

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
October 3, 2023

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

OTHERS: HR Director Clough, Nursing Home Administrator Labore

Commissioner Piper called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

HR Director Clough arrived and gave the following report (*see attached)

HR Director Clough reported that she and CA Libby attended a public hearing at HealthTrust and stated that they would have a lot to discuss regarding health insurance. The Guaranteed Maximum Rate (GMR) will be set next week, and the County will know its GMR on the 11th.

Agenda Items:

1. Commissioner Piper asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the September 21st and September 26th meetings. Commissioner Piper requested that a subheading be added to the last page for the discussion with the Register of Deeds.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to approve the minutes from the September 21st meeting as amended. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes,” Commissioner McLeod “yes,” Commissioner Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition, the motion passes.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to approve the minutes from the September 26th meeting as amended. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes”, Commissioner McLeod “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 1042-1046; 2023-0929.2023 (3)

Nursing Home Administrator (NHA) Labore arrived and gave the following report: (*see attached)

1) Commissioner Memo Requests

a. New Bladder Scanner Bid Waiver – NHA Labore reported that this purchase was approved through the Nursing Home’s FY24 Capital Budget. He explained that at the end of this calendar year, their current bladder scanner will reach the “end of life” and will no longer be serviceable. Verathon is the sole local distributor of bladder scanners in their region. He noted that the Nursing Home purchased its current scanner from Verathon in 2014 and has found their customer service to be very responsive to the Nursing Home’s requests, as well as their diligence in contacting the Nursing Home to schedule annual service maintenance. NHA Labore stated that the quote is \$11,605.75.

Commissioner Ahern asked about other vendors outside the area. NHA Labore stated that pricing is the same with other vendors outside of New England, but when it is an online company, the County would pay travel to have someone come in and service the scanner, and the Nursing Home would have more downtime. The New England vendor is based in Massachusetts and is within a 3-hour drive.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to accept the Nursing Home Administrator’s request to waive the competitive bidding process and accept the quote submitted by Verathon for the purchase of the i10 Bladder Scanner System with Workstation and Printer kit for a total purchase price of \$11,605.75. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes”, Commissioner McLeod “yes,” Commissioner Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition, the motion passes.

b. Convection Gas Steamer Unit – NHA Labore explained that the Nursing Home’s current model, a Market Forge Steamer, was purchased in 2013, and they have experienced many service issues with this unit. He stated that the amount of operational downtime associated with these issues, combined with the number of man-hours that the Maintenance Department has spent diagnosing and fixing issues, has led them to the determination that now is the time to replace it. He noted that this purchase was approved in the FY24 budget. NHA Labore stated that he received the following two (2) quotes:

Restaurant Supply – \$28,850.00
Singer/Kittredge – \$30,550.73

NHA Labore explained that although the quote from Restaurant Supply is less expensive, it does not include installation of the equipment because they are an equipment distributor and do not have a service team to conduct installations or service equipment in the event of equipment malfunction, so this would be an additional expense. NHA Labore added that given the number of currently active projects, the Maintenance Department cannot conduct the installation of this equipment, and they also do not feel comfortable with the assumption of liability for equipment malfunction that would be associated with an in-house installation.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to accept the Nursing Home Administrator’s recommendation to accept the quote submitted by Singer/Kittredge of Bow, New Hampshire, for the purchase of Cleveland Range Gemini 10 Convection Gas Steamer, for a total purchase price of \$30,550.73. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes,” Commissioner McLeod “yes,” Commissioner Piper “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition, the motion passes.

2. GCNH COVID Update – NHA Labore reported clearing any potential COVID cases on the Granite Unit. The resident who tested positive was identified through surveillance testing. The resident remained asymptomatic and is out of isolation. He stated that they are still seeing staff test positive. There have been six (6) that have tested positive over the last two (2) weeks, but there have been no more over the last five (5) days. There are two (2) out on isolation protocol, and NHA Labore expects them back by the end of the week. Commissioner Piper asked if the County should reinstate the COVID sick pay. NHA Labore explained that the employees are using their extended sick bank. The first three (3) days come out of earned time and the rest out of their extended sick leave, which he reported is working well for them. He noted that the issue for the Nursing Home is that they still fall under the CDC guidelines for healthcare personnel and COVID protocol. This means five (5) days of isolation and then a series of antigen testing with the potential to return as early as day eight (8).

