

Coös County Commissioners  
Regular Meeting  
North Country Resource Center – Lancaster, NH  
November 9, 2011

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; Sheriff Gerry Marcou; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Chris Diego of Coös Economic Development Corporation (CEDC); Max Makaitis, Economic Development CAP; Rick Alpers, Dave Witham & David Bullock from Primex<sup>3</sup>; Chief Deputy Keith Roberge; Darrell Covell, Jim Grady & Larry Barker of UNH/Cooperative Extension; Paul Casey & Ian Drew of US Fish & Wildlife Services; Joyce Brady & Stan Connect of Coös County Farm Bureau and members of the press.

Commissioner Judd opened the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

1. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to approve the minutes of the October 12, 2011 meeting. All approved 3-0.
2. The Board reviewed the Payrolls and Disbursements for the month of October 2011. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to approve the Payrolls and Disbursements for the month of October 2011. All approved 3-0.

3. a. Chris Diego, CEDC:

Mr. Diego explained that the purpose of attending this meeting was to provide the Board with an update on CEDC since last year. CEDC has redefined its mission statement and by-laws and has expanded its Board of Directors. It has also strengthened its relations with its alliances: RDC of New Hampshire and CDFA. The job description of executive director has been redefined with clear expectations. If the position were funded, a search committee will be formed to fill the position with the best possible candidate who would be a good fit with the County. Mr. Diego also spoke of the restructuring of the revolving loan fund and the need for CEDC to be as cost effective as possible.

Mr. Diego had two requests:

- if there are economic development funds available would the County consider adding to the revolving loan fund; and
- \$60,000 to partially fund the executive director salary and benefits. They anticipate offering a salary and benefits of \$90,000 to \$100,000 to attract a viable candidate to this position.

Commissioner Judd noted that money is tight and the requests will be taken under advisement. Commissioner Brady added that he was not opposed to the idea but finding the money will be the problem. Mr. Diego replied that whether or not funds are available it will not change CEDC's efforts. He understands the financial constraints of the County.

Sue asked if Mr. Diego was aware of the UNH Cooperative Extension restructuring plan that includes economic development. Mr. Diego replied that he has worked with Steve Turaj and has become appreciative of his work. He has met with Mr. Turaj to try to come up with solutions regarding the extension program. Sue suggested that CEDC

meet with UNH Cooperative Extension regarding their vision for economic development. Mr. Diego left the meeting.

b. Max Makaitis, Tri-County CAP:

Mr. Makaitis stated that he was requesting funding of \$15,000 in the 2012 budget. Commissioner Judd replied that since the \$15,000 has not been used yet in 2011 he would like the funds encumbered. Commissioner Grenier stated that he had spoken with the Tri-County CAP CFO and funds have been drawn down from each town as needed. Coös County is the last draw of the year. Commissioner Judd asked Mr. Makaitis if he was working for the whole County or just the Berlin area as he has not seen him in Pittsburg. Mr. Makaitis apologized but he has been working a lot in the Groveton area. The closure of the rest areas was discussed. Commissioner Grenier noted that if no projects are active in certain areas Mr. Makaitis won't just show up. Commissioner Brady added that he had been leery of the funds being drawn down so late in the year but now he was in support of doing so. Commissioner Judd asked that the remaining \$30,000 for economic development be encumbered for next year. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to pay \$15,000 from economic development funds for Tri-County CAP in 2011 once the request is received. All approved 3-0.

c. Chief Deputy Roberge reported that the Sheriff was unable to attend due to a meeting concerning Operation Stone Garden. He reported that the information for the sale of the 2006 Crown Victoria cruiser was sent to Sue for publication.

d. Rick Alpers, Dave Witham, David Bullock - Primex<sup>3</sup>:

Mr. Alpers explained that the purpose of attending the meeting was to explain the cause behind the significant increase in workers' compensation premium for 2012. He continued that if the County signs the CAP addendum it will not extend the multi-year agreement. The workers' compensation rates will be increasing 16% as of 1/1/12. If the County had signed the CAP agreement that increase would have been no higher than 8%. The CAP program has a maximum increase of 8%. Sue asked why the whole pool is not offered the program and Mr. Alpers replied that legally Primex<sup>3</sup> cannot offer it to the entire pool; it must be approved by the governing body. Commissioner Grenier stated that the program was not properly explained to him as he would have been in favor of the program and 8% of the 16% increase could have possibly been avoided.

