

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING  
Administration Building  
North Haverhill, NH 03774  
August 29, 2023

PRESENT: Commissioners Piper, Ahern, and McLeod, County Administrator (CA) Libby,  
Assistant County Administrator Burbank, Administrative Assistant Norcross

OTHERS: Maintenance Superintendent Oakes, Alternative Sentencing Director Mitchell, Mental  
Health Court Coordinator Golden, Helen Mrema – American Civil Liberties Union

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

**Maintenance Superintendent Oakes**

Supt. Oakes stated that he has received quotes for asbestos abatement at the Courthouse. Two (2)  
areas in the Superior Court section of the building have asbestos peeling off the ceiling and  
falling on the floor. He stated that this needs to be removed, and he has received the following  
two (2) quotes:

The Lawson Group - \$7,960.00  
Catamount Environmental - \$5,300.00

Commissioner Ahern stated that he feels that the outfit that put asbestos in the Courthouse  
should be responsible for removing it. This company should have researched to know it was  
dangerous, and taxpayers now must pick up this expense.

**MOTION:** Commissioner McLeod moved to accept the bid from Catamount  
Environmental for \$5,300 for asbestos abatement at the Courthouse. Commissioner  
Ahern seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Supt. Oakes stated that he understands where Commissioner Ahern is coming from, but when the  
asbestos was installed, there was no common knowledge of the dangers, and it was widely used  
across the United States. He explained that as time passes and technology becomes what it is,  
they learn from past mistakes. Supt. Oakes noted that the County would continue to incur these  
costs whether they keep the current Courthouse or build a new one because the asbestos will  
have to be removed in either situation.

**Alternative Sentencing (AS) Director Mitchell and Mental Health Court (MCH)  
Coordinator Golden**

AS Director Mitchell and MHC Coordinator Golden arrived to discuss the issue of housing for  
the County's Alternative Sentencing Program participants and possible avenues for funding.

Commissioner Piper stated that this is an extremely important discussion, and she hopes the Commissioners can decide on the support AS Director Mitchell suggests. She stated that the Commissioners were encouraged, through CA Libby, to reach out to AS Director Mitchell with any questions they had, and CA Libby was going to look into possible funding through ARPA or the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Fund (LATCF) funds the County has received.

AS Director Mitchell stated that she received feedback from Commissioner Ahern and shared it with MHC Coordinator Golden for her input. Commissioner Ahern's suggestion is to build housing. AS Director Mitchell is willing to discuss that but also thinks there is an immediate need for safe housing heading into winter. AS Director Mitchell noted that one idea that MHC Coordinator Golden had was to create Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with hotels for participants who do not have housing, and this would keep them in their community and connected to the resources they already have.

MHC Coordinator Golden noted that the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) Mapping is a state-wide initiative in which Grafton County will be participating. AS Director Mitchell explained that this would be where multi-agencies (hospitals, police, or providers) have specific places where they can intervene to prevent people with co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders from being incarcerated, and it would get them the treatment they need. MHC Coordinator Golden stated that she has been trained to bring this to Grafton County. Grafton County has been chosen first to go with this model because Grafton County had just applied for and did not receive a grant for the SIM Mapping, and because of that, the County has the stakeholder group ready to go and has shown that they want this program. This mapping will help Grafton County understand what is happening with housing and what is available.

MHC Coordinator Golden stated that she liked the idea, if funds were available through the County, to help with the cost of hotels or campgrounds for their participants. She noted that the state funding from COVID ran out months ago, which protected people from losing housing due to losing their jobs. There is a nonprofit for Mental Health Court participants that has been helping with the funding to get these participants into campgrounds, and this nonprofit has been giving all it can. AS Director Mitchell added that another issue is the increase in the cost of rent and the lack of availability for apartments.

Commissioner Ahern stated that there is an entity in place by state statute. The counties are responsible for taking care of these people. He explained that he feels a lot of space at the County Complex is not adequately utilized. He stated that the counties are here to provide housing and added that back in the day, the counties used to take care of these individuals when the towns would not. Commissioner Ahern thinks Grafton County needs to inventory what they have and determine if they are making the best use of the space here. Commissioner Ahern asked how long this planning will take before they can get these people into safe housing and added that there is a facility on the complex with plenty of room. AS Director Mitchell stated there are red flags around that issue, and Commissioner Ahern noted that there should not be. Assistant CA Burbank asked how many participants they were talking about. AS Director Mitchell said there are four (4) Mental Health Court participants and one (1) in another program for a total of five (5).

