

COÖS COUNTY
DELEGATION MEETING &
PUBLIC HEARING on the 2019 PROPOSED BUDGET
Saturday, December 15, 2018 - 10:00 a.m.
Coös County Nursing Home - Berlin, NH

Present: Representatives Wayne Moynihan - Chair; Edith Tucker - Vice Chair; Larry Laflamme - Clerk; Kevin Craig, Michael Furbush, William Hatch, Troy Merner, Henry Noël and Yvonne Thomas. Also present: County Commissioners Tom Brady and Paul Grenier; County Administrator Jennifer Fish; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Superintendent Ben Champagne; Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Sheriff Brian Valerino; Captain Keith Roberge; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Registrar Tanya Batchelder; County Attorney John McCormick; Treasurer Suzanne Collins; Captain John Acardi; representatives of outside agencies; members of the press and the public. Representative John Fothergill was excused.

DELEGATION MEETING

Chairman Moynihan called the meeting to order at 10:12 a.m. and introduced the members of the Executive Committee. Sheriff Valerino led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The roll was called by the clerk, Representative Larry Laflamme. There were nine (9) members present.

Chairman Moynihan welcomed new Representatives Michael Furbush from District 1, Kevin Craig from District 4 and Henry Noël from District 3. He thanked former Representatives Bing Judd, Herb Richardson and Robert Théberge for their years of service to Coös County.

Other Business:

- a. Chairman Moynihan read Resolution #1 which pertained to Borrowing Funds in Anticipation of Taxes in 2019:

Resolution #1

Be it resolved by the Coös County Delegation duly convened on this fifteenth day of December, 2018, that since the monies in the treasury of the County of Coös are insufficient to meet the demands upon the same and the sum of Ten Million Dollars (\$10,000,000) being the projected amount necessary for the purpose of operating the county for the Fiscal Year 2019, the Coös County Treasurer is hereby authorized to borrow up to \$10,000,000 upon order of the County Commissioners pursuant to RSA 29:8.

A motion was made by Representative Hatch, seconded by Representative Tucker to approve Resolution #1. The resolution passed by roll call vote 9-0.

- b. Chairman Moynihan read Resolution #2 as follows:

Resolution #2

*Authorization for Coös County to Pay 2019 Expenses
(RSA 24:15)*

Due to timing differences, the County operates without an approved operating budget during the months of January, February and part of March. Historical figures demonstrate that the January through March expenses will total approximately \$8,900,000.

RSA 24:15 states that no County Commissioner or elected or appointed official shall pay, or agree to pay, or incur any liability for the payment of any sum of money for which the County Convention has made no appropriation.

I move that we, the County Convention authorize the County to spend up to \$8,900,000 for 2019 expenses during the months of January, February, and March in anticipation of the subsequent approval of the 2019 budget. Further that the \$8,900,000 be allocated proportionately to the line items based on the 2018 approved net appropriations to fund like operating and personnel expenses in existence as of 12/31/18.

A motion was made by Representative Hatch, seconded by Representative Merner to approve Resolution #2. The resolution passed by roll call vote 9-0.

- c. Continuing discussion of and final action on County Commission recommendation on NHDHHS request for County contribution to funding state Integrated Delivery Network (IDN):

Chairman Moynihan stated that at its regular meeting on December 12, 2018, the Board of Commissioners discussed a recommendation for IDN Funding. Commissioner Grenier stated that he and Commissioner Brady had been contacted by Commissioner Meyers asking to revisit the IDN funding. Both Commissioners stated that they could not support the 50% request. Commissioner Meyers had informed them that all counties needed to contribute in order for the program to work. The Commissioners suggested \$100,000.

Commissioner Grenier continued that at the December 10, 2018, Delegation meeting, Commissioner Meyers presented a new proposal of 30% and stated that if Coös County didn't participate, Coös residents would lose services. He continued that Carroll County's requested amount was \$99,725.85; Grafton County \$172,340.40 and Coös County \$417,462.45. He inquired as to why Coös County was a donor town.

