

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONER MEETING
3855 Dartmouth College Highway
North Haverhill, NH 03774
April 30th 2020

PRESENT: Commissioners Lauer, Piper, Morris, County Administrator Libby and Administrative Assistant Norcross

Commissioner Lauer called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and read the following statement:

As Chair of the Grafton County Commissioners, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is a physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting. In accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

a) Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means:

We are utilizing Lifesize for this electronic meeting. All members of the Commission have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through attending at the physical location.

b) Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting. The meeting notice is also provided on the website of the Commission at www.co.grafton.nh.us.

Please note that all votes that are being taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law.

Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Lauer stated "yes" and there is no one in the room with her during this meeting. Commissioner Piper stated "yes" and there is no one in the room with her during this meeting. Commissioner Morris stated "yes" and there is no one in the room with her during this meeting.

Commissioner Lauer asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the April 23rd Budget meeting. Commissioner Piper had a few grammatical edits.

MOTION: Commissioner Piper moved to approve the minutes from the April 23rd Budget meeting as amended. Commissioner Morris seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Piper “yes”, Commissioner Morris “yes”, Commissioner Lauer “yes”. Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted “yes” and the motion passes.

CA Libby sent the Commissioners the check register that is in need of approval which is 1162.

MOTION: Commissioner Morris moved to approve the check registers. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Piper “yes”, Commissioner Morris “yes”, Commissioner Lauer “yes”. Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted “yes” and the motion passes.

DMV Renewal – CA Libby stated that the State of New Hampshire agreed with the 3.5% increase for years one (1) and two (2) and no increase the 3rd year.

Coronavirus Updates:

CA Libby stated that the resident recently tested on the Meadow Unit tested negative. They continue to struggle with the long term care stabilization stipend program that the state has announced. They don't have the approval from the Department of Employment Security yet and the County's application was submitted two (2) weeks ago. Approvals were just starting to be issued yesterday and Cheshire County received theirs. They are the only County so far to receive their approval. CA Libby stated that they did not issue stipend payments to employees this week in their paychecks. She stated that they have employees that are not happy about that but she did not feel comfortable as she didn't have a signed agreement as of yet. She stated that there have been three (3) rounds of Frequently Asked Questions. The first thing they were told by DHHS and Department of Employment Security was that everyone who worked in the Nursing Home would be included in the stipend regardless of their role. The first round of FAQs stated that administrative personnel are not eligible for the stipend. The Counties all asked them to reconsider that as all employees in the Nursing Home have equal risks for exposure. They are all reimbursable by the Medicaid Cost Report so they feel these employees should be included. When Kate Horgan asked the question she was told that if you have HR employees doing direct care to residents in light of short staffing they yes they are eligible but not if they are doing their HR functions within the facility. CA Libby stated that then last week the majority of counties stated they are going to include administrative personnel and state that they are doing some form of direct care. In the second round of FAQs, they were now told that contract nurses/rehab nurses are not eligible for reimbursement through the Nursing Home so CA Libby had to submit a new application for the Nursing Home on Sunday. Yesterday the 3rd round of FAQs came out and it clearly states that if administrative personnel are not providing direct care they are not eligible. If administrative staff are providing direct care they need to track those hours which would be eligible for the stipend. CA Libby stated that they had a County Administrator's Zoom meeting yesterday and the County Administrator in Strafford County has asked that the Commissioners to

