

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Budget Reviews

3855 Dartmouth College Hwy

North Haverhill, NH

Thursday April 4, 2013

PRESENT: Commissioners Michael Cryans, Martha Richards and Raymond Burton and Director Julie Clough.

OTHERS PRESENT: Craig Labore, NHA, Kelley Monahan, Register of Deeds, Tom Andross, Director of Communications, Sgt. Rick Tyler, Lisa Langlois and reporter Darin Wiperman from the Littleton Courier.

9:06 AM – Commissioners Cryans opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Executive Director Clough told the Commissioners that the first order of business was some language policy revisions pertaining to Earned Time and Family Medical Leave. The Benefits Committee and the Department Heads have been working on this for quite sometime and have come to a consensus on the proposed language. Director Clough stated that both sides have made compromises and that a lot of work and negotiation has gone into this. There is agreement that the compromise language is fair at this point. Director Clough reviewed the proposed changes with the Commissioners. There were some changes to the provision that speaks to donated time, changing it from an automatic process to one that has a process tied to extreme and extenuating circumstances. The biggest change is a proposed addition of an Earned Time buy back program. The program would allow employees to buy back forty (40) hours of ET if they met the criteria for the benefit. There are costs associated with the buy back program. Director Clough gave the Commissioners a hand out that had estimated costs for the program and explained how those estimates were arrived at. Director Clough explained that there were some difference of opinions as to whether the program should apply to salaried employees and a decision has not been made yet. This is tied together with the changes to the Family Medical Leave policy. Director Clough explained that we have experienced a great deal of FMLs that have a large cost associated with them. There are proposed changes to the language of the pay and benefits section of the Family Medical Leave policy. The main change would be that if employees were to go out on leave for someone other than themselves that they would have to use their Earned Time balance first and then would be able to use their Extended Sick Leave bank. Currently, they are able to use their Extended Sick Leave for leave for anyone. There are also some changes to the Personal Leave time to tighten up the four (4) week extension on Family Medical Leave.

Rick Tyler thanked the Director and the Committee for working on this. He said that the employee council as a whole supports this and he hoped that the Commissioners would support this.

Register of Deeds Monahan added that she has a small dept and this buy back will help employees who have high balances in their ET banks. She also feels that the changes to the FML policy give employees more skin in the game. She added that the groups have worked very hard on this and that it is a tightening up across the Board. It is not making everyone happy, but it is a compromise. Register Monahan does support these changes.

Commissioner Burton asked if the Commissioners approve this, does it stop there. Director Clough explained as far as the policy goes that is correct, but that the financial piece would be part of the budget process and the funding would have to be approved by the Delegation.

Commissioner Richards asked if FML has been abused or over used and asked if we spoke with other Counties. Director Clough said both it has been abused by some and over used by others. But the bigger piece is that it is very expensive in the facilities that operate 24/7. As a group of Department Heads we felt like we had to do something to try and address the problem.

NHA Labore stated that some positions are not filled and then that leaves floors short staffed. Commissioner Cryans asked how he sees this helping. NHA Labore reiterated that the employees will have more skin in the game and they will have to carefully evaluate the use of the leave and whether or not they would want to use their ET. Commissioner Burton asked if this would mean lower invoices for traveling nurses. NHA Labore replied that would be the hope. The hope is that these changes will reduce the usage. Lisa Langlois from the Employee Council stated that if the employee truly needs to be out they will not care where the time is coming from and if it is something less emergent then they will have to consider whether or not they want to use their ET.

Director Clough further explained that there also may be savings realized in our 24/7 operations from the buy back program because we will not be paying to replace these people who are buying back time instead of taking the time off. She said it is not a quantifiable number but possible to realize some savings.

Commissioner Cryans asked if they could vote on this on Tuesday. Director Clough stated that she did not expect them to vote on this today. She just wanted them aware of it as they move through their budget process as there is an expense tied to it.

Employee Council members and Department Heads other than Director Andross left.

Director Clough gave the Commissioners a handout that detailed the new positions in the FY 14 proposed budget. This includes positions that are increasing in hours.

Commissioner Burton asked Director Andross about the new position in Sheriff/Dispatch Department. Director Andross said that the position is split between the Sheriff's Dept

and the Dispatch center. It is clerical in nature but the person would be trained and certified as a Dispatcher.

Director Clough gave the Commissioners a comparison detailing all the salary and benefit line items within the FY 14 budget. The proposed budgets include all step increases and does not include cost of living requests.

Director Clough gave the Commissioners a copy of the request from GCEDC for funding in the FY 14 budget. They have requested \$50K; they are currently funded at \$40K.

