

GRAFTON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
March 25, 2024

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Register Monahan, Treasurer Hill – Via Teams

Rep. Sykes called the meeting to order at 9:00 am and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Rep. Sykes stated that since there was no physical quorum, no action could be taken, but they could still review reports.

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: MARCH 25, 2024

CURRENT CASH POSITION (as of 02/29/2024)

Grafton County General Fund

Checking Account (ICS @ 4.80%)	\$ 194,201.01 (Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank)
Investment Account Money Market (5.43%)	\$ 5,086,599.98 (NH Public Deposit Investment Pool)
Investment Account (ICS @ 5.13%)	\$ 2,522,377.56 (Mascoma Savings Bank)
Investment Account (6Mo. CD @ 5.00%)	\$ 2,530,796.00 (TD Bank)
Investment Account ICS @ 4.80%	\$ 1,013,150.60 (Bank of NH)
Investment Account (ICS @ 4.45%)	\$ 2,544,261.05 (Claremont Savings Bank)
Investment Account (ICS @ 4.50%)	\$ 1,017,414.51 (Northway Bank)
Investment Account – ICS (4.25%)	\$ 503,680.84 (Franklin Savings Bank) Investment
Investment Account (6Mo. CD @ 4.75%)	\$ 1,000,000.00 (Passumpsic Savings) Investment
Investment Account (26Wk Cedars @ 5.10%)	\$ 2,500,000.00 (Bar Harbor Bank & Trust)

Grafton County Reserved/Dedicated Accounts

Deeds Surcharge ICS (2.80%)	\$ 262,488.31 (Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank)
Deeds Surcharge Money Market (.07%)	\$ 5,278.67 (Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank)
Dispatch Capital Reserve (.45%)	\$ 86,674.94 (Service Credit Union)
Nursing Home Capital Reserve (2.80%)	\$ 749,456.69 (Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank)
WGSB ICS Money Market	\$ 43.86 (Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank)
American Rescue Plans Funds (4.80%)	\$ 5,213,848.78 (Bank of NH)
NTIA Letter of Credit ICS (4.80%)	\$ 4,340,208.96 (Bank of NH)

RECENT TRANSACTIONS of NOTE

- The Combined Accumulated interest in the current fiscal year (7/1/23-02/29/24) is \$431,912.87.

Interest rates continue to be higher than in the past few years. Interest income will far exceed the \$375,300 that was budgeted.

Treasurer Hill noted the possibility of having to borrow money this year because cash is tied up with the letter of credit or the Broadband Project.

Treasurer Hill answers questions from the Committee.

Rep. Simon arrived, and Rep. Sykes declared a quorum.

MOTION: Rep. Sellers moved to approve the Treasurer’s Report. Rep. Stringham seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin, “yes;” Rep. Morse, “yes;” Rep. Murphy, “yes;” Rep. Sellers, “yes;” Rep. Simon, “yes;” Rep. Stringham, “yes;” Rep. Sykes, “yes.” With the vote being seven (7) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

Rep. Sykes asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the January 22nd meeting.

MOTION: Rep. Baldwin moved to approve the minutes from the January 22nd meeting. Rep. Simon seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin, “yes;” Rep. Morse, “yes;” Rep. Murphy, “yes;” Rep. Sellers, “yes;” Rep. Simon, “yes;” Rep. Stringham, “yes;” Rep. Sykes, “yes.” With the vote being seven (7) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

Commissioner Ahern gave the following Commissioner’s Report:

Commissioners’ Report
March 25, 2024

Staffing Update:

Since our last report in January, we have continued to recruit and hire employees.

In January, we had 23.65 vacant LNA positions; today, we have the same. Most of the new hires have been students for the LNA class. We had 10.15 vacant RN/LPN positions; as of today, we have 9.45.

Our new LNA class will begin tomorrow (March 26th). It is a full class of eight (8). The program will take several months to complete, and the students will need to be licensed.

Regarding contracted staff, we currently have four (4) nurses. We have seven (7) LNAs, down from eleven (11) in January. We have reduced spending on contract staff by \$997,410 in the first

eight (8) months of FY '24 compared to the last eight (8) months of FY '23. We have spent \$1,995,052.78 to date, which should result in fiscal year 24 spending being significantly less than was spent in FY 2023.

In January, we had six (6) FTEs open for Correctional Officers; we now currently have two (2) openings.

We continue to receive applications for LNAs, RNs, LPNs, and Correctional Officers. We have had some difficulty recruiting nurses for the Department of Corrections and have had to hire a contract nurse as we are down two (2) full-time staff positions at the DoC.

Nursing Home:

- The nursing home's census is currently 108, a significant increase from our January number of 96.

Department of Corrections:

- The current in-house census is 60, with another 28 out of the facility. We have 13 on pretrial services.

