

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
January 17, 2023

PRESENT: Commissioners Piper, Ahern and McLeod, County Administrator Libby and Administrative Assistant Norcross

OTHERS PRESENT: Sheriff Stiegler, Jon Warzocha, Maintenance Supt. Oakes, Anne Duncan Cooley – Grafton Regional Development Corporation

Commissioner Piper called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Sheriff Stiegler arrived and gave the following report: (* see attached)

Commissioner McLeod stated that she saw positive press regarding the Sheriff's Department. Sheriff Stiegler explained that Senator Hassan reaches out every six (6) months or so and when she is in the area she likes to stop by. He stated that she visited, and they discussed the forensics lab at the Sheriff's Department and what the US government could do for them. Sheriff Stiegler noted that he did not let the press into the lab because of disclosure agreements. He has no problem with showing anyone the lab with an appointment, as he is proud of the work the Sheriff's Department is doing but he cannot allow anyone with still or video photography in the lab.

Sheriff Stiegler stated that there is a new Clerk of Superior Court, and an issue has been brought to their attention that he wanted to make the Commissioners aware of. He explained that Clerk Carlson liked to have as many court security personnel as possible. The new clerk is not saying she is opposed to that but she explained that in-between hearings, there are usually two (2) bailiffs per room and at the magnetometer. When they are talking in the bailiff's room, during their break, it distracts other staff members, they also will talk at the magnetometer, and people think they are hanging out. He stated that the bailiffs do not have a place to go. Sheriff Stiegler stated that he assumes that the new Clerk of the Court was told that someone has heard them talking and it caused a distraction. He stated that he does not have anywhere for them to go. The security is great, but it causes a bit of a distraction or negative perception and it is a situation they will need to monitor. Commissioner Ahern stated that he is dismayed because he has been professionally using the courthouse since 1979 and he has never had any issues with the bailiffs. He explained that when he goes in and if there are four (4) or five (5) bailiffs, he feels more secure. Sheriff Stiegler stated that he was making the Commissioners aware of the situation.

Sheriff Stiegler stated that in the past, at the beginning of the year, he reports on any internal or external complaints on his department. He stated that he is happy to report that they did not have any citizen or internal complaints generated in 2022 for any deputies.

Sheriff Stiegler thanked Representative Fellows and the chairperson of the Merrimack County Delegation for testifying in support of HB 36. They helped that committee understand what the inflation and increased fees were all about.

Agenda Items:

1. Commissioner Piper asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the January 4th and January 10th meetings. Commissioner Piper had a couple of edits in each set.

MOTION: Commissioner McLeod moved to approve the minutes from the January 10th meeting as amended. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to approve the minutes from the January 4th meeting as amended. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion and all were in favor. January 4th.

2. Conway Village Fire District Agreement – CA Libby stated that the county has received an updated agreement for services the Conway Village Fire District provide on the Kancamagus Highway in Livermore. She stated that the services are paid through the payment in lieu of taxes that the county receives for Livermore and therefore there is no impact on the budget.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to approve the updated MOA with the Conway Village Fire District. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion and all were in favor.

3. NH Association of Counties Executive Committee – Commissioner Piper reported that she had asked the question if Commissioner McLeod was able to cast her vote virtually and she was told that Commissioner McLeod would be able to attend and vote via Zoom. Commissioner McLeod stated that she would be a member of the Executive Committee.

Jon Warzocha, Horizons Engineering & Supt. Oakes

Supt. Oakes stated that J. Warzocha, an engineer with Horizons Engineering, has suggestions or insights regarding the county's situation with Woodsville Water and Light and NH DES that he would like to share with the Commissioners. J. Warzocha stated that Horizons Engineering is working on both the water and wastewater projects for the county, which are on parallel paths and the relationship with WW&L is less than ideal. He explained that as the plans start to gel, the interaction with DES is going to have to ramp up. He knows that DES's approach is to try to discourage the creation of new septic systems, as smaller systems tend to struggle with compliance in terms of regulations. He stated that Supt. Oakes has had a discussion particularly on wastewater because of the RSAs involved with that and DES has some issues with the county trying to move forward with this project. J. Warzocha stated that WW&L has compliance issues with their discharge; he does not fully know what the regulatory status is for their plant, but they have a plant that is 40+ years old with very little updates. He stated that he would speculate that their largest customer is Grafton County and if the county comes off their system, the question is how can the remaining customers support it. He explained that it seems as though there is an opportunity for the county and WW&L to work together if WW&L would look forward. There