Director Clough gave the Commissioners a summary comparison of revenue and expenses from FY 13 actual and FY 14 budget requests.

Commissioner Cryans stated that in general there were several things that the Commissioners need to discuss; new positions to see if there are any we don't feel need to be done this year. Next discussed was if there was anything in the Revenue category that could be enhanced. The Commissioners discussed where they are at with the budget requests and what the impacts are that have not been added into the budget yet. There was a discussion about Rep. Neal Kurk's amendment to the State budget that was defeated yesterday. His amendment would have saved \$7M that is being cost shifted to the Counties. These savings are in regards to Nursing Home costs that are accounted for in the Human Service Budget. The FY 14 & 15 CAP is set to go to \$110M and \$115M respectively.

There was a discussion regarding revenue for FY 14 and if there was any way to add revenue. Director Clough said that according CA Saffo she may be able to add \$50K in revenue to the budget. It was decided that there needed to be more discussion regarding that. The next area identified as a possibility is the Nursing Home to look at Pro-Share and Bed Tax revenue. Director Clough stated that there was a County meeting tomorrow that she hoped would shed more light on whether or not we could anticipate getting any more revenue than what we have already estimated.

Overall, the revenue remains flat.

There was a discussion of where the Commissioners would like to end up with the budget when they are finished with their budget proposals. Commissioner Burton stated his goal is to keep the amount of money to be raised by taxes to a 4%.

The Commissioners' reviewed the new positions being requested. There was a discussion of new positions that were requested last year and then cut. Commissioner Richards asked if all new positions could be supported by each Department. She also stated that on the Corrections side she supports the new position that has been requested by Supt. Libby. She said we built the facility and we need to have the staff to run it properly. Commissioner Burton completely agreed. The Commissioners all support the Finance

Director position, it has been requested a number of times and it is certainly needed. They discussed the File Clerk position and increasing the hours in the Investigator position and the case load. They felt that they probably do need the File Clerk. Commissioner Cryans asked Director Andross if they were feeling having the clerical position nixed last year. Director Andross stated that they have felt it for years. The two (2) clerical positions that are in the Sheriff's Department have grown and are extremely busy. There is definitely the need for another clerical position. Dispatch has never had clerical support. Director Andross explained that a lot of things frankly get put off until someone has time to do it. There was a discussion of the part time position in the Nursing Home that is a result of the Medicaid Managed Care. NHA Labore is anticipating that this will bring more work to the Health Info Dept. The position will not be filled until there is direction on when Managed Care would become effective. The Commissioners discussed the IT request to increase his current part time position to a full time position.

Commissioners reviewed the expense side of the budget. They discussed the items that may need to be added into the budget; COLA and ET buy back and what the impacts would be to for those things. There was discussion about the Social Service requests. The proposed budget that the Commissioners are reviewing has the actual requests from agencies not what Cindy Swart is recommending. Cindy's recommendations are approximately \$86K less than what is in the proposed budget.

The Commissioners continued to discuss what could be done to keep the tax increase around 4%.

There was more discussion about the juvenile diversion program. Commissioner Cryans stated that his major concern is that it is the State's responsibility to pay for juveniles not the County's. We normally fight for the State not to pass off costs to the County. In this situation we are voluntarily taking on a cost that is not our responsibility he said. Commissioner Cryans believes that we should explore putting more money in the Social Service budget to help CADY and not create a new program. Commissioner Cryans asked why create something that is already existing in some areas. We would be giving one agency money they didn't even ask for. There was a discussion about no juvenile diversion program being available in the Northern part of the County. Commissioner Cryans stated that if we are going to put \$120K into the budget for Juvenile Diversion and we want to maintain the 4% tax increase than we will have to cut other programs in the County budget. Commissioner Richards stated that it is cheaper to fund Restorative Justice than to send them to the County jail and it is helping the youth. Director Clough stated that if we are concerned about CADY why wouldn't we look at helping CADY instead of implementing a whole new program with personnel costs and the other diversion program has not asked for more assistance. Commissioner Richards stated that she realizes that we can't be everything to everybody.

Commissioner Cryans asked what the increase is in the NH Retirement System costs for FY 14. Director Clough stated it is \$352K. That is a significant percentage of the

increase. Commissioner Burton asked if there was any bond money left that can be transferred into the operating budget. There was then a discussion about the Capital expenses. They are down slightly from last year. The Commissioners reviewed each department's request. There was a discussion about paying to pasture the cows. The Commissioners are not in support of doing this. Director Andross addressed what the requests for Communications enhancements were. Commissioner Richards asked how many Capital Reserve Accounts the County has. Director Clough said two (2); Dispatch and Nursing Home. She explained that the County does not appropriate funds for these accounts. Revenue is used to fund them. Commissioner Richards suggested that perhaps we should think about starting more Capital Reserve accounts. Commissioner Cryans stated that these accounts have to be funded. Commissioner Cryans stated that people are always concerned about how much their taxes are going up this year, they are not worrying about the future.