He continued that with the reduction in the proposed Medicaid room rates effective January 1, 2019, the Board agreed to \$105,500. The bed tax has been paid on these funds and how would the county get the funds back?

A motion was made by Representative Hatch, seconded by Representative Tucker to appropriate 30% of the excess proshare in the amount of \$340,927.67 for IDN Funding.

Representative Hatch stated that he believes that the services should be provided as these services are vital and necessary. A lot of work has been done by DHHS and the Governor to come up with this program.

Henry Lipman from DHHS, provided some reasoning for the request. Seven of the 10 counties have agreed to the 50% appropriation. The three remaining counties are still working on recommendations.

Representative Hatch noted that the consequences for not participating means the whole state will lose out on services. Mr. Lipman noted that there would be county and municipality consequences.

Representative Laflamme asked what the proposed figure will be for next year's contribution. Mr. Lipman replied that this was a one-time vote. First results of the existing waiver will need to be shown, and then discussions will need to be held where all parties agree. Representative Laflamme noted that the proshare amount was quite sizeable in Coös because of the two nursing homes and a greater amount of Medicaid individuals. There are a lot of poor people in the nursing homes.

Representative Tucker stated that a quarter of the Coös population receives services and there is a need in Coös. It's upsetting to ask so much from Coös and agreed that Coös should not be a donor town.

Chairman Moynihan stated that the county received \$1.3 million more than the 2017 proshare payment. Even after the 30% appropriation there will still be \$1 million more in revenue. He acknowledged the Commissioners' and the Treasurer's past requests. However, he supported the motion.

Representatives Laflamme, Craig and Furbush stated that they did not support the motion.

The motion passed 5-4. *(Representatives Craig, Furbush, Laflamme, Thomas)*

Commissioner Grenier noted that the Commissioners would not be signing the requisition to forward the funds to the state. The Delegation voted to appropriate the funds; however the Commissioners were refusing to spend the funds.

Chairman Moynihan closed the Delegation meeting at 11:20 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

Chairman Moynihan opened the public hearing at 11:36 a.m. and asked Jennifer Fish, County Administrator, to begin her budget presentation.

Jennifer Fish, County Administrator welcomed everyone to the public hearing on the county budget as recommended by the three County Commissioners - Tom Brady, Paul Grenier and Rick Samson.

She welcomed newly elected State Representatives from District 1, The Honorable Michael Furbush; from District 3, the Honorable Henry Noël; from District 4, the Honorable Kevin Craig and Registrar of Deeds-Elect Leon Rideout. Ms. Fish thanked Representatives Judd, Richardson, Théberge and Registrar Batchelder for their many years of service.

Ms. Fish explained that the public hearing was being held in accordance with state law, RSA 24:23 that states "not earlier than 5 nor later than 20 days after the mailing of the commissioners' budget statement, there shall be held within the county at such time and place as the chairperson of the county convention may specify a public hearing on the budget estimates as submitted by the commissioners."

Ms. Fish explained that there are services covered in the budget that are mandated by the State Constitution, there are costs that are required by NH state statute and then there are programs that the county has traditionally funded.

The State Constitution requires certain county elected officials. These include the Registrar of Deeds, the County Attorney, Medical Referees, a County Sheriff, and a County Treasurer.

There are other financial responsibilities that fall to the counties as a result of state law. These include the Commissioners, the Department of Corrections, the Unincorporated Places and the State Assistance Programs where basically the county functions as tax collector for the State of NH. Current state law requires counties to fund 100% of the non-federal share of the cost of all services to any citizens who qualify for nursing home level of care and Medicaid regardless of where they live – be it in a county nursing home, a private nursing home anywhere in New Hampshire, a skilled nursing facility, a residential care or assisted living facility or even in their own homes. The two key elements to being approved by the State for Medicaid services are qualifying for nursing home level of care and meeting the state's Medicaid financial guidelines. The two programs included in the State-County relationship and therefore in the county budget are Home & Community Based Care and Intermediate Nursing Care.

