

COÖS COUNTY  
DELEGATION MEETING  
Monday, February 6, 2012 - 10:00 a.m.  
North Country Resource Center - Lancaster, NH

Present: Representatives John Tholl-Chair; Herb Richardson-Vice Chair; William Hatch-Acting Clerk; Duffy Daugherty, Larry Rappaport, Bill Remick, and Robert Théberge. Also present: County Commissioner “Bing” Judd; County Administrator Suzanne Collins; Director of Finance Jennifer Fish; Superintendent Craig Hamelin; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; County Treasurer Fred King, County Attorney Robert Mekeel, a member of the public and members of the press.

Chairman Tholl requested all to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Tholl called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. and noted that Representative Hatch would serve as clerk in the absence of Representative Thomas. The roll was called by the Acting Clerk, Representative William Hatch. There were 7 members present. Representatives Coulombe, Merrick, Thomas and Tremblay were absent.

Review & Approval of Minutes: Chairman Tholl asked if any changes or corrections needed to be made to the minutes of the December 10, 2011 meeting. A motion was made by Representative Remick, seconded by Representative Daugherty to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2011 meeting. The minutes were approved by a voice vote. Representative Richardson abstained as he was not at the meeting.

Review & Approval of the Fourth Quarter Financial Statements: The Coös County expenditures and revenues for the fourth quarter were reviewed.

Representative Hatch asked why the federal funds line item was only 6.24% expended. Ms. Collins replied that the Dean Brook Village Cooperative has recently begun expending the Community Development Block Grant funds. No funds have been expended for the Notre Dame CDBG project as this funding is contingent on other grant funding being awarded.

Representative Richardson noted that the recycling center revenues more than offset the expenditures. Ms. Collins stated that funds were appropriated for the purchase of the new truck in 2010 but the purchase was only made in 2011 with funds transferred from the Recycling Center Equipment Fund.

Representative Daugherty asked the reason for the disparity of the revenues at the West Stewartstown Nursing Hospital. Ms. Collins replied that HB2 cut what the nursing homes were receiving from Medicaid Quality Incentive Payments by 25%. This cut will also have a substantial effect on the 2012 budget. Representative Hatch asked what part of the year was affected the most and Sue replied July-December. County Treasurer Fred King noted that this is an example of the downshifting from the State to the local property taxpayers. Representative Remick stated that the representatives were told on the floor that there would be no downshifting. Representative Daugherty replied that there has been no downshifting; it's the local decision to overspend which is the issue. Due to this fact, Representative Hatch asked if anything could be done at the nursing homes to cut costs. Mr. King added that inflation is a big part of the issue. Sue replied that what the County must do at the nursing homes is necessary and required by federal mandates. Representative Daugherty added that he has not had a cost of living increase in three years and did not understand why inflation was being factored into the budget. Sue continued that the cost of food, electricity, fuel oil and other supplies keeps going up. Representative Daugherty stated that all of those were discretionary expenses just like wages. Representative Richardson

stated that Representative Daugherty's not having a raise did not substantiate not giving anyone else raises. The costs of gasoline, health insurance and food have gone up and Coös County employees do a "hell of a job" and he does not want to lose them to private industry. He did not think that County employees were overpaid and should continue to be treated well.

The review of revenues continued. Representative Thérberge asked why the revenues were lower than projected for the Department of Corrections and Sue replied there were fewer inmates on the electronic monitoring program.

Representative Daugherty asked about the lag in the Unincorporated Places expenses and Sue replied that it was due to budgeting the statewide education tax and not actually paying it.

A motion was made by Representative Thérberge, seconded by Representative Richardson to approve the fourth quarter expenditures and revenues for all funds. All approved by roll call vote 7-0.

Allocation of National Forest Reserve Funds: Sue explained the state law (RSA 227-H:23) requires that the Delegation vote on the distribution of National Forest Reserve Funds to independent school districts. The total to be allocated in 2012 is \$122,839.47. This year she recommended that all funds be used for the education of the children in Millsfield and Wentworth Location. A motion was made by Representative Hatch, seconded by Representative Rappaport to approve the distribution of the National Forest Reserve Funds per the County Administrator's recommendation. Representative Daugherty questioned whether the children attending Errol School could be tuitioned to Colebrook since the cost of tuition is so high in Errol. Sue replied that it would be a long drive for young children from Wentworth Location and it would involve an increase in transportation costs. Representative Remick stated that it is school choice and Chairman Tholl stated that the tuition does not impact the County tax or the local property tax. The motion was approved by a roll call vote 7-0.

