

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET MEETING

3855 Dartmouth College Highway

North Haverhill, NH 03774

April 26th 2018

PRESENT: Commissioners Lauer, Ahern and Piper, County Administrator Libby, Admin. Asst. Norcross.

OTHERS PRESENT: HR Director Clough

Commissioner Lauer called the meeting to order at 9:00am and began with the Pledge of Allegiance

Health Insurance Discussion

CA Libby handed out spreadsheets outlining the HealthTrust option and three (3) different Harvard Pilgrim options. She discussed the different plans again with the Commissioners noting the differences between them. CA Libby stated that she recommends HealthTrust and explained that there are a lot of factors besides the money that come into play. They need to focus on wellness and figuring how to get claims down. HealthTrust has a very well established Wellness program. As part of that all employees and their spouses/ children above the age of 18 are eligible for \$575 a year for participating in the different wellness programs that are offered. Commissioner Piper stated that she appreciates the wellness program of the more expensive plan, but asked if there have been any measurable outcomes, yet, from participating in a wellness plan.

HR Director Clough stated that she is concerned that Harvard Pilgrim dropped their rates after HealthTrust revisited theirs. She stated that they sat with a sales representative from Harvard Pilgrim when they were given the original rates. The sales rep. stated that our plans have been underfunded and that is why this large increase is needed. He stated that they would not revisit their rates, the rates they originally gave the county were the rates they felt the county needed to be funded at in order to get out of the situation that they are in. HR Director Clough stated that then once Health Trust revisited their rates Harvard Pilgrim did too and this is concerning to her. Commissioner Ahern stated that competition is a good thing. HR Director Clough stated that she wants to get into a company that is funding insurance properly and work with the county to get claims in check and educate employees as to what is available. HR Director Clough and CA Libby stated that the feedback they have received is that the employees felt that for the extra few dollars a pay period they would rather have the better insurance. They noted that this was not a large representation of employees. There were union reps, several employee council members and department heads at the Health Insurance Committee meetings. HR Director Clough noted that Nursing Home Administrator Labore, who has the largest number of employees who are on the insurance, had stated that he reviewed this with his department heads and they were on board with HealthTrust. HR Director Clough and CA Libby went on to answer other questions and address other concerns with the Commissioners.

Commissioner Lauer stated that she will be supporting Health Trust. She believes the increased emphasis on wellness will ultimately keep their claims stable if not drive them down. They have a history with Health Trust having good customer service and there was employee buy in to the extent that they can at the committee level. She will be supporting the extra expense associated

with this insurance. Commissioner Piper stated that she wants to support the employees but is concerned that both of these have been acknowledged to be good plans. She is concerned that there seems to be a chronic issue with morale at the Nursing Home. She stated that they have had ways to try and improve that morale but it is still low. She stated that she thinks that they have to retain people but wonders if the more expensive benefit is needed to do that.

CA Libby stated that if they went with Health Trust, a 1.5% cola, and they want to get the tax increase to 4%, they would need to cut \$545,000.00

Commissioner Piper stated that it is a given that no matter what they do the budget is going to be very hard this year. She would like to look at putting back some of the smaller items that they had taken out. CA Libby reviewed the various smaller items that the Commissioners had discussed removing.

CA Libby requested to go into nonpublic session.

MOTION: * 10:20 AM – Commissioner Piper 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 Ahern seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote, Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”; Commissioner Ahern “yes”; Commissioner Piper “yes” Commissioner Lauer stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and would now go into non-public session.

* 10:44 AM Commissioner Lauer declared the meeting back in public session.

MOTION: Commissioner Piper 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 Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

CA Libby noted that the money added into the Dispatch and Nursing Home Capital Reserve funds can be changed if the Commissioners wished to do so. Commissioner Lauer stated that the Dispatch Capital Reserve is healthy and she would be willing to reduce the contribution of that this year by \$20,000. Commissioner Ahern stated that the dispatch is healthy and feels they should not contribute the \$65,000 in FY19. Commissioner Lauer stated that she would hate to zero it out as they are planning to purchase a new truck in the next few years. Commissioner Piper and Commissioner Lauer were in agreement to contribute \$30,000 to Dispatch Capital Reserve and \$40,000 to the Nursing Home Capital Reserve.

Commissioner Lauer stated that she had further discussed the manure pit paving with the farm staff and they explained that the potential of losing their retaining wall in the manure pit is why they are looking to have the section paved, not because of the mud. After discussion the Commissioners agreed that the wall has not fallen in yet and it can be put off another year.

Commissioner Piper stated that she would like to put the \$2,500 back in for the Activities Director to attend the national conference. Commissioner Lauer stated that she doesn't believe that the Activities Director has ever been able to go to a national conference and she may bring

back valuable information. She stated that of all things that have been cut that would be at the top of her list to add back in.

The Commissioners agreed to zero out the money that is being set aside for the maintenance truck.

CA Libby stated that with all of the changes the Commissioners have made they are at a 4.28% increase in taxes. She noted that this includes the Health Trust insurance option and no COLA.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to go with HealthTrust insurance for FY2019. Commissioner Piper seconded for discussion purposes.

Discussion – Commissioner Lauer stated that this is minimal change to the employees. The cost difference between this plan and the plan with much fewer benefits is minimal. All in all she believes that Health Trust best served the employees, the county and taxpayers. Commissioner Piper stated that she would support the HealthTrust insurance but thinks that this might be an either/or year as far as giving a COLA or choosing HealthTrust, as a better insurance plan for employees. CA Libby stated that half of the employees do not have insurance so that is a very hard decision to make. Half the employees getting COLAs do not have the insurance. Commissioner Lauer stated that they are trying to mix health insurance and COLAs and think we need to separate the two (2) and make a decision about the insurance. Commissioner Ahern stated that as he understands, he still thinks that the best plan for the taxpayers and to provide for the employees is Harvard pilgrim. Commissioner Piper stated that based on the information from the County Administrator and HR Director she will support HealthTrust. Commissioner Ahern stated that as a middle ground, from his point of view the Harvard Pilgrim with the Aetna plan is the better plan for all concerned.

The Commissioners voted on the motion. Commissioner Lauer and Commissioner Piper voted in favor and Commissioner Ahern voted in opposition. With the motion being two (2) in favor and one (1) in opposition the motion passes.

CA Libby requested to go into nonpublic session.

MOTION: * 11:27 AM – Commissioner Piper 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 Ahern seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote, Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”; Commissioner Ahern “yes”; Commissioner Piper “yes” Commissioner Lauer stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and would now go into non-public session.

* 12:40 AM Commissioner Lauer declared the meeting back in public session.

MOTION: Commissioner Piper 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 Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

12:40 PM with no further business the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy A. Piper,
Clerk