Commissioner Piper stated that this might be a re-envisioning of FarmDOC with a different use or goal, which needs to be spearheaded by the Administration. They have an immediate need right now and asked what resources are available. CA Libby stated that the County has the LATCF funding, APRA funds, and the Opioid Abatement Fund monies if Alternative Sentencing could make this work with the guidelines for the Opioid Abatement money.

Commissioner McLeod stated that she supports this short-term fix but also wants to look long-term at more permanent solutions. Commissioner McLeod supports moving forward with Commissioner Ahern's suggestion to look at on-campus and off-campus locations for longer-term solutions. Commissioner Piper stated that she wants to ensure that everyone understands that they are asking for a team effort, a task force, to look into on-campus and off-campus housing. Commissioner McLeod stated that looking at the complex would satisfy Commissioner Ahern's request that he has been making for some time. H. Mrema attended the meeting and said the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) could collaborate with the County regarding housing and harm reduction. H. Mrema stated that she would love to have follow-up conversations on how they can help with housing.

Commissioner Piper stated that there is an agreement amongst the Commissioners that the project Commissioner Ahern is suggesting may be able to be done on the County Complex. Commissioner McLeod added that she thinks this idea needs to be researched, but this is being made actionable, and they will have to have all hands on deck. H. Mrema and the ACLU could also collaborate with the County.

AS Director Mitchell stated they need immediate funding for those participants to have a safe place to live, and she needs a clear expectation as to what they need to do next. If the County is going to collaborate with other agencies, they may be able to have some answers within a couple of months. The Commissioners discussed how much funding would be available and agreed on \$35,000 for two (2) months. AS Director Mitchell stated that they would immediately house their participants in safe housing for the next two (2) months, noting that they would pay the KOA Campground that one participant stays at weekly. She will continue looking for long-term housing and plans to return to the Commissioners.

**MOTION:** Commissioner McLeod moved to approve \$35,000 from the Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Funds for the Alternative Sentencing Department to use for short-term housing for two (2) months. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

### **Agenda Items:**

1. Approval of Minutes – Commissioner Piper stated that she spoke with CA Libby after the last meeting to implement a new plan for the minutes. Grammatical edits can be sent ahead of time, but if there are other items they want the Administration to be accountable for, such as typos, missing words, or things that do not make sense, she feels they should offer those corrections in public session. Those should be recorded in the minutes. Commissioner Piper stated that one of the goals of this, outside of transparency, is bringing much greater accountability to the production of the minutes.

Commissioner Ahern stated that one of his concerns is that the public is reading these minutes, and members of the public do not necessarily know what all of the departments are in Grafton County.

Commissioner Ahern made the following corrections:

- Page 2, Item #3 – Maintenance Mower Quotes was changed to Maintenance Department Mower Quotes.
- Page 3, Item #4 – Out-of-State Travel Request was changed to Dispatch Center Out-of-State Travel Request.

Commissioner Piper made the following edit:

- Page 5, Item #4 – Added the following sentence: "She asked that Commissioners submit their questions to CA Libby and asked CA Libby to keep in contact with AS Director Mitchell."

**MOTION:** Commissioner Ahern moved to approve the minutes from the August 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting as amended. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

2. ARPA Funding Round – CA Libby explained that the County has historically done ARPA funding in conjunction with the Executive Committee meetings, and the next meeting is on September 25. CA Libby stated that Sheriff Stiegler submitted a request in July that is pending. Sheriff Stiegler was told that the request would not be taken up until the next round of funding and that CA Libby did not know when that would be. CA Libby noted that she and Assistant CA Burbank would review the ARPA projects comprehensively and where they all stand. Commissioner Piper felt it was time to start protecting ARPA funds for community uses and issues like those they had just discussed with AS Director Mitchell. Commissioner Piper stated that she does not feel the Commissioners should take department ARPA requests until this long-range plan is further discussed. Commissioner Ahern and Commissioner McLeod agreed.

