

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
3855 Dartmouth College Highway
North Haverhill, NH 03774
August 17th, 2021

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Register Monahan, Asst. Maintenance Supt. Colbeth, County Forester Frohn, Cheri Birch – NH Timberlands Homeowners Association

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

Commissioner Ahern participated electronically according to RSA 91-A: 2 with the reason being he was unable to attend the meeting in person. Electronic participation was at his request. It was noted that all votes must be taken by a roll call.

Register Monahan arrived and gave the following report: (*see attached)

Commissioner Lauer stated that while she was visiting Pennsylvania, she had a conversation with the Venango County Register of Deeds. She was very interested in the degree of duplication that we have of the records here in Grafton County and was very much in support. They are not using Microfilm, but the Register of Deeds in PA wishes she could. Commissioner Lauer noted that she expressed the same concerns as Register Monahan regarding cyber security.

Asst. Maintenance Supt. Colbeth arrived to discuss an air filter order request.

Asst. Supt. Colbeth stated that Supt Oakes was not able to attend the meeting this morning and that he did not have Supt. Oakes' monthly report for the Commissioners because it was not available to him. However, Supt. Oakes asked him to meet with the Commissioners to get approval for their yearly air filter purchase. He stated that they received two (2) sets of quotes, one (1) for nonstandard air filters and one (1) for standard air filters. The quotes were as follows:

Nonstandard Air Filters:

- Air Filter Sales - \$4219.38
- Airex \$3,999.97

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to accept the quote of \$3,999.97 from Airex for the purchase of nonstandard air filters. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Lauer "yes", Commissioner Ahern "yes" Commissioner Piper "yes". With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

Standard Air Filters

- Air Filter Sales - \$6,099.00
- Airex \$6,193.92

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to accept the quote of \$6,099.00 from Air Filter Sales for the purchase of the standard filters. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion.

Discussion: Commissioner Ahern asked Asst. Supt. Colbeth if Maintenance personnel have been seeing an unusual amount of usage of air filters over the last ten (10) months or so with the wildfires out West. Asst. Supt. Colbeth stated that the Maintenance Department has not changed the schedule for replacing the air filters nor has Maintenance seen any extra materials picked up in the air filters.

The Commissioners voted on the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”, Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

Asst. Supt. Colbeth stated that the Commissioners are aware of the water study that Horizons Engineering is performing and that they had found a well on the property. He explained Supt. Oakes received a quote from Horizons to inspect that well and the quote was \$7,500. Supt. Oakes thought that was high and was going to solicit quotes from other vendors before accepting that quote from Horizons. Commissioner Piper explained to Commissioner Ahern, who was not at the meeting when this was discussed, that a well was found on County property. No one knew any information about the well and therefore Supt. Oakes is looking to have an inspection performed to see if the well is usable. Commissioner Ahern agreed that \$7,500 seemed like too much money at this point. The Commissioners discussed the topic and agreed to put this inspection out to bid.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to put the well inspection out to bid. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”, Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

Agenda Items:

1. Commissioner Piper asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the August 3rd and August 10th meetings. All three (3) Commissioners had edits and Commissioner Piper had a few clarification suggestions that she discussed with the Commissioners.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to approve the August 3rd and August 10th minutes as amended. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”, Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner

Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

2. The Commissioners signed check registers 1017 & 1023.

County Forester Report and Chainsaw Safety Training Discussion – Forester Jim Frohn and Cheri Birch, NH Timberland Owners Association (NHTOA)

Commissioner Ahern noted for the record that he is a long-time member of the NHTOA.

Forester Frohn stated that he feels it is important for homeowners and landowners to receive training on how to operate a chainsaw. UNH Cooperative Extension’s policy for years has been demonstration only for landowners and nonprofessionals. Forester Frohn explained that demonstration only by itself, does not allow the participants, homeowners and landowners, to have “hands-on” practice under proper and appropriate expert supervision. Forester Frohn feels it is time to start offering "hands-on" training as there is a lot of interest among homeowners and landowners), and Forester Frohn thinks the Grafton County forest would be a good spot to conduct such "hands on training".

