

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
3855 Dartmouth College Highway
North Haverhill, NH 03774
March 9, 2021

PRESENT: Commissioners Piper, Lauer, Ahern, County Administrator Dorsett, Finance Director Libby and Administrative Assistant Norcross

OTHERS PRESENT: Farm Manager Nelson, County Attorney Hornick, Tracey Secula – Grant Administrator, Lise Howson, Denise Roy Palmer, Anne-Duncan Cooley, Aimee Quimby, Pam Sullivan Caitlin Farrar

Commissioner Piper called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mask Policy Discussion

Commissioner Piper had requested to revisit the mask policy on the 2nd floor of the administration building. Commissioner Lauer expressed concerns about the liability issues regarding that decision and Commissioner Ahern stated that he does agree with those but he has done a lot of research himself as well as spoken with different medical providers. The folks who he has spoken with disagree with what Dr. Fauci is saying about masks and he disagrees with the Governor's lockdown orders as he feels they are all unconstitutional. He stated that FD Libby has concerns but at this point he would like to leave it up to the staff as to whether they want to wear one or not. Commissioner Piper stated that she is unsure if they need to vote on this as they did not vote the policy in. She stated that when employees are in their offices, they take them off and they would ask that when they pass each other in the hallway to be sensitive of the needs of others when they are in close proximity. Commissioner Piper and Commissioner Ahern directed the County Administrator to inform the employees on the 2nd floor of the Administration Building of the changes. CA Dorsett stated that he would create a memo to send out. Commissioner Lauer noted that she does not agree with Commissioner Piper and Commissioner Ahern. FD Libby stated that she feels the Commissioners should talk with the employees on the 2nd floor about how they feel about it as there are some people who will be uncomfortable with this change. They are here five (5) days a week and interact with each other. Commissioner Ahern stated that they should put it in the hands of the County Administrator to inform the employees on this floor. CA Dorsett noted that he would also talk to Primex to make sure there is no liability on the county's part by making this change.

FM Nelson arrived and gave the following report:

1. We are currently milking 83 cows averaging 76 pounds. We are shipping 12,300 pounds of milk every other day. Milk components are remaining consistent at 4.4% butterfat and 3.26% protein. We received \$17.96 per hundredweight for February milk.
2. The (1) inmate laborer, supervised by farm will be released March 21st. There is another

inmate who is helping Sergeant Griffin with other farm chores who can also be supervised by farm staff, but probably won't be able to help with milking. The schedule moving forward will have farm staff doubled up for some milking chores, some overlapping shifts, and some solo shifts.

3. The old flock of laying hens will be leaving this week. 125 new layers will arriving mid-April.
4. The sows will be pregnancy tested with ultrasound again this week. The last ultrasound showed 5 of the 9 sows pregnant. 2 sows were not checked. A young boar was purchased to service our two breeding age gilts.
5. The Farm Stand plan for this year. Stand will open end of August and close the end of October. The focus this year will be pumpkins, winter squash, and potatoes. Sweet corn will be grown for the nursing home and the DOC.
6. I met with John Porter and Heather Bryant on February 25th. Here are some of John's suggestions.
 1. Action Steps:
 2. Look into reducing milking cow numbers and find purebred markets for the cows; and see how it affects the quota system.
 3. Start making decisions at the time of birth as to whether a heifer calf should be kept or not and market excess as bob calves of purebred stock. Keep replacement numbers equal to or less than milking cow numbers. Slow down the culling of cows.
 4. Bring the heifer barn dry cows into the main milking barn.
 5. Start breeding mediocre cows to beef bulls so there isn't the temptation to keep the dairy calf and start raising some beef for the Nursing Home. Supplying beef might be more practical than supplying milk. The Nursing Home only needs about 90 gallons of milk per week, which is just the milk from two cows, which does not justify the investment in processing equipment.
 6. Turn the calves hitched in the box stalls loose. Bed an area for them to lay down. Daily clean the manure area and pick the pack side
 7. Set up an enclosed barnyard so the milking herd can be turned out daily for exercise and check for heats
 8. Plan on an enclosed pasture this summer below the barn to get the dry cows off from concrete
 9. Focus on easier fall vegetable crops such as squash, pumpkins and potatoes. Do not do sweet corn this year, because it will bring people to the stand too early.
 10. So you can talk to your administrators about this plan and start implementing some of the easier things. Let me know if you need me to be present at any of the Nursing Home meetings

Thanks- John C. Porter, UNH Extension Professor/Specialist, Emeritus

Commissioner Ahern noted a concern about reducing the milking herd, as recommended by John Porter, if they can use a few extra cows to produce the milk here for the complex. FM Nelson stated that J. Porter cautioned that it was a lot of investment to become milk processors.

