

COÖS COUNTY  
DELEGATION MEETING &  
PUBLIC HEARING on the 2020 PROPOSED BUDGET  
Saturday, December 7, 2019 - 10:00 a.m.  
Coös County Nursing Hospital - W. Stewartstown, NH

Present: Representatives Wayne Moynihan - Chair; Edith Tucker - Vice Chair; Larry Laflamme - Clerk; Kevin Craig, Troy Merner, Henry Noël and Yvonne Thomas. Also present: County Commissioners Paul Grenier and Rick Samson; County Administrator Jennifer Fish; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Superintendent Ben Champagne; Acting Nursing Home Administrator Lynn Beede; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Sheriff Brian Valerino; Captain Keith Roberge; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Registrar Leon Rideout; County Attorney John McCormick; Treasurer Suzanne Collins; Forest Ranger Jason Huter; representatives of outside agencies; a member of the press. Representative William Hatch was excused. Representatives John Fothergill and Michael Furbush were absent.

**DELEGATION MEETING**

Chairman Moynihan called the meeting to order at 10:16 a.m. Superintendent Champagne led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The roll was called by the clerk, Representative Larry Laflamme. There were seven (7) members present.

Chairman Moynihan apologized for the lateness of the meeting due to the previous meeting with the Commissioners.

Other Business:

- a. Chairman Moynihan read Resolution #1 which pertained to Borrowing Funds in Anticipation of Taxes in 2019:

Resolution #1

Be it resolved by the Coös County Delegation duly convened on this seventh day of December, 2019, 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 Eleven Million Dollars (\$11,000,000) being the projected amount necessary for the purpose of operating the county for the Fiscal Year 2020, the Coös County Treasurer is hereby authorized to borrow up to \$11,000,000 upon order of the County Commissioners pursuant to RSA 29:8.

A motion was made by Representative Tucker, seconded by Representative Merner to approve Resolution #1. The resolution passed by roll call vote 7-0.

- b. Chairman Moynihan read Resolution #2 as follows:

Resolution #2

Authorization for Coös County to Pay 2020 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 \$9,500,000.

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 \$9,500,000 for 2020 expenses during the months of January, February, and March in anticipation of the subsequent approval of the 2020 budget. Further that the \$9,500,000 be allocated proportionately to the line items based on the 2019 approved net appropriations to fund like operating and personnel expenses in existence as of 12/31/19.

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

Chairman Moynihan closed the Delegation meeting at 10:30 a.m.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

Chairman Moynihan opened the public hearing at 10:30 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 as recommended by the three County Commissioners - Tom Brady, Paul Grenier and Rick Samson.

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; and
- The unencumbered fund balance (surplus) is determined.

Ms. Fish highlighted certain appropriations affecting the 2019 budget:

- The proposed 2020 budget did not include any Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for Non-union County employees and employees covered under the AFSCME Collective Bargaining Agreement. The budget did include a 2% COLA for employees covered under the SEA Collective Bargaining Agreement. The Commissioners are currently in negotiations with the AFSCME
- The 2020 budget did 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 480 or 720 were also included in the budget.
- There will be 53 payroll dates in 2020. There is a revenue offset for \$200,000.

- The health insurance rates have been budgeted for a 15% increase in premium for the second half of the year.
- Retirements: There were several anticipated retirement payouts included in the budget.
- The County recently underwent an Informational Technology assessment. The IT firm is currently working on a proposal for upgrades needed. Also, while the Computer Systems Administrator is out on medical leave, the County has contracted with Secured Network Services to provide technical support.
- Water System Connection: The project has not been complete therefore the line item remains in the budget. An offsetting revenue amount is included in the budget.
- IDN Funding in the amount of \$388,044 was also included in the budget.

**REVENUE BUDGET SUMMARY:**

The projected 2019 surplus to reduce taxes is \$2,000,000. The total County Tax for 2020 was projected at \$17,619,349; a thirteen percent increase over 2019.

Ms. Fish explained that the Unincorporated Places Budget document contains a summary for the County's 23 Unincorporated Places. These are geographic entities with no formal town government. The County is the local government to these places. Each unincorporated place pays its own expenses and collects its own revenue. The total Unincorporated Places budget for 2020 was projected at \$1,550,756 compared to the 2019 approved budget of \$1,722,706.

County Treasurer Sue Collins reported that the Governor's budget increased proposed a three percent increase in Medicaid.

Ms. Fish began the review of the 2020 proposed budget and noted that the Special Appropriations requests would be reviewed first.

Jeanne Robillard provided information on Senior Meals, RSVP, North Country Transit, Homeless Outreach Intervention/Prevention, Servicelink and Energy Assistance.

Kimberly Preston provided information on the Child Advocacy Program.

Deborah Haynes, RESPONSE, was unable to attend the meeting due to a previous engagement.

