

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING

Administration Building  
3855 Dartmouth College Highway  
North Haverhill, NH  
June 14, 2019

PRESENT: Representatives, Sykes, Ladd, Stringham, French, Abel, Hennessey, Campion, Maes and Diggs. County Administrator Libby, Admin. Assistant Norcross, Commissioners Lauer, Piper and Morris.

OTHERS PRESENT: Register of Deeds Monahan

9:00AM Rep. Sykes called the meeting to order and began with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Rep. Abel.

CA Libby stated that she handed out a copy of the county fund balance policy as well as a breakdown of where the fund balance is at right now. She explained that the policy states that the county will have an undesignated fund balance of between 7%-14% of the total budget appropriations. She stated that it is very important to keep building that fund balance so they do not have fluctuations in the amount to be raised by taxes that are driven by changes in the surplus. She explained that the undesignated fund balance is a safety net for Grafton County and is not intended to be used as a means to decrease taxes. She then answered various questions from the committee.

CA Libby handed out the Surplus Projection spreadsheet to the Committee and discussed how she arrives at her projections for what the surplus will be at the end of the fiscal year and answered questions from the committee. She stated that she took as much of the extra proshare payment that she could in a fiscally responsible manner to help further lower the tax increase. She stated that she is using \$1.6 million to offset taxes versus the original \$1.1 million. The amount to be raised by taxes before the committee makes any changes is a 4.21%. She stated that she feels that this year they will be able to get the fund balance at the low end of the range that they should be in with the increased proshare payment and hopes to keep gaining each year. CA Libby answered more questions from the Committee. The Committee thanked CA Libby stating that this information is very helpful as they move forward in the budget process.

Rep. Hennessey stated that they need to take into account these are one (1) time increases in revenue to offset taxes and they are increasing personnel expenses which are an ongoing expense every year.

Equalized Valuation – CA Libby stated that Grafton County's Equalized Valuation has grown by \$660,719,656 and when the committee sets their budget she will be able to give them the individual town's tax impact. She noted that just because there is a certain increase in the county budget does not mean that every town is going to have that same increase. It is all based off the equalized valuation of each town.

## **Expenses**

Rep. Stringham stated that he feels the COLA should be lower than 2.5% and proposed a 1-1.5%. CA Libby asked for clarification with Rep. Sykes stating that her understand was that the Executive Committee can make the decision to cut a specific dollar and the Commissioners then decide where that money comes from. The Committee does not decide what specific areas to cut. Rep. Sykes agreed with this. Commissioner Lauer stated that the COLA that the employees have been given the last few years has been lower than the CPI and they have been taken on higher contributions to health insurance. The Commissioners' felt that this year the employees should receive a higher COLA. Commissioner Lauer stated that the COLA goes to the employees but it also keeps their wage scales up to date and competitive. Commissioner Piper stated that she feels that the employees were starved last year because of the large increase in health insurance and compromises they had to make asked a lot of them. She has seen from being a State Representative and a Commissioner the question of why the employees receive both a step and merit increase. She stated that historically they have always had a COLA, some years were higher than others but there has always been one.

Rep. Hennessey stated that throughout the budget she sees a lot of increases in travel and education and conference. She stated that although she believes in training she doesn't know if the county is the place to pay for those expenses.

### Victim Witness Program

CA Libby noted that \$159,000 of this budget is offset by the VOCA Grant. She stated that increases in this budget are offset by the increases in the grant.

### Human Resources

CA Libby stated that she made an error in the Commissioners Proposed budget, the wrong amount has been budgeted in the Contracted Services line. The amount for the expense needed is \$2,000 not \$1,500 and she would request that the committee put the \$500 in that line.

**MOTION:** Rep. French moved to add \$500 to the Contracted Services line. Rep. Maes seconded the motion. Reps., French, Diggs, Maes, Campion, Sykes, Stringham and Abel were in favor. Reps., Ladd and Hennessey were opposed. With the vote being seven (7) in favor and two (2) in opposition the motion passes.

Rep. Hennessey stated that the Education and Conference and Recruitment and Retention Line has a large increase and asked why. Rep. Campion stated that part of the increase includes organizational development training for the nursing home staff which feeds into recruitment and retention. There was an increase for the nurse practitioner and employment law updates as well.

