissioner Samson asked if a joint meeting of the Delegation and Commission should be held. Both Commissioners Brady and Grenier stated that the damage was already done and a meeting was not necessary.

County Treasurer King cautioned that Brookfield's support is necessary for the redevelopment of the Balsams. He reiterated that the Balsams project is essential to the North Country's economy.

Commissioner Grenier stated that as long as he was in office he would not approve a Millsfield resident to a Coös County Board or committee.

- d. **County Employee Survey:** Commissioner Brady stated that several years ago an employee survey was given to employees to complete and mailed to Commissioner Grenier. He would like to do this again. The survey will give employees a chance to voice their opinions. Commissioner Samson and Commissioner Grenier agreed. Commissioner Brady asked that the Board review the sample survey provided to them and the survey will be discussed at the December meeting. Commissioner Samson stated that it would be appropriate to do the survey again.

Commissioner Samson also noted that he was disappointed that no one from Coös County was nominated for the NHAC awards. Coös County's most valuable asset is its employees.

12. **Unincorporated Places:** There were no items to discuss.

13. **Any other public input:**

Edith Tucker, *The Coös County Democrat*, asked if a copy of the PILOT agreement, discussed earlier in the meeting could be posted on the County's website. The Board asked Jennifer to post the document.

Barbara Tetreault, *The Berlin Daily Sun*, asked if the County's legal team had reviewed the document. Jennifer replied that it was forwarded to the County's Attorney Jonathan Frizzell.

Commissioner Samson stated that he had comments and questions for the County Administrator in regards to the budget process:

- *When was the work started on the proposed 2015 budget?*
- *I received my copy on October 30 and was hospitalized from October 31-November 1.*
- *Budget work session was November 5, approximately 6 hours. Chairman Brady was absent. That equates to approximately 1 hour for each \$5,722,391.80 of our county taxpayers budget.*
- *The revised figures were ready on November 10. We will review them today.*
- *What would the increase of our tax burden be if we did not use the surplus?*
- *What is the surplus? How much is it? Is it in a bank account?*
- *Why are we not using the surplus to reduce the taxpayer's burden?*

The County tax burden in Coös County is much higher than any other county in New Hampshire. Coös County families pay more, by far, for county government than anywhere else in the state. This is true in absolute numbers, as a percent of their income, and as a percent of their home value.

Look at county taxes as a percent of median household income. This is what the average family has to put aside, as a percentage of its gross income for county taxes. Another way to look at it is to look at the county taxes as a percent of median home value. In both of these measures, Coös County has high county taxes and low family incomes and median home values. Here in Coös County, government is a much larger burden on the average family than in the richer counties.

Does the average Coös County household (family) see \$950.47 in benefits from Coös County Government?

Commissioner Samson continued that doing the budget in 2-3 weeks is not appropriate or fiscally sound. The budget process should be started earlier and needs to be revamped. He also suggested that the Board meet more than once per month.

County Treasurer Fred King stated that one of the reasons that the cost of running the County is higher is that there are fewer residents. There are two nursing homes and services are provided to the people who need it. Coös County has the highest rate of poverty, the lowest income per capita and the lowest pay scale. He also added that the quality of care that these residents obtain is exceptional and is indicated each year during the state surveys.

The County Administrator asked for time to address Commissioner Samson's questions as the questions were not presented to her prior to the meeting.

14. Non Public Session: A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to enter into nonpublic session per RSA 91-A:3 II (c) at 10:24 a.m. All approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to come out of non-public session at 10:40 a.m. All approved 3-0.

11. Other Business: (continued)

Review and Finalize the Proposed 2015 Budget:

Commissioner Grenier stated that he had asked departments for a one percent reduction in their budgets as presented. Funds were used from the Sick Leave Trust and Vehicle Reserve Fund to reduce the amount to be raised by taxes. He attended a meeting at the White Mountain Community College and was informed that ProShare will be available in 2015 but the amount has not been determined. The proposed total appropriations are \$60,000 less than 2014. The County has a revenue problem.

The following changes were made to the following revenue line items:

- ProShare was increased to \$1,550,000;
- Nursing Hospital - NH Quality Incentive payment was increased to \$700,000;
- Berlin Nursing Home - Private Pay was increased to \$685,000;
- Sheriff: Special Details was increased to \$50,000;
- Sheriff: Grants was increased to \$40,000

Changes were also made to the Sheriff's appropriations:

- Deputy Special Details increased to \$30,300;
- Deputy Forest Patrol Salaries decreased to \$10,000.

The County Administrator addressed some of Commissioner Samson's questions:

The books are not closed until January. The surplus cannot be determined until the books are closed. The surplus is excess revenues over what was budgeted and expenses not spent. The surplus is not in a bank account; it is a balance sheet account. The surplus is typically used to reduce the amount to be raised by taxes.

Commissioner Grenier stated that he was comfortable going to the public hearing with a \$1.3 million increase over last year's budget. Public reaction to the budget is needed. Commissioner Brady noted that once the budget is presented to the Delegation in December for the public hearing; the Board may only recommend changes to the Delegation prior to the final approval in March.

Commissioner Grenier also mentioned that Commissioner Samson's work with the County Forester could produce additional revenue for the County.

Commissioner Grenier noted that the budget being presented is the first part of three stages. The second part will be the revised budget in February and the final part will be the Delegation's approval of the final budget. Commissioner Grenier also added that he expects the Delegation to ask the Commissioners for further cuts prior to the final budget.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to present the recommended budget to the Delegation, City and Towns. The motion was approved 3-0.

Commissioner Samson stated that he would like the budget process to start in August. Jennifer stated that in order to do that the Nursing Homes would need to start earlier in the year. Commissioner Grenier stated that capital improvements need to be discussed further. Commissioner Samson added that he would like to meet with each Department Head to discuss their budgets. Commissioner Grenier suggested spending the month of October meeting weekly to discuss the budgets.

The next regular monthly meeting will be held Wednesday December 17, 2014, at 9:00 a.m. at the Coös County Nursing Home in Berlin.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to adjourn the meeting at 12:15 p.m. All approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Samson, Clerk