

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING
Administrative Building
UNH Coop Extension Conference Room
3855 Dartmouth College Highway
North Haverhill, NH
June 11th, 2021

PRESENT: Rep. Sykes, Weston, Abel, Egan, Folsom, Gordon. Commissioners Ahern, Lauer, Piper, FD Libby, CA Dorsett, Jessica Jackson

ALSO: FM Nelson, CA Hornick

The hearing began at 3:15 PM.

Rep. Sykes read the following statement:

GRAFTON COUNTY

RIGHT-TO-KNOW LAW MEETING CHECKLIST

As Chair of the Grafton County Delegation, due to COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, the Board is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is a physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to the meeting, at 3855 Dartmouth College Highway, No. Haverhill, NH. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, this is to confirm we are:

- a. Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional possibilities by video or other electronic means;
- a. We are utilizing the Zoom platform for the electronic meeting. All members of the Board have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through the Zoom platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in the meeting through dialing the following phone #1 646 558 8656 and using Meeting ID849 3770 5955 Passcode: 177096, or by clicking the following website address: www.co.grafton.nh.us
- b. Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing this meeting:
 - a. We previously gave notice to the public of how to access the meeting using Zoom and instructions are provided on the Grafton County website at: www.co.grafton.nh.us.
- b. Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access:
 - a. If anybody has a problem, please call Andrew Dorsett at (802)745-7360 or the Grafton County Commissioners' Office at: (603) 787-6941
- b. Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:
 - a. In the event that the public is unable to access the meeting, we will adjourn the meeting and have it rescheduled at that time.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote.

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

Rep. Sykes called the attendance roll call. Rep. Abel "here" and no one is in the room with him. Rep. Egan "here" and no one is in the room with him. Rep. Folsom, not present for roll call. Rep. Gordon "here" and no one is in the room with him. Rep. Greeson, not present for roll call. Rep. Ladd, not present for roll call. Rep. Murphy, not present for roll call. Rep. Sykes "here" at Grafton County Complex. Rep. Weston, not present for roll call. Four (4) members were present and a quorum was not declared.

Grant Nelson - County Farm

Revenue

FM Nelson reported that revenues were up for this fiscal year. The farm reduced heifer replacement inventory which resulted in an increase. The farm also had a chance to sell some garden manure, which generated a little more revenue under Miscellaneous line items. FM Nelson also stated he is anticipating some timber harvesting this coming winter resulting in an extra \$25K. Rep. Sykes inquired about the Commissioners' proposal to increase the sale of livestock by \$5K. Commissioner Lauer confirmed the Commissioners were comfortable adjusting that number given the actuals from this Fiscal Year. FM Nelson added that due to the lack of labor, the farm is unable to run the farm stand until the Fall or so and that hopefully this is only a one-year hiatus from typical operating procedures.

Expenses

FM Nelson reported he had included a line for a part-time employee due to the challenges of managing earned time with a small department. His employees max out earned time easily and a part-time person would help him manage this staffing aspect. He noted that wages in lieu of health insurance may change based on the fact that his department is looking for another employee. FD Libby added that adjustments may need to be made as they progress into the new year. A former employee was taking wages in lieu of health insurance so the health insurance may double. FM Nelson noted that he had increased fertilizer/seed spray and lowered dairy feed as he estimates needing a bit more money for fertilizer to get the proper yields from the farm's hay crop. He also found a new vendor for sawdust which saves the department on some costs.

Rep. Abel asked if any of the incoming federal funds could be used for expenditures dealing with the farm. FD Libby and Rep. Sykes both confirmed these funds could not be used for this purpose.

Marcie Hornick - County Attorney

At 3:34 PM, CA Hornick presented the County Attorney budget. She reported that last year with the pandemic, her department was required to go remote in March 2020. Although it was a struggle due to many employees not having strong internet access, the cases were still coming in

and they continued to do the work. Certain costs went down due to lack of travel and less use of paper. CA Hornick reported she is trying to go paperless. A Jury trial was recently finished and submitted, but there were some technical delays. Other than that, CA Hornick reported that her office is back and fully populated, and employees are glad to see each other.