### Information Technology

Rep. Hennessey stated that she doesn't understand why they are hiring a help desk employee. Rep. Sykes stated that they need to recognize that the size of the IT Department compared to other places is much smaller with more computers and operating systems to work with. They are understaffed in this department and they need additional help. Commissioner Lauer stated that in the nursing home over the last year they have significantly increased the amount of data that is being saved on computers and the IT Department still has the same amount of staff. Rep. Hennessey asked if they have thought about outsourcing this service. Rep. Stringham stated that his company outsources support desk help and it works. Rep. Campion stated that she would be very hesitant to outsource as it is very confidential information. Rep. Ladd stated that there are contracted services that can handle this and provide the service in a quick and efficient manner.

**MOTION:** Rep. Hennessey moved to decrease the IT Budget by \$100,000. Rep. Stringham seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Rep. Abel stated that he is against the motion for several reasons. They have such a small department as is that they should be putting more resources into it, not taking them away. He does not feel this is a wise decision. Rep. Stringham stated that the budget would still be up 10% over last year. He is comfortable that there should be enough support. Rep. Ladd stated that in support of the decrease he is not against the fact that staff need the support as quickly as possible, if they have not looked into the possibility of a more cost effective manner they should be doing so. CA Libby stated that the amount asking to be reduced is more than the position is and that leaves no money for a contracted service. There are items in this budget that need to be paid to keep the county running and she cautions against a reduction of this size in the IT Budget. She stated that the new position is worth \$70,487.36.

Rep. Hennessey moved to amend her motion and reduce the IT Budget \$70,000 Rep. Ladd seconded.

Discussion: Rep. Campion asked where the money is to come from for the contract services.

The Committee voted on the motion. Three (3) Reps., Hennessey, Ladd and Stringham were in favor. Six (6) Reps., Sykes, Campion, Abel, Maes, French and Diggs were opposed. With the vote being three (3) in favor and six (6) opposed the motion fails.

### Sheriff's Department

Rep. Ladd stated that as an elected official the salary has been set by the Delegation and he is concerned that the Sheriff is getting support from the special details. He doesn't support the additional special details and thinks the Sheriff should get paid what is appropriated by the Delegation.



Rep. Stringham is concerned about the Deputies line item increase being so high. CA Libby stated that the deputies' line item is going to be over budget this year and they have budgeted accordingly in FY20 which accounts for part of the increase.

Rep. Hennessey stated that she does not support hiring an additional person in this budget. There are a lot of initiatives that will save on man time.

**MOTION:** Rep. Hennessey moved to reduce the 29.5 hour person and any associated expenses totaling \$42,600. Rep. Ladd seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Commissioner Lauer stated that this is not a new position and they will then be down 29.5 hours. It's a transferred position from another line item. Commissioner Morris stated that Sheriff Stiegler is trying to increase the forensic investigation department. To be at the top of the game they need to do this. Rep. Stringham stated that while there are new initiatives in this budget it doesn't mean they need more money to accomplish those. The increase is significant.

The Committee voted on the motion. Four (4) Reps., French, Hennessey, Ladd and Stringham were in favor. Five (5) Reps., Sykes, Campion, Abel, Maes and Diggs were opposed. With the vote being four (4) in favor and five (5) opposed the motion fails.

Rep. Hennessey stated that the 9% increase in the Sheriff's Department budget will carry on going forward including additional COLAs next year and she is completely against that.

### Department of Corrections

Rep. Hennessey asked if they are seeing a decrease in population why they are not a decrease in staff. Rep. French stated that with the classification system at the DoC all units still need to be open and staffed. CA Libby stated that she has had discussion with Supt. Elliott and they are looking at their staffing levels and what they can do when the population levels fall below a certain amount. He will be discussing it with the Commissioners.

Rep. Ladd asked why meals are not declining. Commissioner Lauer stated that they are in a holding pattern right now not knowing what will happen with bail reform.