Traditional and Community Programs are financial responsibilities that fall to the county as a matter of choice. These programs include:

- The County Nursing Homes;
- Victim/Witness Program that operates out of the County Attorney's Office;
- UNH Cooperative Extension;
- Coös County Conservation District;
- Other Special Appropriations; and
- The Recycling Center and Transfer Station are included in the budget but do not have any financial impact on the county tax. Both are operated directly by County staff for several area municipalities that separately and individually cover all the associated costs.

The proposed budget will be revised again prior to its submission to the County Delegation for final action after the following events have taken place:

- The Commissioners and members of the Delegation have had the opportunity to give consideration to comments received from members of the public;
- Delegation subcommittees have had the opportunity to meet with department heads on any or all budgets for the various county operations; and
- The surplus is determined.

Ms. Fish highlighted appropriations affecting the 2019 budget:

- The proposed 2019 budget did not include a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for County employees. However, the Commissioners were currently in negotiations with the collective bargaining units AFSCME and SEA. The 2019 budget also included step increases for those employees who have not reached the top step on the County's salary schedule. Increases in longevity and the additional payroll cost of employees reaching eligibility criteria for sick time payments on hours accrued over 480 or 720 were also included in the budget. The estimated cost for these increases were \$344,291.
- The health insurance rates were budgeted with a 10% increase in premium beginning July 1, 2019.

- The projected cost of State Assistance Programs increased by 4%. State Assistance Programs include Intermediate Nursing Care and Home & Community Based Care for individuals who qualify for nursing home level of care.
- The Commissioners are considering using the County House for office space for County employees currently located in the Nursing Hospital in West Stewartstown. A \$6,000 appropriation has been budgeted for a consultation with an architect.
- The County recently underwent an Informational Technology Assessment. The consulting firm will be provided the Commissioners with their recommendations on current strengths and weaknesses of the County's systems.

Ms. Fish also highlighted revenues affecting the 2018 budget:

- The projected 2018 surplus to reduce taxes is \$2,500,000.

The total County Tax for 2019 was projected at \$16,047,731; a three percent increase over last year.

The Unincorporated Places Budget document contains a summary for the County's 23 Unincorporated Places (three places are entirely within the boundaries of the White Mountain National Forest and have no taxable property). The total Unincorporated Places budget for 2019 was projected at \$1,609,334 compared to the 2018 budget of \$1,752,172.

Ms. Fish began the review of the 2019 proposed budget and noted that the Special Appropriations requests would be reviewed first. Commissioner Grenier also noted that no reductions were made to the requests per Representative Fothergill's recommendation.

Paul Robitaille provided information on Senior Meals, RSVP, Servicelink and Energy Assistance.

Kimberly Preston provided information on the Child Advocacy Center.

Deborah Haynes provided information on RESPONSE.

Brenda Gagnon provided information on North Country Transit.

Mike Scala provided information on Coös Economic Development.

Dawn Ferringo from Homeless Outreach also provided information.

The meeting recessed for lunch at 12:47 and reconvened at 1:30 p.m.

Laura Mills, NHA - West Stewartstown, provided information on the facility and highlighted the specials requested by certain departments: a food cart, a handicapped van, air conditioning for the kitchen, an 85 lb. washer and a tub chair with scale which totaled \$96,720.

Representative Craig inquired about the performance incentive line item in the amount of \$5,000. Commissioner Grenier stated that the Board reviewed the nursing home administrators' performances. The Berlin Nursing Home Administrator went from a geriatric nursing home to a skilled facility which obtains Medicare reimbursement and was able to reduce the revenue deficit by a significant portion. The Commissioners increased her salary as she is now a skilled nursing home administrator. Commissioner Grenier suggested an incentive for the West Stewartstown Nursing Hospital. If the

Nursing Hospital Administrator is able to reduce the deficit gap by \$500,000, she should have some type of incentive to do so. Chairman Moynihan asked if any goals had been set. Commissioner Grenier replied that currently the line item is only a place holder. It will be only for one person, the nursing hospital administrator. The goal will be attainable.

Louise Belanger, NHA - Berlin, provided a brief history on the Berlin Nursing Home and explained the changes of a skilled nursing facility. She noted that the facility was on track to bring in \$1.3 million in revenue.

