

COÖS COUNTY DELEGATION
QUARTERLY MEETING
Friday, February 19, 2016 - 10:00 a.m.
North Country Resource Center - Lancaster, NH

Present: Representatives Robert Théberge-Co-Chair; Yvonne Thomas-Clerk; John Fothergill, Alethea Lincoln Froburg, Wayne Moynihan and Leon Rideout. 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, Director of Finance Carrie Klebe, County Treasurer Fred King, Deputy Brian Valerino, Administrative Assistant Linda Harris, a member of the press and public.

Representative Théberge requested all to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance which was led by Representative Théberge. The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. The roll was called by the clerk, Representative Yvonne Thomas. There were 6 members present. Representatives Hatch, Rappaport, Richardson and Tholl were excused.

Review & Approval of Minutes: Representative Théberge asked if any changes or corrections were required with the minutes of the December 7, 2015, meeting. A motion was made by Representative Moynihan, seconded by Representative Fothergill to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2015, meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved by a voice vote.

Hearing of the Public:

- a. Brendon Prusik - Cooperative Extension: Mr. Prusik informed everyone that his position now focused on two programs: economic development and natural resources. He provided a short presentation on forestry.
- b. Jane Jontz, Sullivan County - Presentation on Duties and Workings of Human Resources: Representative Théberge stated that he had chosen Sullivan County as there are similarities to Coös County. Ms. Jontz stated that she began working at Sullivan County May 2015. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Business with a concentration in Human Resources. She has three main priorities:
 - Staffing: She ensures that the county is fully staffed.
 - Training: Everyone needs to be trained in skills needed to succeed at their job. For example, if a new manager is hired that manager will require training. She performs a need analysis with staff to see what is needed, and tries to anticipate the needs of staff.
 - Does everyone know what success looks like during their work day? How will an employee make their day a success? When employees are hired have they been told expectations? How are employees held accountable.

In regards to recruiting, Ms. Jontz views herself as a consultant for department heads. She currently does not participate in interviews but she does provide department heads with a list of questions for the interview process.

Employment applications go directly to the human resources email. The HR staff responds quickly in order to set up interviews, perform background checks, drug screening and orientation.

Representative Fothergill asked if she answered insurance, deductibles and benefits questions. Ms. Jontz replied that she used to do benefits support. A self-service desk area has been set up in the HR area for employees to use and ask for assistance if it's needed. Most employees can navigate benefits themselves once provided with resources.

Representative Th  berge asked how many employees were in the HR department. Ms. Jontz replied four: the HR Director supervises a full time HR Generalist, a full time Payroll Clerk and a part-time support person. Representative Th  berge stated that in his opinion a full time, not part time, HR person was needed. The HR responsibilities need to be removed from the County Administrator.

Representative Thomas inquired on how personnel problems are handled. Ms. Jontz replied she prefers that the managers prepare the counseling reports for their employees. If a manager has never done a counseling report, she will look at it. She is the employee/employer advocate.

County Treasurer Fred King asked who she answered to and Ms. Jontz replied the County Manager and Commissioners. She does not deal with the County Delegation.

Representative Th  berge inquired about policy manuals. Ms. Jontz will generally give the manuals to department heads and ask for suggestions. Commissioner Samson asked how often the employee handbook is reviewed. Ms. Jontz replied that all policies are on an intranet website that only employees can access. Once a policy is updated and approved by the Board it is uploaded on the intranet.

Laura Mills, NHA-West Stewartstown, asked who presents warnings/constructive criticism to employees. Ms. Jontz replied that she tries not to be present. It is usually between the employee and supervisor/manager. Employees tend to leave due to the employer and she tries to remain in the middle as she does not want to be viewed as taking the employer side.

Louise Belanger, NHA-Berlin, was concerned as the Berlin Nursing Home is located one hour away from West Stewartstown. Between the two nursing homes and other county departments there are roughly 420 employees. The Berlin Nursing Home employs 50% of the county employees. She questioned how the Berlin facility will be affected and how will they benefit? The facility has a union and because of the nursing shortage, once individuals are interviewed the hiring process begins immediately in order to get the individual to work right away.

Representative Th  berge stated that department heads will need to provide input to the County Administrator. This will be a crucial decision for Co  s County. Ms. Jontz stated that if someone reaches out to the County HR affiliate, they will help.

Representative Fothergill stated that he would not support hiring four people as there are people currently doing some of the job functions.

Ms. Jontz also added that the department heads were part of the interview team that hired her.

Julie Brunault stated that in the class she recently took it was indicated that there should be an HR person for every 88 employees. Her position of Payroll/HR Coordinator is 35 hours per week but she actually works 40.

Representative Th  berge stated that every county HR department is different. Representative Fothergill noted that HR functions are already being done they just need to be streamlined.

Review & Approval of the Fourth Quarter Financial Statements:

While reviewing the fourth quarter expenditures, Representative Moynihan asked why the Federal Funds line item was below expected expenditure. Ms. Fish explained that one of the Community Development Block Grants was still in process. The Brookside Apartments was completed and the Bartlett School began in June. The third is a placeholder in case a request is submitted during the year.

The revenues were also reviewed.

The Unincorporated Places appropriations and revenues were reviewed with no questions.

A motion was made by Representative Rideout, seconded by Representative Moynihan to approve all appropriations and revenues for Co  s County and the Unincorporated Places. The motion was approved by roll call vote 6-0.

Update on the Co  s County Water System:

County Administrator Jennifer Fish informed the Delegation that the Commissioners had voted on February 10, 2016 to join the West Stewartstown Water Precinct.

Approval of Biannual Property Tax Billing in the Unincorporated Places as Recommended by the Co  s County Commissioners:

County Administrator Jennifer Fish stated that property taxes have been mailed once per year. A discussion was held with the Commissioners, and with the anticipated changes in Dixville, she requested that a change occur to biannual property tax billing. A motion was made by Representative Rideout, seconded by Representative Froborg to approve biannual property tax billing in the Unincorporated Places.

Representative Moynihan asked when the decision was made by the Commissioners and when the taxpayers were notified. Ms. Fish replied that the Commissioners made the decision at the December meeting and the taxpayers were notified by letter on January 4, 2016.

The motion was approved by roll call vote 6-0.

Subcommittee Reports: There were no subcommittee reports.

Other Business:

Representative Th  berge stated that House Bill 359 was originally created to allow all municipalities in Co  s County to adopt the property tax exemption to foster commercial and industrial construction. The proposed amendment would extend the property exemption to all municipalities in the state.

He asked that all Delegation members attend the hearing to show opposition. Commissioner Samson stated that he would be attending the hearing. Representative Moynihan stated that hearing was scheduled with the Senate Ways & Means Committee for March 1.

Commissioner Samson stated that the Commissioners had voted to submit a letter of opposition.

Michael Phillips, Town of Groveton, stated that the exemption gives incentive to draw businesses to Groveton. It is needed in the area. County Treasurer Fred King urged everyone to contact Senator Jeff Woodburn.

Shawn Donahue, Town of Stark, stated that the North Country has been devastated with unemployment. He cannot believe other counties in the southern part of the state need the exemption.

On a motion made by Representative Rideout, seconded by Representative Froburg, the meeting was adjourned at 12:25 p.m. The motion was approved by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Yvonne Thomas, Clerk