

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
March 10, 2022

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Ed Wargo – SNS, Supt. Oakes, Sheriff Stiegler, Director Andross, DoC
Supt. Elliott, Broadband Committee – Nik Coates, Carina Park, Brigitte Codling – via Zoom, Ed
Morris – Via Zoom.

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

Commissioner Ahern stated that he received a disturbing email from the NHAC that concerns
him. He is afraid that the federal government is going to clawback ARPA money. Commissioner
Piper stated that she was on a Zoom call with the Economic Community & Workforce
Development Committee with NACo. At the beginning of the meeting, the Chair had mentioned
a clawback of ARPA funds. She spoke with Kate Horgan about it who contacted Senator
Shaheen regarding the issue, asking them to oppose the language.

K. Robinson from NCIC was present for the meeting and asked for more information on this. J.
Libby stated that she received an email from Senator Shaheen's office stating that they are
closely tracking the provision. Senator Shaheen is opposed to the clawback. The clawback was
removed from the house version of the budget that will be voted on and will then head to the
senate. Commissioner Lauer stated that the federal government is looking to remove roughly \$7
billion, which they have stated would first come from the States, then the territories, tribal
governments and then local county governments. Commissioner Piper added that from NACo
there seemed to be a sense that counties should not worry about a clawback; they believe the
federal government will be able to get enough money without having to touch the counties.

Commissioner Piper asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the March 7th
meeting. Commissioner Piper had a few edits.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to approve the minutes from March 7th as
amended. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Ed Wargo – SNS

E. Wargo explained that 16 switches and licenses were missed on the original quote in the first
ARPA request due to an oversight, but they have been ordered and have arrived. The cost is
\$94,666.08. Commissioner Ahern stated that he is disturbed to see this. The County has a
contract with SNS, and they are asking taxpayers to pick up something that SNS missed and
should have caught. He stated that he does not feel the county should be paying for this.

Commissioner Lauer stated that the switches have already arrived and therefore need to be paid for.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to recommend approval of switches and licenses for \$94,666.08. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer “yes”, Commissioner Piper “yes”, Commissioner Ahern “no”. With the vote being two (2) in favor and one (1) in opposition the motion passes.

DoC – Supt. Elliott

Supt. Elliott thanked the Commissioners for the funding from the first round of ARPA request for the DoC’s much needed infrastructure updates.

Supt. Elliott explained that the DoC has two (2) cruisers that are seven (7) years old. One (1) of the cruisers has 100,000 miles the other is just under 100,000 miles. He stated that he would have requested a new cruiser in their FY24 budget but with the availability of ARPA funds, he is requesting to purchase a 2022 Ford F-150. He explained that by having a truck, they would have more uses for it. It would be used for transportation but could also be used for roadside supervision for spring cleanups and be a delivery vehicle to shelters, food pantries, moving goods and supplies around the complex.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to recommend approval of a cruiser for the DoC for \$44,735.04. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Broadband Committee – Nik Coates, Carina Park, Bridgitte Codling, Ed Morris

N. Coates stated that the Broadband Committee would like to give an overview of what they have been working on since they last met with the Commissioners. He stated that the goal has always been to do everything they can to not impact taxpayers of Grafton County. The Committee also had a goal to bring telehealth options, remote learning and work, everyday activities for residents, as well as have a project to serve all towns. He stated that they are aware that some towns have other opportunities, and the Broadband Committee is not trying to obstruct those opportunities. N. Coates stated that the committee has been able to leverage \$10,000 from the NCIC Technical Assistance program as well as \$25,000 from CDBG funds.

C. Park reported that the Broadband Committee has been holding regional meetings that have been well attended. They have also started to meet with individual Selectboards as they feel that when they meet one on one with the towns they have a more in-depth conversation, a better sense of what the individual towns’ goals are and how they can help. She noted that the original plan of the committee was to build the backbone but in meeting with the communities, they have learned that most of them do not have the resources to complete the last mile and do not know where to start. They have morphed their thinking to considering how to address the unique needs for the communities but still stay on the middle mile path and as they are meeting with the communities they are learning that the towns need more help.