Revenue

CA Hornick reported there were not any major changes for revenue. Much of her department's revenue comes by means of grants so it's more or less the same as last fiscal year. FD Libby noted that the Roving Advocate grant expires in August but that they have re-applied for a larger amount, so that is why the line increased in the budget. CA Hornick confirmed this was a 3-year grant that she inherited and that FD Libby has been handling the financial side.

Expenses

- Line 3 Investigative Services - CA Hornick explained that Wayne Fortier was their investigator and that she had been unable to find and hire an adequate replacement for FY '21. The Commissioners did not approve this line item for FY '22. CA Hornick stated she will be looking for this line for the next budget season. Rep. Sykes asked the Commissioners for clarification on this decision. Commissioner Piper explained the County Attorney's office was able to do without this position last year, and further clarified that there was no blanket policy of 'no new hires' for FY '22. There were three new positions asked for and this one had been vacant already for a year, so the Commissioners chose not to approve it for FY '22.
- Line 170 Education and Conference - CA Hornick stated that her department was able to save money on account of using Zoom. They use an online meeting software called Lifesize, so they could pursue education online which reduced the overall line amount.
- Lines 290 Contracted Services and 360 Office Supplies were both reduced due to less paper being needed.
- Line 380 Postage was reduced due to the use of electronic mail.

Rep. Gordon asked how many clerical positions are currently in the County Attorney's office. CA Hornick answered that there were six (6) and that they all have different assignments, although there are seven (7) total including the Office Manager. Rep. Gordon asked how many Assistant County Attorneys are working for the department. CA Hornick stated that there are eight (8) Assistant County Attorneys employed across various locations.

Rep. Abel asked what the impact of not having the aforementioned investigator position would be to the department. CA Hornick explained that the loss of that position causes an inability to follow up and assist smaller police departments with investigations when they receive referrals, which is a service her department often needs. Having someone in this role ensures the CA office is able to secure an extra meeting with a victim that is separate from what the victim-witness coordinator can do. CA Hornick explained that she does not want to lose the position, but that she has not been able to find a qualified person to fill the role. Due to COVID, the position was not needed, but as things return to normal, she may need to fill this position again. The former

person in this role, Detective Fortier, also followed up with cold cases and sexual assault cases, just to ensure there was a bridge between the community and the CA office. The role also ensures an extra eye to examine cases.

Commissioner Piper added that the Commissioners were careful with their decisions and that the CA office is a very robust office. It was the Commissioners' understanding that CA Hornick left that position vacant last year, and did not feel the need to be too aggressive to fill it. Given the \$1.2 million revenue loss, the Commissioners felt that if the position could be left open one year, it could be open for one more.

Rep. Sykes reported that Rep. Folsom had just joined the meeting, and a quorum was declared.

Rep. Gordon asked if the County pays the salaries for the Plymouth Office. CA Hornick confirmed. FD Libby directed the Committee to budget line 01-4008-103. Rep. Gordon asked if this was an offset of costs to the Assistant CA. Hornick confirmed yes, and that all of his expenses were included in that overall number. He is considered the 9th Assistant County Attorney as he works from home in Rumney. Rep. Gordon asked if all eight (8) Assistant County Attorneys were doing criminal prosecution as this seemed like a large firm for the North County. CA Hornick explained that her department interfaces with not just the public defender program, but with District Attorneys from across the state, and that between the County, they are up to 480 cases varying from negligent homicide to insurance fraud to sexual assault to burglaries, drugs, etc. CA Hornick commented that it is quite the gamut of crimes, and that her drug expert carries over 200 cases alone. There is a lot going on to keep everyone busy. In 2019, her department handled 500 cases. In 2020, they saw 379 cases, and in 2021, they are already up to 485 cases. CA Hornick projects her department will meet and pass the 2019 number.

