

COÖS COUNTY DELEGATION
PUBLIC HEARING & 2018 SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET
Saturday, March 16, 2019 - 9:00 a.m.
Coös County Nursing Hospital - W. Stewartstown, NH

Present: Representatives Wayne Moynihan - Chair; Edith Tucker - Vice Chair; Larry Laflamme - Clerk; Kevin Craig, John Fothergill, William Hatch, Troy Merner, Henry Noël and Yvonne Thomas. Also present: County Commissioners Paul Grenier and Rick Samson; County Administrator Jennifer Fish; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Registrar Leon Rideout; County Attorney John McCormick; Treasurer Suzanne Collins; Captain John Acardi; members of the press and the public. Representative Michael Furbush was excused.

PUBLIC HEARING

Chairman Moynihan opened the public hearing at 9:07 a.m. Captain John Acardi led the Pledge of Allegiance. The roll was called by clerk, Representative Laflamme. There were nine members present and one member excused.

County Administrator Jennifer Fish read the following: The Coös County Commissioners are requesting funding as requested by the Department of Health & Humans Services for the Integrated Delivery Network. In June 2018, the County received \$1,391,541 more in Proportionate Share Medicaid revenue than anticipated. The State of New Hampshire Health & Human Services requested that a portion of that amount be returned to them for the Integrated Delivery Network (IDN).

In December 2018, when the Delegation voted and approved on the appropriation of \$340,928 there was no appropriation in the 2018 budget in order to make the payment. This is the reason for the supplemental budget. It is recommended that \$340,928 of Proportionate Share payment be used to offset the appropriation.

County Treasurer Sue Collins distributed information to the Delegation to support her argument from last September to not appropriate the total amount requested. (A copy of which is on file.) She began by stating that she had attended the New Hampshire Association of Counties Executive Committee meeting on March 8. Commissioner Meyer attended the meeting to discuss the Governor's budget for the next two years.

The State of NH Department of Health & Human Services was urged over a decade ago to match legitimate nursing home expenditure deficits with federal dollars. Beginning last year, they did. The new source of increased ProShare payments in 2018 was the federal match for Certified Public Expenditures created by county nursing home deficits.

The total deficit for both nursing homes in 2018 was \$8,049,842; in 2017 \$8,441,699.

Ms. Collins explained that it is these county nursing home deficits that the State is now using to get federal matching dollars. It is the prior year (2017) deficit that resulted in the County's receipt of \$1,391,400 additional ProShare dollars in July 2018. It is a portion of this additional funding that DHHS Commissioner Meyer is requesting to help fund IDN7; specifically, \$340,927.67. The members of the County Delegation have been asked to authorize the appropriation and expenditure of \$340,927.67 at its annual meeting on March 16, 2019.

Coös County has the highest county tax effort in New Hampshire. In 2017, we raised \$15,573,805 in property taxes and \$8,049,842 of that amount ended up funding the nursing home deficits. 51.6% of the county tax supports the nursing homes. Can Coös County afford to turn over \$340,927 to the State of NH? The property tax burden in Coös County is so high and she asked the Delegation to reconsider the amount.

HB2, which is the trailer bill to the budget, maintained the counties' cap with a 2.1 percent increase in state fiscal year 2020; and, another 1.6 percent increase in fiscal year 2021. The Commissioner announced to the committee that there was a \$5 million error in the Governor's budget.

Sue reviewed a copy of the five year budget and noted that the state received \$2,358,477 in fiscal year 2018. The counties never received increased proshare that year. She was told that the state was informed by the Feds to draw down the funds and not share it with the counties. Sue has requested written documentation from Jim Monahan on the authorization.

Commissioner Meyer also advised that proshare may increase over the summer; and he expects \$10 million from the counties cooperatively. He did not want to tell the counties on what to pay. He wants the counties to decide on amounts.

Steve Arnold, Colebrook, an employee of Northern Human Services, spoke in favor of the IDN funding. The money comes from citizens through federal taxes. The State of NH wrote a grant to obtain funds to coordinate services with Medicaid patients. He hoped that the Delegation would approve the appropriation.

Jeff Young, Jefferson, stated that he was not totally opposed to giving money back to the state but Coös is asked to give a greater amount than some other counties. He recommended an appropriation of \$100,000. The proposed amount is an extreme tax burden on Coös County residents.

Commissioner Grenier stated that the Commissioners did not recommend the appropriation of \$340,928. The funds were set aside because of the previous recorded vote of the Delegation. The funds were encumbered from the 2018 budget. Commissioner Grenier also questioned how healthcare will be affected with Littleton Regional pulling out of north care.

Commissioner Samson asked the Delegation to consider the following: can the Coös County taxpayers afford to support the entire state by requesting this amount of money. The Commissioners do not support the amount requested. The Board does feel an obligation to participate in the program and \$105,000 would be sufficient to start off the program. The Commissioners have an obligation first to the County and then to the State. That is how he feels as a Commissioner and taxpayer.

Commissioner Samson referred the Delegation to two items not included in the proposed 2019 budget. Items that were brought to the Commissioners' attention on Wednesday, March 13. One item was \$79,500 for hot water tanks for the Nursing Hospital; and the second, \$100,000 for an impending retirement. He asked the Delegation to reconsider the proposed appropriation.

Chairman Moynihan closed the public hearing at 9:51 a.m. and opened the supplemental budget meeting.

A motion was made by Representative Hatch, seconded by Representative Merner to appropriate \$340,928 for the purpose of IDN funding.

Representative Hatch did not agree with how the Governor handled the situation. However, he supported the IDN for the region.

Representative Fothergill asked if there was any data to show other county nursing home deficits. Are other counties in the same situation as Coös County? The cost of medical services is high in the North Country.

Representative Tucker stated that this was a mental health and opioid crisis issue. There is a substantial problem in Coös County. Representative Fothergill replied that the budget has only so much money. Is Coös getting its money back? He was not convinced that they were. He was not against IDN but wants money to be well spent. He added that the funds are not coming back to this area. His patients do not have access to Littleton. He suggested increasing the social service agencies line items.

Chairman Moynihan stated that the budget has been increased over the years for law enforcement relating to the opioid crisis. The bottom line was the county budgeted \$2 million and received \$3 million. It was an increase over the budgeted amount. The requested amount is a percentage amount consistent with other counties.

Chairman Moynihan asked for a vote.

The motion passed 6-3. *(Representatives Craig, Fothergill, Thomas)*

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m. at the call of the Chair.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Larry Laflamme, Clerk