Forester Frohn explained that he would find some trees that could be taken down next to an open field or trees that are crowding others. He stated that he is looking for the Commissioners’ approval to hold this Chainsaw Safety Training on County property and noted that UNH Extension and NHTOA can provide certificates of insurance.

Commissioner Lauer stated she feels this is a wonderful opportunity with the provision there is no liability to the County. Commissioner Ahern stated that he sees many good things coming out of this program. Forester Frohn stated that there is a lot of potential and demand for a course like this. The class size will be limited 8-10 per instructor and future workshops may be a possibility as well. The training will be two (2) separate days. One (1) day will be saw maintenance/safety features of the saws and Farm Manager Nelson has stated that he would be willing to provide shop space. The second day would be hands on in the forest. Commissioner Lauer noted that she appreciates that they are requiring participants to have the proper PPE. The Commissioners all agreed that this was a good opportunity for the county.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to authorize the Chainsaw Safety Training workshop by UNH Cooperative Extension and NHTOA on the County property. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”, Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

J. Frohn then gave the following County Forester Report: (* see attached)

Commissioner Ahern asked if the low-grade wood from the timber sale could be made into chips for the biomass plant in an effort to try to save the taxpayers some money. Forester Frohn stated

that it could, but the woodchips are currently under contract. FD Libby noted that the county just entered into a three (3) year contract for woodchips that began in July.

Commissioner Ahern noted that he is working on a presentation to make to the Commissioners about raising red deer on the County Complex as a part of FarmDOC.

Finance Director Libby gave the following report:

1. FY'21 Audit Fieldwork completed – FD Libby stated that everything went well, and her staff is working on providing post year-end items for the auditors. The audit is typically completed in October.

2. MQIP – 4th Quarter FY'21 Payment – FD Libby explained that the last outstanding item from FY'21 is the MQIP payment. She explained that the County does not receive this until August, and she is anticipating that they will receive it this Friday. She did an estimate of the dollar amount for the budget but will have to go in and adjust it once they receive the final number. Once she receives that number, she will have the final FY21 numbers.

3. Interviews for Payroll Coordinator Position – Thursday – FD Libby stated that the position has been advertised and they will be interviewing five (5) candidates on Thursday.

4. Commerford – Nieder – Perkins Livermore Revaluation Proposal – FD Libby explained that this is a cyclical revaluation for the five (5) properties in Livermore. This is in conjunction with the revaluation process that is done for all of the unincorporated places in Coos County. The proposal is \$2,000 and will be billed in its entirety in 2023. This includes visits to all properties, callbacks if applicable, and any data entry in 2023; they will perform any updated values, which would include a sales analysis, and the preliminary value informal review process with property owners. This cost also includes the costs to file abatements in 2024 but does not include costs for appeals to the BTLA or to Superior Court. FD Libby stated that this came to them from Coos County and they have used Commerford-Nieder-Perkins for many years. She recommended that the Commissioners accept and sign off on the agreement.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to accept the Commerford-Nieder-Perkins Livermore reevaluation proposal. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”, Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

5. NHAC Awards Ceremony – FD Libby attended the Awards Committee meeting, and the committee members were asked to talk to their Boards of Commissioners and ask them how they felt the NHAC Awards Ceremony should be held. She gave the Commissioners a list of the individual awards that are given out annually. During the conversation with the Awards Committee, it was brought up as to whether each County wanted to continue with this format or do a general format for a county celebration due to what employees have gone through during COVID. FD Libby stated that the feeling of a number of committee members was that they would still like to see individual awards, but it would be hard to choose one employee over others when all employees have worked hard throughout the pandemic. FD Libby stated that she

feels that continuing to do individual awards is a nice thing to do. Everyone has worked hard but there are still some who have gone above and beyond. FD Libby noted all of the counties have discussed premium pay to recognize their employees using ARPA money and therefore she feels that this should be kept separate and done how it has always been done. Commissioner Piper stated that this is an opportunity for the Commissioners and Administrators to show appreciation based on employee's specific work. Commissioner Lauer stated that she agrees and stated that in every all-star team you still have a player that goes beyond. Commissioner Ahern noted that the Commissioners have their own employee recognition dinner, which is an indication of the appreciation the Commissioners show their employees.