Other Expenses

- VAWA grant (Page 6) - An assistant CA is partially paid for through federal funds, who specializes in sexual assault cases with minors. There is an age cutoff for anyone under the VAWA.
- Victim-Witness Program - Some of what they do is covered by the grant, and some is not. CA Hornick stated that her department has three victim-witness coordinators, one of whom is only Circuit Court and covered by grant funds. Those monies have stayed mostly the same. Supplies/postage will have gone down as well as travel because of the pandemic and working virtually. FD Libby explained that page 7 covers the non-grant expenses and page 8 is an overview of the grant-covered expenses.
- Rural Roving Advocate Grant (Page 9) - CA Hornick explained that the money they spend is covered by the money they receive from that grant. As FD Libby mentioned earlier, this grant expires in September, but they have already applied for renewal. This grant helps to provide services throughout the northern part of Grafton county to victims of sexual violence.
- Medical referee (Page 18) CA Hornick explained that this line is for an unfortunate but necessary part of what her department does, which is when there are untimely unattended deaths which they see a lot of. The medical referee comes in and does the reports and autopsies.

Julie Libby - Finance Department

FD Libby presented the Finance Department budget to the Committee. Below is the summary:

Summary for Revenues

Not Department Specific

- State/Federal Funds - No Change
- Interest Income – Reduction of \$95,000 caused by the sharp decline in interest rates due to the COVID 19 Pandemic.
- Courthouse Rent- Slight increase due to increased rental payments for leases
- Human Service – Recoveries – No Change
- Dividends/Misc. – No Change
- Surplus – Increase of \$1,000,000

Summary for Commissioners' Office (4100)

- 002 – Finance Director – increase is due to the first full year of the position being budgeted. FY '21 was only budgeted for six (6) months
- 120 – Health Insurance – decreased due to changes in employees' plans
- 130 – Retirement – increased due to increase in rate from the NH Retirement System and the increase in salaries
- 170 – Education & Conference – decreased due to the one-time training costs in FY '21 for the conversion of PR software
- 230 – Consultants – increased due to the hiring of a consultant to help maximize grant funding opportunities and to maximize use of non-county funds. In addition, this consultant will assist in some American Rescue Plan analysis.
- 290- Audit Services – increased due to the requirement that an Actuarial Attestation being completed every other year to assess liability for Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) GASB 75 regulations. This cost is \$4,350
- 700 – Travel Expense Commissioners – decreased due to historical usage

There are a number of small adjustments within other operational line items within the budget but they are not of note or significant changes.

Summary for Expense Accounts

Not Assigned a Specific Department

- 8650 – Conservation District – budget is for one full-time employee and changes were from salary and associated benefit cost increases

- 8625 – IDN Funding – budget was eliminated – reducing the budget by \$651,498. This program was a five (5) year program implemented by the State of NH – the project ended on December 31, 2020 – not requiring any additional funding. Additionally, the funds that were budgeted in FY '21 will not be spent as it was determined by all ten (10) counties that we would not be contributing as the program was ending and established IDN's still had remaining uncommitted funds
- 8655 – Regional Planning Commission – Minimal decrease in one RPC's dues
- 8670 – Wage & Benefit increased
 - 007 Earned Time Buy-back – Implementation of a new program that will in the long run save money. Employees will be able to buy-back accrued time after meeting criteria instead of using time thus preventing have to back-fill shifts with contracted staff or overtime
 - 100 Social Security & 130 Retirement increased due to the Earned Time buyback program
- 9100 – Tax Anticipation Interest – decreased due to the assumption that interest rates will continue to be low and that we will borrow very little again this year.
- 9120 – Bonded Debt – decreased due to debt schedules and the debt refunding that was done several years ago
- 9210 – Contingency – no significant changes
- 9270 – Unemployment – decreased due to actual claims
- 9370 – Delegation Expense – decreased due to historical usage (mileage and per diem)

Additional Revenue Notes

FD Libby added that regarding the surplus increase of \$1 million, that she has been evaluating since the 9-month mark and that she is very comfortable using this to offset the significant revenue loss from the retirement system.

