

GRAFTON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
November 20th, 2023

PRESENT: Reps. Sykes, Baldwin, Simon, Sellers, Morse, Stringham, Murphy, Morse, Bolton. County Administrator Libby, Assistant County Administrator Burbank, Administrative Assistant Norcross, Commissioner Piper -via Teams, Commissioner Ahern – via Teams, Commissioner McLeod

OTHERS PRESENT: Treasurer Liot Hill – via Teams, Register of Deeds Monahan, Helen Mrema, Irene Lambert

Rep. Sykes stated the minutes from the September 25th Executive Committee meeting, the October 12th Public Hearing, and the October 12th Delegation meeting needed to be approved.

MOTION: Rep. Simon moved to approve the minutes from the September 25th Executive Committee meeting, the October 12th Public Hearing, and the October 12th Delegation meeting. Rep. Baldwin seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin “yes,” Rep. Bolton, Rep. Morse “yes,” Rep. Murphy “yes,” Rep. Sellers “yes,” Rep. Rochefort “abstain,” Rep. Simon “yes”; Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being eight (8) in favor, none in opposition and one abstention, the motion passes.

Treasurer Hill gave the following Treasurer’s Report via Teams:

TO: GRAFTON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
FROM: KAREN LIOT HILL, TREASURER
SUBJECT: TREASURER’S REPORT
DATE: NOVEMBER 20, 2023



CURRENT CASH POSITION (as of 10/31/23)

Grafton County General Fund

Checking Account (ICS @ 4.80%)	\$ 2,806,506.86 (Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank)
Investment Account (ICS @ 4.00%)	\$ 1,318.21 (Mascoma Savings Bank)
Investment Account Money Market (5.43%)	\$ 1,045,259.95 (NH Public Deposit Investment Pool)
Investment Account CD (4.00%)	\$ 7,860.00 (TD Bank)
Investment Account – ICS (4.25%)	\$ 1,050,796.04 (Claremont Savings Bank)
Investment Account – ICS (4.80%)	\$ 1,033,552.05 (Bank of NH)
Investment Account -Money Market (4.00%)	\$ 1,032,915.54 (Northway Bank)

Grafton County Committed Accounts

Deeds Surcharge ICS (2.80%)	\$ 247,092.26 (Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank)
Deeds Surcharge Money Market (.05%)	\$ 11,173.42 (Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank)

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Dispatch Capital Reserve (.75%)	\$ 54,802.07 (Service Credit Union)
Nursing Home Capital Reserve (2.80%)	\$ 796,298.42 (Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank)
American Rescue Plan Funds (4.80%)	\$ 5,835,100.70 (Bank of NH)

RECENT TRANSACTIONS of NOTE

- The Combined Accumulated interest in the current fiscal year (7/1/23-10/31/23) is \$203,809.26. The FY '24 budget is \$375,000.
- Tax Invoices have been sent out – we have received payment from three (3) towns. Taxes are due on December 18th.
- The Letter of Credit was executed for the NTIA grant with Bank of NH. That letter is cash secured - \$4,274,643 is in an interest-bearing account (4.80%.) The Letter of Credit and cash security can be decreased as the project reaches certain completion phases.
- Investment letters will be going out the first week in December to develop our Investment Plan for taxes to be received in December.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to approve the Treasurer’s Report. Rep. Morse seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin “yes”, Rep. Bolton, Rep. Morse “yes”, Rep. Murphy “yes”, Rep. Sellers “yes”, Rep. Rochefort “yes”, Rep. Simon “yes”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being nine (9) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

Commissioner Piper gave the following Commissioner’s Report via Teams:

Commissioners’ Report
November 20, 2023

Staffing Update:

Since our last report in September, we have continued to have success in hiring LNAs, RNs, LPNs, and Correctional Officers.

In September, we had 27.85 vacant LNA positions; as of today, we have 25.85. We had 15.35 vacant RN/LPN positions; as of today, we have 11.65.

We did begin a LNA class on 9/14/23 with seven (7) enrolled. We have had two (2) drop out of the class. The participants should be licensed by December. That will reduce the FTE vacancy for LNAs by another five (5).

We do intend to have another LNA class in the spring.

As far as contracted staff, we currently have nine (9) nurses, with three (3) contracts set to expire in December, and we have eight (8) LNAs, with three (3) contracts set to expire in December. We have

reduced spending on contract staff by \$461,838 in the first four (4) months of FY '24 in comparison to the last four (4) months of FY '23

In September, we had eleven (11) FTEs open for Correctional Officers; we now currently have eight (8) openings.