Commissioner Richards moved to enter into non-public session for the purposes of discussing the dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee according to RSA 91-A:3, II (a). Commissioner Burton seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote, Commissioner Cryans called the roll. Commissioner Richards "yes"; Commissioner Burton "yes"; Cryans stated that a majority of the board voted yes and would now go into non-public session.

Commissioner Cryans declared the meeting back in public session.

Commissioner Richards moved to permanently seal the minutes from the just completed non-public session in the event they could affect the reputation of someone other than those of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Cryans seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Commissioner Richards moved to pay a stipend of \$500/month to Karen Clough for fulfilling the role of Acting HR Director since December, 2012. She will receive a lump sum \$2,000 payment for December through March. Going forward she will receive \$250 per pay period until a Human Resource Director is hired. Commissioner Burton seconded the motion. All were in favor.

County Attorney Lara Saffo arrived to discuss the Juvenile Diversion program further. Commissioner Cryans stated the issues that should be address regarding the Juvenile Diversion. His concern about the County taking this over; the County filling a role the State should be doing; what impact this has on our budget. He explained that the budget right now is higher than the target. He asked if we are we creating more than we need. The diversion program in Lebanon is up and running. He asked if there is a program in Littleton. CA Saffo replied no there is not. Commissioner Cryans asked CA Saffo if she had to set priorities what would they be. If this is a priority then where can the CA's office make reductions? CA Saffo stated that Juvenile Diversion already has two (2) programs in existence and both are extremely well received. There was a discussion

about the programs and the costs associated with the costs. There was discussion regarding how we should fund them. Commissioner Cryans stated that there is already money put into the Social Services budget for both programs. CA Saffo said it really isn't a Social Service it is a Criminal Justice program. She would not think that we would fund them out of the Social Service budget if we fund them County wide. Commissioner Richards asked why would the County fund these programs when two are functioning. CA Saffo explained that CADY's RJ program will close June 30, 2013 if they do not receive extra funding. If the program closes these kids will end up in the court system and costs to the police departments will go up. The State is supposed to be paying for this but they are not even though they state that they feel that Juvenile Diversion is important. She said simply the State is not living up to their end of the deal.

Commissioner Cryans stated that if we don't do it the communities will do it. CA Saffo explained what the communities are left to do is use the juvenile court system. Kids will not be receiving services. Eventually they will likely end up in jail when they are of age. CA Saffo feels that it makes more sense for the County to run this program, the communities don't know how many kids they are going to have the program.

Commissioner Richards said that could just set an amount for towns to contribute. CA Saffo stated that she feels the county can administer this program more efficiently.

Commissioner Cryans asked where we get the money do it. Who do we cut to get to our targeted budget? Somebody has to give. Do we cut everyone across the Board? CA Saffo would be happy to answer that question on Tuesday. She is not prepared to do that today.

Commissioner Cryans asked if they funded the Valley Diversion with the \$16K recommended through social services are they going to be okay. CA Saffo thinks that they will get by with the \$16K. Commissioner Cryans asked what does CADY need to get by. Saffo understanding \$40K is what they need.

CA Saffo's plan would be to have Shelly Golden, Mental Health Court Coordinator, oversee these funds. Commissioner Burton does not want Lisbon/Haverhill/Littleton area to be left out. He wants to allocate funds to get a juvenile diversion program started in that area. County Attorney Saffo feels that we are definitely ready to move into the Juvenile Diversion area. Commissioner Richards wants to preserve the programs that are already in existence but she feels a sense of responsibility to take care of this population as well. CA Saffo will return on Tuesday to continue this discussion.

The Commissioners discussed what they feel the major issues are and how they are going to approach these issues and how they are going to get to their target on the budget. Commissioner Cryans stated that the departments have brought in responsible good budgets. Commissioner Richards stated we are an aging County, we are doing something about energy needs, and we have new facilities we are trying to maintain. She feels that we are trying our hardest to do the best for our constituencies.

The Commissioners will meet again on April 18th to finalize their budget recommendations.

12:20 PM, being no further business Commissioner Burton moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Richards seconded. All were in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Raymond S. Burton, Clerk