3. Contract Nursing Discussion – NHA Labore noted that they are keeping an eye on the contracts that expire in the coming months. He stated that there is a chance that the Nursing Home will need to extend some of the LNA contracts that are set to expire due to the timing of the incoming LNA class to graduate in December. He explained that by the time they finish the course, become licensed, and then go through orientation, they are looking at a mid-January to end-of-January time frame before these new LNAs are put into the staffing rotation.

Commissioner Piper asked how many contract nursing positions have been able to be eliminated. NHA Labore stated that there are eight (8) LNAs and two (2) nurses.

NHA Labore stated that the new nursing wages are very attractive compared to the hospital pay. He stated that he expected to be closer to hospital wages but did not expect to surpass them, and this is helping the County bring in more staff.

4. CMS Mandatory Staffing Regulation - NHA Labore reported that there is a phased rollout, and he believes that, because of the County’s location, they will fall under the rural designation, and this will help the County to some extent. Within 60 days of the rule becoming finalized, there is the first part of the regulation that will require more administrative paperwork analysis through their facility assessment. This is a large document that CMS requires Nursing Homes to complete to access all operations of the Nursing Home to ensure that they are doing what they can for the residents based on the resources available.

NHA Labore discussed the concern about the upcoming RN requirement. He stated that there are not enough RNs to cover this mandate. He reported another article that states that between now and 2027, there are expected to be another 100,000 RNs set to retire. There is a lot of advocacy

work right now for this, as there are not enough programs to help nursing homes become compliant with this new expectation.

NHA Labore discussed a letter issued by the US Senate from 28 Senators that signed the letter to CMS, which discussed the unreasonable regulations and the issue Nursing Homes will have in complying, given the current workforce challenges. He noted that Representatives Pappas and Kuster have also expressed concerns. NHA Labore stated that the New Hampshire Delegation has recognized CMS's goal but also knows the reality and concerns of the nursing homes. They would like to work with CMS to figure out how to get there

NHA Labore reported that he was asked to give a presentation for a group of healthcare advocates in the Lebanon area called the Elder Forum. He will be giving a presentation on this subject as another form of advocacy. He stated that he would give comments to CMS on the proposed rule. This presentation will be October 13th.

Agenda Items

1. MS 535 – Livermore for the Commissioners to sign.
2. FY 2024 Tax Information – CA Libby presented the attached County Tax Comparison Sheet. She stated that tax bills will be going out the week of October 30th and will be due December 18th, as the 17th is a Sunday.
3. Request to Increase Credit Card Credit Limits – CA Libby reported that the County currently has seven (7) departments that have county-issued credit cards. She explained that the Nursing Home and Maintenance order many things online and max their credit cards out each month. CA Libby noted that due to the rural nature of the County, it is hard to get items, and therefore many are ordered online. CA Libby stated that all credit cards have a \$10,000 limit, and she is requesting to increase the Maintenance and Nursing Home to \$15,000 permanently. She explained when these departments max their cards out, due to billing cycles, there is a two-week gap where they cannot use them, and therefore, these departments use the Commissioners' Office credit card to get through those periods of time. CA Libby stated that she has had to set temporary increases, and now she is requesting the Commissioners authorize those two (2) departments to increase to the \$15,000 limit permanently.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to authorize an increase in the credit card credit limits for the Nursing Home and Maintenance from \$10,000 to \$15,000. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern "yes," Commissioner McLeod "yes," Commissioner Piper "yes". With the vote being three (3) in favor and none in opposition, the motion passes.

4. Annual Report Dedication – CA Libby stated that the Annual Report is in production, and the Commissioners need to consider their dedications. Commissioner Piper explained to Commissioner McLeod that the County has traditionally had each Commissioner choose a citizen from their district to dedicate the report to, but there have been a few years that the report had a single dedicatee. The Commissioners discussed which route they would like to go with this

year's annual report and agreed to discuss it further when they have had more time to think about it.

