

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
April 21, 2022

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

OTHERS PRESENT: FM Jurentkuff, Office Administrator Evans, Sheriff Stiegler, Supt. Elliott,
Register Monahan, HR Director Clough, HR Senior Generalist Fuller

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

Wage Study Discussion – CA Libby, HR Director Clough, HR Senior Generalist Fuller

HR Director Clough explained that since their meeting on March 15th, they have worked both on their own gathering further information and with PayPoint HR requesting that they scale down the comparators and remove the metropolitan comparators that they used. She stated that PayPoint HR did this and it resulted in Grafton County being overall 3% below market. She explained that they utilized that information combined with the most current labor market situations in the immediate area and the positions at Grafton County that have had the longest and highest vacancy rates, along with adjusting for the internal equity variance reported in the original report. She stated that they were able to utilize the pay scale that was presented by PayPoint and they placed positions accordingly. She explained that they used the framework of the wage chart from PayPoint because they felt strongly that they needed a new pay scale. She explained that they needed to correct the internal equity variances that they had, as well as correcting the inconsistency between ladders. The new charts set the difference in between the new grades to 5% and this allows incentives to employees to seek positions with more responsibilities and makes it financially rewarding. She stated that they have reduced the original number of pay grades from 32 to 30, which they felt better met the needs of Grafton County. The chart increases the average spread from minimum to maximum of 40%, which according to the survey, is the average spread. She noted that this new wage scale reduces the number of maxed out employees at Grafton County by 85% and allows for further employee growth. HR Director Clough explained that they were able to look at the positions that they knew needed the greatest adjustment and this new wage chart allows them to become marketable positions. She stated that it is important to note that with a 2.5% unemployment rate and employees leaving the market at alarming rates, the county must remain competitive. It is also very important for benefited positions to remember that pay is only one piece of the total compensation package. She noted that the benefits were shown in the wage study to be very competitive.

Commissioner Piper stated that the Commissioners know PayPoint did not give them what they asked for despite many requests. She stated that they were not able to use the original wage study and asked HR Director Clough if they are able to use this wage chart. HR Director Clough

explained that this is the wage chart framework from PayPoint and they were able to use some of the documentation that was given to them to create these wage charts.

Commissioner Piper stated that one (1) of the reasons they paid \$40,000 rather than the \$20,000 for this study was to look at different pay structures. She stated that it is by no means universal in the ten (10) counties that there is almost a 95% guarantee of a 5% increase every year. That level of increase is unheard of in the private sector, regardless of how well an employee performs. This issue was brought up as a bipartisan concern two (2) budget cycles ago. HR Director Clough explained that she spoke with PayPoint HR about that and asked what they recommended. They talked about constructing a minimum, mid and maximum range for an increase. A true merit-based system gives a range for a pay increase based on an employee's performance. She explained that an issue with merit-based raises in a public employer setting as large as the County's, is that they would need to budget the highest increase for every employee and then it is on the evaluator's end to accurately evaluate employees. There would be a large disparagement in how a supervisor evaluates. There will never be two (2) supervisors who evaluate the same. HR Director Clough stated that they were convinced by what PayPoint HR said that maintaining the current structure would be the best for Grafton County.

CA Libby explained that they took the new wage chart and placed employees on it according to their existing wages, where all employees received a minimum of a \$0.50/hour raise. The cost to implement the new wage chart is \$753,000. She noted that the average increase across the board is \$0.94 or a 4.5% increase. There are employees that have larger increases and some that have smaller increases. The positions that have the highest increases are the ones the county is having the hardest time recruiting for and are the lower paid positions. A lot of the management, higher paid positions are receiving some of the lowest percentages. She explained that the current budget includes merit increases from the existing wage charts. She stated that the recommendation would be to implement these wage charts and employees would still be eligible for their step increases in FY23. If the Commissioners were in favor of this wage scale, she would send the wage charts to the department heads with a list of where their employees would be placed and have them redo their budgets. She noted that department heads have already factored in a 3% increase in their budgets and therefore there will be an increase with this new wage chart but not significant. CA Libby stated that if the Commissioners were to give a COLA of 4.5% rather than implement these wage charts it would cost roughly the same amount but would not address the issues that these new wage charts do.

CA Libby stated that she is hoping to come out of today's meeting with some direction from the Commissioners regarding the proposed wage charts.

Commissioner Piper stated that she respects the new wage scale and understands that the new scale helps solve the county's problem with recruitment and retention as well as restoring internal equity and rewarding and incentivizing employees.

Commissioner Ahern stated that the County is a very labor-intensive institution. They need the right employees, and they need to do what they can to attract those employees and keep them. The Commissioners have responsibilities to take care of employees as well as the rest of the items in the budget. He noted that he is unsure if they need to have everything else in the budget.

As he looks at the Sysco invoices, the inmates eat better than many of his constituents. The Commissioners need to take a close look to ensure they are making the best use of ARPA money.

Commissioner Lauer stated that she likes the fact there are 30 grades with a set 5% increase between grades. CA Libby stated that this recommended wage scale has a COLA for FY 23 contained within as these wages are current market data.

Commissioner Piper stated that she feels they should implement the new wage charts and see what the budget looks like. CA Libby stated that as part of the project team, they fully recommend implementing these wage charts that have been presented.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to adopt the proposed wage chart effective July 1st. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

CA Libby asked if they should discuss this with the Employee Council, as this is something many employees are waiting to hear about. Commissioner Lauer stated that the employees can look at the wage charts and see they used the framework from PayPoint HR. Commissioner Piper suggested making a presentation to all employees with the new wage scale on the screen and explain why they did what they did, rather than meeting with the smaller group of the Employee Council. CA Libby stated that they could incorporate that presentation into next Thursday's budget meeting. Commissioner Piper asked when they could have the new budget figures. CA Libby stated that she would get the department heads the lists of where their employees are placed on the new charts and ask them to reconfigure their budget. She will have the numbers by next Thursday.