### Farm

Rep. Hennessey stated that she would like to see the Executive Committee recommend and voted on by the entire Delegation that they as a county look into the public benefit that the farm has vs the expense to make sure that they should have a County Farm and if so, should it be run as it is now. She stated that they have been seeing increasing net losses with the farm. Last year they were told with new people they wouldn't be seeing these increases. Rep. Sykes stated that last year they looked forward to the positive changes that would be coming. CA Libby stated that the

current farm budget was prepared by the previous farm manager. FM Knapton has only been here six (6) months and she needs to be given time to create her own budget and make her own changes. Rep. Stringham stated that he feels that it is too early for FM Knapton to be able to turn that around. They are \$100,000 in the negative. The DoC provides the inmate labor and they are short inmates which impacts the farm as well. It is not a standalone department. He stated that he would like to be thinking strategically where they would like to go but does not feel there is anything to act on in this current budget. Rep. Ladd stated that he agrees with what has been said. The Farm needs to be looked at. He has been and always will be an advocate of the farm, and wants to see it continue but is there a good working relationship between the DoC and the Farm. Commissioner Lauer stated that as a result of their Mission and Visioning Session with Primex one (1) of the four (4) goals is the future of the farm. She stated that they are aware of the issue and are taking the necessary steps to try and address it.

### Social Services

Rep. Stringham stated that there has been great work done by the Commissioners in thinking of the Social Services funding and how the money is spent between the two (2) goals of keeping the elderly in their homes and reducing recidivism.

**MOTION:** Rep. Stringham moved that the Commissioners fund 100% of the fund amounts towards those two (2) goals and remove any agencies that do not fit into those (2) goals.

Rep. Sykes stated that when this budget was discussed it was decided to have a committee to sit down and talk about the prioritizations of social service funding and next year's budget could accurately reflect these goals. Commissioner Piper stated that the two (2) goals definitions have been so widely construed. The Committee discussed their views on social service funding and agreed that the subcommittee to discuss the funding policy is needed. Rep. Ladd stated that there are two (2) childcare programs funded in this budget for a total of \$12,000 that do not fall under either of the funding goals. The Commissioners noted that they have discussed putting certain agencies on notice that they will not receive funding in the FY21 budget to give plenty of notice.

**MOTION:** Rep. Ladd moved to cut the social services budget by \$12,000. Rep. Stringham seconded.

Discussion: Rep. Abel stated that what is proposed is not significant enough to take action at this point. He stated that he would rather they go through the process that was set up with the subcommittee.

The Committee voted on the motion. Reps., Ladd, Stringham, Hennessey, Diggs and French were in favor. Reps., Maes, Abel, Campion and Sykes were opposed. With the vote being five (5) in favor and four (4) in opposition, the motion passes.

CA Libby stated that there are areas in the Farm budget that FM Knapton stated could be reduced and the Committee needs to vote to reduce the Farm budget by \$2,675.00



**MOTION:** Rep. Hennessey moved to reduce the Farm budget by \$2,675.00. Rep. Diggs seconded the motion all were in favor.

### Capital Outlay

Sheriff – Rep. Ladd stated that he doesn't understand why they need the plate carriers when not all of the local police departments have them. They are already equipped with bullet proof vests. He stated that he is questioning why they need three (3) cruisers as well.

Plate Carriers – Rep. Sykes stated that it increases the officer's safety from a rifle round. It was not too long ago when police officers in the North Country were dealing with a suspect with a rifle and a State Trooper was killed. Rep. Diggs stated that her concerns are also with not having the helmets. She asked why not purchase fewer plate carriers in order to purchase the helmets and fully equip part of the staff. Rep. Sykes stated that they are then getting into deciding who gets the equipment and who goes without. Rep. Abel stated that he believes the Sheriff, as a law enforcement professional, is better equipped to make the decision as to what his department needs. He thinks this is worthwhile.

Cruisers – Rep. Hennessey stated that during this discussion she wasn't satisfied with the answer the Sheriff gave in regards for the miles put on each cruiser. CA Libby stated that the three (3) year vehicle policy is not Sheriff Stiegler's policy. It is one that they have been following for years. Rep. Sykes stated that the Sheriff has stated that he is exploring other manufactures that may come in at a lower cost. Rep. Hennessey stated that she would like to see this number reduced based on finding a lower cost option. She stated that she would be disappointed to see that a lower cost option was found and they purchased more vehicles. Rep. Sykes stated that it is the Commissioners responsibility to decide how the appropriated money is spent.