She did not budget for a van; but that could change by February. Commissioner Grenier noted that the estimated amount was \$60,000.

Representative Tucker noted that she has received positive feedback on the services offered at the Berlin facility.

Ms. Fish presented the County Administration budget. Representative Tucker inquired about the county house renovation. Ms. Fish replied that funds had been allocated to hire an architect to look at the house and make it ADA compliant and more space efficient for county offices.

County Attorney John McCormick provided information about the County Attorney's office and the Victim/Witness Advocacy Program. He also reviewed his budget and explained the replacement system being set in place for computers.

Tanya Batchelder, Register of Deeds, presented her budget. The greatest increase was health insurance due to the addition of a two person plan. She was thanked for her many years of service.

County Sheriff Brian Valerino provided information on the duties of the Sheriff's Department. He noted that the drug task force appropriation was included in the budget. The attorney general's office is working on obtaining additional funding to offset the appropriation.

Superintendent Ben Champagne presented information on the Department of Corrections budget. The specials included a vehicle lease and continued updates on the video surveillance equipment.

Superintendent Champagne also provided information on the recycling center and transfer station.

Brendan Prusik, UNH/Cooperative Extension provided information on the programs offered. He explained that Coös County pays a certain percentage of the budget.

Haven Neal, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors for the Coös County Conservation District spoke of the services provided by the Conservation District.

Ms. Fish reviewed the remaining budget requests. Commissioner Grenier explained that AHEAD requested Coös County to sponsor CDBG Public Facilities Grant for the renovation of a building on 121 Main Street in Berlin. The Board may include a CDBG for economic development prior to the final budget approval.

Chairman Moynihan noted that the proposed appropriations totaled \$38,566,843.

Chairman Moynihan briefly reviewed the estimated revenues. The proposed county tax showed a three percent increase. Commissioner Grenier noted that due to the reduction in the Medicaid rate the revenues for the nursing homes will need be adjusted.

Chairman Moynihan reviewed the Unincorporated Places budgets. Ms. Fish highlighted some changes and introduced Captain John Acardi of DRED. He reviewed the services that are provided to the Unincorporated Places of Coös County.

Representative Tucker expressed her support in purchasing new tasers for the Sheriff's Department.

Chairman Moynihan suggested a meeting in the future with the Delegation, the County Administrator and possibly the County Treasurer to discuss the budget further.

Chairman Moynihan proceeded with subcommittee chair assignments

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| • Nursing Homes | Representative Thomas |
| • Corrections Department | Representative Craig |
| • County Sheriff/County Attorney | Representative Laflamme |
| • Budget Transfer Committee | Executive Committee |
| • Elected Officials' Salaries | Entire Delegation |
| • Unincorporated Places | Representative Hatch |
| • Capital Improvements, Revenue Items and Surplus | Entire Delegation |
| • Performance Audits | Representative Hatch |
| • Economic Development | Representative Noël (Also ex-officio member CEDC) |
| • Coös County Planning Board | Representative Merner (ex-officio member) |
| • UNH Cooperative Extension Advisory Board | Representative Tucker |
| • Register of Deeds | Representative Merner |
| • Soil Conservation | Representative Tucker |

Ms. Fish urged all Delegation members to contact her with any budget questions.

A discussion was held on which day to hold meetings. The Chair noted that Representative Fothergill is not available to attend meetings on Mondays and Fridays. Chairman Moynihan noted the Delegation meetings are advertised as public meetings and that Saturday is the day that the public may attend. Representative Hatch agreed. Representative Tucker disagreed. Staff has to be on site. Saturday would be a burden since they would be working extra hours. She suggested holding a Saturday meeting to determine who attends – how many Delegation members attend and if any members of the public attend. Representative Laflamme asked if there would be added expenses if a meeting is held on Saturday. Ms. Fish replied that certain staff will need to be paid overtime.

A motion was made by Representative Hatch at the call of the Chair at 3:38 p.m. The motion was approved by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Larry Laflamme, Clerk