Mr. Witham reviewed the claims reports. One of the reasons for the increase is that the County is dropping a really good year of claims (2004) and a bad year (2009) is replacing it. He continued that the nursing homes have the highest claims. It is clear that the nursing homes are seeing more cases of dementia and combative residents. Mr. Witham interacts with the Safety Committee at both facilities. He has set meetings in December to close out 2011. The benchmarks for both facilities need to be aggressive. Commissioner Grenier asked if the employees are required to attend these meetings. Louise and Laura replied no. Laura continued that a subcommittee meets with Mr. Witham to review claims but she is not always able to attend the meetings because of short notice. The Board requested that a mandatory meeting be scheduled for all staff to be made aware of workers' compensation claims, costs and issues. Commissioner Grenier added that it will be an added cost but may pay off in the long run. Louise also added that Berlin has begun requesting that residents bring in cordless phones for their personal use and if a resident has a laptop, set up for wireless access is being suggested.

The wireless setup needs to be discussed with the IT Department further as there are a couple of issues. Cords are the cause of some trips and falls.

Mr. Alpers suggested that Sue, Jen and department heads get together to come up with ideas for 2012 and hit the ground running. Mr. Witham noted that Coös County has been attentive at meetings and the current data suggests certain areas need to be given much more attention. The group left at 10:30 a.m.

e. Darrell Covell, Jim Grady & Larry Barker – UNH Cooperative Extension:

Mr. Barker asked if the Board had any questions on the Cooperative Extension's proposed budget for 2012. The Board had no questions.

Mr. Grady stated that they wished to discuss the current and proposed partnership between Coös County and UNH Cooperative Extension. Effective July 1, 2011, the State of NH cut the UNH budget by 48% which means \$100 million less funding over the next two years. The proposal is to reduce staffing levels and not incur any costs to the County government. Mr. Grady suggested that the Advisory Council and the Commissioners meet in January to discuss the budget proposal. Under the UNH Re-extension plan, the county educators will now be field specialists which means they will specialize in certain areas. The MOU is up for renewal in 2012 as it is renewed every six years and will also be discussed at the January meeting. Another suggestion was if counties want to increase savings offices and staff could be combined. Commissioner Judd inquired if the County Forester position in Coös County will be eliminated. Mr. Covell replied it will not but the forester may have to provide services elsewhere.

Joyce Brady from the Farm Bureau stated that the reports show no reduction in Administration. Mr. Covell replied that between resignations and retirements there has been 27% cut in Administration. Mrs. Brady asked for a copy of the detailed budget and Mr. Covell replied the final numbers were not available yet but should be shortly. There was continued discussion on what programs should be provided. Sue suggested that the Farm Bureau members contact their Senators and Delegates as it is the New Hampshire State budget that caused these problems.

Mr. Grady noted that UNH was not given the gift of time to come up with a plan. They are currently looking at models in different parts of the country. The hope is to continue to pay close attention to programs and provide a local presence.

Commissioner Judd agreed that the Board should meet in January and thanked them for attending the meeting. The group left at 11:15 a.m.

f. Paul Casey & Ian Drew – US Fish & Wildlife Service:

Mr. Casey stated he had requested to meet with the Board as there is misinformation out there regarding the Refuge's program.

Commissioner Judd voiced his concerns regarding the land in the Unincorporated Places being purchased and restrictions being imposed after the sale of lands to the federal government. For example, special permits for blueberry picking, hunting and fishing regulations are different from the State's. Wood harvesting is also curtailed on USFWS lands.

Mr. Casey replied that when land is acquired a notation is developed on wood harvesting. There has been wood harvesting over the last 2-3 years. A forester has been hired and will begin working in December. Commissioner Grenier asked if the Board could be provided with a report of total board feet cut and the names of buyers. Mr. Casey agreed to provide that information. Pertaining to hunting regulations, the Federal Government tries to mirror the State's regulations. However, hunter orange is required for safety purposes. Currently turkeys are not part of the refuge plan but will be added. Mr. Casey also explained that anyone may pick berries on federal land. As for the particular issue that is being referenced, land was purchased by the Refuge and the property owner requested that he continue to have the exclusive right to pick the blueberry fields. The request was granted. However, since it was federal land the public began picking the fields and Mr. Casey had to post the fields based on the agreement with the former landowner. He admitted that it should have been posted differently.