3. Certificate of Authority – CA Libby stated that this Certificate of Authority is for the Bureau of Drug and Alcohol Services (BDAS) grant that the County has with the State of New Hampshire. The County's current grant was set to end on September 29. It has now been extended until June 30, 2025. The funding has increased significantly as well. CA Libby explained that the County has been recording the expenses for the substance use treatment programs, which BDAS has significantly underfunded. When the State of New Hampshire was doing contract revisions, they increased funding to the County to accurately reflect what is being spent. CA Libby explained that the County would offer the same services but would be paid more accurately. This Certificate of Authority is for the Commissioners to authorize CA Libby to enter into the BDAS contract and sign the amendments to receive the increased funding over the next two (2) years. The total contract is increasing by \$850,000 for the twenty-one (21) month contract period.

**MOTION:** Commissioner McLeod moved to approve the Certificate of Authority and authorize CA Libby to enter into the BDAS contract and sign the amendments to receive the increased funding over the next two (2) years. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

#### 4. Non Public Session per RSA 91-A: 3 II (a)

**MOTION:** \* 10:20 AM Commissioner Ahern moved to enter into non-public session for 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 said, "Yes," Commissioner McLeod said, "Yes," and Commissioner Piper said, "Yes." Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted "Yes" and would now go into a non-public session.

\* 11:01 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 passed.

#### **Commissioner Issues:**

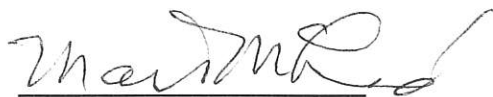
1. Commissioner Ahern said he cannot attend next week's meeting due to a scheduling conflict.
2. Commissioner Ahern reported that he has asked a State Representative to sponsor legislation exempting Grafton County from complying with the regulations regarding meat processed at the county complex. He is looking for the County to be exempt from USDA regulations or from having to be inspected by the USDA. Commissioner Ahern explained that under state law, the State of New Hampshire Department of Agriculture inspects meat processing facilities. He stated that this proposed legislation would note that this meat is not to be sold to the public; it is to be consumed at the Department of Corrections. Commissioner Ahern also noted that processing meat could also provide training for the inmates. Rep. Sellers will put this legislation in, and it needs to be submitted next week. Commissioner Ahern reported that he would also be meeting with Rob Johnson, Executive Director/Legislative Liaison between the New Hampshire Farm Bureau Federation and the Legislature. Commissioner Ahern expressed concerns about the food supply chain and stated that Grafton County has everything it needs on the complex. Commissioner Ahern went on to state that if this legislation is passed, it does not mean the County has to implement it right now; it would allow it if it were to become a need in the future.

Commissioner Ahern stated that processing farm-raised deer has become exempt from the USDA inspections, which the County should also look into. He noted that he is still interested in purchasing a dairy processing trailer for the complex, allowing the County to make milk, creamer, ice cream, butter, and cheese. Commissioner McLeod stated that she recently read that meat processors could apply for more funding to help with expansion. The US Department of Agriculture has \$123 million to help meat and poultry processors nationwide, and applications are due November 22. This funding is a result of the strain on the industry during COVID. Commissioner McLeod expressed concerns about meat processed on the complex and not being inspected, given the large number of people that could be infected by various diseases that could come from that. She asked who would be overseeing the cleanliness of the operation. Commissioner Ahern said this would be handled at the DoC in their stainless-steel kitchen. The Commissioners further discussed the proposed legislation. Commissioner McLeod stated that she is unsure if she could support this. It is one thing to do this for your family, but it is another when you feed it to many people.

3. Commissioner Ahern stated that regarding their discussion with the Alternative Sentencing Director earlier this morning, he would like to go around the facility and see the potential available spaces. He believes there are three (3) offices in the basement of the Administration Building that the Register of Deeds has stated are for real estate closings. Commissioner Ahern stated that he has never had a closing in those offices. Commissioner Ahern would suggest that the Alternative Sentencing staff be moved into available space on campus and that the Alternative Sentencing Building be used for temporary housing. CA Libby stated that the Alternative Sentencing Building is not set up for living space and would need extensive renovations. CA Libby and the Commissioners discussed possibilities in the Administration Building. CA Libby stated that it is essential to keep residential and administrative facilities separate. She agreed with this morning's idea of creating a committee or task force to investigate all possible solutions.

11:20 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Martha S. McLeod, Clerk