

PUBLIC HEARING

Commissioners FY11 Budget Recommendations  
UNH Cooperative Extension Conference Room  
3855 Dartmouth College Hwy.  
N. Haverhill, NH 03774  
May 18, 2011

PRESENT: Commissioner's Michael Cryans, Omer C. Ahern Jr. and Ray Burton,  
Executive Director Julie Clough, and Secretary Jeri Martino

DEPT. HEADS: Supt. Libby, HRD Simpson, NHA Bolander, ITM Ruggles, Sheriff  
Dutile, Treasurer Elliott, Supt. Oakes, Director Andross, HSA Bishop, FM Kimball,  
Atty. Saffo, and UNH Educator D. Maes.

OTHERS PRESENT: See attached sign in sheet.

7:04 PM Commissioner Cryans opened the meeting and began with the Pledge of  
Allegiance.

Commissioner Cryans then introduced Commissioner Ahern and Commissioner Burton  
and noted that each one of them represent 1/3 of the County's population. Commissioner  
Cryans then introduced State Representatives Bulis, Ladd, Simard and Almy, as well as  
all the Department heads and other Elected Officials.

A PowerPoint presentation was given and Commissioner Cryans explained each slide.  
Attending members were able to follow along with a copy of the presentation. \*(see  
attached PowerPoint)

Commissioner Cryans asked Corrections Superintendent Libby to discuss the new staff  
that the Jail would be bringing on. Supt. Libby said there will be 19 new staff members  
which translates as 11 Correctional Officers and 8 ancillary positions. All staff will need  
to go through extensive training for the new facility which is why some are being brought  
on before the facility is open.

The Delegation voted to authorize \$38M for a new Jail and due to various changes and  
conditions, only \$33M was needed, which is a savings of \$5M.

Commissioner Cryans asked Maintenance Supt. Oakes to briefly explain some of the  
increase to Maintenance. Supt. Oakes said that the Commissioners had just approved a  
bid for heating fuel at a price of \$3.325 and they were still holding out for a lower  
propane bid which was \$2.58. Electricity has increased almost 10% every year and Supt.  
Oakes said he didn't think this year would be any different. One Maintenance person  
will be hired within a few weeks and there would be another two dedicated to the Jail  
fulltime.

Commissioner Cryans then asked Nursing Home Administrator Bolander to speak to the  
revenue and expenses for the Nursing Home. She said that room rates were increased in

order to cover costs and as far as expense go there was a \$200K supplemental appropriation added to the budget last year which needed to be incorporated into this budget.

Human Services Administrator Nancy Bishop reviewed her budget and said that \$830K that came to the County in ARRA money, more specifically FMAP (Federal Medicaid Assistance Payments) has been discontinued. That money was put into the Human Service budget last year as a credit for long term care and will not be available this year which has resulted in a \$641K increase.

Commissioner Cryans discussed wages and benefits and said that step increases for eligible employees have been added to this budget and a stipend of \$650 was put in for those employees who are maxed out on the pay scale. He also briefly talked about the health insurance which has been changed to a deductible plan in which the County is paying 75% of that deductible for employees.

Commissioner Cryans then entertained questions and comments and asked that people be brief so that everyone could have a chance to speak.

N. DeMayo suggested that the County needs to sharpen its pencil when it comes to this budget and said he didn't feel that the County should be giving employees a raise.

Bernadetta Costa from Franconia said that town employees haven't had a raise in three years and teachers gave up their increases. Commissioner Cryans said that the employees of Grafton have taken on more of the cost of their health insurance. Director Clough said the employees will be subject to a deductible, which they have not had before.

Frank Granno from Littleton said he pays for his own insurance and feels that it is about time that employees start paying for their own insurance. He said he feels County employees are getting a good deal and it seems to him that they feel they are above the taxpayers in stature. Commissioner Cryans said he's never met a County employee who feels they are better than others.

Karen Clough spoke on behalf of the employees and said that County employees work hard at their jobs just as others do and they fight hard for their benefits. She read a statement. \*(see attachment). The employees are requesting that the County pay 100% of the deductible while suggesting that monies not used could be rolled over to the following year. She suggested accommodating the employees while looking closely at other areas of the budget that could be cut.

Luther Kinney said that health insurance is a growing problem for everyone and said he hopes that residents don't turn against the towns, State and County employees. He then asked if there was a waiting list at the Nursing Home. NHA Bolander replied that right now the home is at full capacity but there is always a waiting list.

Rep. Paul Simard from Bristol informed everyone that the State is \$67.3M behind in projected revenues so no help from the State can be expected. He stated that 10% of the

population in Bristol has been lost and noted that the Delegation will be scrutinizing this budget very closely. Commissioner Cryans said that to imply that they Commissioners have not looked closely at this budget would not be a fair statement. He felt they had and did a good job with it.

Sylvia Smith from Littleton said that people who are “bled out” in these towns feel like they just can’t give any more. She said she didn’t understand the reason for a stipend and why employees should have that. She also said that she studies the Constitution and that health insurance is not a right under the Constitution.

Commissioner Cryans explained the stipend was for employees who were maxed out on the pay scale.

At this time there were verbal comments from the audience and Commissioner Cryans said that the side comments are uncalled for in this meeting. He then continued on and said that because there would be such a burden on employees because they are expected to pay more for their benefits, a stipend would be given.

Ms. Smith replied that employees should just have to suck it up like people on the “outside” do.