pay that handful of administrative employees the stipend from the County as he feels it is not worth starting a war in the Nursing Home. CA Libby stated that they have ten (10) full time staff that would qualify for the bonus and if they go through June 30th it would be roughly \$35,000. Commissioner Piper stated that she does not know if they would consider someone on the front lines who is working in purchasing. She stated that she agrees with the state's parameters they have set. She would not be in favor of including administrative staff. Commissioner Lauer stated that her concern is different. Administrative staff is out on the floors, they already have a us vs them mindset in the nursing home and she doesn't want to make the situation worse. She thinks this could cause more hate and discontent. Commissioner Piper stated they are trying to correct the culture and already spending money to do so. CA Libby stated that it clearly states that maintenance is included in that stipend and she struggles with that. To her that seems wrong to include maintenance and not include nursing home staff who works in the building 40 hours a week. Commissioner Piper stated that is the state's mistake and asked if Grafton County tax payers should be paying because of that. Commissioner Morris stated that she sees where Commissioner Piper is coming from but feels anyone going in that building should receive hazard pay as they are being put at risk. Commissioner Piper stated that Commissioner Morris makes an excellent point. CA Libby stated that she does not need to have a decision today, they can discuss it Tuesday. She stated that she believes Belknap County is going to pay all nursing home employees out of the stipend money as they feel they can justify under their interpretation that those positions should receive the stipend under the state program. CA Libby stated that she is concerned about doing that because you have to list name, title and other information on the weekly certification and she doesn't feel comfortable certifying that with her interpretation of what the guidelines say. CA Libby stated that a lot of information has been conflicting and not direct. The memo sent to employees yesterday that stated they would not be receiving their stipend pay this week said that they were trying to figure out the administrative personnel portion because at this point it was unclear in the information received from the state as to whether they will be included or not. NHA Labore feels very strongly that they should be included. Commissioner Piper stated that if the definition is people who provide vital services that contribute to the direct care of residents is not restrictive and if that is the definition set forth by the state then she would suggest that they do what Belknap County is doing. CA Libby discussed the definitions of front line workers with the Commissioners. CA Libby stated that if the Board of Commissioners state that say that they interpret these definitions as everyone in the nursing home and that is how they want them to submit the reporting that is how they will do it but if the state denies it they will have to pay that money back. Commissioner Piper stated that after discussing those definitions she withdraws her previous statement. Commissioner Morris stated that this is essentially hazard pay and the state needs to pay for it. She feels that they should put in for all employees and if the state denies it then the County will pay for it. CA Libby stated that the stipend payments will cost the County \$52,000 in employer related in payroll taxes up until June 30, 2020.

CA Libby stated that she has submitted to Kate Horgan the County's estimated expenses and lost revenue for six (6) months. That information is going to the GOFER Committee as they decide how they are going to divide up the \$1.25 billion. She thinks whatever the County gets will be based on population. She stated that last Friday she participated in the New Hampshire Homeland Security Emergency Management FEMA meeting for the applicant briefing so they can apply for FEMA money. It appears that most of the monies they will be able to recoup are

PPE purchases that have been made. There is not a clear answer on the overtime yet on backfilling shifts due to people out because of COVID-19. She stated that she is hoping that the CARES 2.0 that the federal government is working on will include some distribution to counties across the county. This will likely also be population based as well. CA Libby stated that she is trying to keep in touch with as many ways to recoup lost monies as possible. She stated that their biggest challenges will come from lost revenue.

Budget Discussion:

CA Libby sent the Commissioner a spreadsheet of all the changes that they have made to the budget. She stated that the only reduction made in the Sheriff's Capital Budget was a \$15,000 reduction in their software. She stated they did propose a change with the Office Administrator, who currently splits time between the two departments, to make that a full time Dispatch position and then take the 24-hour part time position in Dispatch and move it to the Sheriff's Department. Sheriff Stiegler has removed that 24-hour position from the budget.

CA Libby stated that with all change made by the Commissioners they are at a 3.49% increase in taxes or \$945,959. The budget has a revenue increase of \$638,159 and \$1,984,018 in expenses

MOTION: Commissioner Morris moved to approve an operating budget of \$48,595,844 with \$28,032,873 to be raised by taxes. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Piper "yes", Commissioner Morris "yes", Commissioner Lauer "yes". Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted "yes" and the motion passes.

CA Libby stated that she received an email from Rep. Sykes stating that he thinks they should have the Executive Committee and Delegation meeting by Zoom on May 18th. The Commissioners discussed the Public Hearing and agreed that they will wait to set the date next Tuesday after the Governor discusses the stay at home order tomorrow.

10:03 AM With no further business the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Marcia Morris,
Clerk