

A Checklist To Ensure Meetings Are Compliant
With The Right-to-Know Law During The State Of Emergency
Coös County Delegation - Quarterly Meeting
February 27, 2021

Chairman Th  berge read the following prior to the start of the meeting:

As Chair of the Co  s County Delegation, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor’s Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor’s Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting. All members of the Co  s County Delegation have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # 1-646-558-8656 or by clicking on the following website address: www.zoom.us/join. Meeting ID # 897 9276 7374, passcode 190413.

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have also been provided on the website of the Co  s County Delegation at: www.cooscountynh.us.

If anybody has a problem, please call 603-331-5670 or email at: jennifer.fish@cooscountynh.us.

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled. Please note that **all votes** that are taken during this meeting shall be done by **roll call vote**.

Let’s start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law. The roll was called by the clerk, Representative Larry Laflamme. There were nine members in attendance.

Representative Craig	present	Representative Laflamme	present
Representative Davis	absent/excuse	Representative Merner	present
Representative Dostie	present	Representative Th��berge	present
Representative Hatch	present	Representative Thompson	present
Representative Kelley	present	Representative Tucker	present

Also present remotely: County Commissioners Tom Brady, Paul Grenier and Raymond Gorman; County Administrator Jennifer Fish; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Superintendent Ben Champagne; Nursing Home Administrator Lynn Beede; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Sheriff Brian Valerino; Captain Keith Roberge; NH Cooperative Extension Specialist Nickolas Rowley; a member of the press and public.

1. Chairman Th  berge opened the Delegation meeting at 10:04 a.m.

2. *Review & Approval of the Minutes of the December 7, 2020, organizational meeting and the December 12, 2020, meeting and public hearing, as distributed:* A motion was made by Representative Laflamme, seconded by Representative Kelley to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2020, organizational meeting and the December 12, 2020, meeting and public hearing. The motion was approved by roll call 8-0-1.

Representative Craig	yes	Representative Laflamme	yes
Representative Davis	absent/excuse	Representative Merner	yes
Representative Dostie	yes	Representative Th��berge	yes
Representative Hatch	abstain	Representative Thompson	yes
Representative Kelley	yes	Representative Tucker	yes

3. *Hearing of the Public:*
- a. NH Cooperative Extension Specialist Nickolas Rawley stated that he worked in the food and agriculture division. He provided a PowerPoint presentation on the programs that are offered.
4. *Review & Approval of the Financial Statements of Co  s County and of the Unincorporated Places for the Periods Ended December 31, 2020.* Chairman Th  berge began the review of the Co  s County financials. The total expenditures for the period ending December 31, 2020 were \$40,336,988 or 89.38% expended. There were no questions. The total revenues for the period ending December 31, 2020 were \$45,592,792 or 101.02% received. There were no questions. A motion was made by Representative Hatch, seconded by Representative Merner to approve the Co  s County financials for the period ending December 31, 2020. Commissioner Grenier noted that these were pre-audit figures and there may be small material changes. The motion was approved by roll call 9-0.

Representative Craig	yes	Representative Laflamme	yes
Representative Davis	absent/excuse	Representative Merner	yes
Representative Dostie	yes	Representative Th��berge	yes
Representative Hatch	yes	Representative Thompson	yes
Representative Kelley	yes	Representative Tucker	yes

The Chair continued with the Unincorporated Places financials. The Unincorporated Places fourth quarter expenditures totaled \$1,242,463 or 80.88% expended. The Unincorporated Places fourth quarter revenues totaled \$1,308,582 or 85.19% received. A motion was made by Representative Thompson, seconded by Representative Kelley to approve the Unincorporated Places fourth quarter financials. The motion was approved by roll call 9-0.

Representative Craig	yes	Representative Laflamme	yes
Representative Davis	absent/excuse	Representative Merner	yes
Representative Dostie	yes	Representative Th��berge	yes
Representative Hatch	yes	Representative Thompson	yes
Representative Kelley	yes	Representative Tucker	yes

5. *Old Business:*
- a. Status of broadband access and coverage in Co  s County: County Administrator Jennifer Fish reported that the Co  s County Broadband Committee met last week. All towns in Co  s County have been invited and sixteen have joined. The remaining towns will be contacted by some committee members.

There was a presentation by NH Electric Cooperative provided information on their broadband initiative. Members were urged to go to nhbroadband.com and enter their physical address to see if coverage is available.

Representative Thomas stated that he has offered to represent the Town of Stewartstown. The Selectboard will take action at their next meeting.

- b. Update on the county house renovations: County Administrator Jennifer Fish reported that the renovations were complete. The IT company needs to complete the work at the nursing hospital in order to set up the computers at the new offices.
- c. Coös County Delegation Handbook: Representative Laflamme reported that some Delegation members had requested some changes.

6. New Business:

- a. Representative Thompson made a motion, seconded by Representative Th  berge, *that the Delegation vote to authorize the issuance of Request for Proposal (RFP) to conduct a Performance audit of the Co  s County Government Agencies. The RFP is to be issued by the Co  s County Delegation and the Auditing firm selection is to be conducted by the Delegation. Further the Delegation authorizes the Delegation Chairman to appoint a committee of five of its **members including the Chairman and Representative Hatch**, both of whom were on the Delegation when the last audit was performed. The balance of the committee should consist of one democratic member and two republican members. Included in the audit should be a draft report submitted to the Delegation along with a final report with corrections and comments from the County Commissioners. The Committee will put together the RFP no later than 30 days from the passage of this motion along with no less than four firms that perform these audits and forward it to the County Administrator for the purpose of sending them out to the firms indicated by the Committee to determine the costs involved in performing the audit. The County Commissioners and all County employees should be advised to cooperate in any way with the Auditors requests for information.*

I want to thank you for considering this action; I think that we need this information to go forward as a Delegation and a County. The Pandemic has taught us a number of lessons and I think we need to build these things into our plans for the Counties future. If you any questions or items that you would like to add to the motion please feel free to call me at 867-7536.

