

COÖS COUNTY
DELEGATION MEETING &
PUBLIC HEARING on the
2017 PROPOSED BUDGET
Wednesday, December 14, 2016 - 10:00 a.m.
Coös County Nursing Home - Berlin, NH

Present: Representatives Robert Théberge- Chair; Wayne Moynihan Vice-Chair; Larry Laflamme-Clerk; John Fothergill, Bing Judd, Troy Merner, Herb Richardson and Yvonne Thomas . Also present: County Commissioners Tom Brady and Paul Grenier; County Administrator Jennifer Fish; Superintendent Craig Hamelin; Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Sheriff Gerald Marcou; Sheriff-Elect Brian Valerino; Captain Keith Roberge; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Registrar Tanya Batchelder; County Attorney John McCormick; County Treasurer Fred King; Treasurer-Elect Suzanne Collins; Captain John Acardi; representatives of outside agencies; members of the press and the public.

DELEGATION MEETING

Chairman Théberge requested all to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was called to order at 10:09 a.m.

Commissioner Tom Brady announced that this would be County Treasurer Fred King's last meeting as an elected official. Mr. King dedicated his life to helping others and the residents of Coös County. After reading a very long list of life achievements, Commissioner Grenier asked the Delegation to declare December 14, 2016, in the form of a resolution, as "Fred King Day". The Delegation approved the request unanimously by voice vote.

The roll was called by the clerk, Representative Larry Laflamme. There were eight (8) members present.

Other Business:

Chairman Théberge read Resolution #1 which pertained to Borrowing Funds in Anticipation of Taxes in 2017:

Resolution #1

Be it resolved by the Coös County Delegation duly convened on this fourteenth day of December, 2016, 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 2017, 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 Richardson, seconded by Representative Thomas to approve Resolution #1. The resolution passed by roll call vote 8-0.

Chairman Théberge read Resolution #2 as follows:

Resolution #2

Authorization for Coös County to Pay 2017 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 \$8,000,000.

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 \$8,000,000 for 2017 expenses during the months of January, February, and March in anticipation of the subsequent approval of the 2017 budget. Further that the \$8,000,000 be allocated proportionately to the line items based on the 2016 approved net appropriations to fund like operating and personnel expenses in existence as of 12/31/16.

A motion was made by Representative Merner, seconded by Representative Judd to approve Resolution #2. The resolution passed by roll call vote 8-0.

Chairman Théberge closed the Delegation meeting at 10:28 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

Chairman Théberge opened the public hearing at 10:29 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 recommended by the three County Commissioners - Tom Brady, Paul Grenier and Rick Samson.

Ms. Fish welcomed the newly elected State Representatives to the Coös County Delegation from District 1, The Honorable Bing Judd; from District 3 the Honorable Larry Laflamme; from District 5 the Honorable Edith Tucker; and from District 7 the Honorable Troy Merner. Newly elected officials County Treasurer Sue Collins and Sheriff Brian Valerino.

Ms. Fish also thanked Representatives Froburg, Rappaport, Rideout and Tholl; Sheriff Marcou and Treasurer King for many combined years of service at both the county and state levels.

Ms. Fish explained that the 2017 budget development process began in September. The budget requests were submitted to the Director of Finance in October. The Commissioners' reviewed the budget on two separate occasions. The proposed budget was mailed to the Delegation on December 1, 2016. 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;

- The unencumbered fund balance (surplus) has not been determined for 2016. The amount will be determined when the 2016 financial statements are closed in mid to late January after all accounts receivable, accounts payable, encumbrances and accruals for 2016 have been recorded.

Ms. Fish highlighted appropriations affecting the 2017 budget:

- The proposed 2017 budget includes a 2 % Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for County employees. The 2017 budget also includes 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 720 are also included in the budget.
- The health insurance rates have been budgeted for a 10% increase in premium for the 2nd half of the year. However, the County was informed late last week that the Not-to-Exceed rate will be 16.97% which is an additional \$143,000 to the budget.

Ms. Fish added that she would be researching alternative plans and may have to reopen negotiations with the two unions

- The Coös County Nursing Home (Berlin) has budgeted for transitioning to a Skilled Nursing Facility in the second half of the year. The nursing home will be able to provide rehabilitative care to Medicare beneficiaries.
- Both the Recycling Center and Transfer Station budgets are fully funded by their participating towns.

Ms. Fish also highlighted revenues affecting the 2017 budget:

- The projected 2016 surplus to reduce taxes was \$2,750,000. The fund balance was largely the result of
 - ✓ receiving an unexpected additional \$494,827 in Medicaid Proportionate Share Payments (ProShare); and
 - ✓ savings in the expense budgets of the nursing homes, Sheriff's Department, Department of Corrections, and County Attorney's office.