Commissioner Judd suggested that there should be better communication between Refuge and the Board of Commissioners. It was decided that Mr. Casey should meet with the Board on a quarterly basis to keep them up to date. Commissioner Brady asked if the Refuge's timber cuts will total the same as private companies might have cut. Mr. Casey replied yes. Commissioner Judd also suggested that Mr. Casey meet with the Planning Board from time to time.

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. After the budget work session of 11-2-11, Nursing Home Administrators Mills and Belanger each cut over \$30,000 more from their budgets in order to comply with Commissioners' directive. A revised budget based on changes made at the session was sent to Board members on 11-4-11. Also incorporated into the budget was a firm price of \$85,000 to retrofit the Coös County Courthouse Probate Office based on an architect's plan developed between Daniel Hebert and County Attorney Mekeel. The plan awaits final sign-off from Attorney Mekeel, the Commissioners and the Bureau of Court Facilities.

The Board was pleased with the budget cuts made by the nursing homes. Sue inquired about CEDC and the Board chose to level fund the economic development line item for the time being. Sue asked about GREAT and the Board suggested that it could be part of the \$45,000.
  - b. Local Government Center (LGC) has issued the Guaranteed Maximum Rates (GMR) for the medical benefit provided by HealthTrust effective July 2012. The average rate increase is 4.7%. The deductible plan for active employees has a GMR of 4.6%, the MediComp Plan (with prescription coverage) for retirees 65 and over has a GMR of 6.0%, and the MediComp Plan (without prescription coverage) for retirees 65 and over has a GMR of 7/10ths of 1%.
  - c. Unfortunately the rate increase for workers' compensation coverage from Primex<sup>3</sup> is not as favorable. The rate increase effective January 1, 2012 is 16.5%. It will require a premium increase of \$43,156. Rick Alpers and Dave Witham, Primex<sup>3</sup> representatives, attended the Commissioners meeting to speak with the Board about the Contribution Assurance Program (CAP) and the poor claims experience of the past two years. Sue reported that on October 26, the U.S. Labor Department issued a report that injury rates

among nursing home workers are alarmingly high – higher than construction, manufacturing and mining. The average number of skilled nursing facility workers injured on the job was 8.6 per 100 full-time equivalents (FTE) compared to 5.6 workers in coal mines, 4.8 workers in tire manufacturing and 3.5 for building construction. In nursing homes, injuries are often related to lifting residents and experiencing violent behavior from dementia residents.

- d. The Primex<sup>3</sup> increase for the 2012 Unemployment Compensation Contribution is 25%. Much of that increase is due to the wage base increasing from \$12,000 to \$14,000 to be consistent with the State's program. The dollar amount of increase for the County is \$4,087.
- e. The 7 participating towns in the Coös County Recycling Center program met on November 3 and approved the proposed budget for 2012. The general consensus of the towns is that the Center is going in the right direction. Sue prepared a letter of commendation for C.O. Chris Gray who took up the challenge of operating the Recycling Center while plans were developed for continuing operations without the Town of Colebrook. The Board signed the letter.
- f. At the NHAC Conference on October 24, John Pike of UNH Cooperative Extension met with the Commissioners' Council to speak about the county relationship with UNHCE as it is expected to change due to the drastic reduction in funds appropriated in the SFY 2012 and 2013 budget. No one from Coös County was able to attend that meeting due to other program workshops being held at the same time. What was learned in a round table discussion facilitated by Grafton County Commissioner Ray Burton was that counties without the full complement of educators are only paying a pro-rated amount of the funds appropriated by the county for educator salaries. Sue called Coös County Extension Educator Larry Barker for a contact at UNH to further discuss this funding issue and subsequently, Larry arranged for Darrell Covell and Jim Grady to meet with the Commissioners on 11-9 to address this inquiry as well as the future of Cooperative Extension in Coös County. Discussion at the round table centered on the important services of UNH Cooperative Extension as well as another potential down shifting of state financial obligations to the local level.
- g. Donna Lane, CDBG Consultant, reported that the CFDA has approved the Community Development Block Grant application for the Notre Dame Project in Berlin with the condition that the project receives approval from their other funding sources (likely in January).
- h. Chairman John Tholl has called the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Delegation Meeting for Monday, November 14, 2011 (10 a.m., North Country Resource Center, Lancaster). He has also selected Saturday, December 10 for a short Delegation meeting followed by the annual public hearing on the 2012 Coös County budget (Coös County Nursing Hospital, W. Stewartstown).

