

Coös County Commissioners  
Regular Meeting  
North Country Resource Center - Lancaster, NH  
March 14, 2012

Present: Commissioners Bing Judd, Paul Grenier and Tom Brady; County Administrator Suzanne L. Collins; Director of Finance Jennifer Fish; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger; Superintendent of Corrections Craig Hamelin; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; County Treasurer Fred King; Cathy Conway and Scott Tranchemontagne, New Hampshire Grand; Jon Warzocha of Horizons Engineering and members of the press.

Commissioner Judd opened the meeting at 9:11 a.m.

1. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2012 meeting. All approved 3-0.
2. The Board reviewed the Payrolls and Disbursements for the month of February 2012. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to approve the Payrolls and Disbursements for the month of February 2012. All approved 3-0.
3. Hearing of the Public:
  - a. Cathy Conway and Scott Tranchemontagne, New Hampshire Grand. Ms. Conway updated the Board on the changes that have occurred with the group. She introduced Mr. Tranchemontagne who works in public relations. He explained that the NH Grand group has refocused on community outreach. The immediate goal is to raise \$35,000 to match the Tillotson grant awarded to them. In 2009-2010, Coös County saw an increase of 10% in the rooms & meals tax and in 2010-2011, an 8% increase in rooms and meals tax. Coös County was the only county in New Hampshire to have seen an increase in this revenue. Ms. Conway described the information they would like to include on the way-finding kiosks. Fred King stated that they have walked away from the concept of the "Great North Woods". People come to the Great North Woods to utilize the area and he suggested incorporating "Great North Woods" in their NH Grand campaign. The State spent tourism money on the Great North Woods endeavor and legislation was approved to designate most of Coös County as the Great North Woods. Mr. Tranchemontagne stated it was a good idea and would discuss it further with the team. Commissioner Grenier agreed with Mr. King. Commissioner Brady stated that the "Great North Woods" should be more prominent. He also suggested adding information that included 4-wheelers. Mr. King also suggested contacting the French Canadian market. Mr. Tranchemontagne thanked those in attendance for their suggestions.
4. Report of the County Administrator Suzanne L. Collins. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:
  - a. Revisions to the Collective Bargaining Agreements with the SEA and AFSCME have been complete and both agreements were presented for Board member signatures. Both agreements were signed.
  - b. A major revision of the Employee Policy Handbook was distributed to members of the Board for review prior to the meeting. Sue reported that once the Employee Handbook is finalized she plans to hold meetings with staff to review the contents of the handbook and emphasize new policies.

The Board did not have any changes to make to the handbook. Sue reported that there are two issues that still need to be resolved.

- Cell Phone Policy: Sue explained that currently the policy states that cell phones shall remain in staff lockers or handbags during their shift. The cell phones may be accessed during staff breaks and lunch. Louise has requested that staff be allowed to carry the phones on person but turned off. She is afraid that staff will run down the stairs during breaks increasing the possibility of injury. Commissioner Grenier stated that if the phones are in the locker they cannot be used. He likes the current policy. Commissioner Brady noted that staff could forget to turn off their phones and would need to be reprimanded. He also suggested leaving the policy as is.
  - Sue reported that there is a policy only at the W. Stewartstown Nursing Hospital pertaining to a weekend bonus. This policy was introduced in ~~1986~~ 1990 in order to encourage staff to work weekends. Some individuals have a regular position and work every weekend and others who agree to work an extra weekend earn the bonus too. This policy currently affects three people with regular positions. Commissioner Grenier stated that policies should be consistent in both facilities. He suggested that the three current staff members be grandfathered; however from here on out do away with the policy. Commissioner Brady asked for more information on this including a cost prior to the next meeting. The other Board members agreed. Superintendent Hamelin asked if the weekend differential is also paid and Laura replied yes. Commissioner Brady stated that he wanted all county employees treated fairly and this policy seemed unfair.
- c The Salary Schedule for 2012 was updated and ready for Board consideration and approval. All wages remained the same as 2011. The changes were limited to deleting the farm wage classifications, adding the Activity Director II classification to the Nursing Hospital (same as the Nursing Home) and adding the Community Programs Officer to Corrections. The Board signed the new schedules.

