

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
August 30, 2022

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

OTHERS PRESENT: County Attorney Hornick, Interim Farm Manager Libby, Ben White, DoC Supt. Elliott, Sgt. Griffin, Heather Bryant – UNH Extension, Pam Gilbert – Conservation District

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

County Attorney Hornick arrived via Teams and requested to go into nonpublic session.

MOTION: * 9:06 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 Piper seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes” Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and would now go into non-public session.

* 9:21 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 Piper seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes”. Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and the motion passes.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to adopt the recommendation of the County Attorney to promote an attorney to Lead Attorney from within her department. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion. Commissioner Ahern abstained. The motion passes 2-0 with one (1) abstention.

Agenda Items:

1. Commissioner Piper asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the August 23rd meeting. Commissioner Piper had a couple of grammatical edits.

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MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to approve the minutes from the August 23rd meeting as amended. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion and all were in favor.

2. The Commissioners signed check registers 1025 & 1026.

3. Opioid Litigation Discussion – CA Libby stated that she and Commissioner Piper had a conversation with Robert Bonsignore last Friday. He is asking the Commissioners to consider terminating their relationship with Napoli in the opioid litigations and by doing so, the county would be joining Atty. Bonsignore. Atty. Bonsignore is working with the State Attorney General to try to get the counties in line with the State of New Hampshire so the state has support from the counties going into these trials. Strafford and Rockingham Counties have both already agreed to do so and Cheshire is supposed to follow suit this week. Commissioner Piper stated that James Bofetti, Deputy Attorney General, Robert Bonsignore and the other counties that have signed on, are asking Grafton County to work with them to present this united front of support regarding opioid litigation. CA Libby stated that they are anticipating that there may be a settlement with J&J before it goes to trial in September. Commissioner Ahern stated that there were two (2) years during this opioid litigation where he was not a Commissioner and he does not know enough about this subject to participate in the discussion. Commissioner Piper suggested Commissioner Ahern reach out to Atty. Bonsignore and George Maglaris to educate on himself on this matter. Commissioner Lauer stated that she believes that the counties' support could show good will to the state.

MOTION: Commissioner Lauer moved to end Grafton County's representation by Napoli Shkolnik in the opioid lawsuit matter as the County's goals no longer coincide with Napoli's efforts in this matter. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion.

Discussion – Commissioner Piper stated that they are reaching the end of the 2nd year of their term. This subject has been brought up multiple times and she hopes the information Commissioner Ahern needs will be obtained.

The Commissioners voted on the motion. Commissioner Lauer and Commissioner Piper were in favor. Commissioner Ahern abstained. The motion passes 2-0 with one (1) abstention.

4. Opioid Grant application – CA Libby stated that DHHS, on behalf of the Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission, released the request for grant proposals for the Opioid Abatement Program. Applications are due in September. She reviewed the criteria required to apply for the grant. CA Libby stated that Grafton County is the only county that receives funding from the Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services for a large part of the SUD Treatment services through the DoC and Alternative Sentencing. She does not know what specific expenses the county would have beyond what they are already being reimbursed for. Grafton County receives roughly \$215,000 in BDAS funding that supports the Substance Abuse Treatment Programs at the Department of Corrections and a small portion of the Substance Abuse Treatment program in Alternative Sentencing. She noted that they met with Alternative Sentencing Director Mitchell, County Attorney Hornick and Supt. Elliott about opioid abatement programs and it does not seem like they are at a point where they are ready to apply for funding for specific programs. CA

Libby stated that her thought is that there is going to be more opportunities for these funds in the future and she feels that it does not make sense to put in an application for this particular grant program. CA Libby will review with AS Director Mitchell as well.

5. ARPA Requests – CA Libby stated that there are fourteen (14) ARPA requests for the next round of funding. She gave the Commissioners copies of the requests for their review and stated that she would be working to set up meetings with the department heads.

Interim Farm Manager Libby arrived and requested to go into nonpublic session.

MOTION: * 10:03 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 Piper seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes” Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and would now go into non-public session.

* 10:26 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 Piper seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes”. Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and the motion passes.

Farm Committee – Glenn Libby, Ben White, Tom Elliott, AJ Griffin, Heather Bryant, Pam Gilbert

Commissioner Piper stated that the Board of Commissioners and the Farm Committee need to create a new mission and purpose for the farm that is sustainable, given the extreme challenges it is facing. Commissioner Lauer asked what they need to do to make the farm continue to be an important part of Grafton County.

G. Libby stated that he believes they need to go in an educational direction for the whole county. If they make the farm about education and not productivity, he believes they can survive. Sgt Griffin stated that they could have schools throughout the county coming into the barns. Supt. Elliott stated that he fully supports the idea of switching to an educational component, as the inmate model is no longer there. Commissioner Lauer noted that if the county did not have inmates on farm, they could have the 4H kids there. Pam Gilbert from the Conservation District stated that there are many opportunities with education. The Committee discussed different ideas of how to incorporate educational components to the farm.

CA Libby stated that they are not able to implement these ideas until decisions are made regarding the size and structure of the farm. The Commissioners decided in July that the herd would be downsized for staffing reasons. Now, CA Libby stated, we need to determine what the final herd size is going to be and then what that will mean for crops; she asked how we get to that final number and footprint. H. Bryant stated that she would recommend cutting where they can until they can get staffing levels back up to normal. Supt Elliott stated that the size of the farm needs to be based on the farm staff being able to operate the farm without any inmate labor, as the future of inmate labor is unknown. If inmates are available, they can be used to supplement labor, but the farm should not rely on them for day to day operations. The Committee all agreed on this.

G. Libby stated that, in his opinion, the first thing to go would be the chickens. The Committee discussed the chickens and felt that, overall, the chickens are not cost effective and discussed phasing them out at the end of the farm stand season. B. White explained that the nutritionist is coming this week to go over what they need for crops and what they do not need since they have downsized the herd. CA Libby stated that it is important to keep meeting to determine what our immediate needs are as well as to keeping working towards our ultimate mission and goals and how to get there. The size and footprint of the farm is the immediate concern. G. Libby stated that they would have a definite number for the herd size, as well as what they will need for crops for that size herd by the next meeting. The committee will meet again on September 12th at 9:00am.

Commissioner Issues:

1. Commissioner Piper stated that she has reached out to Rep. Sykes regarding the possibility of putting forth legislation in regards to the Woodsville Water and Light situation and she has not received a response.

2. CA Libby stated that she had a thought of using some of their fund balance towards the Broadband NTIA grant match rather than bonding the entire \$7 million. She stated that there are many unanswered questions. The worst-case scenario is that the county has to come up with \$7.4 million. Commissioner Piper asked that if the Broadband Committee receives the proposals from the Internet Service Providers on the 7th, can the Commissioners and the Broadband Committee discuss funding on the 8th and see if the ISPs are willing to put up some of the matching funds. CA Libby stated that she would talk with the bond bank this afternoon. She stated that using surplus funds would lessen the burden on taxpayers while also continuing the project they have been invested in.

12:33 PM with no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Omer C. Ahern Jr., Clerk