

COÖS COUNTY
DELEGATION MEETING
Monday, November 14, 2011 - 10:00 a.m.
North Country Resource Center - Lancaster, NH

Present: Representatives John Tholl-Chair; Herb Richardson-Vice Chair; Evalyn Merrick - Acting Clerk; Duffy Daugherty, Larry Rappaport, Bill Remick, Robert Théberge and Marc Tremblay. 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, The Honorable James Michalik and Sue Watson of the Family Resource Center and members of the press.

Chairman Tholl requested all to stand for the Pledge of the Allegiance and to observe a moment of silence for all of the deceased veterans.

Chairman Tholl called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. He asked that Representative Merrick serve as clerk in the absence of Representative Thomas. The roll was called by the Acting Clerk, Representative Evalyn Merrick. There were 8 members present. Representatives Coulombe, Hatch and Thomas were absent.

Hearing of the Public:

Attorney Michalik began his presentation by stating that he was not at the meeting to request funding. He just wanted to provide information and educate the community on the Family Resource Center. The Resource Center is available to solve issues in the community. It is the seventh largest employer in the Gorham area and dispenses over \$1 million per year in Coös County. There are three myths about the Resource Center which he corrected:

- it is not a child care center – the Center rents space to a day care center;
- does not only serve low income clients; and
- does not only serve Gorham/Berlin area – it provides services County wide.

There are three core programs:

- Family Support - the funding for this program decreased \$74,602 due to cuts in state funding; however they have worked on several grants to cover the deficit. Included in this program is Military Supports. New Hampshire is one of only nine states that offer this program.
- After School Program - this program is offered only in the Berlin/Gorham area.
- Financial Literacy Program – this program offers free income tax services and financial counseling for at risk women and the disabled.

Attorney Michalik reported that the Family Resource Center was named Non-Profit of the Year in 2011.

Representative Théberge thanked Attorney Michalik for the presentation. He asked if there has been an increase of need due to financial constraints in the County. Sue Watson replied that the case load has doubled in the last six months. Supt. Hamelin inquired if Attorney Michalik would be interested in setting up a meeting to discuss services that could be provided in the Department of Corrections release packet for inmates. Attorney Michalik agreed to discuss this further.

Review & Approval of Minutes: Chairman Tholl asked if any changes or corrections needed to be made to the minutes of the August 4, 2011 meeting. A motion was made by Representative Remick, seconded by Representative Tremblay to approve the minutes of the August 4, 2011 meeting. The minutes were approved by a voice vote. Representative Richardson abstained as he was not at the meeting.

Review & Approval of the Third Quarter Financial Statements: The Coös County expenditures and revenues for the third quarter were reviewed. Representative Thérberge inquired about the census for both nursing homes. Laura Mills replied she had 71 out of 97 beds filled and Louise Belanger replied she had 96 out of 100 beds filled. Representative Richardson asked about the status of the recycling center and the Town of Colebrook. Sue reported that the Town of Colebrook withdrew from the center as of September 30. The proposed 2012 budget will reflect a significant decrease in that budget. Representative Remick asked why the funds received in the federal funds line item were low. Jennifer explained that it is a community development block grant and is just getting geared up.

A motion was made by Representative Richardson, seconded by Representative Tremblay to approve the third quarter expenditures. All approved by roll call vote 8-0.

A motion was made by Representative Richardson, seconded by Representative Thérberge to approve the third quarter revenues. All approved by roll call vote 8-0.

A motion was made by Representative Richardson, seconded by Representative Remick to approve the unincorporated places third quarter expenditures. All approved by roll call vote 8-0.

A motion was made by Representative Richardson, seconded by Representative Thérberge to approve the unincorporated places third quarter revenues. All approved by roll call vote 8-0.

New Business:

- a. Update on the Coös County Attorney's Office Space: Attorney Mekeel reported that he has been working with Dan Hebert and Attorney Phil Waystack on a plan to renovate the Probate space in the courthouse that is suitable for now. He does not think that it's a good idea and there are drawbacks to this plan but he is willing to work with the Commissioners to see what can be done in the courthouse. Representative Thérberge inquired if there have been any negative impacts with the new location. Attorney Mekeel reported that everyone is happy and there have been no negative impacts that he is aware of. Representative Daugherty asked if there was a drop dead date to resolve this issue as it seems it has been ongoing for quite some time. Attorney Mekeel replied that it is not his decision to make but the Delegations' and Commissioners'. Representative Richardson noted that the Delegation makes the financial decisions; this is the Commissioners' decision to make. Sue stated that the urgency of this project at this point was to obtain an amount for renovations for the 2012 budget. She noted that the rent line items have nearly doubled for the County Attorney and Victim Witness Program. The figure that has been provided for the remodel is \$85,000 which would have a six year payback in rental costs saved. Attorney Mekeel stated that it is his obligation to provide adequate space to his staff. He questioned if it was wise to spend \$85,000. Commissioner Judd reported that this design project has been ongoing through the summer and as far as the Commissioners were concerned this project is a go. They are waiting for the County Attorney to sign off on the design. Representative Merrick asked for clarification on the payback over six years and why was the project awarded to Dan Hebert Inc. and not sent out to bid. Commissioner Judd explained that the County will pay back through the budget over the next

six years. Regarding the bid process, Sue explained that the courthouse is a state-owned building and the State has the final say on the plan and the contractor not the County. Chairman Tholl inquired about the length of time for construction. Sue replied about three months. County Treasurer Fred King clarified what the payback meant: the rent at the courthouse will be less than the current lease thus the money saved actually pays back the renovations.