Commissioner Piper stated that there are requests for four (4) new positions. Commissioner Ahern stated that the County Attorney's office is too big. There are police departments that should be doing the investigating. The County Attorney's Office has been without an investigator for a number of years, and he feels they can continue to get by without one. Commissioner Lauer stated that she does not feel qualified enough to best know whether the department needs an investigator. Commissioner Piper stated that Atty. Hornick made a strong case for the position but the CA office has also made it for three (3) years without the new position. CA Libby stated that a concern she has is there are a number of police departments that do not have the resources to do the investigating and rely on the County Attorney's Office. She stated that they rely on the county department heads' expertise to bring their case to them and explain why they need these positions and then the Commissioners need to make that decision. Commissioner Piper stated that she believes they should leave the position in there for now. CA Libby noted that the position was through the ARPA process and is being advertised. The question is whether to fund the 25% of the position in the budget. The Commissioners further discussed and agreed to leave it for now.

Commissioner Piper stated that HR Director Clough made a strong case for the Recruitment/Retention Specialist position, but the new wage scale will help address some of the issues they are dealing with. Commissioner Lauer noted that her highest priority is the dispatcher

position. Commissioner Ahern stated that in regards to HR, he does not feel this new position is something they need to have.

Commissioner Piper stated that she does not want to say “no” to new positions, generally, because there are higher paid employees filling in for lower level positions in a couple of departments. Both Director Andross and Supt. Oakes made a good case for their requests. She stated that they cannot fund both of their requests and asked which of the staffing shortages is costing the County the most money and ability to provide service. CA Libby stated that the nature of the work Dispatch does is public safety. She understands Supt. Oakes’ needs but his work can wait if it has to, public emergencies cannot. CA Libby stated that this is a good discussion to have and when they have the final numbers for the new wage scale next week, the Commissioners can revisit this discussion and decide whether they have room to fund both or not.

Commissioners’ Office

Education & Conf. – The Commissioners reduced this line to \$2,500.

Regional Planning Commissions – The Commissioners are no longer funding.

Wage & Benefit

Earned Time Buyback – CA Libby stated that the Commissioners could reduce this line to \$150,000.

County Attorney’s Office

New Equipment – The Commissioners agreed to not fund the \$2,500. CA Libby explained that there is money in the IT budget for equipment repair and maintenance.

Capital Outlay – The Commissioners agreed to not fund the \$2,000 request for interior windows.

Register of Deeds

Register of Deeds – The Commissioners reduced this salary line back to \$60,154.00.

Human Resources

The Commissioners agreed not to fund the Recruitment/Retention Specialist position.

Office Supplies – Commissioner Piper stated that HR Director Clough noted that the increase in this line was due to the request for a new position. The new position is not being funded and therefore they can reduce this line back to \$3,000.

IT

CA Libby reviewed the IT Budget with the Commissioners. She broke down the contracted services line totaling \$369,032.00 and explained that it includes support, Artic Wolf and Office 365.

Supply Line – CA Libby stated that this line could be reduced back to last year’s amount of \$300.

New Equipment – This line includes all desktops and laptops that are on the replacement schedule. Commissioner Piper asked if they could pass on this for a year or cut it in half. She also asked if this could be put into an ARPA request. CA Libby stated that putting it into an ARPA request is something they can look into.

Software Maint & Renewal – CA Libby stated that this line includes annual software renewals for a number of offices. The total cost is \$400,228.00.

Sheriff’s Department

New Equipment – The Commissioners reduced this line by \$2,000.

Dispatch

Education & Conference – Commissioner Piper noted that Director Andross stated they could reduce this line by \$2,000.

Remote Storage Rental – CA Libby stated that she spoke to Director Andross about this and he stated that they can remove the \$15,000 from this line. He stated that it would be a risk but he has a storage location with no charge right now and he does not foresee that changing.

Maintenance

Commissioner Piper asked if they could consider reducing the budget by \$41,029 by not topping off the fuel tanks. CA Libby suggested that the Commissioners discuss this with Supt. Oakes before making that decision.

Maintenance Capital Outlay

Heat Pump – The Commissioners agreed to not fund this request.

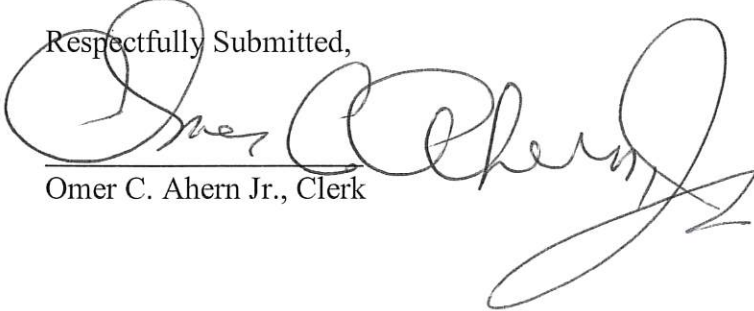
Line Striping – CA Libby stated that this request does not qualify as a capital outlay request and she will move it into the operating budget. The Commissioners were in agreement to not fund this.

Human Services

CA Libby stated that she gave the Commissioners two (2) options for the cap: the percentage they are at vs increasing the percentage. She stated recommended staying with the \$340,670.27 increase, which is the percentage the county has right now.

11:55 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

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

Omer C. Ahern Jr., Clerk