Sheriff's Department

- Thayer Paronto, a long-time employee of the Dispatch Center, has been promoted to the Director of Communications following Tom Andross' retirement in January.

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

- Budget meetings with department heads began on Thursday, March 21st. We have received a 24.2% increase in our health insurance rates for FY '25. We have sought quotes from other providers, and all declined to quote. Our claims experience is very high as we have incurred some very high dollar claims. We are looking at options for restructuring our current plans to realize some savings and not have the 24.2% increase.
- Surplus to Reduce taxes—As you will remember, in fiscal year 2024, we used \$7,045,000 to reduce taxes. It is extremely unlikely that that much money will be available in FY 2025.
- The Commissioners plan to have their budget completed by the end of April.

Broadband Update:

- The County has hired EN Trust Solutions headquartered in Warrenville, IL. as the Owner's Project Manager for the Broadband Project.
- The project's first phase is the Environmental Assessment, which eX2 is completing. Construction cannot begin until that process is complete. The project is 96% ariel on existing poles and 4% underground in existing disturbed rights-of-way. The EA is underway and expected to take 30 to 90 days. Therefore, it is anticipated that the EA process will be completed by the end of May.

- We will release an RFP soon to begin looking for Internet Service Providers to work with.

Courthouse Update:

- On March 5th, Commissioner Charlie Arlinghaus from the Department of Administrative Services, Chief Justice Gordon McDonald, Director Dianne Martin, Administrative Office of the Courts, Sarah Lineberry, Superintendent Bureau of Court Facilities, Executive Councilors Cinde Warmington, and Joe Kenney attended a Commissioners' meeting to discuss the Courthouse. Commissioner Arlinghaus indicated that the State likes their relationship with the County and does not intend to leave. That said, though, the State can't commit to spending additional funds for increased lease costs. The group had a brief tour of the Courthouse, which mostly consisted of discussing some of the shortcomings of the building. Next Steps: The Commissioners decided at their meeting on 3/19/24 to move ahead with the planning process for a new building that would include space for the Courts. A building committee will be established, and then that group will draft an RFP/RFQ to look for interested/qualified architects and engineering firms to do the initial design. The Commissioners' plan is to utilize ARPA funding to complete this phase of the project. A proposal will be brought before the Executive Committee in May for your approval to use funds from ARPA for this. Eventually, this project would need to be bonded in order to be paid for. That would require a 2/3rd majority vote by the Delegation.

Water System

- DES did approve the County's request for a Concept Approval. At their meeting on March 19th, the Commissioners voted 2-1 to not move forward with the County having an Independent Water System. Commissioners Piper and McLeod are concerned about the impact on the ratepayers in Woodsville as they are Grafton County taxpayers as well. They did not feel that the marginal savings (\$25,000/year) that the feasibility study shows we would realize would be beneficial enough to outweigh the impacts that the citizens of Woodsville would suffer. They were both also concerned about the additional workload and ongoing operational costs associated with owning our own system.

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 \$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. We have approximately \$3M unobligated funds.

Rep. Simon asked for clarification on the ARPA funding. He stated that the numbers in the report for what is obligated and what remains do not add up. CA Libby explained that of all the projects that have been approved and obligated, many came in under cost. That money was put back into the overall ARPA funds, and therefore that is why there is \$3 million left. Those original projects were approved, but not all funds were expended.

Rep. Sykes questioned the 24% increase in health insurance and stated that a nonprofit that he is on the board of has recently come to realize that there is a new development in health insurance. There is a way to have a hybrid shelf insurance plan and explained that the employee would pay for the health insurance on their own, but in the event of a catastrophic event, this insurance would kick in, and the obligation to the nonprofit, in this case, would be much lower. Rep. Sykes stated that this hybrid model will save this nonprofit roughly \$1 million a year. CA Libby explained that the County is insured through HealthTrust. She noted that they had explored self-insurance in the past, but it had not been financially advantageous to the county. She explained that she, HR Director Clough, and Asst. CA Burbank will be meeting with HealthTrust tomorrow and will present a plan to the Commissioners in the coming weeks to avoid the 24% overall increase. She noted that they requested quotes from six (6) different insurance companies, and all declined to quote the County because of the high claims experience. At the time of the request, the claims experience was 160%, and it should be around 70%.

Rep. Sykes stated that he would like to know if Commissioner Piper could contact the NHAC and see what their practices are relative to the per diem payments for online meeting participation.

CA Libby and Commissioner Ahern answered various questions from the Committee.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to approve the Commissioners’ Report. Rep. Sellers seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin, “yes;” Rep. Morse, “yes;” Rep. Murphy, “yes;” Rep. Sellers, “yes;” Rep. Simon, “yes;” Rep. Stringham, “yes;” Rep. Sykes, “yes.” With the vote being seven (7) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

CA Libby gave the following County Administrators Report:

County Administrator’s Report
 March 25, 2024

Financial Reports

- ❖ Cash Management Report – This report shows where the county’s funds are invested. This includes operational monies and reserve accounts.
- ❖ 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 eight (8) months complete.

