

COÖS COUNTY
DELEGATION MEETING &
PUBLIC HEARING on the
2016 PROPOSED BUDGET
Monday, December 7, 2015 - 10:00 a.m.
Coös County Nursing Home - Berlin, NH

Present: Representatives Robert Th  berge-Co-Chair; John Tholl-Co-Chair; Yvonne Thomas-Clerk; Alethea Lincoln Froburg, Wayne Moynihan, Larry, Rappaport and Herb Richardson. Also present: County Commissioners Tom Brady, Paul Grenier and Rick Samson; County Administrator Jennifer Fish; Superintendent Craig Hamelin; Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Sheriff Gerald Marcou; Chief Deputy Keith Roberge; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Registrar Tanya Batchelder; County Attorney John McCormick; County Treasurer Fred King; Captain John Acardi; representatives of outside agencies; members of the press and the public.

DELEGATION MEETING

Representative Tholl requested all to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. The roll was called by the clerk, Representative Yvonne Thomas. There were seven (7) members present.

Review & Approval of Minutes: Representative Tholl asked if any changes or corrections needed to be made to the minutes of the October 21 and November 5, 2015 meetings. A motion was made by Representative Richardson, seconded by Representative Rappaport to approve the minutes of the October 21 and November 5, 2015 meetings. The minutes were approved unanimously by voice vote.

Other Business:

County Treasurer Fred King read Resolution #1 which pertained to Borrowing Funds in Anticipation of Taxes in 2016:

Resolution #1

Be it resolved by the Co  s County Delegation duly convened on this seventh day of December, 2015, that since the monies in the treasury of the County of Co  s 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 2016, the Co  s 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 Th  berge to approve Resolution #1. The resolution passed by roll call vote 7-0.

Representative Tholl read Resolution #2 as follows:

Resolution #2

*Authorization for Co  s County to Pay 2016 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 \$7,452,600.

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 \$7,452,600 for 2016 expenses during the months of January, February, and March in anticipation of the subsequent approval of the 2016 budget. Further that the \$7,452,600 be allocated proportionately to the line items based on the 2015 approved net appropriations to fund like operating and personnel expenses in existence as of 12/31/15.

A motion was made by Representative Richardson, seconded by Representative Rappaport to approve Resolution #2. The resolution passed by roll call vote 7-0.

County Administrator Jennifer Fish presented a request to withdraw funds from the Facility Fund. The amount would be up to \$10,000. The funds will be used to install a well pump and system as well as a water treatment system at the County House. There has been no water at the house since a leak was discovered last winter.

A motion was made by Representative Richardson, seconded by Representative Lincoln Froburg to approve request for a withdrawal up to \$10,000 from the facility fund.

Representative Richardson asked why the repairs were needed. Commissioner Grenier replied that the house cannot be sold if there is no water and no heat. Representative Moynihan asked why the line was not repaired. Commission Brady stated that the area of the break is not known. Water is needed at the house whether the house is sold or not. Commissioner Grenier also stated that the house will have its own well with no connection to the County facilities. It is the most cost effective option. Commissioner Samson also noted that the Department of Corrections cannot use the house for training because of no water. The motion was approved by roll call vote 7-0.

Representative Tholl closed the Delegation meeting at 10:29 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

Representative Tholl opened the public hearing at 10:29 a.m. and asked Jennifer Fish, County Administrator, to begin her 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.

Jennifer explained that the 2016 budget development process began in September. The Commissioners' reviewed the budget on two separate occasions. The proposed budget was mailed to the Delegation on November 19, 2015. 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 been determined for 2015. The amount will be determined when the 2015 financial statements are closed in mid to late January after all accounts receivable, accounts payable, encumbrances and accruals for 2015 have been recorded;
- The anticipated final report is reviewed from Underwood/HEB Engineers in regards to recommended options for the Coös County Farm water system; and
- On December 4, a roof evaluation report for the Coös County Nursing Home prepared by HEB Engineers was received. HEB's estimated a cost of the necessary repairs would be \$560,000. The Board of Commissioners will discuss the estimate further at the December 9 meeting.

Jennifer highlighted appropriations affecting the 2016 budget:

- The proposed 2016 budget does not include a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for County employees. The 2016 budget does include 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. Union negotiations are currently ongoing between the County and the two unions.
- The health insurance rates have been budgeted for a 10% increase in premium for the second half of the year. Jennifer reported that the County was informed that the not to exceed rate will be 8.96%. Other options will be looked at.
- Workers' compensation rates and unemployment rates have remained stable. The Nursing Home Administrators have been working very closely with the Primex³ Risk Managers to provide intensive and mandatory education to employees to implement changes in work methods and awareness in an effort to mitigate losses and their hard work has paid off.
- The projected cost of State Assistance Programs has increased by 3%. State Assistance Programs include Intermediate Nursing Care and Home & Community Based Care for individuals who qualify for nursing home level of care. The State of NH bills each county for its share of all payments made to qualified providers based on a 3-year rolling average of payments.
- Both the Recycling Center and Transfer Station budgets are fully funded by their participating towns. The Town of Colebrook will be rejoining the Recycling Center in 2016 and has been included in the budget.