**MOTION:** Rep. Ladd moved to reduce the Sheriff's Capital Outlay by \$14,000. Rep. Hennessey seconded. Three (3) Reps., Ladd, Hennessey and Stringham were in favor. Six (6) Reps., Sykes, Campion, Abel, Maes, French and Diggs were opposed. With the vote being three (3) in favor and six (6) in opposition the motion fails.

Rep. Stringham stated that he would like to discuss the asphalt paving. He stated that the overall cost would be 20% higher if they subdivided into multiple pieces due to the mobilization costs. He is in support of providing funding but would like to go into a reserve account until there is enough to do the entire project at once. Rep. Sykes stated that we don't have a maintenance capital reserve account. CA Libby noted that the Delegation needs to create that account. Rep. Stringham asked if they know what the added costs are by waiting each year. CA Libby stated that it has added 11% over three (3) years. Rep. Campion stated that they have put this off the last three (3) years and she recalls that each of those years the damage is greater and that cost is not included in the increase. Rep. Ladd stated that here is a lot of merit trying to do the whole project at once. You can coordinate with the community. Rep. Stringham stated that he feels a maintenance reserve account needs to be established.

**MOTION:** Rep. Stringham moved to reduce the Maintenance Capital budget by \$141,500 with the understanding that they will go to the Delegation for the creation of a Maintenance Capital Reserve Account. Rep. Ladd seconded the motion. Two (2) Reps., Stringham and Ladd were in favor. Seven (7) Reps., Sykes, Campion, Abel, Maes, Hennessey, Diggs and French were opposed. With the vote being two (2) in favor and seven (7) in opposition the motion fails.

**MOTION:** Rep. Hennessey moved to recommend to the Delegation to establish a Maintenance Capital Reserve account and put in \$2,175.00. Rep. French seconded the motion and all in favor.

**MOTION:** Rep. Abel moved to add \$43,000 in revenue to the Register of Deeds Budget, \$50,000 to the Department of Corrections and \$500,000 to surplus to reduce taxes. Rep. Hennessey seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Rep. Stringham stated that the CPI last year was 1.9% and he feels that they should lower the COLA to 1.9% for this year.

**MOTION:** Rep. Stringham moved to adjust the budget to reflect a 1.9% COLA. Rep. Hennessey seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Rep. Abel asked how many employees are under union contract. CA Libby stated that the union contract has been ratified and signed therefore they will have to go back and renegotiate the contract.

The Committee voted on the motion. Two (2) Reps., Ladd and Stringham were in favor. Six (6) Reps., Campion, Abel, Maes, Diggs, French and Sykes were in favor. With the vote being two (2) in favor and six (6) opposed the motion fails.

**MOTION:** Rep. Campion moved to recommend a budget of \$46,611,726 with \$27,086,914 or 4.17% to be raised by taxes. Rep. Maes seconded the motion. Six (6) Reps., Campion, Abel, Maes, Diggs, French and Sykes were in favor. Two (2) Reps., Ladd and Stringham were opposed. With the vote being six (6) in favor and two (2) in opposition the motion passes.

**MOTION:** Rep. Stringham moved to expend \$194,322 out of the Nursing Home Capital Reserve. Rep. Diggs seconded the motion and all were in favor.

**MOTION:** Rep. Ladd moved to expend \$206,800 out of Dispatch Capital Reserve. Rep. French seconded the motion and all were in favor.

**MOTION:** Rep. French moved to spend \$20,071 out of the Register of Deeds Surcharge account. Rep. Diggs seconded the motion and all were in favor.

**MOTION:** Rep. Campion moved to transfer \$181,818.32 into the Nursing Home Capital Reserve account from the reserved IDN funding from FY 2019. Rep. Diggs seconded the motion and all were in favor.

The Committee discussed the Social Services subcommittee and stated that Reps., Ladd, Diggs and Sykes will be on that Committee as well as all three (3) Commissioners. They set the first date for June 24<sup>th</sup> after the Delegation Meeting.

**MOTION:** Rep. French moved to pay mileage for the subcommittee meetings. Rep. Stringham seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Register of Deeds Monahan requested that during those subcommittee meetings the Executive Committee be mindful of former Commissioner Ahern's ten (10) county social service funding study that he had put together of what the other ten (10) counties funded for social services.

1:03 PM With no further business the meeting adjourned.

  
Jerry Stringham, Clerk