We continue to receive applications for LNAs, RNs, and LPNs regularly, as well as Correctional Officers.

Nursing Home:

- The census at the nursing home is currently 98.

Department of Corrections:

- The current in-house census is 66, with another 17 on pretrial services.
- We are pleased to announce that Timothy Lethbridge began on November 13th as the new Department of Corrections Superintendent. Mr. Lethbridge has relocated to NH from Florida.

Broadband Update:

- The contract with NTIA has been executed.
- The Letter of Credit has been issued.
- An RFP for an Owner's Project Manager has been released. Proposals are due by 12/15/23 and will be opened by the Commissioners on 12/19. We hope a selection is made and the OPM is on board by mid-January.
- The Contract with eX2 has been signed.
- The project's first phase is the Environmental Assessment, which is being completed by eX2. No construction can begin until that process is complete. The project is 96% ariel on existing poles and 4% underground in existing disturbed rights-of-way. Therefore, the EA process is anticipated to be complete by February.
- Once the OPM is on board, an RFP will be issued to begin looking for partners to work with.

Courthouse Update:

- On October 31, 2023, the Commissioners voted to move forward with planning a new building for the county offices in the Courthouse. As previously reported, the State of NH has been unable to commit to any funding for a new building and, furthermore, to commit to a long-term lease so that the County knows that if we build a new courthouse, the State will continue to occupy the space. A letter was sent to the State of NH Bureau of Court Facilities informing them of the decision and asking them to reconsider their position. We have received a response that the letter would be shared with the Judicial Branch and the Department of Administrative Services team for additional discussions. The State is supposed to provide an update by today. We will continue to update you as we move forward. The Phase 1 Design costs would be an ARPA request.

Water System

- The County has been doing a feasibility study regarding putting in our own water system to supply the complex with water. This feasibility study is nearing completion; two (2) test wells that supply adequate water have been drilled. However, they marginally meet the need, and the recommendation is that a third well be drilled to ensure adequate supply and the water quality

meets all requirements. The next step is to submit a Concept Approval Request to NH Drinking and Groundwater Bureau, formally requesting the development of our own water system. Once this step is complete, the Commissioners will evaluate and decide if we want to proceed. The Conceptual Opinion of Cost is \$2,222,000. This would be an ARPA request.

American Rescue Plan Act of 2021:

- Grafton County received \$17.4M in ARPA funding. Thus far, there have been seventy-seven (77) ARPA projects approved by the Commissioners and Executive Committee for a total of \$15,878,781.88. These projects are in different phases; many have been completed, and others are ongoing. All funds are required to be obligated by December 31, 2024. There has been \$1,064,788.18 returned to available funding from completed projects, leaving \$2,645,308.30 in unobligated funds.

Unionization:

- In October, the Teamsters submitted a Petition for Certification to represent the Sheriff's Department and Dispatch Center staff. On November 15th the election was held by the Public Employers' Labor Relations Board (PELRB), and the employees voted to be represented by the Teamsters.

Appropriation Transfer Request:

- Please see the attached request.

Commissioner Piper answered various questions from the Committee.

Appropriation Transfer Request – CA Libby explained that West Central Behavioral Health receives social service funding from the County, and at the end of the fiscal year, the County reaches out to social service agencies in June and gives them a date that their 4th quarter funding request is due. She stated that if the County does not hear back from an agency by that date, they will contact any agencies. West Central Behavioral Health was sent emails on June 23rd and July 18th. The final email on July 18th stated that if they did not respond by the end of that business day, their funds would be forfeited because if funds are not drawn down at the end of the fiscal year, they lapse into the general fund. CA Libby went on to explain that on October 30th, the Chief Financial Officer of West Central reached out to the County and stated that the person in charge of submitting funding requests forgot to submit them, and they have asked if they could submit their request now. The CFO stated this employee has never missed a request in the past, explained that they are dealing with short staffing, and requested that the Commissioners allow them to submit their request as they rely on Grafton County's funding. CA Libby stated that the funds have lapsed into the fund balance, and the Commissioners have approved moving this request forward to the Executive Committee. The request was for \$10,000, which would have to be taken from the fund balance or this year's budget and covered with funds not spent out of this current year.