Edith Tucker asked for clarification on the step schedules and longevity bonus. Sue explained that there is a 10-step salary schedule. Employees receive a step increase usually on their anniversary date after completion of a successful employee review. After seven years of service, employees receive a longevity step. These steps are listed in the employee handbook and prorated based on employees' position hours.

Commissioner Grenier inquired about the assistant county attorney's salary. Sue explained that he is not on the salary schedule as he works at the pleasure of the county attorney. The Delegation suggested that a step schedule be developed. The sheriff's deputies are not on a schedule either as they work at the pleasure of the Sheriff. Commissioner Grenier stated that he opposed the increase to the assistant county attorney's salary. It's not that he does not deserve it; the County is facing tough times and this sends a wrong message to employees. The Delegation does not have the authority to grant raises to non-constitutional positions. Commissioner Judd stated that the Board needs to work with the Delegation. At the budget meeting, the Sheriff urged the increase. Commissioner Judd stated that he was not in favor of a retroactive increase but stated that he would support the increase effective April 1. Commissioner Brady agreed with Commissioner Judd. Commissioner Brady stated that he was grateful that the majority of the Delegation was responsible towards the nursing home budgets. He also supported the Delegation's recommendation. A motion was made by Commissioner

Brady, seconded by Commissioner Grenier to approve the raise to the assistant county attorney salary to \$60,000 yearly beginning April 1. The motion was approved 2-1.

- d. On Friday, March 9, the Local Government Center reported that final health insurance premiums for July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013 had been approved by its Board. This resulted in a 5.3% decrease in health insurance premiums. A premium decrease is unprecedented. The budget savings of \$109,400 for the last 6 months of 2012 was shared with the Delegation at the Annual Budget meeting on March 10. This savings will also carry over to the 2013 budget.
- e. All departments are feeling a sense of relief that adequate funding was provided by the Delegation for the County's programs in 2012. The budget resulted in a county tax increase of 7% for 2012.

*Report of the Unincorporated Places:*

- a. The Delegation approved the Unincorporated Places budgets and added \$1,000 emergency equipment line items in 12 unincorporated places with fund balances. This will give the Commissioners the discretion and opportunity to fund other organizations' requests for emergency equipment if they provide services in certain unincorporated places.
- b. Larry Gomes of The White Mountain Ridge Runners was pleased to hear that the \$1,500 funding for the Utility Terrain Vehicle was approved. He requested a letter of support for the grant application to the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund. Sue presented a letter that she prepared for Board review and signature. The Board signed the letter.
- c. Granite Reliable's attorney has been in touch with Attorney Frizzell about the County's letter that requests a decommissioning fund in a local bank. It appears that setting up the escrow account in a local bank is all set. However, the Granite Reliable attorney now wants to substitute the letter of credit with naming Coös County as an additional insured on its existing policies. Attorney Frizzell has stated to the Granite Reliable attorney that the Commissioners have already approved the twofold approach of the bank account and the letter of credit.

Sue recommend that the Board re-affirm its previous decision to require the bank account with 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the decommissioning fund deposited annually for 10 years and the letter of credit. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to approve the County Administrator's recommendation. All approved 3-0.

- d. Will Abbott of the Society for the Protection of NH Forests reported on 3/12 that for the past few years the Forest Society has been working with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to transfer the ownership of Big Island in Lake Umbagog to the US Fish & Wildlife Refuge at Umbagog. That transfer will soon be completed. The Society acquired the Island in the early 1980s before the existence of the Refuge. The Society determined that the long term stewardship of the Island will be best served by having the Refuge on-site staff manage this land.
- e. Sue was contacted by Jon Warzocha of Horizons Engineering on behalf of Dan Hebert. Dan is seeking the Board's support in submitting an exemption from the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (RSA 483-B) for the area around the Balsams Hotel along the northern shore of Lake Gloriette. Without the exemption the resort must seek approval from NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) for even minor improvements within the Shoreland Protection Zone, which starts 250 feet from the high water mark of the lake. As permit processing can take several months, this makes any work within the zone difficult.