The **total proposed 2017 appropriation budget** (without the unincorporated places) was \$35,350,252 compared to the 2016 approved budget of \$35,965,016; a decrease of \$614,764 or 1.71%.

The total County Tax for 2017 was projected at \$15,778,071 compared to \$14,406,246 in 2016; an increase of 9.52%.

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 2017 was \$1,580,351 compared to the 2016 approved budget of \$1,498,483.

Jennifer began the review of the 2017 proposed budget. She explained that she would be following the budget book by department and welcomed questions through the process.

Coös County Nursing Hospital: Sue Collins inquired if any of the salaries in the proposed budget would be affected by the exempt law that had been recently overturned. Ms. Fish replied that the Activities Director and Housekeeping/Laundry Director salaries would be revised.

While reviewing the Nursing Department budget, Representative Moynihan inquired if the payout of sick leave and personal time for retiring employees was included in the budget. Ms. Fish replied in the affirmative.

Representative Moynihan noted that the Nursing Hospital budget increased half a million compared to the 2016 budget and asked how much was attributed to the two percent cost of living increases. Carrie Klebe, Director of Finance, replied \$230,000 for 2016-2017. The 2017 increases totaled \$115,000 approximately.

Coös County Nursing Home: Commissioner Grenier announced that the nursing home would be transitioning to a skilled nursing facility midyear. He noted that expenses would be incurred initially but additional revenues would also be coming in. The two nursing homes run at a deficit and alternative options have been looked at to reduce some of the deficit. Representative Fothergill questioned the necessity of becoming skilled as the four local hospitals all have skilled beds available. Louise Belanger, NHA, replied that she had researched and spoken with the local hospital administration which was happy with the nursing home becoming skilled.

County Attorney: Chairman Th  berge asked for a Drug Court update. County Attorney John McCormick reported that he would need to set up a meeting to figure out a time line for the federal grant application. Representative Moynihan added that instead of a county driven system the drug court would be state managed through the superior court system.

Registry of Deeds: Registrar Tanya Batchelder provided a copy of a house bill for the 2017 session which stated that the register of deeds shall not charge more than \$1 per page for copies of documents. If this bill were to pass, Ms. Batchelder replied it would potentially reduce revenues by \$30,000. Chairman Th  berge encouraged Delegation members to testify against the bill.

Sheriff's Department: Sheriff Marcou reported that he had made cuts from his department's budget per the Commissioners' request in November; however, he asked that the cuts be reconsidered prior to the final budget.

Department of Corrections: Commissioner Grenier thanked Superintendent Hamelin for his many years of service to Co  s County. Superintendent Hamelin is a respected by County and State officials; his retirement will be a greater loss than people realize.

Superintendent Hamelin noted that 2016 funds would be carried over into the 2017 budget for video surveillance.

Cooperative Extension: Larry Barker noted that Cooperative Extension budget had been reduced by 5% per the Commissioners' request. The cut affected the salaried position for a new program. Representative Fothergill asked if the program has been successful which Mr. Barker replied in the affirmative. Mr. Barker was asked to provide data to the Delegation relating to the program and position.

Other Special Appropriations: Representative Richardson reported that 20% of Coös County residents receive some type of benefit from Tri County CAP. He also added that he would be requesting full funding of the food bank line item which was reduced during the budget revisions.

Representative Moynihan asked about the Child Advocacy Center funding request. Kimberly Preston, the new director, explained that the center did not approach all towns as in years past but decided to ask only the county for funds. She has reviewed the request and reduced the amount to \$15,000. Some of the grants obtained by the center require match funding. The center did not seek funding from towns and municipalities in the county. County Attorney John McCormick added that the CAC is a great tool for law enforcement and he works with the CAC closely. The CAC interviews a child when cases arise. It is an important resource. Sue Collins confirmed that the CAC did not request funding from the Town of Colebrook.

The public hearing recessed for lunch from 12:50 p.m. to 1:35 p.m.

Jennifer then reviewed the County's projected revenues.

While reviewing the Unincorporated Places budgets, Commissioner Grenier noted that the yield taxes are significantly lower than in the past.

Chairman Thérberge requested a motion to reappoint Mike Waddell to the Nash Stream Citizens Committee per the Coös County Commissioners recommendation. A motion was made by Representative Richardson, seconded by Representative Fothergill to reappoint Mike Waddell to the Nash Stream Citizens Committee for a period of three years. The motion was approved by voice vote.

A motion was made by Representative Richardson, seconded by Representative Thomas to adjourn the public hearing at 2:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Larry Laflamme, Clerk