Jennifer also highlighted revenues affecting the 2016 budget:

- A recap of six years of county tax as well as the projected increase for 2016 was presented:

Year	County Tax Amount	Percentage Change	
2011	\$13,199,675		
2012	\$14,123,935	7.0%	Increase
2013	\$14,438,133	2.2%	Increase
2014	\$14,339,928	-.68%	Decrease

2015	\$14,339,928	0.0%	No change
2016	\$15,414,564	7.49%	Increase

- The projected 2016 surplus to reduce taxes was estimated at \$2,750,000. The fund balance was largely the result of
 - ✓ receiving an unexpected additional \$862,608 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 2016 appropriation budget** (without the unincorporated places) was \$34,924,608 compared to the 2015 approved budget of \$34,120,410 which was an increase of \$804,198 or 2.35%.

The **estimated 2015 surplus to reduce taxes in 2016** was reduced from the 2015 budget. Historical practice has been to be very conservative when preparing the year-end surplus estimate. The County still has to operate another 6 weeks and barring any unanticipated expenses that fund balance should be better at year end.

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 2016 was \$1,471,141 compared to the 2015 approved budget of \$1,499,190.

Jennifer began the review of the 2016 proposed budget. She explained that she would be following the budget book by department and welcomed questions through the process.

Coös County Nursing Hospital: Representative Thérberge asked the Commissioners to consider offering childcare and/or housing benefits as a recruiting aid. Commissioner Brady stated that the Board had begun discussions regarding housing.

Coös County Nursing Home: Jennifer noted that the Commissioners had included an appropriation of \$57,250 for a roof evaluation by engineers.

County Administration: Representative Thérberge noted that administration was working with the Board to create a human resource position.

County Attorney: County Attorney John McCormick reported that the new Assistant County Attorney was doing well. Several changes will be forthcoming in his department. Representative Tholl noted that Felonies First will increase the County Attorney's work load significantly.

Sheriff's Department: Representative Richardson asked if all of the cruisers had cameras. Sheriff Marcou replied that three still required them. Representative Richardson recommended that the Commissioners appropriate \$18,000 for the purchase and installation of cameras in the cruisers. In his opinion, it was a safety issue.

Department of Corrections: Representative Th  berge asked how the Department of Corrections would be affected by the Drug Court/Felonies First. Superintendent Hamelin replied that currently there was no plan in place. Commissioner Brady stated that the Drug Court was discussed at the NHAC meeting on December 4. A meeting has been set for January 11 at Grafton County in order to watch Grafton County's Drug Court in action. Commissioner Brady invited the members of the Delegation to join the Commissioners.

Special Appropriations:

Sue Collins noted that a new program, *Homeless Outreach Intervention & Prevention* had requested a \$10,000 appropriation and asked for information on the program. Jeanne Robillard provided information on the program. A homeless outreach coordinator covers Co  s County. The coordinator goes out to where homeless people are for example campgrounds and people sleeping in their vehicles. The coordinator also works with police departments. The coordinator lines the homeless people with services to get them out of the cold. Sheriff Marcou asked if this program would be available for inmates that are released with no place to go. Ms. Robillard suggested calling the program coordinator.

Representative Tholl noted that the nearest inpatient facility was in Bethlehem. Kristy Letendre of *Tri-County CAP's Division of Alcohol and other Drug Services (AoD)* replied in the affirmative. Tri-County CAP has the only comprehensive program that has identified that there is a need to expand services. The program has to meet certain criteria and the current infrastructure does not meet the criteria. A bigger infrastructure is needed. Funding is requested from counties only and not towns.

Representative Richardson suggested that a member of the Delegation be on the Tri-County CAP Board.

Representative Rappaport provided an update on Co  s Economic Development Corporation as there was no representative at the meeting.

Jennifer reported that there were currently no Community Development Block Grant requests for 2016. The line item was a placeholder.

The public hearing recessed for lunch from 12:33 p.m. to 1:20 p.m.

Jennifer then reviewed the County's projected revenues.

While reviewing the Unincorporated Places budgets, Representative Moynihan asked about the timber reports of cut. Commissioner Brady stated that the intent to cut is an estimate provided by the logger. The report of cut is filed by the logger at the end of the cut. Captain Acardi explained that the rangers try to visit every job but focus on the ones that have past history.

On a motion by Representative Th  berge, seconded by Representative Rappaport, the public hearing adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Yvonne Thomas, Clerk