are many funding opportunities on the state and federal levels for wastewater projects and upgrades. He stated that he wants to ensure that everyone on the regulatory end of things understands why the county is looking to put in their own septic system. Supt. Oakes stated that he is advocating that J. Warzocha speak to Tracy Wood at NH DES and explain what is going on between the county and WW&L and why the county is looking to install their own system but did not want to give him the ok to do that without speaking to the Commissioners first. J. Warzocha stated that he knows Tracy Wood and having her understand what is behind all of the county's decisions would help. He stated that he would still recommend the county continue aggressively pursuing the ability to walk away from WW&L even with the current issues they are facing, and he will reach out to Tracy Wood, NH DES to have a discussion. The Commissioners agreed.

Supt. Oakes then gave the following report: (* see attached)

Supt. Oakes took some time to explain some of the projects the maintenance department has ongoing with Commissioner McLeod.

Anne Duncan Cooley – Grafton Regional Development Corporation

A. Duncan Cooley explained what services they provide at GRDC and took time to discuss some of the various grants GRDC offers. She handed out the attached document that outlines services GRDC provided in 2022. She answered questions from Commissioners.

Agenda Items

1. CA Libby submitted the following CDBG claims for Commissioner Piper to sign:

Grafton RDC – Micro - \$29,912.59
Belknap EDC – Micro - \$28,740.00

2. December Financial Reports:

Revenue:

- CA Libby reported that the Nursing Home continues to be at an average daily population of 84. Each month the revenue falls behind a little more. She stated that they would see the increase in rates effective January 1st which will help. CA Libby noted that she is hoping to have an increased ProShare payment at the end of the fiscal year. CA Libby went on to report that the DoC is behind in revenue but they did receive their first federal inmate last week. The Circuit Court line that is showing behind because they are waiting for a onetime payment from the Upper Valley Prosecutorial Association, which is roughly \$100,000.

Expense

- CA Libby stated that one area of concern is contract nursing. The nursing home has spent \$2 million in the first six (6) months of the fiscal year and are already over expended. She stated that within the nursing budget, because of the shortage of staffing, they should be able to cover that expense.

Prorated report

- CA Libby reported that the county is under revenue by \$645,000 and under expended by \$1.7 million. She noted that this decrease in revenue is starting to lower the unassigned fund balance.

3. Mascoma Community Health ARPA Request – Commissioner McLeod reported that she spoke with Councilor Warmington and Councilor Warmington was not aware that Mascoma Health might not make it through to the merger with HealthFirst. Commissioner McLeod expressed concern to Councilor Warmington that the county appeared to be the only entity providing bridge funding for Mascoma Health and whether any of the conversion foundations such as the Endowment for Health would consider funding them or the NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Commissioner Ahern stated that he spoke on the phone with Mike Samson and he asked if Mascoma Community Health would consider partnering with Grafton County because the county can receive Medicare and Medicaid money as well as VA money. M. Samson stated that he had not thought about it and would look into it. Commissioner Ahern stated that what it boils down to is what is a human life worth. What they may be doing is saving lives and the amount of money Mascoma Community Health is asking for, he {Commissioner Ahern} is willing to give, but the ultimate decision has to be made by the Executive Committee.

Commissioner Piper stated that she thinks that the Board of Commissioners is doing all of its due diligence regarding the possibility of providing more ARPA funds to Mascoma Community Health. The last week has involved many phone calls trying to get everyone involved that can be involved to help them with this decision. She thinks the Commissioners are doing everything they can to be informed to make the best decision for residents/taxpayers. She has been involved with three (3) conversations. She reported that CA Libby and she talked to Kate Horgan at the NH Association of Counties on Thursday, and Kate reached out to Gina Powers, an advocate for HealthFirst. G. Powers reported that the parties appear close to an agreement with DHHS.

Commissioner Piper stated that she talked with Senator Prentiss, who was first contacted by Mascoma Community Health. Senator Prentiss spoke with both G. Powers and Councilor Warmington. Commissioner Piper reported that she spoke with Councilor Warmington this morning as well and she confirmed that DHHS has a verbal commitment in this deal with HealthFirst. She believes DHHS has been the biggest hurdle. G. Powers is working very hard to make this deal go through.