Mr. Warzocha explained that the exemption clause outlined in RSA 483-B allows the governing body of a municipality to request that the NH Office of Energy and Planning (NHOEP) exempt an area that has been historically developed from the shoreland rules. Both NHDES and NHOEP indicated to Mr. Warzocha that the area being proposed will likely fit within the definition in the shoreland rules, but obviously they would need to review a complete application. Sue had prepared a letter to accompany the application being prepared by Horizons Engineering for Board consideration. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to approve the exemption. All approved 3-0. The Board signed the letter. Sue noted that the entire area being considered is in a designated development district as far as zoning is concerned.

*Other Items:*

- a. Commissioner Judd inquired about soliciting bids for the county vehicle at the Nursing Hospital. The Board had decided on a Ford Flex and the Activity Department confirms that it would meet the needs of the residents. Sue reported there are two Ford dealers in Coös County - North Country Ford and Berlin City Auto. Sue asked if bid requests should be sent solely to dealers in Coös County and should the bids include a trade-in on the 2005 Mercury Marquis with 112,900 miles. Commissioner Judd stated that the bids should remain within the County with no trade in. Commissioner Grenier stated that he researched information on obtaining a quote from Ford Fleet as the nursing hospital is a governmental agency. Sue stated that she would mail out the bids with a deadline of April 6.
5. 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:

HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS	24
PRETRIAL	13
<b>TOTAL IN FACILITY</b>	<b>37</b>
STATE PRISON INMATES	1
ELECTRONIC MONITORING	1
WORK RELEASE	0
OTHER COUNTY INMATES	1
HELD AT OTHER FACILITIES	17
HOC= House of Corrections PT= Pre-Trial	BELKNAP DOC: 1 PT MALE CARROLL DOC: 1 PT MALE GRAFTON DOC: 1 HOC M, 5 HOC F, 1 PT F HILLSBOROUGH DOC: 1 PT MALE MERRIMACK DOC: 1 PT MALE STRAFFORD DOC: 1 PT MALE NHSP: 2 HOC M, 2 PT M, 1 HOC F
AVERAGE DAILY POP. JANUARY	41
AVERAGE DAILY POP. FEBRUARY	41
FEMALE DAYS SERVED FEBRUARY	172
MALE DAYS SERVED IN FACILITY FEBRUARY	1,182

- a. Archonix XJail jail management trainers/installers were on-site all last week. Mandatory training was scheduled for staff on all shifts to learn new booking and the various jail management features. Additional training was provided for administrative functions, accounting and commissary modules. Although successful, as expected it has not been a perfect conversion and programmers will be working closely with the facility from this point forward to iron out any outstanding issues.

- b. Officer Zacharie Covill is attending the 88<sup>th</sup> NHAC Correctional Academy at the New Hampshire Police Standards and Training Facility in Concord. Graduation for the five-week Academy is scheduled to be held on April 6.
- c. Federal holds of illegal aliens have been successful to date. There were two requests for housing in February with one alien being from India, the other from Mexico. Both individuals were promptly picked up for transport elsewhere the next day. Border Patrol Agent-in-Charge Paul Kuhn has checked with the facility frequently to make sure the process has been successful.
- d. Superintendent Hamelin submitted to the Board copies of the Outside Corporal and Community Programs Officer job descriptions.

Commissioner Grenier asked for a report showing a comparison of the Department of Corrections' budgets for the last eight years. He explained that a comment was made at the last public hearing that this particular budget had unconscionable increases over the years. Commissioner Brady also suggested that the updates that have been done to the facility be included. Mr. King also suggested that the inspection report from Primex<sup>3</sup> be added. Commissioner Grenier stated that he is proud of what has been accomplished at Coös County DOC. The Superintendent runs a tight ship.

- 6. 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 77. The average census for February was 73; occupancy for February was 75.2%. In February there were five (5) admissions and one (1) discharge. There has been three (3) more admissions and two (2) deaths in March. Of the 77 residents, twenty-two (22) are Private Pay and ten (10) residents are Vermont Medicaid. The totals to date for 2012: Thirteen (13) admissions with another admission planned for this week, two (2) discharges and three (3) deaths.
  - b. Norovirus: The second floor was closed for admissions for two weeks. The quarantine was lifted on February 14. Residents celebrated by rolling all missed activities for those two weeks into one big party.
  - c. Nursing Home Rate: The Nursing Hospital information has been submitted for the February 29, 2012 picture date for the July 1, 2012 Medicaid nursing home rates. There is a higher census but some of the newer admissions have a lower acuity and some are quite high so it is hard to predict where the rate will go.
  - d. Nursing Hours at the Department of Corrections:

2011	MINUTES	Hours	2012	Minutes	Hours
January	3,907	65	January	2,206	37
February	4,035	67	February	2,168	36
March	3,930	66	March		
April	4,427	74	April		
May	4,280	71	May		
June	4,446	74	June		
July	4,529	75	July		
August	4,307	72	August		

September	4,358	73	September		
October	4,086	68	October		
November	1,750	29	November		
December	1,711	29	December		

The Department of Corrections census remains up.

- e. Laura had an issue for non-public, Section 91-A:3 II (c ).

Commissioner Brady asked for clarification on the State of Vermont Medicaid reimbursement. Both Sue and Laura explained the reimbursement process. Sue emphasized that Medicaid residents from Vermont do not end up on the NH State bill for Intermediate Nursing Care.

7. Report of the Berlin Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting is as follows:
  - a. Census: The current census was 99. 19 residents are Private Pay at this time. The average daily census for February was 96.2. There were 5 admissions in February and 3 deaths.
  - b. Elevator: The packing around the hydraulic piston is leaking into the elevator shaft. The elevator will not pass inspection as is. The repair is being scheduled at a cost of \$2,450.
  - c. Server: On March 7, the Care Tracker program was moved from Windows 2000 server to the new server purchased in November. The facility now has redundant power and hardware drives. The switch was uneventful.
  - d. Liquid Oxygen: On February 29, the facility began the switch to liquid oxygen. The switch was completed on March 1 along with staff training. The canister units for the liquid oxygen are small, lightweight, and last 8 hours verses the small oxygen tanks that needed to be replaced every 4 hours. The maintenance staff and porters are very pleased with the decrease in time spent changing empty oxygen containers. Oxygen concentrators are no longer being used outside of the residents' rooms. The concentrators caused a tripping hazard due to the electrical cord. The cost for the liquid oxygen is projected to be slightly less than our current oxygen costs.
  - e. American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME): On March 8, bargaining unit employees voted to accept the proposed contract. Forty-six (46) members voted from a total of 77 members. Forty-one (41) voted in favor and 5 voted against.
8. Report of the Finance Director Jennifer Fish. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting is as follows:
  - a. John Lyford, CPA, completed his on-site visit in February and is currently working on a draft of the financial statements. The financial statements will be audited again this year by Ron Beaulieu & Company.
  - b. Jen is currently working on the Medicaid Annual Report for Nursing Facilities for both West Stewartstown and Berlin. The reports are due to the State of New Hampshire by March 31, 2012.

- c. Treasurer King signed the loan documents in February for the County's Tax Anticipation Note with Laconia Savings Bank. The \$10,000,000 note is now available when funds need to be borrowed.

9. Other Business:

Fred King reported that Commissioner Toumpas will be visiting the North Country (Plymouth and Littleton) on Friday, March 16.

Mr. King spoke of \$26.5 million in federal funds that will be coming to the state to support elderly and disabled individuals. He noted that these funds are part of a three year grant and questioned if the counties may need matching funds. He also questioned who will be pay for these new programs created after this grant runs out. The State has no money so they may look to the County for money.

HB 1355 which pertained to the default budget bill was killed in the house. The Coös County Delegation vote was 7 against 2 for and 1 abstained.

Commissioner Grenier thanked the Sheriff's Department for coverage during Berlin Police Department's group picture.

10. Unincorporated Places:

- a. Approval of 2012 Contract for the General Assessing Services and the 2012 Contract for the Cyclical Revaluation Services for the Unincorporated Places - Commerford Nieder Perkins. The Board approved and signed both contracts.
- b. Approval of 2012 Tax Map Maintenance Contracts - Cartographic Associates, Inc. The Board approved and signed the contract.
- c. MS-2 Report of Appropriations Voted. The Board signed all forms.

11. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II (c) at 11:00 a.m. All approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to come out of non-public session at 12:30 p.m. All approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Brady, seconded by Commissioner Grenier to adjourn the meeting at 12:30 p.m. All approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas M. Brady, Clerk