Representative Richardson set the subcommittee meeting with the County Attorney for Monday, December 5 at 10:00 a.m. at the County Attorney's office. He will also contact the County Sheriff to set up a meeting for the same date.

b. Representative Daugherty read the following motion:

The County Administrator will develop an analysis of all non-constitutional programs run by the County, excluding the two nursing homes and the County Correctional Process, to determine if there are any non-essential programs, property or equipment that can be divested or disposed for the purposes of county budgeting.

He specifically noted the recycling center and the administrator's house as examples.

In the discussion about the Recycling Center, Representative Th  berge asked Supt. Hamelin how this would affect the Department of Corrections. Supt. Hamelin replied that it will impact another of the Department's rehabilitation programs. Six to eight inmates currently work at the recycling center. He might have to warehouse inmates with no outside programs.

Representative Th  berge also asked if it was part of the contract that the administrator's house is a requirement for the County Administrator to live on the property.

Representative Daugherty noted that the County Administrator does not work 40 hours per week and it is unnecessary to give a house to a County Administrator who makes \$93,000 per year in retirement. No other county does so.

Representative Richardson noted that the Recycling Center serves other towns. Just because the Town of Colebrook pulled out does not mean that the other towns get dropped. He also added that the house is legal property and it is up to the Commissioners to make the decision.

Representative Daugherty stated that he is looking at ways to reduce the budget. With the Town of Colebrook out of the recycling center it's half gone there will be an increase in cost. Chairman Tholl added that the recycling center is a wash and does not cost the County money because the participating towns pay 100% of all the costs. Representative Remick agreed.

County Treasurer King provided a brief history as to why the recycling center was created. The participating towns pay all associated costs. The operator's salary is paid by the towns and the County cannot leave the remaining towns high and dry.

Regarding the administrator's house, when he became County Administrator he was told he had to live on the grounds. Housing was provided at the convenience of the County. The person who lived there was to work seven days a week and is on call. It has been an asset historically and may attract someone to the position in the future. Selling the home at this time would be inappropriate.

Sue Collins explained that a succession plan has been in place for a few years. Once she leaves, the position could be part time or more responsibilities like economic development could be added to the County Administrator's role. The Board of Commissioners needs to work on a job description of what they want the position to be.

Representative Merrick noted that Sue has done a phenomenal job. The current salary is quite generous. She did not think in this day and age that the County will need to worry about filling the position without the benefit of free housing. She recommended using the house as a source of income. Representative Daugherty agreed with Representative Merrick. He is looking at trimming costs to the County. The conditions of employment have changed since Mr. King was in the position. The Administrator's house, recycling center and all other programs that are not primary functions of the County should be looked at for budgetary purposes. Why is the Recycling Center offered only to certain towns?

Commissioner Judd stated that Sue may leave next year. Whoever replaces her will be on call 24/7. The County is possibly looking at an increase of salary of \$24,000 - \$30,000 if the housing is not part of the compensation package. The house does not cost the County a lot of money. The new administrator may cost \$100,000 to \$120,000 per year. As far as he was concerned, the county administrator works for the Commissioners and will continue to be on call.

County Treasurer King noted that Sue's retirement was not just calculated from County service; she also had time accrued from working at the school district. Sue added that she had 42½ years of credible service in the retirement system.

At this time, Representative Remick questioned why the motion was being discussed as there was no second. Representative Th  berge seconded the motion to continue discussion. Representative Rappaport agreed with Representative Remick regarding the second on the motion. He disagreed with Representative Daugherty in regards to closing the recycling center. He recommended renting or leasing the house to a third party or to the incoming administrator. If something were to go wrong it could be fixed. However if the house is sold it's gone. This has been an informal arrangement and does not appear anywhere in the budget. The house should be listed separately in the budget.

Chairman Tholl commented that selling the house which is located in the middle of county property is not a good idea. It is a good idea to list it separately and keep track of it in the budget. The Delegation and Commissioners will need to come to an agreement. For example, if the new administrator lives there, perhaps he/she will have to pay rent or electricity and heat. Representative Th  berge stated that he agreed with Chairman Tholl and Representative Rappaport. Representative Daugherty stated that the house being in the middle of County property is not an issue. It sits on a triangle at the edge of the property.

Representative Richardson asked if the motion also referred to the special appropriations line items. These programs are evaluated each year at the budget meeting. Representative Daugherty replied that these programs should be evaluated. He questioned why they should be funded with taxpayers' money. There is no data to support these requests. He is not satisfied with the County's budget process. Representative Th  berge agreed that the special appropriations need to be looked at also. Representative Rappaport noted that the motion asks that the Commissioners look at non-constitutional programs. Representative Daugherty's suggestions are just suggestions. Representative Richardson asked if this motion included the nursing homes. Co  s County is the only county with two nursing homes. Representative

Daugherty replied that the motion excluded the nursing homes and the incarceration process. Representative Remick left at 11:50 a.m. After a brief recess, Representative Daugherty re-read his motion which was seconded by Representative Th  berge. Sue asked if there was a date certain for fulfilling the request. Chairman Tholl replied February before the Delegation votes on the budget. The motion passed 5-2.

- c. Representative Th  berge distributed a draft summary pertaining to changes that will occur at UNH/Cooperative Extension. The final proposals will be announced during the early part of January 2012. These changes will affect Cooperative Extension services in the County.
- d. Representative Richardson announced that the Redistricting Committee will be meeting Tuesday, November 15 to discuss the Commissioners' redistricting proposals. The House seats will be discussed at a work session November 16 & 17. It is hoped to recommend the Commissioners redistricting next week.

There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Representative Tremblay, seconded by Representative Merrick to adjourn the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Evalyn Merrick, Acting Clerk