Commissioner McLeod stated that gap funding is needed but is concerned that Grafton County is the only major funder. This puts the county in a difficult position when other not-for-profits in the county ask for help and will we have the funding. She does not want to stand in the way, she

just foresees Mascoma Community Health coming back in a few months for more funding as this process seems to be taking longer than expected. She asked if the Commissioners are comfortable telling the rest of the organizations in Grafton County that the County gave all their money to one organization. She asked how they help Mascoma while also helping them look in other places. Commissioner Ahern stated that this is doing something to potentially save lives. Commissioner Piper stated that in terms of other organizations, she is sympathetic to that. The previous Board of Commissioners made a decision to be restrictive with the ARPA funds and hold it to county campus needs. She has wanted to open this up to community organizations but there was opposition to that, with the idea being that they can save taxpayers money by investing in campus infrastructure. She stated that her feeling is that she is not optimistic about building their own septic system. That is a lot to ask of their employees to manage that when they are short staffed. She thinks that when they look at the rest of the ARPA list, that there is going to be more funding available. Commissioner McLeod asked if the Commissioners would consider \$200,000 rather than \$250,000 to give Mascoma Community Health some relief while still maintaining some ability to help other not for profits, and the County can continue to help them legislatively. Commissioner Piper and Commissioner Ahern agreed.

MOTION: Commissioner McLeod moved to fund \$200,000 to Mascoma Community Health to be paid in two (2) installments, \$100,000 February 1st and \$100,000 March 1st. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

4. CA Libby stated that in the beginning of September the Board of Commissioners at the time approved two (2) ARPA requests that Director of Communications Andross had made. There was a request for \$192,000 for dispatch furniture and \$74,550 for an alarm monitoring system. The Commissioners approved both requests unanimously. She explained that at the September Executive Committee meeting they ran out of time and never heard Director Andross' requests. CA Libby thought was they should go to the Executive Committee at their meeting next week because they have already been through the vetting process with the Board of Commissioners and approved. The next step is the Executive Committee, which these requests were on the agenda for, but were bumped because of time and were never put back on the Executive Committee agenda. She stated that she does not know procedurally if the board can reconsider that decision or if they need to forward them to the Executive Committee and let them make that decision. CA Libby explained what the two (2) requests were for Commissioner McLeod. She stated that these two (2) requests are still out there and Director Andross has asked about them. Commissioner Piper stated that there is a new board now and criteria is possibly changing. Commissioner Ahern stated that in fairness, the Commissioners previously approved the requests and he feels they need to send it to the Executive Committee to go through the proper process. Commissioner McLeod stated that she would not want to step on the toes of the prior Board of Commissioners unless there was a reason to do so. Commissioner Piper stated that she sees both sides, these requests total \$266,550. CA Libby stated that to go back now and say that they have changed priorities and not fund it seems not right to her. The Commissioners reviewed the requests again along with the full ARPA request list.

CA Libby stated that \$5,766,000 is the cost for the Courthouse Design, Municipal Well System, Municipal Septic System, Mascoma Community Health and the two (2) requests from Dispatch, which will leave with \$533,000 remaining in ARPA funds. Commissioner Piper stated that with

the obstacles they are encountering, she does not foresee the county having their own municipal septic system for \$1.3 million. CA Libby stated that she would not give that money away at this time and keep it reserved for that purpose if it does become possible to do. She noted that there are two (2) more years to obligate this money. Commissioner Piper stated that she is tending to think there will be more money left than they realize because she is not optimistic about the septic system. The hurdles between the Municipal Association and DES are large. She noted that legislation was written and passed, to separate the county from WW&L for electricity needs but the county could not find another electric provider. That effort was ultimately not successful. CA Libby stated that they are also reserving the money for the municipal wells, as they do not know if that is feasible at this time. They are waiting on the results of the feasibility study.