Rep. Abel asked if it were possible to have discussion of what the \$17 million in ARPA funds will mean for the County and can they anticipate using it in the next budget year? FD Libby explained that the first installment is in and will be booked as “deferred revenue” so it will not presently impact the budget outcome. She will be identifying lost revenues and helping to construct a full plan to be developed by the Commissioners which will be brought to the Executive Committee. The County has until Dec 31, 2024 to obligate the funds. FD Libby hopes that they will have a report in time for the Executive Committee meeting in September. The Commissioners have accepted the first half of the ARPA funds but a formal discussion has not happened yet. Commissioner Lauer added that this ARPA money is very much directed towards specific activities and that the Commissioners are being cautious in identifying the allowable uses of these funds so that they don't misuse money and get penalized for doing so.

Additional Expense Notes

Regarding the Consultants line, CA Dorsett explained that a consultant had been hired to provide technical service to leverage funds, technical guidance for use of ARPA funds, and on-going contract management to ensure reporting and close-outs are done on schedule. He explained that there will be quite a few applications running at one time. Some concepts for projects will be done on this line, for example the micro grid project and wastewater project. The idea is to use non-County tax dollars as much as possible.

Transfers to Capital Reserve - the Commissioners included \$25K as a transfer to the Dispatch account.

Rep. Gordon asked if the Conservation District produced any revenue and FD Libby stated that they do not.

Board of Commissioners

GCEDC (Grafton County Economic Development Council)

Commissioner Piper explained that this organization has been funded for 15-20 years. They had originally been funded at \$50K but the BOC trimmed this amount by 10 percent about 6 years ago. Grant funding has gone to that organization to pay the salary of their loan officer. GCEDC provides loans to businesses. Commissioner Piper stated that the Board's understanding is that this money began as seed money and that it wouldn't be needed in following years. The Board brought on a new County Administrator this year with new ideas, which included hiring a consultant rather than continuing to provide this money to GCEDC. The Board asked for financial reports from GCEDC for the first time this year and took another look at the services being funded. The feeling was, since ARPA funds were coming in, and with a new CA who is well-versed in economic development, the Commissioners would rather spend this money on a service that would more directly impact GC taxpayers, such as help with infrastructure programs like: water wells, broadband, new sewage. These are potential programs they could spend ARPA money on. The Commissioners thought this was a good year to phase out what they felt was seed money and repurpose the funds to create something more beneficial to taxpayers.

Rep. Abel was concerned that this may send a message that the County is not interested in economic development within the County. Commissioner Piper explained that the new County Administrator is well-versed in economic development. CA Dorsett added that both organizations do different things. What GCEDC does is provide county-wide economic development through SB loans and technical support. What the Board of Commissioners is looking to do with a different consultant are projects specifically for the County organization that will impact the tax rates. They are different roles, and the new consultant would not replace the services GCEDC offers.

Rep. Sykes added that the County was providing money to help GCEDC's budget which gave the County a voice in making sure a portion of GCEDC's micro loans went to agricultural

businesses. As the prisoners in the jail are learning agricultural work, the County wanted to make sure they had these jobs to go to.

Social Service Funding

Commissioners Piper reported that the Commissioners had level-funded all of the social services from last budget season with the exception of two agencies. She explained that they were asked by the Executive Committee to narrow their focus of social service funding to agencies that feed directly into the County mission. A new application was sent out asking social service agencies to address these requirements. The narrowed view of social services included services to the elderly and disabled, and services to the DOC. Last year, the Commissioners did not fund Family Support agencies (Upper Valley Childcare, who did not apply as they did not need it - and TLC in Claremont) for this reason. Two that were missed last year were Whole Village, which is a family support organization, and Tri-County CAP, which is a fuel subsidy the Commissioners feel is a great program, but did not see why it should involve taxpayer money. Commissioner Piper added there was one new application this year from the Alternative Life Center in Littleton, but that the Commissioners decided not to fund it based on trying to be considerate to taxpayers this year and the lack of a complete application.

