

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Administrative Building
3855 Dartmouth College Highway
North Haverhill, NH 03774
July 6th, 2021

PRESENT: Commissioners Piper, Lauer, Ahern, County Administrator Dorsett, Temp Admin Jessica Jackson

ALSO PRESENT: Nursing Home Administrator Labore, HR Director Clough

Commissioner Piper called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM and Commissioner Lauer led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: 9:05 AM Commissioner Ahern moved to approve the minutes of 6/22/21. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern "yes"; Commissioner Lauer "yes"; Commissioner Piper "yes" Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted "yes" and the **MOTION CARRIED**.

2. Craig Labore, Nursing Home

At 9:06 AM, NHA Labore presented the attached **Grafton County Nursing Home Commissioner's Report for July 6, 2021**.

A. General Report

NHA Labore reported that admissions were slowly rising. Since his last report, there have been five (5) admissions while two (2) residents have passed away. The Nursing Home is short staffed right now due to vacations and the holiday, so they are holding off on admissions for next week, but there are several new admissions in the pipeline. The projected daily census was 114 and NHA Labore is confident they will meet this number. His report includes the updated Medicaid rate, which is a daily rate of \$208.33 (former rate: \$198.33). NHA Labore stated that this increase will help the Nursing Home especially for the first 6 months of the fiscal year. NHA Labore added that there is potentially more money coming in from the federal government, which has not been finalized but there has been much discussion.

B. Visitation Program

NHA Labore stated that the Enhanced Visitation Program started on June 21st and is going well. There has been a steady increase of numbers since they started the program; at the beginning, they averaged 22 daily visitors to start but were now at 28-33 visitors per day. These visits give a new sense of energy to the Nursing Home and its residents. The staff have appreciated it as well and have been happy to see families come in to converse with their loved ones. Commissioner Ahern asked if everyone must wear a

mask when visiting. NHA Labore stated that according to CMS guidelines, all visitors must wear facemasks and people have been very receptive of this policy. All staff also have to wear masks regardless of their vaccination status.

C. Staff COVID Testing

NHA Labore reported that effective that day, the Nursing Home has introduced a new testing program in conjunction with guidance from the CDC and CMS. Only unvaccinated people are being tested for COVID, but if a positive case is identified, all staff must be tested. Reimbursement for the current program is ending, so NHA Labore decided to switch everything back over to state testing so the Nursing Home is not held fiscally responsible for testing. Commissioner Lauer asked how vaccinations were being verified. NHA Labore explained that staff had to provide this information. The guidelines from CMS suggest providing education on the vaccination program, and staff have to sign acknowledging receipt of education, then they can choose whether or not to pursue vaccination. The Nursing Home is required to document who is vaccinated. Commissioner Piper asked what the current vaccination rate was. NHA Labore stated that the current vaccination level is 77%, which is an increase due to the wide availability of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. NHA Labore stated there is still no discussion on a national level about mandating vaccines, so vaccines cannot be required at this time.

D. Plymouth Rotary Donation & Awning Purchase

NHA Labore expressed his thanks and reported that the Plymouth Rotary had made a donation of \$1,000 to put towards the purchase of a side-by-side awning. With that, NHA Labore reported he would like to make a request to waive the competitive bidding process for the purchase of two (2) Elite Plus motorized awnings, measuring 40ft wide by 11ft in length from Otter Creek Awnings. He explained that these are specialized awnings, and no other local companies that make these kinds of awnings. This request would have no impact on the budget as it is included in the FY '22 budget. Supt. Oakes and the Maintenance Department will need to move some shrubbery in front of the Maple dining room to accommodate this installation. NHA Labore explained that as the summer is here, there is understanding that the residents will be outside and that the pandemic has really shown the value of this outdoor area. Commissioner Ahern asked if these awnings would be used in the winter. NHA Labore stated this was unlikely as they would then need outdoor heaters. These awnings are motorized, so they will be brought in and drawn out only during use and will not be extended during inclement weather. Supt. Oakes reviewed the equipment along with the Activities Director, and the Maintenance Department will be doing some of the electrical work when these awnings are installed. Commissioner Piper commented she was very happy about this, and that the Board wants all the Nursing Home residents to enjoy a nice quality of life here in the Nursing facility.

MOTION: 9:26 AM Commissioner Ahern moved to approve the request to waive the bidding process and purchase two (2) Elite Plus motorized awnings from Otter Creek Awnings in the amount of \$15,600. Commission Lauer seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes”; Commissioner Lauer “yes”; Commissioner Piper “yes”

Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and the **MOTION CARRIED.**

E. Other

Commissioner Ahern reported that about two weeks ago, there was an incident in his neck of the woods where an elderly woman was lost in the woods. When she was found, there was no place she could go as she and her husband had been out of touch with their family. Commissioner Ahern stated that 60 years ago, this woman would have gone to the County home, but the Law Enforcement Officer Commissioner Ahern had been communicating with did not seem to think this was an option. The woman has no money and was in the process of applying for Medicaid. Commissioner Ahern was wondering if there could be space at the Nursing Home for her as an emergency place.