N. Coates stated that as part of the funding they received from CDBG as well as the initial funding from the County, they combined those funds together and came up with high-level designs for every town in Grafton County, which is a starting point for each community. It gives them a basic soft cost figure and a ground to stand on, competitively. Over the next few weeks, the committee will work to distribute these designs to the towns. C. Park stated that this shows a product of the County's ARPA funds.

N. Coates reported that, with the county ARPA funds, the final engineering for the middle mile has been started, which covers 110 miles of the total 353 and is nearing completion. The final engineering can turn on a construction project tomorrow. The engineers could start to submit applications tomorrow for the first 110 miles.

N. Coates stated that the committee did not receive the NTIA grant but they have been discussing with the Congressional Delegation where they had weak points in their application. They will be meeting with NTIA staff as well. C. Park noted that all of the awards in the last round of NTIA funds were awarded to final mile projects. The next round of NTIA is specifically for the middle mile. There will also be other sources of funding coming available soon, there are many funds out there that they are able to apply for.

N. Coates stated that the request the Broadband Committee had submitted is to complete the remaining 240 miles of final engineering for the middle mile, which would make the entire project shovel ready. The 2nd part of the request is the final engineering for all of the towns. This would get the towns all shovel ready for grant opportunities. N. Coates stated that this has been their plan but as the Committee started to look at things, they came up with an alternative to propose to the Commissioners. He reported that Bristol and Hebron applied for a Northern Borders Regional Commission grant and received \$1.8 million, of which \$800,000 is a match. There are multiple private entities interested in putting funds in that project as well. The Bristol, Hebron project is the first leg of the Grafton County project. N. Coates stated that the committee put in an application with this as well to see if they could get a first leg complete with a smaller grant. The Committee can leverage those dollars as well and build out completed loops of the project. He discussed the three (3) options they have looked into. He stated that the committee is asking the County to authorize ARPA funds to move forward with best plan, which would be determined after meeting with internet providers. N. Coates stated that he feels they can meet with the providers to learn how they can benefit each other. They would report to the Commissioners within 60 days with their recommendation for the best course moving forward. C. Park asked the Commissioners for their input on what they feel is the best use of County funds, whether it be focusing on the detailed level designs for the 39 communities or get shovel in the ground and complete the first phase.

Commissioner Lauer stated that she feels that the details for the small towns is critical. Many towns have small offices and need this help to get ready to apply for grants. Commissioner Ahern stated that broadband is specifically mentioned in the ARPA criteria. He has looked at what the Broadband Committee has done as the conduit to make this happen, so everyone in the county can benefit. He stated that he relies on the committee to do the best for all concerned. Commissioner Piper stated that she agrees with Commissioner Lauer, rather than completing a loop, she would prefer to work with all of the communities to create that final mile.

Commissioner Piper asked N. Coates and the committee to address the NHEC letter that the Commissioners received. C. Park explained that they have had many conversations with NHEC. The Broadband Committee has met with NHEC at their location and NHEC has a regular appearance at the Broadband Committee meetings. She stated that the Broadband Committee does not want to duplicate efforts. The committee has had conversations with NHEC about the possibility of crossing paths and how they could work together in the future. She explained that a concern of theirs is that from what they can gather from NHEC's website and maps, in about half of the Grafton County communities where NHEC has customers, they cover less than half of those communities. C. Park stated that the Broadband Committee is not looking for competition. They are trying to address the county as a whole and what is beneficial for everyone. N. Coates stated that they are trying to provide a service to as many people as possible for a good price. He went on to state that he believes NHEC chose Grafton County because there is a lot of momentum behind what this committee is doing.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to recommend approval of the Broadband Committee request for \$3,716,800. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Maintenance – Supt. Oakes

1. High Pressure Water Jet System – Supt. Oakes stated that this system would be used to clear stubborn clogs in sewage pipes. His department would be able to address issues more quickly as they come up and would save money over time. He explained that he has hired contractors a number of times to use this and it is expensive. He stated that he believes last year at the Nursing Home alone they spend around \$20,000 for the various sewage issues that a jet system was needed to fix. The cost of this Jet System is \$7,160.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to recommend funding for a High Pressure Water Jet system for \$7,160.00. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

2. Flooring in the Admin Building – Supt. Oakes stated that he is looking to replace carpet and vinyl flooring in the following places in the Administration Building:

- Carpet in IT and Payroll Offices
- Vinyl flooring and cove base molding in the Maintenance Department restroom
- Replace carpeting in UNH Extension corridor and conference room with vinyl planking

He explained that these carpets are either heavily stained or worn and rippled causing a tripping hazard. He stated that the vinyl flooring in the Maintenance Department restroom has shrunk, leaving a gap between the flooring and base molding which creates a places for buildup of foreign materials.