Commissioner Ahern stated that he would like to join a meeting with John Porter and was surprised he was not invited to the meeting that they had as he had introduced the FarmDOC prior to this last meeting. FM Nelson stated that the initial meeting with J. Porter was for him to look at their day-to-day operations, to see if he saw the same inefficiencies that FM Nelson was seeing. FM Nelson stated that he does share some of the same concerns that Commissioner Ahern has expressed about reducing the herd. He feels they need to live in the moment based on the decline in inmate labor, in hopes that they will see that rebound. In the moment, they can actually produce up to 2.5 million pounds of milk and stay within their quota. Commissioner Ahern stated that he would like to know more about the quotas from Agrimark. FM Nelson noted that Howard Hatch from Hatchland Farms has expressed concerns about the County producing its own milk for the complex as well. Commissioner Lauer noted that the County buys the milk for the Nursing Home from Hatchland Farm and Commissioner Piper added that the goal of the Farmdoc is to not compete with other local farms. CA Dorsett stated that he is going to be going on a tour of the Farm's milking operation and invited Commissioner Ahern to join. FM Nelson stated that he would forward John Porter's full report to the Commissioners for their review.

Commissioner Piper asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the March 2nd meeting. Commissioner Piper had a few edits.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to approve the minutes from the March 2nd meeting as amended. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

The Commissioners signed check registers 41; 1177-1181.

County Attorney Hornick arrived to give the Commissioners a brief update on Grand Jury and Jury Trials.

She stated that Chief Justice Nadeau alerted the County Attorneys yesterday that Grand Juries will be back in person in the Courthouse starting in May. They will no longer be doing the remote statewide panel. She also noted that all courthouses have been cleared for Jury Trials starting in April. This will allow them to get working on the backlog of cases they currently have.

Grant Hearings

Grant Administrator Tracey Secula arrived for the Mid-Grant Public Hearing on the 2020 CDBG Microenterprise Technical Assistant Grant and the public hearing for the 2021 CDBG Microenterprise Technical Assistance and Training Grant Submission

10:00AM Commissioner Piper opened the Mid Grant Public Hearing.

Commissioner Piper introduced the topic on the agenda: Mid-Grant Public Hearing on the 2020 CDBG Microenterprise Technical Assistant Grant

Tracey Secula of Lakes Region Planning Commission introduced herself as the Grant Administrator for the 2020 CDBG Microenterprise Technical Assistant Grant.

The purpose of this hearing is to provide a status update for the Grafton County Commissioner's CDBG Microenterprise program and gather comments about the project's performance. The update to be heard includes a progress review of the 2020-21 CDBG Microenterprise Technical Assistance Program including a project status report, expected timeline to completion, project results to date, and a budget summary. The CDBG funds were sub-granted to a total of 6 entities:

A. Partnership of 4 agencies – known as the QUADS: 1. Belknap Economic Development Council (BEDC), 2. Coos Economic Development Corporation (CEDC), 3. Grafton Regional Development Corporation (GRDC), 4. Wentworth Economic Development Corporation (WEDCO);

B. Northern Community Investment Corporation (NCIC); and

C. Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network (WREN), for the purpose of providing training and technical assistance to low- and moderate-income microenterprises.

1. Project progress status and expected timeframe to completion - The County was awarded this project through G&C approval on 9/28/2020 for \$394,865 for the purpose of assisting three organizations to provide microenterprise training and technical assistance activities through June 30, 2021. This offers a nine-month window for these three organizations to provide these services.

2. Results to date and projected totals – The semi-annual reporting covered the time period through 12/30/20 in which 53 low and moderate income recipients received benefits. The project calls for up to 143 recipients to be served, thus there are additional opportunities to serve 90 Imi beneficiaries still.

3. Funds expended, balance of funds available, and budget expectations to completion - The project has accrued \$148,711 in claims through 12/31/2020. There is a balance of \$246,154. The next claims process will be the end of this month. It is expected that the three organizations will utilize all of these funds and as of right now, by the program end date of June 30, 2021.

