

COÖS COUNTY DELEGATION
SPECIAL MEETING
Friday, March 24, 2017 - 5:00 p.m.
Coös County Nursing Home - Berlin, NH

Present: Representatives Robert Théberge-Chair; Wayne Moynihan Vice-Chair; Larry Laflamme-Clerk; William Hatch, Bing Judd, Troy Merner, Herb Richardson, Yvonne Thomas and Edith Tucker. Also present: County Commissioners Paul Grenier and Rick Samson; County Administrator Jennifer Fish; Superintendent Ben Champagne; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Captain Keith Roberge; and a member of the press.

The meeting was called to order at 5:20 p.m.

Chairman Théberge noted that a rumor has been circulating that members of the Delegation have had discussions with Grafton County in regards to closing the Coös County Department of Corrections and sending all Coös County inmates to the Grafton County facility. Rep. Richardson researched the matter and reported that it was not a Delegation member from Coös County but a Grafton County Delegate who had made an inquiry. Superintendent Champagne stated that if the Delegation were to entertain the possibility of decommissioning the jail; outsourcing to Grafton would not be an option. Chairman Théberge asked that the Superintendent assure the DOC staff that the directive did not come from the Delegation. His greatest concern would be the domino effect on the nursing hospital in the future.

Laura Mills, NHA, noted that the Nursing Hospital loses money on Vermont Medicaid residents. She provided information, discovered by her biller that the daily rate for VT Medicaid residents could include the MQIP portion. The VT Medicaid rate request will change from \$157 per day to \$204 per day, and the Nursing Hospital revenue will increase by \$150,000. The loss of revenue from VT Medicaid will be less than in previous years.

Commissioner Grenier stated that changes proposed by the Commissioners were highlighted in the budget book in gray. The other special appropriations line items were all reduced by 10%. Rep. Laflamme stated that the Child Advocacy Program request of \$20,000 was reduced to \$8,000 then \$7,200. As he understood it, the request for funding was changed this year whereas they requested only from the County and not individual towns. Rep. Richardson noted that Lancaster had received a request for funding but Rep. Merner seemed to think that the request was removed.

Commissioner Grenier stated that the funds previously cut had not been reinstated for the Cooperative Extension request. The funds would be for a Healthy Living program position. It was suggested by the Finance Director that if the Delegation appropriated the funds maybe the individual could become involved with County employees and promote healthy living. Commissioner Grenier stated he had not mentioned this change to Board members.

The new county tax with the proposed changes was \$15,064,635.

Rep. Tucker was concerned and questioned to what extent expenditures had actually been reduced. Funds were shifted from savings and some expenditures were put off for another year but she was concerned about next year's (2018) budget. She did not want to see facilities close but the nursing homes occupancy rates are not thriving. Raises of two percent across the board are proposed for this year. The Delegation should ask the Commissioners for long range solutions. The County is losing

population and there is still the burden of the County tax. She was excited about the Berlin facility becoming skilled and inquired if a monthly report could be provided to the Delegation during the first year. Chairman Th  berge agreed that he too was concerned for the next year's budget if there is no other source of revenue.

Commissioner Samson provided information on tax rates from local towns to the Delegation.

Chairman Th  berge noted that he would propose the following at the budget meeting:

- The Sheriff's department has requested increasing the deputy transportation salary line item by \$7,000. The department is also pursuing a grant for new bullet proof vests. This will be a 50/50 matching grant. A policy will be provided to the Commissioners regarding vest rotation. Commissioner Grenier stated that the Sheriff's match for three vests has been included in the new equipment line item. Rep. Judd recommended the purchase of four vests for the full-time employees. Captain Roberge noted that the new equipment line item also included cages, etc. for the new vehicles. Rep. Tucker asked for a report on the Stone Garden program for the March 31 meeting.
- The Cooperative Extension budget cut will also be discussed.

Rep. Judd left the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Rep. Moynihan asked for clarity on the Child Advocacy Program. He would like to fund the request. However, there were questions on which towns were also assisting the funding of the program. Commissioner Grenier noted that the County did not cut funding; the 2017 request of \$20,000 was reduced to the prior year funding. Rep. Thomas stated that she had spoken to the director after the last meeting and the director could live with the \$8,000 funding. Rep. Moynihan, Merner and Richardson will research and have answers for the budget meeting. The new director stated that the center changed the funding request because some towns use the center but do not pay their fair share.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rep. Larry Laflamme