5. CA Libby reminded the Commissioners that Pumpkin Day with Woodsville Elementary School is next Tuesday the 10th.

6. Public Hearing/Delegation Meeting – 10/12 – 9:00 AM @ Department of Corrections – Training Room

7. CA Libby reported a letter was sent to Register Monahan requesting additional information regarding the bid waiver she seeks for the Deed's Historic Plan Record Restoration and Repackaging Project. CA Libby stated that she hopes to receive the answers to the three (3) specific questions and would be able to move forward with the bid waiver as requested.

8. CA Libby informed the Commissioners that the Littleton Community Center will soon be considered by the New Hampshire State Historical Resources Council for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

Commissioner Issues:

1. Commissioner Ahern reported receiving many comments about the County and the \$5 million match for the NTIA grant. He stated that the County needs to make somehow money to offset or equal this \$5 million, as it is still taxpayer money they are using. Using this money out of the surplus could cause financial hardship in the future. This Middle Mile project could help entities make a profit, and the County needs to investigate ways that Grafton County Government can make money off this broadband project without violating NTIA guidelines.

CA Libby stated that Commissioner Ahern had requested a copy of the NTIA grant application, and she could not give that to him. She explained that the application was done through a portal in different pieces, with multiple attachments and various documents. The application does not exist in a format that can be given to him in one piece. She stated that if he has specific information that he is looking for, she can try to provide that. Commissioner Ahern stated that some of the members of the Delegation are looking for the original application information and what the parameters were. CA Libby stated that there are various attachments to the application that she could go through and try to obtain if she knew what information the Delegation members were looking for. Commissioner Ahern asked for all the information sent to NTIA as a part of the application.

2. Commissioner Piper received a letter from Sandra Hayden from Mascoma Community Healthcare thanking the Commissioners for the County's support and giving an update on their affiliation with Healthfirst. The letter stated that verbal approval of their collaboration with Healthfirst has been secured from the Federal Health Resources Services Administration.

11:43 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 black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Martha S. McLeod, Clerk

Grafton County Human Resources Report
 Karen Clough, Human Resources Director
 October 3, 2023

HR Activity Report (09/05/2023-10/02/2023)

• ***New Hires***

<u>Department</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Position(s)</u>
Nursing Home	12 (1 PD, 7 FT, 4 PT)	2 FT / 1 PD RN, 2 FT Dietary Aide (LNA Program), 1 FT Dietary Aide, 4 PT Dietary Aide, 1 FT LNA, 1 FT Cook
DOC	2 (1 FT, 1 PT)	1 FT CO, 1 PD RN

Separations

<u>Departments</u>	<u>#</u>	
Nursing Home	1 (1 FT)	1 FT Dietary Aide (LNA Program)
DOC	1 (1 FT)	1 FT CO

Reasons:

- Resigned personal reasons/no reason-
- Termination – 1
- Deceased -
- New job/career change – 1
- Relocated –
- School –
- Retirement –
- Not Reappointed -
- Not meeting Per Diem / Part Time Requirements -

Status Changes/ dept transfers: 1 FT Activity Aide to FT LNA, 1 FT Dietary Aide to LNA Program, 1 FT Case Manager to LADC, 1 per diem LNA to FT, 1 Student Dietary Aide to Student Unit Aide

Active Leave of Absences between September 5, 2023 to present

<u>Department</u>	<u>#</u>	
Nursing Home – Nursing	10	(8 are intermittent, 5 for self, 5 for family)
Nursing Home – Non-Nursing	8	(6 are intermittent, 5 for family, 3 self)
DOC	2	(1 intermittent, 1 self, 1 family)
Sheriff’s Dept/Dispatch.	3	(2 intermittent, 3 self)
County Atty’s Office	2	(2 intermittent, 2 self)
HR Department	1	(1 intermittent, 1 family)
Alternative Sentencing	1	(1 intermittent family)
Maintenance	1	(1 intermittent family)
TOTAL:	28	

Oriending Oct 4th:

1 FT LNA

1 PD RN

2 PD LNA's

Current Jobs posted/advertised

LNA's/Unit Aides (27.85 FTE's vacant)