FD Libby noted that another question raised at the Awards Committee meeting is how the presentation of awards is going to be held. The banquet hall at the hotel is limited to 200 due to COVID protocols, the awards banquet typically has 400, and therefore a normal banquet is not being planned. She stated that there has been discussion of doing the Public Service Awards and Elected Officials awards at the dinner. There is also talk of the DuPont group and the President of the NHAC going to each county to present the individual employee awards. She stated that if Grafton County has award winners, they might be able to incorporate that into the Employee Recognition Dinner. The Commissioners further discussed the issue and agreed that they feel the Public Service Awards should be given out at the dinner.

6. Return of Surplus – Return of Surplus from Healthtrust– FD Libby stated that this Return of Surplus from HealthTrust is unplanned revenue that was not budgeted for in FY22. This year the Return of Surplus is \$407,729.32, almost double from last year. FD Libby further stated that in the past the County has returned a portion of the Surplus that employees have paid for their various benefits, back to them and FD Libby recommended that the Commissioners do the same this year.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to distribute an appropriate portion of the return of surplus from Healthtrust to the employees. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”, Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

7. FD Libby submitted a CDFA Drawdown request for Commissioner Piper to sign from NHARDC in the amount of \$117,876.

8. FD Libby submitted an agreement for the FY22 NH Alliance of RDC's grant for Commissioner Piper to sign.

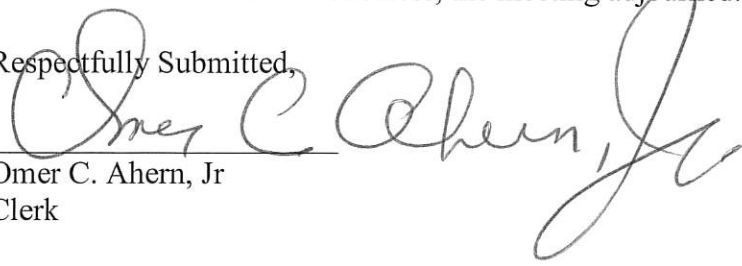
Commissioner Issues:

1. Commissioner Ahern stated that he apologizes for not bringing up the matter of the Red Deer forward to the Commissioners before today, but the situation presented itself during the discussion with County Forester Frohn, and so he brought the Red Deer Proposal up to the Commissioners.. He would like the Commissioners to agree with him in getting involved in

raising red deer on the County Complex as a part of FarmDOC. He stated that the only red deer farmer in Grafton County is his cousin, Henry Ahern Jr. in Plymouth. He has given Commissioner Ahern information on how Grafton County could benefit from raising red deer. He stated that CA Dorsett had mentioned the possibility of ARPA funds for this project as well. He will be making a full presentation to the board as he gets more information.

11:04 AM with no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Omer C. Ahern, Jr
Clerk

**Grafton County Registry of Deeds
Kelley J. Monahan Register
Report to Commissioners
August 17, 2021**


July Revenue

County Revenue 7/2009	\$ 95,760.75	State Revenue 7/2009	\$ 587,752.32
County Revenue 7/2010	\$ 78,183.24	State Revenue 7/2010	\$ 533,698.56
County Revenue 7/2011	\$ 73,874.18	State Revenue 7/2011	\$ 588,695.04
County Revenue 7/2012	\$ 97,870.27	State Revenue 7/2012	\$ 873,670.08
County Revenue 7/2013	\$ 91,743.38	State Revenue 7/2013	\$ 753,309.12
County Revenue 7/2014	\$108,609.67	State Revenue 7/2014	\$1,363,522.56
County Revenue 7/2015	\$ 95,930.06	State Revenue 7/2015	\$ 895,613.76
County Revenue 7/2016	\$ 96,422.18	State Revenue 7/2016	\$ 939,816.96
County Revenue 7/2017	\$ 92,220.96	State Revenue 7/2017	\$ 885,240.00
County Revenue 7/2018	\$105,648.59	State Revenue 7/2018	\$1,175,898.24
County Revenue 7/2019	\$100,671.70	State Revenue 7/2019	\$1,108,785.44
County Revenue 7/2020	\$128,157.00	State Revenue 7/2020	\$1,409,734.08
County Revenue 7/2021	\$134,393.76	State Revenue 7/2021	\$1,614,354.24