Lise Howson provided information on Coös Economic Development.

County Attorney John McCormick spoke of the need of certified written transcripts which are cleaner than recordings. He also noted that there is a push to start e-filing and the continuing work on criminal case stemming from the Randolph motorcycle accidents. Another increase attributed in contracted services line item was due to the need of flying in witnesses for testimony.

Leon Rideout, Register of Deeds, reported that most line items were decreased. The greatest increase was in the index processing line item as the department will be implementing a new security program which will secure the Registry's data in three different locations as well as increased fire walls.

County Sheriff Brian Valerino provided information on the drug task force's presence in the county and requested continued funding. The Sheriff also explained the increase in the new equipment line item included outfitting two new cruisers and the purchase of a new ATV estimated cost of \$4,800. The motor of the current ATV died last fall and the estimated cost to repair was \$3,500 - \$3,800.

Superintendent Ben Champagne presented information on the Department of Corrections budget. Some members of the Delegation noted that the department's budget request was lower than last year.

Brendan Prusik, UNH/Cooperative Extension provided information on the proposed office renovations where costs will be share between UNH and Coös County. Mr. Prusik also explained the reasoning of transferring the current office employee from Coös County to UNH. This employee after six months as an UNH employee would obtain free college tuition.

Carolyn McQuiston, Coös County Conservation District Administrator was present at the meeting. Carrie Klebe, Director of Finance, stated that the budget increase was due to Ms. McQuiston's impending retirement after 30 years of service to Coös County.

IDN Region 7 representative Kris vanBergen-Buteau presented information on some of the programs that have received funding. County Treasurer Sue Collins noted that the IDN funding sunsets one year from this month and asked what would happen to the programs. Ms. vanBergen-Buteau replied that the partners will need to determine which programs are working. Ms. Collins asked why \$10 million and where did the figure come from. County Administrator Jennifer Fish replied that it is the figure provided by DHHS to the NH Association of Counties. The NHAC was told to determine the funding mechanism.

Representative Thomas left at 12:20 p.m.

Forest Ranger Jason Huter provided information on the services provided by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources in the Unincorporated Places.

The meeting recessed for lunch at 12:33 and reconvened at 1:42 p.m.

Laura Mills, NHA - West Stewartstown, reviewed the departmental budgets. She noted that the increase in the Quality Director's salary was because all of hours were now in this budget due to federal requirements in infection prevention. The nursing hospital specials included a handicapped van, a bariatric patient lift, an 85 lb. washer and a commercial mower totaling \$93,900.

The requested appropriations totaled \$12,293,210.

Lynn Beede, Acting Nursing Home Administrator - Berlin, reviewed the departmental budgets. Chairman Moynihan inquired about the status of hiring a Nursing Home Administrator. County Administrator Jennifer Fish replied that the process is still ongoing. A decision must be reached by February. Commissioner Grenier stated that Ms. Beede was more than qualified for the position; however, she will be pursuing other avenues that could benefit the county in the future. The nursing home specials included electric beds, an ice machine, dining system and paving of the employee/delivery entrance totaling \$56,250.

The requested appropriations totaled \$13,961,630.

County Administrator Jennifer Fish provided information on the proposed renovations of the county house. She explained that the figure in the budget was only an estimate for office renovations and making the building ADA compliant. Ms. Klebe added that the building did not need a sprinkler system as it was less than 5,000 square feet. Ms. Fish also noted that heat, electricity and plowing was still being paid with an estimated cost of \$6,000 per year. Six county employees would be moving to the house. In the nursing home, one of the offices would be modified into a two-resident room. The County is also looking into grants to offset the cost. Representative Tucker questioned if by doing this change would the need for staff increase on the first floor. Ms. Mill replied that it would not. Commissioner Grenier stated that he was not quite sold on the idea and needed to look at the logistics. However, the additional revenue from the additional bed space would have the renovations at the house paid for in two years. These changes would increase the nursing home's operational budget. He added that something needs to be done with the property if the offices are not moved.

Representative Tucker also expressed her dismay about Vermont residents in the nursing home. Ms. Collins noted that Vermont pays more Medicaid than the State of NH and the county does not have to return money on the beds. The revenue from the State of Vermont is gravy.

Chairman Moynihan noted that the proposed appropriations totaled \$41,399,784.

Chairman Moynihan briefly reviewed the estimated revenues. Commissioner Grenier noted that due to the possible change in the Medicaid rate the revenues for the nursing homes will need be adjusted.

Chairman Moynihan reviewed the Unincorporated Places budgets. Ms. Fish noted that the ambulance and fire services had not been increased as requests had not been received.

A motion was made by Representative Merner, seconded by Representative Craig at 2:54 p.m. The motion was approved by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Larry Laflamme, Clerk