The Commissioners further discussed Director Andross' two (2) requests. Commissioner Piper stated in the early part of the conversation, Commissioner McLeod had pointed out that a previous governor had made changes to a budget due to financial constraints. If the new board does not recommend the \$266,550 for the Dispatch requests, they would have over \$700,000 left in ARPA funds after reserving the funding for the wells, septic and funding \$200,000 to Mascoma Community Health Center. CA Libby stated that if the Commissioners were going to change their vote on the Dispatch requests, they would need to make a vote because it was previously approved and is waiting to go to the Executive Committee. Commissioner Ahern stated that they have an ethical obligation to push these two (2) requests forward. The Board of Commissioners legally voted these on last year and the Executive Committee should hear them.

MOTION: Commissioner McLeod moved to not advance the Dispatch requests to the Executive Committee. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion.

Discussion: CA Libby asked if these two (2) requests would go away. CA Libby stated that she had brought this to the Commissioners' attention that the requests should be put on the agenda for Monday's meeting. Commissioner Piper stated that the issue that she is trying to solve is what requests to advance at this point and does not think that it would prevent the requests from coming back to the board at a future date. CA Libby stated that it is sounding like there will be no more requests if there will be \$533,000 left in ARPA funding and the Commissioners are looking to give that to communities. She stated that the Commissioners already approved this as a board, and she agrees with Commissioner Ahern. It is not Director Andross' fault that because of scheduling with the Executive Committee, it was not heard. It should be up to the Executive Committee at this point to decide if they want to approve it. Commissioner Piper stated that this is a new board and not the past board who approved these requests. There is a new voice and new interests being brought to the table. The current board needs to make this decision not the past. She does not feel it is unseemly to change a budget. Commissioner McLeod stated that she feels they can do with these two (2) requests what they want. Commissioner Piper noted that she was disappointed in the requests that came forward on this list. She thought the Executive Committee was looking for more visionary requests, not all of the same types of small items that have been previously requested. CA Libby stated that the department heads were not told that it had to be visionary; they were told if there were future, ARPA requests what it would be. Commissioner Piper stated that the fault then lies with them. The Department Heads should have been directed differently in order to

address the concerns of the Executive Committee. She has felt that they should provide money to the communities for quite some time, and she was the only one on the previous board. Commissioner Ahern stated that he does not agree, this decision should be left to the Executive Committee.

Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Piper “yes”, Commissioner McLeod “yes”, Commissioner Ahern “no”. With the vote being two (2) in favor and one (1) in opposition the motion passes.

Commissioner Issues:

1. Commissioner Ahern reported that there is a new Senate Bill, SB23, establishing a study committee on meat processing, to find ways to make existing processes more efficient. He stated that a state meat inspection program does exist, and this will be the discussion of that committee.

12:26 PM with no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Martha S. McLeod, Clerk



Grafton County Sheriff's Department Operations Division

Monthly Statistics

December 2022

-Transport:

- Court Transports: 12 Prisoner Transports: 46
- CSO movements from jail to court: 21
- Juvenile Transports: 0
- Involuntary Emergency Admissions (IEA): 4

-Arrest:

-Arrest on warrant, Superior or Civil Warrant, Instate Warrant, EBW, GCSO cases and on view arrest(complaint generated by this agency)

Total Arrest: 22

-Civil:

(CSI inforsew cannot differentiate types of civil service, In Hand, Abode or Non Est)

Total Monthly Civil Service: 146

-Warrants:

-Total # of Active Warrants: Criminal= 409
Civil =18
Total 427

-Motor Vehicle Activity

-Motor Vehicle Stops: 16

-Fleet Mileage

- Total Miles Driven: 21,878

Grafton County Sheriff's Department Investigative Services Division Activity



December 2022

In addition to pre-existing cases and investigations the Grafton County Investigative and Computer Forensic Units had the following activity for the month of December 2022. The Criminal Division continues to learn and often struggle with the new records management system (CSI).

Narcotic Offenses	2
Possession of Child Sexual Abuse Images:	1
Assist Other Agencies	6
Technical Assists	9
ICAC Search Warrant Operation(s)	2
ICAC School or Public Outreach Presentations	4

Evidence or Property obtained to include electronics or storage medium for review, examination, delivered or taken into the Computer Forensic Unit (CFU).

Other Computer	1
Communication Devices (Cell Phone):	25
Computer Hardware / Software	21
Laptop Computer:	3
Electronic Equipment:	18
Drugs:	3
Audio Video:	2

Training: 1 Investigator 1-Week Computer Forensic Scripting