Commissioner Ahern stated that he is in favor of trying to avoid the tripping challenges in the hallway leading to the UNH Conference room but they have to separate needs vs. wants. He cannot justify the other requests other than the hallway. Commissioner Lauer stated that she thinks they would see this request in the capital outlay budget in the next year or so. She went on to state that this is not the highest priority of all requests but thinks it meets the Commissioners' criteria of a one-time purchase in the budget. Commissioner Piper agreed with Commissioner Lauer but stated that she understands Commissioner Ahern's point. She stated that she sees this request as getting into the budget, and if it were in the regular budget, she would likely not support it as she would see it as a want not a need but it meets their ARPA funding criteria.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to recommend funding for the flooring in the Administration Building for \$14,000.00. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

3. Utility Tractor

Supt. Oakes explained that this tractor would replace the ten (10) year old Kubota RTV with a plow. He stated that the Kubota is falling apart and the corrosion is causing a number of issues. His staff will not drive it because it is very unreliable and they have been stranded many times. They would like to have a tractor with a sander on the back as well for the sidewalks.

K. Robinson stated that this purchase would qualify for a USDA grant that would cover a portion of the costs. She explained the grant program and stated that she would write the application if she was authorized by CA Libby.

Commissioner Piper stated this is a one-time expense, which meets their funding criteria.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to recommend funding for the Utility Tractor with the contingency that Supt. Oakes works with K. Robinson on the grant application. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion and all were in favor.

4. BAS System – Supt. Oakes stated that he would like to completely convert the Administration Building and Nursing Home Building Automation system. He explained that over a year ago they began upgrading the Trane LON-based BAS's in both buildings and in the process the contractor ran into some integration issues with some of the existing LON field controllers and therefore they have been left with a few areas that they cannot control properly through the updated hybrid system. He stated that in addition, the existing LON field controllers are 20 years old and their supportability is waning and therefore they are looking at having to upgrade the system sooner rather than later. Supt. Oakes noted that to keep project costs down his department staff would perform much of the labor needed.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to recommend funding for the BAS Upgrade for 235,400. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Dispatch – Director Andross

1. Additional Functionality to CSI Info Share Software – Director Andross explained that this phase 2 of this project and would add additional functionality to their new records software system to implement the ability to track personnel training and standards internally. It will also allow them to complete the software deployment for their regional agencies to be able to implement and share data and records with the new core system. Commissioner Ahern asked why this was not completed with the original project if it is so important. Director Andross explained that they did not want to take on all of the administrative and start up tasks at the same time. In a week or so they will be going live with the core pieces and then they will add on these additional pieces as the summer goes on. Commissioner Ahern then asked what would happen if they did not receive these additional pieces. Director Andross stated that they would move forward with the core pieces and add on the others as they can find a way to do it.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to recommend funding for the additional functionality to their CSI Info Share Software for \$48,400. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper “yes”, Commissioner Lauer “yes”, Commissioner Ahern “no”. With the vote being two (2) in favor and one (1) in opposition the motion passes.

2. Move Radio Control Station from Courthouse to Littleton – Director Andross explained that the radio system used to dispatch Littleton PD and agencies responding with them is a repeater system based in Littleton. Dispatch accesses this repeater using a control station radio currently located at the courthouse. During times of business traffic and when utilizing multiple resources, the radio becomes inoperable and messages need to be repeated. This project will move the control station to the Mann Hill tower site to eliminate the local interference issues.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to recommend funding to move the Radio Control Station for \$7,500. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion and all were in favor.