Steve Kelley said he feels there’s a disconnect between the public and the private sector regarding what’s going on on Main Street. He said there needs to be some kind of personal responsibility that goes along with one’s own healthcare. He also discussed the Jail and said that although it has been built, questioned whether there could be a delay in opening it for a year or more. He said that drastic times call for drastic measures and anything that could be done would be appreciated

Daryl Brown from Plymouth asked if there would be anything passed down by the State that might cause the County to have to dip into the general fund. NHA Bolander said that usually happens in the form of a lower reimbursement of the Medicaid rate in the Nursing Home.

Rich Crocker from Plymouth said that because of changes by the State that have taken place in years past, Nursing Homes are responsible for more monetary payments. He said that if the community home based services are cut by the State, costs will go up for the Nursing Homes in which the County pays toward out of the Human Service budget. He said he feels there needs to be a way to balance the costs and that the Counties pay the largest costs but have no control at all. He is advocating that the County have more control over long term health care and would request that the County consider putting together a citizens group to engage the State in this matter because he doesn’t see them doing anything.

Brien Ward from Littleton said that every community is dealing with a sustainability issue and that the current model is not sustainable. He said that Littleton had to cut positions. He asked Commissioner Cryans if any programs were cut and Commissioner Cryans replied no. Mr. Ward suggested that the County may have to do less than what has been done in the past.

Commissioner Cryans said they would have to see how that plays out and said he feels

that Grafton County runs a good County and that it is the lowest budget of all the rural Counties per capital.

Commissioner Cryans said there are a number of operations that have to run and that Counties are mandated by law to run a Jail. He said that once in custody the County is responsible for taking care of the inmates. Drug Court was added about five years ago and seems to be a success, and a Mental Health Court, which is covered by a grant, was just added recently.

Bill Sharp said some of the proposals in the budget run contrary to the State statues and spoke specifically about the Deeds surcharge account which is to be used for equipment. He said that some items in the budget have not gone through a bid process and asked the Commissioners to rectify that and suggested the Delegation pay particular attention. Commissioner Cryans said that this is a proposed budget and bids can not be done prior to the approval of the budget.

Martha McLeod, Chair of the UNH Advisory Board spoke and thanked the Commissioners for their support for UNHCE. She recommended using UNHCE for resources and thanked NHA Bolander and HSA Bishop for their help with North County Health Consortium's Molar Express which operates out of a County building during the month.

Russ Cumbee said that his source of income has not included any increases and his standard of living has gone down. He said he finds employee increases obscene.

Sherry Thornburg of HIV/HCV Resource Center asked how many residents would be at the new Jail and Supt. Libby said 150. She said that the agency she works for served 317 residents of Grafton County through HIC and Hepatitis C testing which saved the County a lot of money. She said that she would like to suggest to the Jail that they consider receiving services from this agency.

Sister Carmen from Littleton said she volunteers at the Jail working with inmates to get their GEDs. She said the current Jail is inhumane and the County is working to try to give inmates a new direction in life.

Henry Ahern asked if the \$800K that was received in ARRA money was used to hire employees and HSA Bishop said that it was not. She said it was used to offset expenses of long term care.

He then questioned if the County was overestimating revenues in order to compensate for expenses, questioning if the numbers were up to snuff. He said he is self employed and can no longer afford to buy his own health insurance. He also said that the State charges him an income tax for anything he makes over \$50K and he has no sympathy for those making \$70-\$90K. He said he feels that anyone making over \$50K should have to give money to the State.

Nancy Clement, a Grafton County employee, said that she is not appointed or elected and had to apply for job with the County. She said everyone makes choices of what to do for

work, whether that is to work for someone else or to be self employed.

Ellen Dearborn said that she is a homeowner and mother of seven who makes less than \$30K a year. She has gone over the budget and wondered about bonuses paid to employees and what longevity was. Commissioner Cryans said that longevity has been given at the County for over 25 years now and a person has to be in service for six years before receiving it. It begins at \$95 on that sixth year and grows from there. HRD Simpson said that longevity is being phased out and noted that last year, steps were frozen, though there was a cost of living given.

There was a discussion as to how the budget proceeds from here and Rep. Bulis said that the budget from the Commissioners is now passed on to the Executive Committee, who are a nine member board made up out of the twenty-six Legislators. The Executive Committee then works on the budget and makes a recommendation to the full Delegation.

Someone asked when the public will get a chance to talk to their Representative about the budget and Rep. Bulis said they should contact the Representative for their area.

A woman spoke up and said that their school system pays \$35K for health insurance for a family of four and asked if someone should be going after the insurance companies. She asked the Commissioners if they would lobby at a State level. Commissioner Cryans said Grafton County does not pay that much for a family plan insurance. Director Clough said they pay half that amount.

Rep. Bulis informed the attendees that the Reps. that are here are listening and taking notes.

Rep. Almy said that the only place that there is a hearing on the budget is with the Commissioners.

Ron Adams from Holderness said they should cut the budget adding that he hasn't had a raise in years, or a stipend.

Nick DeMayo said that social security recipients haven't had any increase in two years. He asked if there was any kind of buy back of insurance or deal if a husband and wife both worked at the County. He also asked about freezes.

HRD Simpson said that the County does offer a different way of figuring out costs if spouses work for the County, or someone carries their own health insurance and not the County's.

Martha McLeod said there is a lot of anxiety in the room and noted that it was not good to pit one against another. She said the employees have to make a living too and support families and they understand that those who are retired are having a tough time.

Brien Ward asked that the Executive Committee have a dialog to consider another kind of budget for the future.

Henry Ahern said that the County is underutilizing the Farm and the Nursing Home is not

taking advantage either. He said the Farm should raise animals for meat and they should be raising at least 80% of the food for the Nursing Home.

8:46 PM Commissioner Cryans thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.

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Raymond S. Burton, Clerk