

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
May 2, 2023

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

OTHERS: Register Monahan

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

Commissioner Piper requested to go into nonpublic session.

MOTION: * 9:08 AM Commissioner Ahern moved to enter into non-public session for the purposes of the dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her, unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a meeting and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted according to RSA 91-A: 3, II (a). Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern "yes", Commissioner McLeod "yes" Commissioner Piper "yes" Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted "yes" and would now go into non-public session.

*9:38 AM Commissioner Piper declared the meeting back in public session.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to permanently seal the minutes from the just completed non-public session because they could affect the reputation of someone other than those of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern "yes" Commissioner McLeod "yes" Commissioner Piper "yes". Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted "yes" and the motion passes.

Budget Discussion

CA Libby reviewed the following list of proposed changes to the budget that the Commissioners have discussed:

- CA Libby stated that the Commissioners had previously discussed level funding all social services agencies and no new agencies. This decreases that budget by \$100,130.
- Bed Tax – CA Libby stated that she is proposing they decrease \$950,000 that was budgeted down. to \$900,000 based on historical data as well as increase the revenue by \$50,000.

- County Cap – CA Libby explained that she split the difference between the two (2) scenarios she presented the Commissioners, which reduces the proposed cap by \$67,000.

CA Libby stated that she then looked at the capital budgets and tried to figure out ways they could make some of these purchases from another source or are there items that would be eliminated this fiscal year. She stated that the Sheriff’s Department has budgeted for three (3) cruisers this year and one of them is a 2019 Ford Escape that they use as a civilian vehicle. She stated that she feels that might not be as important to replace and if it did become a need the County has ARPA interest money available. CA Libby stated that the Maintenance Department Capital Budget has two (2) standing seam roofs and a new truck and she left both of the standing seam roofs and identified the truck as something they can discuss as well as the mower for the farm. CA Libby lastly stated that in the Dispatch Capital Reserve, the County has historically contributed 10% of Dispatch revenue and she is looking at possibly reducing that to 5%

Social Services Discussion

Commissioner Ahern requested to discuss these agencies. He stated that his rational is going back to essential functions of County Government. He would like to see a 50% cut in the Social Services budget. Commissioner McLeod stated that she does not support that. Many of these agencies are keeping people from needing to be in nursing homes or keeping people out of the DoC. She stated that if they do not work with these agencies the result will be more elderly in the nursing homes or young people in the DoC. She understands Commissioner Ahern’s request but thinks this partnership is very important and makes a big impact on County services.

Commissioner Ahern stated that he is sure that all of these agencies will find the money elsewhere. If the administrators are doing their jobs, the money is out there. Commissioner McLeod stated that she is currently working on an issue with an agency whose money they receive from COVID is now ending and they no longer have the ability to back up those increased costs they have. This budget is a small portion of the total nonprofits in Grafton County and she feels an obligation to the people in the County to support these needs.

Commissioner Piper stated that she was very happy to see that there were two (2) agencies that did not ask for funding. Her worry about cutting is that she believes they have to be uniform in how they treat the agencies. There are agencies that have really suffered during COVID and she worries that reducing funding for certain agencies would be catastrophic for them. Commissioner Ahern stated that he feels there needs to be some trimming among these agencies. Commissioner Piper stated that if she supports a 10% cut then she has to apply that to all of the agencies and she is not sure she could support that.

Grafton Regional Development Corporation

Commissioner Ahern asked if this is in the purview of the Grafton County. He appreciates when GRDC meets with the Commissioners to give updates on what they are doing but he thinks that cutting this line would not affect the people that Commissioner McLeod is concerned about. Commissioner Piper stated that her understanding is that quite a while ago \$50,000 was provided to GRDC as seed money to help this organization get off the ground. It was reduced to \$45,000 a few years ago. She values economic development but has always had concerns as to whether some of the establishments that receive this money have been means tested. She is also