MOTION: * 9:30 AM Commissioner Ahern moved to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A: 3, II (c) for the purposes of matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine, or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes”; Commissioner Piper “yes”; Commissioner Lauer “yes”. Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and would now go into non-public session.

* 10:00 AM Commissioner Piper declared the meeting back in public session.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer 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 Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes”; Commissioner Lauer “yes”. Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and would now return to public session.

3. Karen Clough, Human Resources

At 10:02 AM, HRD Clough presented the attached **Grafton County Human Resources Report for July 6, 2021.**

A. General Updates

HRD Clough reported that the month of June had been quiet, though there had been four (4) new hires. She reported that a number of employees were on leave of absence and that these positions were being backfilled/paid overtime. She explained that family medical leave is covered by earned time and sick time first. Commissioner Ahern asked the cost of 42 employees being out and HRD Clough stated that the cost depends on a lot of factors. Commissioner Ahern requested HRD Clough to provide this information at the next meeting. CA Dorsett requested clarification on FMLA as intermittent can mean the employee is not necessarily out at present. HRD Clough explained that intermittent can

mean a lot of things; that an employee could be out occasionally due to medical limitations, etc. Commissioner Piper asked if the County had not made the decision to make this leave “paid,” would this have impacted the current situation. HRD Clough stated that in her opinion, there would be no difference.

B. Union Contract

HRD Clough presented the newest Union Contract to the Commissioners to be signed and explained that this had been ratified in the Nursing Home by the employees. There were no comments or corrections by the Commissioners and they signed the contract at 10:16 AM.

C. Employee Handbook

HRD Clough explained that the Employee Handbook has a few changes which were highlighted. One change included the reporting of the HR Director to the County Administrator. Commissioner Piper stated she had some minor edits. On page 11 under 2:2, she added that the Finance Director also reports to the County Administrator.

On page 18 under 3:2 “Performance Evaluations,” Commissioner Piper asked if this was new. HRD Clough explained that it was not new, but that based on discussions, it had felt like a clarification would be good regarding a department head’s abilities to deny step increases. This had been included as a possible suggestion to department heads, that if they did not think an employee should receive a merit increase, they could deny the increase and revisit it in 3 months. Commissioner Piper stated she was not in favor of including this change; she was not sure if this change would send a message of diligence and conscientiousness required of employees given that it was a “second chance.” Commissioner Piper also thought this could potentially cost the County money and stated that while she appreciated the clarification, she would recommend not putting it in the handbook.

Commissioner Lauer added that if a department head has an employee who was underperforming, this clause could give that employee the motivation to improve their performance faster (3 months) rather than in 1 year. Commissioner Ahern asked for clarification on whether or not the rate would be retroactive and how long the handbook is valid for. HRD Clough stated that the rate would not be retroactive and that her department tries to look at the handbook annually. The performance evaluation clause being discussed was already in the Union contract and has been in there. Commissioner Lauer stated that if this policy is already in place, it seems the problem is the supervisors. Commissioner Piper agreed. Commissioner Ahern asked what the implications of the upcoming wage study would be. HRD Clough confirmed that the wage study would be done this year, and that it would impact the salary/compensation structure. Commissioner Piper added that almost every year, employees are already getting a COLA and if a department head determines an employee should not be eligible for a step increase, that employee should not receive the increase. This could also impact the budget. Commissioner Lauer explained that her understanding was that one department head had complained that the step increase is all or nothing, but this proposed 3 month reevaluation would result in a partial step increase for the employee. Commissioner Piper stated that

HRD Clough had put this in place because of feedback from one Department Head regarding employees consistently underperforming and that Department Head stating that there was no choice but to give 3% or 0% as a merit increase. She believes that the policy should not be changed to provide a second chance. Commissioners Piper and Ahern agreed that department heads need to have “intestinal fortitude” in these matters. Commissioner Piper also added that this will change next year because there will be a different wage structure, and therefore, she sees no reason to include it. HRD Clough stated that the clause can be removed, and she had thought some clarification was needed for department heads.

Commissioner Piper also had a question regarding Page 24, under 4:11 “Wages” where the language should be changed from “exceeds” to “very good or exceeds”. HRD Clough agreed this language should be changed and recommended it be changed to “performance where employee scores 3.5 or higher” as this was more accurate to the policy.

MOTION: 10:41 AM Commissioner Lauer moved to approve the handbook as amended. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes”; Commissioner Lauer “yes”; Commissioner Piper “yes” Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and the **MOTION CARRIED.**

D. LPN Program Update

HRD Clough stated that a representative from River Valley had come on Jun 20th to introduce the LPN Program and that 15 employees attended the meeting. Two (2) have already started the enrollment/application process, which is due by Sept 30th. HRD Clough stated there was good interest in the program. The TEAS test is part of the application process and in the case of overflow applications, scores from this test would help determine priority enrollment. She reminded the Board that the program provided a tuition reimbursement up to \$13K with a commitment of 2 years, paid direct to River Valley.

MOTION: * 10:44 AM Commissioner Lauer 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 Ahern seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes”; Commissioner Piper “yes”; Commissioner Lauer “yes”. Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and would now go into non-public session.