*Report of the Unincorporated Places:*

- a. The NH Department of Education notified Sue that Coös County School District is eligible for an "Ed Jobs Fund" grant from the American Recovery & Reinvestment Act to offset some tuition costs for students from Millsfield and Wentworth Location. Although not a large amount (Millsfield \$342.58 and Wentworth Location \$450.88), Sue completed all the state & federal forms required to claim the funds.

- b. The Granite Reliable Wind Park shows daily signs of progress along the Dixville ridgeline. Attorney Jon Frizzell is working on the decommissioning agreement with legal counsel for GRP. The goal is to get a draft agreement for the Board's review in the next few weeks.
  - c. The 2012 Unincorporated Places budget reflects the \$495,000 Payment in Lieu of Tax for Millsfield and Dixville.
  - d. The Coös County Planning Board is holding a Public Hearing and Regular Meeting on November 10 to consider the Plum Creek subdivision application for the Greenough Ponds tract that is designated as Phase V of the Androscoggin Headwaters Conservation Project.
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	23
PRETRIAL	7
STATE PRISON INMATES	3
ELECTRONIC MONITORING	1
WORK RELEASE	0
OTHER COUNTY INMATES	0
HELD AT OTHER FACILITIES	GRAFTON DOC: 1 HOC MALE, 1 HOC FEMALE, 1 PT FEMALE HILLSBOROUGH DOC: 1 PT MALE MERRIMACK DOC: 1 PT MALE NHSP: 2 HOC MALE, 1 PT MALE
HOC= House of Corrections PT= Pre-Trial	
AVERAGE DAILY POP. OCTOBER	34

- a. Congratulations to Officer James Lesperance, who graduated from the 86<sup>th</sup> NHAC Corrections Academy on November 4. An impressive graduation ceremony was held at Alan's of Boscawen. Officer Lesperance was spoken highly of by Retired Superintendent Richard Grenier, who oversees the Academy.
- b. Two officers applied for the Community Programs Officer position recently posted. Officer Scott Grassette has been selected for the position, which operates the Recycling Center and will transition into it over the next two weeks.
- c. There are two vacant Correctional Officer positions currently posted. One is due to an unannounced resignation occurring on third shift. The other is for the first shift position being vacated by Officer Scott Grassette.
- d. Officer Brian Cross will become the Department's OC Defensive Spray Instructor this month. He will become certified on November 10 by attending a two day instructor certification course being offered at NH Police Standards and Training Academy.
- e. Another Pretrial housing block shower has been refinished and sealed by East Coast Granitex. Third shift staff and inmate workers have also been busy stripping multiple layers of paint from the dining hall floor. An epoxy paint system will be applied which is anticipated to last longer than floor paint.

- f. A new computer server was installed by Systems Administrator David Leveille to prepare for the installation of the Archonix Jail Management Software. Archonix has started data conversion which will swap all archived information and users from the current Digital Solutions system to the Archonix system. Training on the new software will begin in early 2012.
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 71. The average census for October was 73; occupancy for October was 75.0%. In October there were three (3) admissions, four (4) discharges and two (2) deaths. Of the 71 residents, nineteen (19) are Private Pay. Ten (10) residents are Vermont Medicaid. There has been two (2) admissions in November and one (1) death. For the year to date, Coös County Nursing Hospital has had thirty-eight (38) admissions, nine (9) discharges and twenty-four (24) deaths.
  - b. County Nursing Home Employee of the Year: The County was pleased to have Erin Gray, RN, recognized as a County Nursing Home Employee of the Year at the 2011 NHAC Conference on October 24. Erin was one of the first employees to take advantage of the Nursing Tuition Loan Program. She is a prime example of just who the program was designed for as she has proved the advantages of “growing our own nurses.”
  - c. NHAC Annual Conference: This year Louise and Laura were put in charge of education for the conference. They were able to offer wound care training for nurses; presenters on FMLA, admissions & collections; managing conflict for administrators and others. All the presenters provided very timely, worthwhile education that will be used.
  - d. Collaboration with NAMI and Service Link: Coös County Nursing Hospital is working with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and Service Link to provide education to other area providers, community members, and staff on several topics. These educational opportunities are scheduled every Tuesday in November at the nursing home. Last week, education was offered on Understanding Depression in Older Adults. Other topics will include Understanding Mental Illness in Older Adults, Understanding Dementia, Coping with Changing and Challenging Behaviors and Legal Issues. This is a good way to bring in people from the outside and introduce them to the nursing home and a way to network with other providers.
  - e. Nursing Hours at Department of Corrections:

2010	MINUTES	Hours	2011	Minutes	Hours
January	3,821	64	January	3,907	65
February	3,678	61	February	4,035	67
March	3,474	58	March	3,930	66
April	3,350	56	April	4,427	74
May	3,031	51	May	4,280	71
June	3,048	51	June	4,446	74
July	2,509	42	July	4,529	75
August	4,013	67	August	4,307	72
September	3,895	65	September	4,358	73

October	3,784	63	October		N/A
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The part time nurse started at the HOC on November 1. Next month's nursing hours should reflect a reduction in nursing hours provided by the nursing home.

- f. Laura had two issues for non-public, Section 91-A:3 II (c ).

Commissioner Brady inquired about the issue of tripping on cords at both nursing homes. Laura replied that beds cords are an issue. The recently purchased electric beds have a better set up. Louise has problems with all cords. A motion was made by Commissioner Brady, seconded by Commissioner Grenier that residents, in both facilities are to use only cordless phones as of January 1, 2012. All approved 3-0.

Commissioner Brady also added that Wi-Fi access needs to be researched further. There are systems available that would provide internet access for residents and visitors. Many businesses offer it for free. Louise will ask IT to research it further.

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 96. 23 residents are Private Pay at this time. The average daily census for October was 97. The year to date average daily census is 96.5. The facility had 1 death and 2 admissions in October. The year to date total admissions is 28.
  - b. Phone line issue: On Saturday, October 15 shortly after midnight the Nursing Home lost all but one phone line into the facility. Several staff members were unable to reach the facility when attempting to call out due to illness. These employees then called other staff members requesting that they communicate to the Supervisor the issue with the phone lines upon arrival to the facility. All phone lines were repaired at approximately 1:30 in the afternoon on Saturday. The staff did an excellent job in notifying the local hospital and local law enforcement of the one working phone number for the facility if they needed to call the facility.
  - c. Business Office expansion: This project is almost completed, the enlargement and renovation to the corner looks great. There have been many positive comments from visitors.
  - d. Dietary: Tina Leveille was selected for the Assistant Dietary Manager's position; this will only be effective in mid-December. Tina has been employed with CCNH for 30 years.
  - e. New Hampshire Association of Counties Conference was held on October 24 and 25. The workshops were focused on current issues that all County Homes are dealing with; FMLAs, Managing Disruption and Conflict, Advance Planning and Collections and Essentials of Geriatric Wound Care.
8. Other Business:
  - a. Redistricting: The Board discussed a letter received from the Honorable Gene Chandler concerning the redistricting of Coös County Commissioner Districts. Commissioner



Grenier suggested that Randolph be added to District 1 as it is contiguous to Berlin. The population totals will be as follows with a +/-5% deviation:

- District 1 10,733;
- District 2 11,523; and
- District 3 10,799.

The Board agreed with Commissioner Grenier's recommendation.

9. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II (c) and 91-A:2 I (c) at 12:00 p.m. All approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to come out of non-public session at 12:25 p.m. All approved 3-0. The following action was taken:

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to approve the request of a nursing hospital employee for payment in lieu of personal time due to extenuating circumstances contingent on the availability of funds. All approved 3-0.

The next regular monthly meeting will be held December 14 at the Berlin Nursing Home at 9:00 a.m.

A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Brady to adjourn the meeting at 12:25 p.m. All approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas M. Brady, Clerk