concerned that if the County is providing help to organizations that make a profit she expects them to pay a livable wage. This money provided to GRDC pays for the loan officer's salary and she is not sure if this is vital with the mission of County Government, the focus of which is the vulnerable population. Commissioner Piper stated that she does not know if the County needs to pay \$45,000 to GRDC. Commissioner McLeod stated that she would like the chance to talk to Anne Duncan Cooley from GRDC directly before making these cuts to her agency. Commissioner Piper asked if the Commissioners would want to propose a trim to this budget. Commissioner McLeod stated that if the County makes these small cuts it would not make a difference in the budget and feels they need to focus their energy on the larger items. It only hurts these agencies. Commissioner Piper stated that sometimes people have different budgeting philosophies and even though a taxpayer might not pay a large portion of money for this, for her it is the principle and the question is, is it fair. Commissioner McLeod noted that there is a property tax abatement fund for elderly low-income residents that they could take advantage of. Commissioner Ahern stated that short of knocking on the doors of the elderly, many do not have internet to get this information. If the County can reduce taxes, that is helpful to those elderly people. He stated that he is trying to set an example to the towns. Commissioner Ahern stated that he would propose a cut of \$5,000. Commissioner Piper was in agreement. Commissioner McLeod stated that she does not support it. She thinks there are other areas that we can look that would have a real impact on the budget, but appreciates their effort.

New Positions

Office Manager – Sheriff's Dept. – Commissioner Ahern stated that he is not in favor of changing the hierarchy in the Sheriff's Dept. and Dispatch. Commissioner Piper stated that she would not support the new Office Manager and Deputy positions.

Deputy Communications Director – CA Libby stated that this is a \$3,000 increase to upgrade a current Dispatch Supervisor position, which would allow for succession planning within the department. Commissioner Piper stated that she is sympathetic to the succession planning but is leaning towards not funding it. It is a new position. CA Libby stated that she feels investing \$3,900 in making a succession plan would be a wise investment for the future of the department. She feels they need to have more succession planning across the campus. Commissioner Piper stated that she is in favor of succession planning and \$3,000 is worth paying. Commissioner Ahern asked if they are training someone to take over for Director Andross; how they know a person they have been training will be the one chosen to take over. CA Libby stated that the Sheriff's Department and Dispatch have put this request into place and she is sure that there is a plan and everyone is on the same page. Commissioner Piper and Commissioner McLeod stated that they would support the upgrade.

The Commissioners agreed not to support the new full time Dispatch position, Deputy and Office Manager.

Sheriff's Capital

CA Libby stated that the Sheriff's Department usually budgets for three (3) vehicles a year. This year one (1) of those vehicles being requested is a civilian cruiser and that could be removed

from the capital budget. She stated that there is ARPA interest money if that cruiser were to be a need for this upcoming fiscal year.

Maintenance Capital

CA Libby stated that Supt. Oakes reported that his current ½ ton truck is rusting, has an electrical harness issue and having the fully loaded sander is too much for it. CA Libby stated that the Commissioners could use ARPA interest money to make this purchase as well. She explained that this money does not have the same strings to it as the regular ARPA money. The Commissioners could approve that purchase whenever they want.

Farm Capital

The Commissioners agreed to cut the mower and stated they can purchase that with ARPA interest money as well.

Commissioner Ahern stated that he is concerned about what is being fed to inmates at the DoC. He would like to see the meals budget in the DoC cut by \$5,000. He is concerned about the amount that is being spent on potatoes at Sysco and feels as though they should be growing their own produce here. CA Libby asked what happens if they have a year like this year where the potato crop was not successful and they were unable to use it. She explained that right now the DoC budgets \$2.05 per meal per inmate which \$43 a week to feed a person. That is one of the lowest costs in the county jails across the state and she does not know if they could, properly feed the inmates for much less than what they currently spend. She stated that she understands Commissioner Ahern does not agree with what the DoC feeds the inmates but it is an inexpensive way to do it. Commissioner Ahern stated that he is trying to make a point that it might be a good thing for the residents to know that they are growing some of the food they are going to eat. We have a lot of resources and assets at this facility that many counties do not. The Commissioners discussed Commissioner Ahern's request to cut the meals line by \$5,000. The Commissioners agreed to fund \$200,000 rather than \$202,000 and cut it by \$2,000. Commissioner Piper stated that her fear is not having the labor to have all of the crops Commissioner Ahern is talking about as well as the crop being successful.

Register Monahan was present for the meeting and stated that she had told the Commissioners she would revisit them in April to discuss revenue lines. She stated that considering of the volatility of the market she is proposing a cut of \$65,500 from the revenue line. CA Libby noted that she reduced the interest line by \$1,000 as well so the overall revenue is being reduced \$66,500.

CA Libby stated that she would update the budget to reflect the changes made today for the Commissioners to have at their meeting tomorrow.

11:19 AM with no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Martha S. McLeod". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Martha S. McLeod, Clerk