Rep. Sykes stated that he is aware that West Central has hired a new person to help in the process of coordinating with County Government, and he is hopeful that communications will be better. With that in mind and that West Central's services are critical in keeping people out of the

Department of Corrections and Nursing Home, he would encourage the Executive Committee to approve this request.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to approve the appropriation transfer of \$10,000 from the Nursing Home Expenses line item 01-4190-560 to the West Central Behavioral Health Line 01-8600-290. Rep. Morse seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin “yes,” Rep. Bolton, Rep. Morse “yes,” Rep. Murphy “yes,” Rep. Sellers “yes,” Rep. Rochefort “yes,” Rep. Simon “yes,” Rep. Stringham “yes,” Rep. Sykes “yes.” With the vote being nine (9) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

MOTION: Rep. Morse moved to approve the Commissioners’ Report. Rep. Murphy seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin “yes,” Rep. Bolton, Rep. Morse “yes,” Rep. Murphy “yes,” Rep. Sellers “yes,” Rep. Rochefort “yes,” Rep. Simon “yes,” Rep. Stringham “yes,” Rep. Sykes “yes.” With the vote being nine (9) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

CA Libby gave the following County Administrators Report:

County Administrator’s Report
November 20, 2023

Financial Reports

- Cash Management Report – This report shows where the county’s funds are invested. This includes operational monies and reserve accounts. Our current cash position is good. With the execution of the Letter of Credit and being required to secure that with \$4.2M, we are closely monitoring our cash position, but I don’t anticipate needing to borrow funds in anticipation of taxes.
- Monthly Variance Report compares the budget on an equal monthly basis to actuals and looks at the positive (black) or negative (red) variances. These reports represent four (4) months complete.

Nursing Home Revenue:

Payer Source	FY 2024 Budget	FY 2024 YTD Actuals
Medicaid	68	69
Medicare	7	2
Private Pay	19	22
Veterans	4	5

Total	98	98
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- o The census at the nursing home has remained steady during this fiscal year, and our average daily population is right on budget. We see some deviation in the payer sources, but the census remains strong. The chart above is as of October 31, 2023. Our current census is, with a planned admission this week. Total revenue for the nursing home is currently showing a negative variance of \$25,682.28 due to the variance in payer sources.
- o Proshare/Bed Tax – ProShare is a lump sum payment received in June. Bed Tax is paid quarterly. These reports do not reflect the receipt of any bed tax payments. However, our 1st quarter payment of \$391,965.20 was received on Friday, November 17th. This payment is on target with the budget.
- o The Department of Corrections is showing a negative variance currently.
 - This is primarily due to the timing of Bureau of Drug and Alcohol (BDAS) grant funds. The County’s BDAS funding increased significantly effective October 1, 2023, which will be reflected in the coming months.
- o The farm revenue is showing a slight negative variance.
- o County Attorney/Victim Witness. These grants are direct reimbursements for expenditures. Reimbursements are requested quarterly.
- o The Register of Deeds revenue shows a favorable variance of \$118,632.12.
- o Interest Income is showing a favorable variance of \$78,709.26. Expenses
- o Through four (4) months, we have a few departments that are showing negative variances. They are all minimal and should fall back in line as the year progresses. This is primarily because September was a three (3) payroll month, and it takes time for smaller department budgets to come back into line. The bonded debt line shows a negative variance because the only bond payment for the fiscal year was made on July 1st.
- Pro-rated Report: This report looks at the % of the year completed and then prorates revenues and expenses based on known variations on revenues and expenses.
 - o 33.33% of the fiscal year completed. On the pro-rated report, I factor in the revenue and expenses that are either over or under at this point in the fiscal year. Based on the October reports, we are at 33.88%, above revenue by \$257,633.45, and at 31.47% or under-expended by \$1M.

- Over-Expenditure Report – This report shows any over-expended line item at month's end.
 - o Several accounts are over-expended at this point. There is nothing concerning or out of the normal.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to approve the Commissioners' Report. Rep. Simon seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin "yes," Rep. Bolton, Rep. Morse "yes," Rep. Murphy "yes," Rep. Sellers "yes," Rep. Rochefort "yes," Rep. Simon "yes," Rep. Stringham "yes," Rep. Sykes "yes." With the vote being nine (9) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

New Business:

Rep. Morse stated that she has been in discussion with Commissioner Piper regarding the Inclusivity Statement that the Commissioners have discussed in hopes that they can come up with something that everyone is comfortable with. She hopes they can come up with something within the next couple of weeks and present it to the rest of the Commissioners and see if they are happy to move forward. Rep. Sellers asked what the resolution was. Rep. Morse explained that this is an anti-discrimination resolution asking that Grafton County be an inclusive place for everyone. Rep. Sellers asked if this was state law. Rep. Sykes stated that this type of resolution is common for communities to register their support for these issues, and it is an important part of what the government does. Commissioner McLeod explained that in the Commissioners Issues portion of their meetings, she had spoken several weeks in a row about inclusivity issues in the Town of Littleton. Many of the towns in northern Grafton County have passed inclusivity statements. She added that her motion was not seconded two (2) times, and people have continued to ask if the County would consider this resolution. Rep. Simon stated that being from Littleton, the dynamic of the situation and what everyone needs to take into consideration was that there was a comment made at a Selectboard meeting that upset people. His concern in Littleton was that those comments immediately went outside of Littleton and did not stay within the town to come to a resolution on its own, and now they have national pressure being applied in a situation where the community is interested in having conversations to come to a resolution. As the Representative from that District, he would appreciate it if the town of Littleton was given more time to sort this out before receiving more pressure. Rep. Simon stated that he does not believe a great deal of animosity is exhibited among people, even from the person who made the comments. The person who made the comment has always been open and welcoming. He thinks the town of Littleton would like to have those discussions without everyone getting involved. Rep. Murphy asked what the process is for a resolution. He asked if the Executive Committee and Delegation approve it, and if so, where does the resolution reside if passed? CA Libby explained that the role of the Executive Committee and Delegation is strictly financial. This is a Commissioner level issue. The Commissioners would pass the resolution, and it would then be a document that would be retained. Commissioner McLeod stated that she would suggest that this resolution be posted in a public place, such as the County website. She stated that during the public comments section of the meeting, the Executive Committee will hear what the impact is on people, noting that this is an economic impact as well. The arts community is large in Northern Grafton County, and everyone must be welcomed. Rep. Murphy stated that he would

like to think that we all live by this resolution, regardless of its presence, but he knows that does not always happen. He would like to see something on the County's website.

Commissioner Piper thanked Rep. Morse for giving her the opportunity to explain her position. She stated that she wants to be as clear as she can be. She is not anti-gay or anti-trans. She is pro Grafton County. She stated that there are over 90,000 constituents between the three (3) Commissioners. The rhetorical question is why this is needed. There is a problem in Littleton that is very unfortunate, but there are many different interpretations at the table for what happened in Littleton. She stated that she has listened very carefully to all comments, and they are underscoring her concerns that this is a politically divisive issue. Rep. Simon's statement was very important, asking if people could let Littleton handle this without outside pressure. Commissioner Piper noted that it is hard to describe the outside pressure she has received because of this and asked if they can remember the democratic process. There is an enormous campaign to get her to change her position, and she wonders how far this will go. She stated that the emails that have been sent are very vituperative towards her. One of the emails stated that they would not rest until this was done. This vote did not go the way her fellow party members wanted it to go and there has been heck to pay for her and her family. Commissioner Piper stated that they must consider respecting each other's differences. She requested that they turn down the pressure on behalf of her spouse and son and allow them to have disagreements. She stated that she had done a lot for Grafton County and noted that it was not an accident that the ARPA funding got out to the communities. Think about the damage that is being done to her and her family. Rep. Sykes stated that he wants to acknowledge that there will be work that Commissioner Piper will be engaged in. Commissioner Piper stated that Rep. Sykes is missing her foundational point. She is more of a Commissioner than she is a party member. She stated that the only thing members of her party who have spoken are taking away from this is that she might be changeable. They are not respecting the democratic process and pressuring her to change her vote and opinion.

Comments from the Delegates:

Rep. Stringham stated that applications for social services funding for next year's budget will be coming out shortly, and the responses are due the first of the year. He stated that anyone with worthy organizations should be sent an application. Rep. Sykes requested a lengthier application period to give these agencies more time to submit their applications. Rep. Bolton noted that as a nonprofit that receives the funding, he does not see an issue with the one-month timeframe. CA Libby stated that this is the timeline the County has always used, and there have not been any issues. Commissioners McLeod and Piper both stated they would be happy to take this up as a consideration in a Commissioners' meeting.

The next meeting date is January 22nd, 9 am.