RN/LPN (14.45 FTE's vacant combined)

ADON

CO's (11 FTE's)

Housekeepers (1 PT)

Dietary Aides (1 FT and PT)

Deputy Sheriff

Dispatcher

Activity Aide

Other business: 10/18 Norwich University Career Fair, Empower Deferred Comp rep on site 09/18 to meet with interested staff, Benefits Review Committee first meeting scheduled for 10/12

Grafton County Nursing Home Commissioner's Report: October 3, 2023

Census

Medicare: 3
Medicaid: 69
VA: 5
Hospice: 0
Private: 23
Total: 100

FY '24 Budgeted Census:

Medicare: 7
Medicaid: 68
VA: 4
Hospice: 0
Private: 19
Budgeted Census: 98

Monthly Admissions/Discharges

Admissions: 3
Deceased Residents: 2
Discharges: 0

Other Topics:

- 1) Commissioner Memo Requests
- 2) GCNH COVID Update
- 3) Contract Nursing Utilization Update
 - Current Contracts: 8 Nurses / 10 LNAs
 - i. 1 nurse contract to expire in Oct; 3 in Nov; 4 in Dec.
 - ii. 4 LNA contracts set to expire in Nov; 6 in Dec.
- 4) CMS Mandatory Staffing Regulation:
 - CMS estimates additional 12,639 RNs and 76,376 LNAs needed nationally, to meet proposed requirement.
 - Hardship exemptions:
 - i. Area with shortage of RNs or LNAs
 - ii. At least 20 miles from the closest nursing home as determined by CMS.
 - iii. Good faith effort to hire and retain staff.

Alternative Proposal:

- Discussion of 3.48 Hours Per Resident Day option that includes LPNs in the nursing calculation. Keeps 24/7 RN requirement.

GRAFTON COUNTY TAX COMPARISON

MUNICIPALITIES	FY 2023	FY 2024	INC (DEC)	% INC (DEC)
ALEXANDRIA	\$ 387,590.00	\$ 388,311.00	\$ 721.00	0.19%
ASHLAND	\$ 500,795.00	\$ 482,422.00	\$ (18,373.00)	-3.67%
BATH	\$ 218,087.00	\$ 221,941.00	\$ 3,854.00	1.77%
BENTON	\$ 44,932.00	\$ 48,263.00	\$ 3,331.00	7.41%
BETHLEHEM	\$ 529,684.00	\$ 560,751.00	\$ 31,067.00	5.87%
BRIDGEWATER	\$ 823,755.00	\$ 679,971.00	\$ (143,784.00)	-17.45%
BRISTOL	\$ 1,020,212.00	\$ 1,002,228.00	\$ (17,984.00)	-1.76%
CAMPTON	\$ 884,442.00	\$ 857,211.00	\$ (27,231.00)	-3.08%
CANAAN	\$ 616,072.00	\$ 635,148.00	\$ 19,076.00	3.10%
DORCHESTER	\$ 79,430.00	\$ 72,002.00	\$ (7,428.00)	-9.35%
EASTON	\$ 137,564.00	\$ 133,076.00	\$ (4,488.00)	-3.26%
ELLSWORTH	\$ 27,983.00	\$ 31,044.00	\$ 3,061.00	10.94%
ENFIELD	\$ 1,066,331.00	\$ 1,020,380.00	\$ (45,951.00)	-4.31%
FRANCONIA	\$ 562,505.00	\$ 596,109.00	\$ 33,604.00	5.97%
GRAFTON	\$ 224,288.00	\$ 232,052.00	\$ 7,764.00	3.46%
GROTON	\$ 268,425.00	\$ 240,549.00	\$ (27,876.00)	-10.39%
HANOVER	\$ 3,714,414.00	\$ 3,798,552.00	\$ 84,138.00	2.27%
HAVERHILL	\$ 599,504.00	\$ 649,630.00	\$ 50,126.00	8.36%
HEBRON	\$ 538,033.00	\$ 469,267.00	\$ (68,766.00)	-12.78%
HOLDERNESS	\$ 1,398,959.00	\$ 1,394,844.00	\$ (4,115.00)	-0.29%
LANDAFF	\$ 79,490.00	\$ 87,616.00	\$ 8,126.00	10.22%
LEBANON	\$ 3,734,841.00	\$ 3,496,835.00	\$ (238,006.00)	-6.37%
LINCOLN	\$ 1,667,366.00	\$ 1,969,842.00	\$ 302,476.00	18.14%
LISBON	\$ 243,187.00	\$ 176,121.00	\$ (67,066.00)	-27.58%
LITTLETON	\$ 1,502,869.00	\$ 1,515,358.00	\$ 12,489.00	0.83%
LIVERMORE	\$ 177.00	\$ 143.00	\$ (34.00)	-19.21%
LYMAN	\$ 126,948.00	\$ 112,823.00	\$ (14,125.00)	-11.13%
LYME	\$ 598,509.00	\$ 537,628.00	\$ (60,881.00)	-10.17%
MONROE	\$ 753,419.00	\$ 759,180.00	\$ 5,761.00	0.76%
ORANGE	\$ 48,548.00	\$ 42,696.00	\$ (5,852.00)	-12.05%
ORFORD	\$ 234,457.00	\$ 253,091.00	\$ 18,634.00	7.95%
PIERMONT	\$ 163,638.00	\$ 153,786.00	\$ (9,852.00)	-6.02%
PLYMOUTH	\$ 821,830.00	\$ 872,687.00	\$ 50,857.00	6.19%
RUMNEY	\$ 424,978.00	\$ 364,861.00	\$ (60,117.00)	-14.15%
SUGAR HILL	\$ 355,112.00	\$ 310,478.00	\$ (44,634.00)	-12.57%
THORNTON	\$ 722,438.00	\$ 803,912.00	\$ 81,474.00	11.28%
WARREN	\$ 156,956.00	\$ 163,038.00	\$ 6,082.00	3.87%
WATERVILLE VALLEY	\$ 568,527.00	\$ 620,945.00	\$ 52,418.00	9.22%
WENTWORTH	\$ 169,619.00	\$ 200,440.00	\$ 30,821.00	18.17%
WOODSTOCK	\$ 516,136.00	\$ 560,645.00	\$ 44,509.00	8.62%
	\$ 26,532,050.00	\$ 26,515,876.00	\$ (16,174.00)	-0.06%