4. Have representatives from the agencies here (or via zoom) to introduce themselves and give them the option to talk about their services or a special story. The agencies and representatives are as follows:

1) QUADS: Comprised of 4 Agencies – have three on zoom - include Belknap Economic Development Council (BEDC) with Justin Slattery, Coos Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) with Lise Howson, Wentworth Economic Development Corporation (WEDCO) with Denise Roy Palmer and Grafton Regional Development Corporation (GRDC) with Anne-Duncan Cooley in person

2) Northern Community Investment Corporation (NCIC) with Aimee Quimby on zoom

3) Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network (WREN) with Pam Sullivan and Caitlin Farrar in person

Members from each of the entities were present either in person or via Zoom to give the Commissioners an update on their agencies and answer questions.

Commissioner Piper asked if there were any questions from the public. There were none.

10:26AM Commissioner Piper closed the public hearing.

**Application for Grant Submission and Anti-Displacement and Relocation Plan
Public Hearings
10:30 am, March 9, 2021**

Commissioner Piper introduced the topic on the agenda: 2021 CDBG Microenterprise Technical Assistance and Training Grant Submission and Anti-Displacement and Relocation Plan Public Hearings

Tracey Secula of Lakes Region Planning Commission, Grant Administrator, explained that Community Development Block Grant funds are available to municipalities for economic development, public facility and housing rehabilitation projects and feasibility studies that primarily benefit low and moderate income persons. The purpose of the public hearings required for CDBG funding is to solicit the view of citizens on community development; furnish the citizens with information concerning the amount of funds available and the range of community development activities which may be undertaken under the Community Development Act.

CDBG funds are awarded on a competitive basis in New Hampshire and may be used for housing, public facilities, and economic development which have primary benefit to low and moderate income persons. A community or County can apply for up to \$500,000 a year for public facilities, up to \$500,000 a year for economic development projects, up to \$500,000 for microenterprise program as well as up to \$500,000 a year in emergency funds. Planning grants are available for up to \$25,000. HUD has also allocated additional CDBG funds ("CDBG-CV" funds) to New Hampshire through the CARES Act to address issues related to the impacts of COVID-19. CDFA has allocated up to \$850,000 of their allotted CDBG-CV funds statewide to augment the existing Microenterprise Technical Assistance Program.

T. Secula stated that there is a Handout on CDBG Project Activities, Income Guidelines and Project Summary available and were also posted online.

10:36AM Commissioner Piper opened public hearing # 1 – Grant Submission

Tracey Secula explained that this proposal to be considered by the Commissioners is a CDBG Micro Enterprise grant to be submitted by Grafton County on behalf of multiple organizations statewide including GRDC (Grafton Regional Development Corporation), BEDC (Belknap Economic Development Corporation), WEDCO (Wentworth Economic Development Corporation), Coos Economic Development Council (CEDC), WREN (Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network) and NCIC (Northern Community Investment Corporation). The grant, for up to \$500,000, would be used to provide training and technical assistance and loan servicing to micro enterprises. The program has become very popular. We anticipate that up to 10 separate entities will apply for funding under two counties, Grafton and Cheshire. Some of those entities are

collaborating. NH CDFA has raised the total amount of funding available to \$850,000 statewide. Because a municipality (county) can only apply for up to \$500,000 a year, Grafton County will provide funds to entities in the northern half of the state. Cheshire County will again apply to provide funds to entities in the southern part of the state. As with last year, we expect that applications will exceed the amount of funding available.

Commissioner Piper asked if there were any questions from the public. There were none.

10:45AM Close Public Hearing # 1

10:45AM Open Public Hearing # 2 – Anti-Displacement and Relocation Plan

Tracey Secula explained that if any displacement takes place as a result of this project, the Uniform Relocation Act must be followed, which requires that any displaced household or business in a project using any federal funds must be found comparable housing in a comparable neighborhood at a comparable price. **There will be no displacement as a result of this project.** Under the certification section of the application, the County will certify that the Residential Anti-displacement & Relocation (RARA) plan is in place, and in the event that it is discovered that this specific project does displace persons or households, a displacement implementation plan must be submitted to CDFA prior to obligating or expending funds.

Commissioner Piper asked if there were any questions from the public. There were none.

10:48AM Close Public Hearing # 2

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to support submission of a 2021 CDBG Micro Enterprise grant to provide funds to multiple entities throughout the state for the purposes of providing training and technical assistance to micro-enterprises and to authorize the Chair to sign, submit and execute any documents that may be necessary to effectuate the CDBG application and contract. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion and all were in favor.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to adopt the Grafton County Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan for this project. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Anne Duncan Cooley, CEO Grafton Regional Development Corporation, gave the Commissioners an update on their agency and how they have been doing during the pandemic. She stated that this year has pushed collaboration. They have been reaching out to their partners to see how they can work together better. She gave the Commissioners an overview of how things within their programs have shifted and answered questions.