Comments from the Public:

1. Treasurer Hill stated that she understands the topic of the Inclusivity Statement is a sensitive subject. She explained that roughly ten (10) years ago in Lebanon, they adopted an Inclusive Resolution, which has been reaffirmed several times. She stated that this is becoming an annual

activity that they do. She explained that this came about when there were racist pamphlets that showed up on vehicles when people were shopping, and it was very distressing to many people in the community. A group of people asked the City Council if they would pass an inclusive resolution. Something like this had never been adopted before, and these same questions were asked. Treasurer Hill stated that the value she has seen in this over the last decade has been a tangible expression of their values. People have seen it as a statement of their values in their communities. She is sorry to hear of the distress this is causing Commissioner Piper but noted that it is part of being an elected official. Sometimes, they are caught up in sensitive issues, which can impact their lives at home, and she has empathy for that. She did not hear of this Inclusivity Statement at the County until Friday, and after hearing about it, she wanted to offer her support. As a City Councilor representing 15,000 people in Lebanon, she thinks this is a good thing for the County to engage in. She is encouraged to hear that Rep. Morse and Commissioner Piper are conversing. She does not think of this as a partisan issue. She wanted to offer her public expression of support and hoped there could be a way to resolve this. People in Grafton County are concerned, and seeing the County express a statement of value would be valuable to them.

2. H. Mrema stated that she is the Regional Campaign Manager for the American Civil Liberties Union. She wanted to answer why this is important and stated that accountability is democracy, to speak for their marginalized communities. The Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, or the Marriage Equality Act would not be here if that accountability and pressure weren't there, the push to be better. She stated that she does not like that it feels like a personal attack because Commissioner Piper has been a dream to work with, and she respects her position and right to have it. H. Mrema stated that it is a privilege to speak on this topic, to advocate and create a world for her children to see.


3. Irene Lambert stated that last week was the first time she attended a Commissioner meeting, and this is her first Executive Committee meeting. She thanked Susanne Moore for bringing this resolution up again. She explained that she lives in Littleton and has experienced firsthand what is happening, which is not good. Many lives are being affected, and it all began with artwork that was put up on boarded-up windows on a building. The day the art was being placed, she was walking by and was thrilled to see it; it gave her a positive feeling. I. Lambert stated that the Co-Chair for North Country Pride had received funding from the United Way, and they used it to fund this art project. The town was becoming alive; it was attracting a lot of good attention and now it is a lot of negative attention. She attended the Selectboard meeting, and business owners stated that they noticed, in the past couple of weeks, that business is down some. The theater company that has been leasing the Littleton Opera House for many years has many members from the LGBTQ community, and they are being told that they are not welcome. These people received a \$1 million grant to build a new place for the theater or offered thousands of dollars to the Town of Littleton to fix up the Opera House. The Town of Littleton has yet to renew their rental agreement. There is a lot at stake for the Town of Littleton. The Selectboard member who made the comment is from a religious background, and she mixes state and religion. I. Lambert stated that they are all created equally. Regarding H. Mrema's statement, we will not rest, her perception is that people will not rest until this problem is resolved, especially those who are being attacked. She does not see it as an attack on Commissioner Piper or to have her change her ideas. She is so happy to hear that Lebanon and Hanover are doing this and towns around

Littleton have also done it. People attend the Littleton Selectboard meetings, and the Selectboard members do not answer questions or comment. They do not know how to handle it. I. Lambert stated that she is looking for democracy. They are all Americans, and it does not matter your race, religion, or gender. They should all be treated equally.

4. Register Monahan stated that in her thirteen (13) years of service, she has been a voice for a master plan for the County. She stated it would be a bigger conversation in the Courthouse building as to whether the Register of Deeds would be included. She stated it is not a requirement for her. She stated that the County funded Steve Whitman, who did a small overview at her suggestion, and then he was unfunded. Register Monahan stated that after studying this county for twenty (20) years and serving for thirteen (13), the County does a lot of knee-jerking without a long-range view. She noted that the County had a former Delegate whose career was analysis of buildings, and she suggested to the County Administrator to pay that Delegate something to come, but nothing happened with that. Register Monahan stated that she did not attend the planning last fall on where they were looking to go with the Courthouse, but she thinks it needs to be a much bigger conversation, especially if the state is not going to be involved. Register Monahan noted that this was a segway into a question for Rep. Bolton. She explained that she is doing a master plan for her department to plan for her exit and her deputies' exits. She stated that Rep. Bolton filed a legislative service request for a constitutional amendment, which has been withdrawn, but she asked what the plan or justification was for that LSR. Rep. Sykes stated that Rep. Bolton did not have to respond because he had withdrawn the LSR. He stated that if Rep. Bolton and Register Monahan wanted to speak about this later, they could do so. Register Monahan stated that it is a pertinent question. Rep. Sykes stated it was a good question to ask Rep. Bolton, but not during an Executive Committee meeting. Register Monahan responded that the Representatives would all be voting on it eventually, so why should the conversation end here? Rep. Sykes stated that the LSR has been withdrawn, and therefore, they will not be voting on it. Register Monahan requested that the County think about master planning.

10:36 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Heather Baldwin, Clerk