Largest to Smallest

MUNICIPALITIES	FY 24
HANOVER	\$ 3,798,552.00
LEBANON	\$ 3,496,835.00
LINCOLN	\$ 1,969,842.00
LITTLETON	\$ 1,515,358.00
HOLDERNESS	\$ 1,394,844.00
ENFIELD	\$ 1,020,380.00
BRISTOL	\$ 1,002,228.00
PLYMOUTH	\$ 872,687.00
CAMPTON	\$ 857,211.00
THORNTON	\$ 803,912.00
MONROE	\$ 759,180.00
BRIDGEWATER	\$ 679,971.00
HAVERHILL	\$ 649,630.00
CANAAN	\$ 635,148.00
WATERVILLE VALLEY	\$ 620,945.00
FRANCONIA	\$ 596,109.00
BETHLEHEM	\$ 560,751.00
WOODSTOCK	\$ 560,645.00
LYME	\$ 537,628.00
ASHLAND	\$ 482,422.00
HEBRON	\$ 469,267.00
ALEXANDRIA	\$ 388,311.00
RUMNEY	\$ 364,861.00
SUGAR HILL	\$ 310,478.00
ORFORD	\$ 253,091.00
GROTON	\$ 240,549.00
GRAFTON	\$ 232,052.00
BATH	\$ 221,941.00
WENTWORTH	\$ 200,440.00
LISBON	\$ 176,121.00
WARREN	\$ 163,038.00
PIERMONT	\$ 153,786.00
EASTON	\$ 133,076.00
LYMAN	\$ 112,823.00
LANDAFF	\$ 87,616.00
DORCHESTER	\$ 72,002.00
BENTON	\$ 48,263.00
ORANGE	\$ 42,696.00
ELLSWORTH	\$ 31,044.00
LIVERMORE	\$ 143.00
	\$ 26,515,876.00