Juvenile Court Diversion

Commissioner Piper stated that they received letters from CADY and Valley Court Diversion. They need to all read the letters before they discuss them.

MOTION: * 11:15 AM Commissioner Ahern moved to enter into non-public session for the purposes of matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine, or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant according to RSA 91-A: 3, II (c) Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”; Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes” Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and would now go into non-public session.

* 11:51 AM Commissioner Piper declared the meeting back in public session.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to permanently seal the minutes from the just completed non-public session because they could affect the reputation of someone other than those of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes” Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes”. Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and the motion passes.

FarmDOC –

Commissioner Ahern stated that as he read the minutes from last week’s meeting, he is under the assumption that the FarmDOC is dead. He is confused as to where it stands. In order to give everyone involved the go ahead to get figures, the Commissioners need to do a formal vote. He would like to see the Commissioners adopt this so that as things can be done and implemented, they will be. Commissioner Lauer stated that she fully supports continuing to look at the farm and using the FarmDOC to help but does not feel comfortable voting to adopt a document when they do not have all of the numbers associated with it. Commissioner Piper noted that they had asked FM Nelson questions about the milk production with Agrimark that they have not received answers too. Commissioner Ahern stated that FarmDOC is meant to go back in time with how they used to run the farm and feed the inmates and residents. Commissioner Piper stated that she thinks they can reach a compromise in terms of the motion that is made. She is appreciative of Commissioner Ahern’s language of going back in time as she keeps hearing language about repurposing things, using resources differently, given changes in culture. She stated that when she attended the NACO Conference and met with members of Congress, Congresswoman Kuster was discussing possible different uses of the DOC infrastructure to meet the needs of today. There are many ideas right now on how to approach new problems. They now have a farm manager who has a very different focus than the previous farm manager. She also stated that this is an enormous project, which they do not have all the information for. Commissioner Ahern stated that this is a plan to get into a more stable food environment and reduce taxes. Commissioner Lauer stated that she would be happy to adopt the four (4) goals of the document but not the specifics.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to adopt the following four (4) goals of FarmDOC:

1. Reduce County spending by purchasing less food from SYSCO , and other food vendors (presently budgeted at around \$200,000.00 per year) and replacing "off farm purchased foods" with on farm produced and processed food
2. Increase Farm revenue by introducing new sources of income
3. To provide "residents of the DOC" with healthy, locally grown, food, "learning opportunities" in the agricultural industry
4. Reduce the County Tax Burden on Grafton County Taxpayers.

Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

FD Libby stated that FM Nelson did respond to the questions about the milk at the FarmDOC meeting. She does not want it on the record that he did not answer those questions. Commissioner Piper thanked FD Libby for the correction. FM Nelson stated that they are not limited regarding the amount they can withhold but if they take a large amount, it will impact their revenue. A small amount could be taken, and he would be able to make it up.

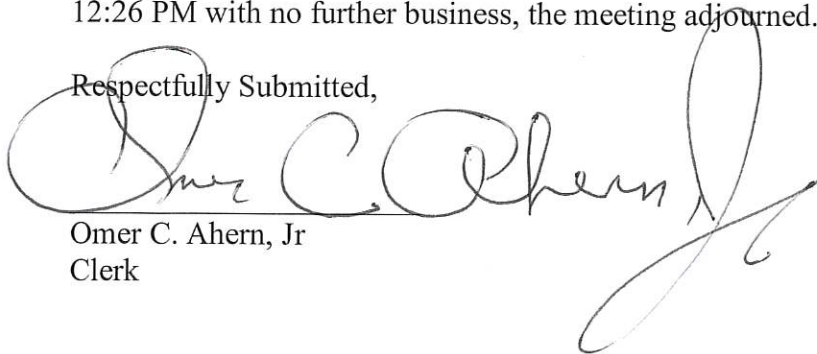
Commissioner Issues

Commissioner Ahern stated that he will be starting the Just Omer TV program again tomorrow. He has 30 minutes every week to talk to the Pemi Baker and Plymouth area about what the Commissioners are discussing during their meetings and what they do in county government.

Commissioner Piper stated that she attended the Executive Committee meeting of the NHAC. FD Libby stated that they discussed the Proshare, FMAP and the County cap. The Proshare payment may be impacted this year for June. There were many conversations regarding the changes to these items.

12:26 PM with no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Omer C. Ahern, Jr.", is written over the typed name and title.

Omer C. Ahern, Jr
Clerk