

Coös County Commissioners/Coös County Delegation  
Joint Meeting  
North Country Resource Center - Lancaster, NH  
September 12, 2018

Present: Commissioners Tom Brady, Paul Grenier and Rick Samson; Representatives Robert Théberge, Wayne Moynihan, Larry Laflamme, John Fothergill, Bing Judd, Troy Merner, Herb Richardson, Yvonne Thomas and Edith Tucker; County Administrator Jennifer Fish; Superintendent Ben Champagne; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Sheriff Brian Valerino; Captain Keith Roberge; Executive Councilor Joe Kenney; Senator Jeff Woodburn; Les Otten; Attorney General Gordon MacDonald; Jon C. Delena, Special Agent in Charge/DEA; Thad Blazak, Acting Assistant Special Agent in Charge, DEA; Robert L. Quinn, Assistant Commissioner, NH State Police; Captain Joe Ebert, NH State Police; Michael S Forti, Assistant Commander, Attorney General's Drug Task Force; James C. Vara, Associate Attorney General, Chief of Staff; Peter Morency, Chief Berlin Police Department; Sheriff Doug Dutille, Grafton County; Chief Edward Wagner, Conway Police Department; members of law enforcement, press and public.

Excused: Representative William Hatch.

1. Commissioner Brady opened the meeting at 9:05 a.m. Delegation Chair Robert Théberge led the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Approval of the Agenda: A motion was made by Commissioner Samson, seconded by Commissioner Grenier to approve the agenda. All approved 3-0.

Delegation Clerk Larry Laflamme called the roll. There were eight members present. Rep. Hatch was excused.

3. Other Business:
  - a. Les Otten made a brief presentation to the Board:

*Thank you for giving us an opportunity to bring you up to speed on the Balsams. In addition to letting you know about our status with the NH Business Finance Authority we would like to outline a potential alternative plan, and receive your feedback.*

*While you have heard the news that the Balsams' application has been withdrawn from the NH BFA, I want you to know what this means.*

*In 2015, Senate Bill 30 was passed to assist the Balsams redevelopment. Unfortunately, our historical understanding of how the bill was to be applied is not consistent with the BFA's understanding or criteria today. I am not able to go into great detail, as we continue to talk with the BFA, but it essentially came down to conditions on the guarantee that were not contemplated based on our understanding of SB 30 - and discussions we had in 2014 and 2015 with State economic development leaders .*

*While we remain open to finding a solution with the BFA's participation, we must proactively think about other ways to preserve the creation of a tax assessment district in Dixville for the*

*Balsams' redevelopment. This has always been the foundation to our financing - the ability to create a tax assessment district.*

*To refresh everyone's memory, the tax assessment district would allow assessments -you could consider them "property taxes" - on our real estate to pay back a portion of our financing. That is essentially what SB 30 did - allow an unincorporated place like Dixville to create a TIF-like district to service a loan - which would be guaranteed by the BFA. However, if we do not proceed with the BFA, we would still want to preserve the ability to create the tax assessment district.*

*As SB 30 was written and passed, the BFA's participation is required to create the assessment district. An alternative path without the BFA will require an amendment to the existing legislation, allowing for the County to be the issuer of the bond, without a loan guarantee. While this may seem complicated, there is no fiscal responsibility of the County for issuing the bond. It will simply allow for the tax assessment loan to be made by a lender who is providing the funds, and there is no financial risk or obligation by the County, or by the State for that matter. This bond issuance is just the mechanism for us to receive a loan relating to the assessment district.*

*Obviously, we would need your support for this kind of technical correction to SB 30 - and we would need to pass it in the next legislative session.*

*This alternative is not a sure thing to ultimate project success, but as you know, I have remained committed to the Balsams Redevelopment and trying to advance economic development opportunities in the North Country for 5 years, so I feel we owe it to at least try.*

*I truly believe in the vision and opportunity to revitalize the North Country with thousands of new jobs and hundreds of millions of dollars of new investment. The market has responded to our proposed development very favorably, as we have collected deposits on more than \$25 million worth of real estate. People want this resort to expand and reopen - and they are putting earnest money down to reserve their place at the new Balsams. We believe leaders like yourselves and residents across the North Country also want us to succeed and we continue to work as hard as we can toward that end.*

*In closing we'd welcome any thoughts you might have on this concept to modify SB 30, and your advice on how to move forward legislatively.*

Commissioner Grenier asked how much of the capital existed between the equity and bank financing. Mr. Otten replied that there was a term sheet for \$126 million in construction financing, \$20 million in cash equity. The \$146 million "can't be hard or visible" until the \$28 million loan guarantee was set in stone. Currently there was \$23.4 million worth of presales but the figure has dropped from \$26.5 million.

Since the resort has been closed for several years there is no cash flow and the traditional bank sources are not available. The Balsams would be a non-performing loan for the first two years of construction.

Commissioner Grenier clarified that it would not be county government but the commissioners acting as the Dixville Selectmen in conjunction with the Delegation, who serve as the town meeting.

- b. Attorney General Gordon J. MacDonald welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the North Country Drug Interdiction Summit. It was a unique gathering of elected officials and law enforcement to talk about a very important transcending issue facing the State of New Hampshire and the unique challenges that the issue proposes to the people of Northern NH. The Attorney General presented three objectives: an overview of the scale of the problem; discussion of current strategy; and discussion of opportunity to improve what is being done. Brief presentations were made by Jon C. Delena, Special Agent in Charge/DEA; Thad Blazak, Acting Assistant Special Agent in Charge, DEA; Robert L. Quinn, Assistant Commissioner, NH State Police; Captain Joe Ebert, NH State Police; Michael S Forti, Assistant Commander, Attorney General's Drug Task Force; James C. Vara, Associate Attorney General, Chief of Staff; Sheriff Brian Valerino, Coös County; Peter Morency, Chief Berlin Police Department; Sheriff Doug Dutille, Grafton County; and Chief Edward Wagner, Conway Police Department.

All presented statistics and facts on the drug crisis. Several indicated that additional funding is needed to assist the drug task force.

Both, Commissioner Brady and Representative Théberge thanked everyone for attending. A motion was made by Commissioner Grenier, seconded by Commissioner Samson to adjourn the meeting at 11:40 a.m. All approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Samson, Clerk