#### New Business:

##### a. 2012 Legislation:

- Representative Thérberge reported that he is working on a bill relative to the Medicaid Eligibility Determination (MED) which the State has passed on to the nursing homes to complete. It is very time consuming requiring 5-6 hours of RN time per resident and a waste of time on a State mandated form. The nursing homes do not get just compensation. The resolution is coming to the House floor and he requested the Delegation's support.
- Chairman Tholl reported that he is working on a bill that creates a procedure for conflict of interest complaints against elected officials. A complaint would be submitted in writing and it is given to the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Clerk of the Delegation. If it is found to be true the only thing that can be done is public censure. It does not constitute a crime. He asked Sue if the County has a Conflict of Interest policy and she replied no.
- Representative Remick is working on the taxation of telephone poles.
- Representative Rappaport is working on taxation of pole attachments.
- Representative Hatch is working on a public education bill.
- Representative Tholl reported that the ED and A Committee is attempting to strip the funding from the Police Standards & Training with monies going to the general fund and he has testified against it. Representative Hatch added that this fund must remain intact and supports Chairman Tholl.
- Representative Daugherty is working on HB593 which would offer up to four locations for casino gambling in the State two of which would be in Coös County. Representative Richardson asked if the towns selected would have the right to approve first and Representative Daugherty stated yes.

- b. Representative Daugherty presented and read the following motion which was seconded by Representative Rappaport:

*That the Delegation form a feasibility and planning committee for the development and construction of a new centrally located Coös County Government Center.*

*This Government Center shall be sufficient to accommodate all current Coös County administrative and management functions in a single location: a combined county nursing home and hospital, department of corrections and jail, sheriff operations, county attorney office, office of registrar of deeds and office accommodations for the county commissioners and administrator.*

Representative Richardson asked when the committee would report its findings. Representative Daugherty stated he did not have a deadline. He explained that the reasoning for this motion is that the budgets for the past couple of years are bleeding money that the County does not have. For example the sheriff transports from West Stewartstown, to Berlin, Lancaster and Concord; the two nursing homes one of which is outdated and not well suited to be nursing home. There is indication that the economy will turn around in the next year or two. This center could be centrally located in Groveton or Stark or in that general area. Representative Richardson stated this is too big and added that such a committee should not only include Delegation members but a County Commissioner, Administrator, Sheriff and members of the public. Representative Rappaport supports the idea but the committee should remain small and public hearings could be held for input. Mr. King asked if the Delegation was prepared to appropriate money for this study. Representative Daugherty replied that no money was needed at this time. It is time to start planning as the County cannot continue to afford two nursing homes and have the Sheriff's Department transport all over the place. Representative Thérberge was in favor of the study. He continued that there is an ever increasing aging population. This is just phase I. This could be cost effective in the long run. Representative Richardson stated he did not have a problem with the study but it should not be just Delegation members; it should involve the people mentioned earlier. Representative Remick stated that if one is looking at centrally locating the center geographically Stark/Groveton would be the best but if one looks at population location it would be the Berlin/Gorham area. The motion was approved by a roll call vote 6-1. Chairman Tholl appointed the following to the Long Range Planning Committee: Representatives Duffy Daugherty, Chair; Robert Thérberge; Herb Richardson; Yvonne Thomas; and Marc Tremblay.

- c. Representative Rappaport presented a motion to form a finance committee. Chairman Tholl asked for the basis to form this committee. Representative Rappaport replied that a member from each subcommittee be part of the finance committee. With the ever increasing County budget and massive unemployment, there should be a committee to focus exclusively on finance. Representative Richardson seconded the motion for discussion purposes. He continued that there is a finance committee in place, the Delegation. He does his homework - studies the budget that is presented at the public hearing and votes on the budget in March. If he has any questions, he calls administration with his questions. In a few months there will only be 10 members in the Delegation. Chairman Tholl stated that it does not matter who is on the committee but members do not show up for meetings as it is. The whole Delegation must vote on the budget in the long run. Representative Thérberge replied that this makes it appear that the Delegation is micro-managing the Commissioners and undermining their authority. Representative Rappaport stated that taxes are going up 8% and another set of eyes may help. In his opinion, taxes should not be going up. Representative Remick stated that he agrees with the concept; however, the Delegation cannot get a group together for a regular meeting. In the long run, the whole Delegation approves the budget. Representative Hatch also agreed with the concept if the Delegation were a bigger group. He did not agree with the concept for this group. Representative Daugherty supported the motion. In his

opinion, there was no financial analysis at last year's meeting and the budget was rubber-stamped. Representative Th  berge added that there is a process in place where questions should be asked at the public hearing. Mr. King also noted that only seven members of the Delegation were in attendance at the public hearing in December. The motion was defeated by roll call vote 2-5.

There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Representative Hatch, seconded by Representative Remick to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative William Hatch, Acting Clerk