Foreclosures

2009 100 year to date
2010 134 year to date
2011 128 year to date
2012 120 year to date
2013 93 year to date
2014 94 year to date
2015 64 year to date
2016 74 year to date
2017 50 year to date
2018 28 year to date
2019 46 year to date (+280 in one day time share foreclosures)
2020 0 year to date
2021 0 year to date

Respectfully submitted,


Kelley J. Monahan

County Forester Report
Grafton County Commissioners' Meeting August 17, 2021
Submitted by Jim Frohn
Grafton County Forester, UNH Extension

Chainsaw Safety Training workshop

UNH Extension is partnering with the NH Timberland Owners Association (NHTOA) to offer a chainsaw safety training class to landowners and other non-professionals. We've scheduled a workshop for October 22nd and one other day. The hope is to offer more of these classes in the future for a variety of non-professional audiences including landowners, trail maintenance volunteers, land trust staff, and others.

The Grafton County Forest would make a good site for a class. A class would consist of approximately 8-10 people, with one instructor. Instructors are professional loggers who also do training for the NH Professional Logger Program (PLP). Each instructor is vetted by UNH Extension and NHTOA (see attached letter) and is hired as a UNH employee when teaching.

UNH and NHTOA can provide certificates of additionally insured if needed.

Jim Frohn, Grafton County Forester, and Cheri Birch, NHTOA Program Director will assist the instructor as needed.

Attendees will be required to wear all appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – Hardhat, eye and ear protection, chainsaw resistant pants or chaps, safety toe boots.

The class would likely take place over two separate days. The first date is October 22nd, the second date TBD. Some of the time is spent going over safety equipment and saw maintenance, and the rest of the time is spent in the woods practicing technique. We will be doing some limited tree felling of trees that need removal but don't have any economic value. These include roadside or field edge trees that are crowding more desirable trees.

For the saw maintenance portion, Farm Manager Grant Nelson has indicated that he can make the farm shop available.

Other Educational Workshops on the County Forest

UNH Extension along with Grafton County Conservation District (GCCD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) are planning a workshop for late September titled: Grafton County Forest Timber Harvest 5 Years Later: What's Growing?

We will lead a tour to look at some of the 2016 timber harvest area to see what's growing. We'll discuss regeneration and wildlife habitat in the patch cuts and adjacent mature stands. We'll also discuss the County Forest management plan and what's next in the plan.

County Forest Update

Future management activities

A timber sale is proposed on the County Forest for this coming winter. It will consist of additional patch cuts to promote regeneration as well as some thinning to promote growth of crop trees.

Prescribed fire discussion – The two most economically important tree species on the Grafton County Forest are white pine and red oak. A critical aspect of sustainable forest management is to ensure regeneration of desirable species, and oak seedlings and saplings are in short supply on the forest. Oak is a fire-adapted species and low-intensity understory fire can promote oak regeneration by knocking back competition and reducing shade. A walk conducted last year with US Forest Service fire scientists and others revealed history of past burns on some areas of the county forest.

An experimental prescribed burn to promote oak regeneration would be useful to study the effectiveness of reducing competition from low-value species and ensuring red oak for the future. The NH Prescribed Fire Council is interested in helping with these experiments.

Alternate revenue sources from the County Forest

Christmas Trees and Balsam

FarmDOC suggested establishing Christmas trees to enhance future revenue generation. A site visit would be useful to discuss potential areas for planting and what will be involved to bring the trees along to a saleable product.

Another potential source of income is balsam brush for wreaths. This can be cultivated by harvesting competing hardwoods and pruning trees to create lush growth

Birch sap – Birch syrup is a growing product category, along with birch sap. There are some stands of paper birch that could potentially be tapped, and the sap sold to syrup makers or possibly made into syrup or bottled as sap on site. A lot more research needs to go into this potential product.

Silvopasture – This is a practice that combines growing trees for timber and other purposes with livestock pasture. It is an intensively managed system that requires rotational grazing and fencing. Silvopasture can be used to help control invasives and other undesirable understory plants. Extension Ag specialist Heather Bryant and I are discussing the possibility of applying for a grant to study silvopasture with goats.

These topics can be discussed in much greater detail but my purpose here is to introduce some ideas for managing the forest in the future.