* 11:09 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 Lauer seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper

“yes”; Commissioner Lauer “yes”. Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and would now return to public session.

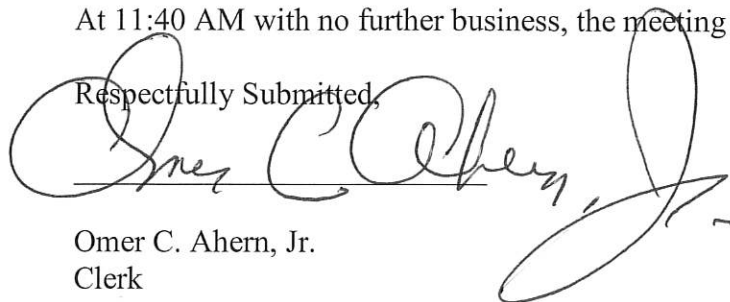
4. Commissioner Issues

- CA Dorsett reported that the Broadband Committee was moving forward and would be coming to the Commissioners to request ARPA funds. CA Dorsett will also be looking further into who needs to be involved regarding the approval of using ARPA funds for projects.
- Commissioner Ahern reported that he had a chance at the Ashland Independence Day Parade to talk to Councilor Joseph Kenney to follow up regarding the recent Steve Curtis Nuclear Power discussion regarding the use of Slightly Used Nuclear Fuel (SUNF), and the need for the Governor of the State of New Hampshire to request that the Federal Government be requested to release the \$40 Billion of New Hampshire citizens money that the Federal Government is holding as a result of taxing the usage of nuclear power in NH since the 1970s. Councilor Kenney requested that Commissioner Ahern send to his office, a letter with the proper wording, along with the information on where to send the letter. Steve Curtis did provide this information to Commissioner Ahern and a letter addressed to the President of the United States, which documents Commissioner Ahern will send to Councilor Kenney. Commissioner Ahern thought it may also be good to ask state legislators to introduce some legislation that encourages the use of SUNF in the state of NH.
- Commissioner Piper reported she is going to the Lebanon City Council meeting with an update on budget and county operations and plans, generally. On Thursday, she is going to Baltimore to attend the NACO Annual meeting. There will be educational sessions on ARPA funding, Broadband, Cyber security and many other issues of importance to County government. Additionally, there are a number of steering committee meetings who generate policies with the federal government on such issues as economic/workforce development, health, and transportation.

At 11:30 AM, the Commissioners signed the check registers and other contracts.

At 11:40 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 fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Omer C. Ahern, Jr.
Clerk

Grafton County Human Resources Report
 Karen Clough, Human Resources Director
 July 6, 2021

HR Activity Report (06/02/2021-07/06/2021)

• ***New Hires***

Department	#	Position(s)
Nursing Home	1 (1 PT)	1 PT Housekeeper
Sheriff's Dept.	1 (1 FT)	1 FT Deputy
DOC	1 (1 FT)	1 FT CO
Farm	1 (1 FT)	1 FT Farm Assistant

Separations

Departments	#	
Nursing Home	4 (3 PD, 1 PT)	3 PD LNA, 1 PT Housekeeper

Reasons:

- Resigned personal reasons/no reason- 1
- Termination –
- Career change -
- Dissatisfaction-
- New job –
- Relocated –
- School –
- Retirement –
- Not meeting Per Diem Requirements - 3

- ***Status Changes/ dept transfers: 1 PT Housekeeper to FT Laundry Aide, 2 FT LNA's to per diem, 1 PT Dietary Aide to FT Unit Aide/LNA***

Active Leave of Absences as of July 2, 2021

Department	#	
Nursing Home – Nursing	21	(17 are intermittent, 13 for self, 8 for family)
Nursing Home – Non-Nursing	5	(5 are intermittent, 3 for family, 2 for self)
DOC	6	(2 intermittent, 5 self)
Maintenance	2	(1 intermittent self, family)
Sheriff's Dept.	3	(2 intermittent, 3 family)
Farm	1	(1 intermittent self)
County Atty's Office	1	(1 intermittent self)
Cmsrs. Office	2	(1 intermittent, 2 self)
HR	1	(1 intermittent self)
TOTAL:	42	

Scheduled to orient 07/07

1 PT Housekeeper

Current Jobs posted/advertised

- LNA's (18 FTE's vacant)
- RN/LPN (12.15 FTE's vacant combined)
- CO's
- PT Housekeeper
- RN House Supervisor
- Maintenance Assistant

OTHER BUSINESS – Handbook approval, Contract signature, LPN program

Grafton County Nursing Home Commissioner's Report: July 6, 2021

Census

Medicare: 2
Medicaid: 85
VA: 2
Hospice: 0
Private: 23
Total: 112

FY '21 Budgeted Census:

Medicare: 4
Medicaid: 94 (Daily rate= \$208.33)
VA: 2
Private: 23

Monthly Admissions/Discharges

Admissions: 5
Deceased Residents: 2
Discharges: 0

Other Topics:

- 1) COVID-19 Update:
 - Visitation Program
 - Staff COVID Testing
- 2) Plymouth Rotary Donation
- 3) Awning Purchase Approval