Commissioner Piper reported that FD Libby had received an email from VAV and WISE (domestic violence organizations in Plymouth and Lebanon) stating that the Burch House was no longer performing domestic violence services. The email asked the Commissioners to defund Burch House and instead to split the funding between VAV and WISE. The Commissioners agreed not to fulfill this request. Commissioner Piper explained that she had a long call with Matt Duclose at the Burch House and discovered the need to help the homeless at their organization was great. The Burch House had only removed advocacy programs (legal, police, hospital) in order to open their doors to provide help for a greater number of people. There are still victims of domestic violence in the homeless shelter. The Commissioners did not want to take funding away from the growing homeless challenge.

VCD and CADY

The Commissioners decided not to allocate funding to these organizations for the upcoming Fiscal Year. They received a letter from VCD and CADY which states that unless their organizations are funded, they are not able to help provide data and statistics to assist the Alternative Sentencing Department. VCD and CADY want to change their relationship with Grafton County and would like to receive \$25K each under social service funding. The Commissioners feel confident in the initial decision they made to cut this funding. The current agreement is that Grafton County Alternative Sentencing will only serve people in Northern Grafton County. ASD DePalo has been asked not to seek to provide service outside of this area. The Commissioners and Alternative Sentencing Department have been told repeatedly that these organizations are secure in their funding. These organizations provide assistance for youth and as youth do not go to the Grafton County DOC, the Commissioners do not see them as social services agencies based on the narrowed definition.

Rep. Gordon asked if all of these agencies had filed applications. Comm Piper confirmed that they had. Rep. Gordon reported that the organization NANA doesn't really exist anymore and had reportedly merged with Lakes Region Community Services. He added that many of these organizations are funded with grants. Commissioner Piper stated that the Commissioners will look into NANA regarding this information, and agreed that funding social services can be tricky, especially looking at some of the salaries of their executives.

Rep. Gordon added that diversion programs save the County a lot of money. Once a juvenile is branded as delinquent, it's highly likely they will end up in the criminal system and it costs the County \$100K per prisoner in the DOC. He also suspects the County Attorney has more than one of her attorneys dedicated to delinquency issues, so costs can be reduced there with diversion as well. Rep. Gordon asked if social service agencies had to report their statistics to the County. Commissioner Piper explained that these organizations have historically provided the data to the County because they were funded by the County. FD Libby also confirmed that all social services agencies file quarterly reports with data and statistics.

Rep. Sykes noted that this discussion will be a part of the final deliberations about the budget. He still has questions, and they will have further discussions about CADY and VCD. He added that while he understands that the Alternative Life Center had holes in their application, he thought it would be wise to make a further effort, even if not for this budget year, to set them up to put in a more complete application as they fill a geographic area that Grafton County does not currently support in helping citizens keep from homelessness, jail, etc. Commissioner Piper explained that the application is extremely easy to follow and that the ALC had asked for a lot of money up-front. Rep. Sykes noted that he has watched social services bend and flex over the years. There is a serious drug and alcohol program in this state, and any way they can identify people who help avoid and treat these issues is an opportunity which he does not want to see lost.

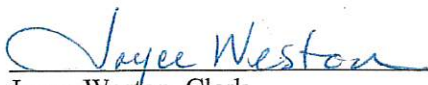
Closing Remarks

FD Libby reminded the Committee that for the following Tuesday's meeting, a physical quorum must be met and that all who are able should plan to attend in person.

Rep. Sykes stated that during the next meeting, the Committee would go through the budget page-by-page and vote. Then on the 28th, the Committee will present the budget to the full delegation.

At 5:05 PM with no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Sincerely,



Joyce Weston, Clerk