Representative Hatch stated that he agrees with performance audits as they are invaluable tools. He continued that what spurred the last performance audit was that it had never been done and it was appropriate at that time. However, the pandemic has caused financial uncertainty. There are several processes in the state that are unsettled that may have a greater impact than they normally would. It is too uncertain of a time to get the criteria that is needed and suggested to wait a little before moving forward with another performance audit. Chairman Th  berge suggested a special meeting to discuss the request of a performance audit at length.

Commissioner Grenier stated that the last audit had been conducted ten years ago and the cost had been \$55,000. The audit had suggested adding two additional positions which was done. He did not disagree with the performance audit. However, there are many factors that would

not make this an accurate performance audit. Representative Laflamme stated that he agreed with Representative Hatch and Commissioner Grenier's comments. The performance audit is a necessary tool. Because of the circumstances this year, it may not be a productive tool. Representative Laflamme suggested waiting until next year.

Representative Thompson stated that his concerns were based on the fact that every principle staff has been replaced. The County needs to plan for the future. The pandemic is not going away. The staff at the nursing home did a great job even though there was not enough. He is looking for key personnel to know what is needed going forward.

Representative Hatch did not disagree with the performance audit. There are so many changes that will be mandated in the future and he suggested waiting for some normalcy.

Commissioner Brady noted that the West Stewartstown Nursing Hospital is at a low census. He did not oppose the performance audit but suggested waiting for some normalcy. There are too many families that have not seen their loved ones. There needs to be an area in the nursing homes where residents may be allowed with their loved ones.

Chairman Th  berge suggested a special meeting to be held on Saturday, March 13 to discuss the performance audit further. Representative Thompson withdrew his motion and Representative Th  berge withdrew his motion.

Representative Tucker agreed that this is not a reasonable time. The County does need to set goals for itself. It is a difficult time right now especially for the new members to see how the nursing homes are run. The new representatives need to be brought up to speed on county operations. The pandemic has changed how things are done and now is not the time for a performance audit. She did not agree with a meeting in a couple of weeks. She suggested waiting until next year.

A motion was made by Representative Hatch, seconded by Representative Thompson to discuss the necessity of a performance audit at a meeting on Saturday, March 13. The motion passed by roll call 7-2.

Representative Craig	no	Representative Laflamme	yes
Representative Davis	absent/excuse	Representative Merner	yes
Representative Dostie	yes	Representative Th��berge	yes
Representative Hatch	yes	Representative Thompson	yes
Representative Kelley	yes	Representative Tucker	no

Commissioner Grenier suggested appropriating \$75,000 for the performance audit in the 2021 budget. If the Delegation proceeds with the performance audit later in the year the funds will be appropriated in the budget.

Chairman Th  berge stated that the meeting will be held at 2 p.m.

7. Subcommittee Reports:

- Nursing Homes: Chairman Th  berge reported that he had spoken to Laura Mills, the West Stewartstown Administrator, and currently the first floor is closed. At the meeting, Lynn Beede,

the Berlin Nursing Home Administrator, reported that Berlin was at 80% capacity. Due to the nursing shortage there are no admissions. People are waiting for admission to the nursing homes.

- Corrections Department: Representative Craig was not aware of any issues and reported that he will need to meet with the Superintendent.
- County Attorney: Representative Tucker had nothing to report.
- County Sheriff: Representative Laflamme reported that he had met with the Sheriff and Captain. There was a discussion about the OHRV patrols and the revenue for the department. Representative Thompson stated that enforcement is imperative. One of the Fish & Game officers in the North Country will be out for a period of time. There is a need for enforcement on this side of the county. Landowners will close trails without enforcement.

Sheriff Valerino thanked Representative Laflamme for the meeting. The Board of Commissioners is very supportive of the Sheriff's Department. Funds have been appropriated for one side by side in the proposed budget.

Commissioner Gorman stated that the Sheriff was encouraged to budget what was needed. Enforcement is huge in the northern area.

- Unincorporated Places: Representative Thompson reported that the Planning Board approved two subdivisions in Millsfield as well as a lot line adjustment in Cambridge.
- Economic Development: Representative Thompson reported that CEDC had acquired Borders Economic Corporation of Colebrook which includes the spec building in the industrial park in Colebrook. It is anticipated that Coös Brewing Company will occupy the building. CEDC has lost a long time employee and looking for a replacement. A business previously located in Vermont has moved to New Hampshire.
- Registry of Deeds: Representative Merner reported that real estate has gone through the roof. Inventory is extremely low.
- UNH Extension Service: Representative Kelley reported that Brendan Prusik and Larry Barker will be retiring from the respective positions. Both are remaining on in advisory roles. New members will be joining the extension service.
- Planning Board: Representative Merner reported that the Planning Board had extended the Balsams permits from two years to four years.

8. Any Other Business:

Representative Laflamme reported that a hearing for HB545 with Municipal and County Government on Monday, March 1.

Representative Laflamme also requested that a moment of silence be observed in honor of Senator Fred King who had recently passed away. He was an asset to Coös County and never stopped working.

A motion was made by Representative Merner, seconded by Representative Dostie to adjourn the meeting at 12:30 p.m. The motion passed by roll call 8-0.

Representative Craig	yes	Representative Laflamme	yes
Representative Davis	absent/excuse	Representative Merner	yes
Representative Dostie	yes	Representative Théberge	yes
Representative Hatch	left meeting	Representative Thompson	yes
Representative Kelley	yes	Representative Tucker	yes

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Larry Laflamme, Clerk