3. Additional Dispatcher Position – Director Andross stated that the full time dispatcher position would supplement coverage historically provided by part-time staff who are no longer available to the department. He cannot depend on part-time help to cover the full time positions. At the conclusion of the project period, this position would be in the regular department process. Commissioner Piper stated that she is going to ask that personnel requests be put into the budget requests. She is not going to support ongoing operational costs using ARPA funds. She stated that she thinks the county must be transparent for the taxpayers. The taxpayers need to see the actual amount of money that it costs departments to run the county. Commissioner Lauer stated that she understands the need for another dispatcher and she would likely support this in the budget but not under ARPA requests.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to not recommend the additional dispatcher position. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Sheriff’s Department – Sheriff Stiegler

1. Full Time Deputy & Part Time Detective – Sheriff Stiegler explained that their office currently averages 400-500 active warrants in their system on a daily basis. The full time deputy

would be mainly used for arrest warrant service and would have a significant impact on this growing problem.

He explained that the part time detective position would be almost exclusively for the investigation of child exploitation with the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. Commissioner Piper stated that, again, she does not believe that ARPA funds should be used for personnel costs. The criteria for this round of ARPA requests are one-time expenses that would be in the operating budget. She stated that she encourages this personnel request to be put in the budget. Commissioner Piper noted that the positions that were approved through ARPA for the County Attorney's Office were approved because they were three (3) year positions directly due to Covid. Commissioner Lauer agreed, noting that she does not want to use ARPA funds to fund a long-term position. This is a rare occurrence, the receipt of ARPA funds.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to not recommend approval of a new full time deputy and part time detective. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

2. Replace Glass Wall – Sheriff Stiegler explained that the current glass wall is extremely flimsy when the door handle is pulled on which presents a significant safety issue for employees and external customers. The glass wall has also caused distracting light glares during certain work hours in the day. He stated that a larger concern is they occasionally have juveniles in their custody that anyone could see through the glass wall, which creates privacy concerns.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to recommend approval of replacing the glass wall for \$5,000. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

3. Office Upgrades – Sheriff Stiegler explained that their photocopy machine is reportedly at or near its end of service life and their shredder is not adequate in size and becomes very labor intensive when in use. He stated that they are also looking to make their workstations ergonomically compliant while at the same time presenting a professional appearance. Commissioner Lauer stated that this meets the criteria of being a one-time expense and is money well spent. If this were taxpayer money for the furniture, she would say no but she would support it through ARPA.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to recommend approval of office upgrades for \$19,837.66. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer “yes”, Commissioner Ahern “yes”, Commissioner Ahern “no”. With the vote being two (2) in favor and one (1) in opposition the motion passes.

4. Soft Body Armor Replacement – Sheriff Stiegler stated that he has seven (7) full time deputies whose soft body armor either expired within the last 6 months or will expire by years end and he would be putting this request in next year's budget.

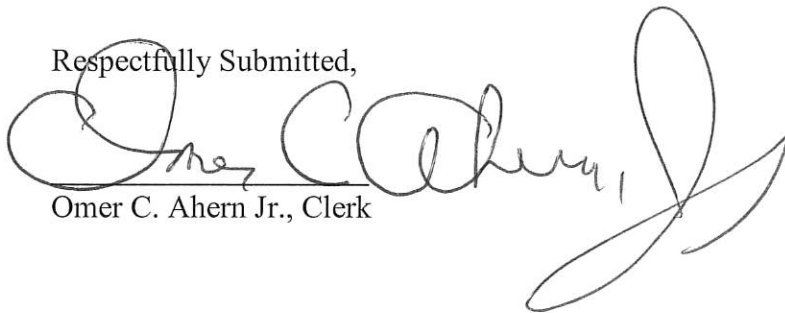
MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to recommend soft and body armor for \$34,733.00. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion and all were in favor.

5. Uniform Replacement – Sheriff Stiegler stated that he is looking to purchase Class A uniform dress blouses for two (2) deputies, twelve (12) sports jackets and utility belts with equipment pouches, court security shoulder patches, and ear microphones for twelve (12) court security officers. Commissioner Piper stated that she appreciates the attentiveness from Sheriff Stiegler regarding morale in his department. Sheriff Stiegler noted that it is about professional appearance.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to recommend approval of uniform replacements for \$6,210.00. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

11:36 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Omer C. Ahern Jr.", written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Omer C. Ahern Jr., Clerk