Nursing Home Revenue:

Payer Source	FY 2024 Budget	FY 2024 YTD Actuals
Medicaid	68	72

Medicare	7	8
Private Pay	19	13
Veterans	4	7
Total	98	100

- The census at the nursing home has increased significantly in the past couple of months, and our average daily population is slightly above budget. We are on target in all payer sources except for private pay. The chart above is as of February 29, 2024. Our current census is 108. Total revenue for the nursing home is currently showing a negative variance of \$80,095.88. I anticipate that with the surge in census numbers and the mix of payer sources this will quickly change, and the nursing home will be showing a positive variance.
- Proshare/Bed Tax – ProShare is a lump sum payment received in June. Bed Tax is paid quarterly. These reports reflect the receipt of the first two (2) quarterly payments of \$775,268.56, which is on target with budget projections.
- The Department of Corrections is showing a slight but improved negative variance currently. This is due to the timing of Bureau of Drug and Alcohol (BDAS) grant funds, no revenue collected for Federal inmates and lower-than-anticipated revenue from Community Corrections.
- The farm revenue is showing a negative variance. This is due to lower-than-anticipated milk revenue and because the timber harvest that is budgeted for has not happened. The timber harvest is anticipated to go out to bid in late April but may not be completed for FY '24 revenue.
- County Attorney/Victim Witness. These grants are direct reimbursements for expenditures. Reimbursements are requested quarterly.
- The Register of Deeds revenue shows a favorable variance of \$105,904.22.
- Interest Income is showing a favorable variance of \$181,712.87. Interest rates received for investments in December remain very strong. We will exceed revenue projects significantly.
- Taxes are all collected.

Expenses

- Through eight (8) months, we have a few departments that are showing negative variances. The IT budget shows a significant negative variance as we are waiting on a subsidy from USAC to offset expenses within that budget. The Governor’s Commission (BDAS) account is showing a \$20,319 negative variance due to a part-time position becoming fully grant-funded. The employee was a full-time employee, but part of the salary was paid from the Jail budget. Funds will be transferred to cover the salary and benefits. The Other category shows a negative variance due to higher Outside Counsel costs. That line will be over-expended at year-end. The bonded debt line shows a negative variance because the only bond payment for the fiscal year was made on July 1st. The Pharmacy costs are showing a negative variance due to the high Veteran population that the nursing home has had this fiscal year and the expense associated with the cost of pharmacy needs for those residents.
- ❖ Pro-rated Report: This report looks at the % of the year completed and then pro-rates revenues and expenses based on known variations on revenues and expenses.
 - 66.67% 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 February reports, we are at 67.09%, above revenue by \$195,587.30, and at 62% or under-expended by \$2.5M.
- ❖ Over-Expenditure Report – This report shows any over-expended line item at month's end.
 - There are quite a few overexpended accounts. Maintenance has seen some significant Repair and maintenance costs that have overextended line items—there are ample funds within the Maintenance budget to cover those overexpenditures. There will be funding to cover all overexpended line items. There may be some Executive Committee requests in May for departments projected to be over by over \$5,000 and will need transfers from other departments.

CA Libby noted that the Nursing Home was able to secure a reimbursement rate at the Nursing Home’s full rate of \$569 per day reimbursement for Vermont residents from Vermont Medicaid. She noted that they do not get the full reimbursement rate through the State of New Hampshire and added that there are issues with the State of New Hampshire pending Medicaid claims because it takes New Hampshire a very long time to approve Medicaid recipients.

CA Libby stated that she would follow up with NHA Labore with the various questions from the Committee.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to approve the County Administrator’s Report. Rep. Simon seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin, “yes;” Rep. Murphy, “yes;” Rep. Sellers, “yes;” Rep. Simon, “yes”, Rep. Stringham, “yes;” Rep.

Sykes, “yes.” With the vote being six (6) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

New Business:

Next Meeting Date – The Committee discussed the upcoming meeting dates and set the following schedule:

Budget Meetings

June 3rd

June 7th

June 10th

June 14th

June 17th if needed.

June 24th – Delegation Vote on FY25 Budget

May 6th – Delegation Meeting to set Elected Officials Salaries

May 20th – Regular Executive Committee Meeting

Comments from the Public – Register Monahan stated regarding the Delegation meeting to set Elected Officials’ salaries, the last time the salaries were set was the first time there was a discussion by the Executive Committee beforehand to come up with a recommendation to present to the Delegation. She asked what the thoughts this year would be and if the Executive Committee would meet before the Delegation meeting to discuss and develop recommendations. Rep. Simon stated that if they want to have a discussion regarding the salaries, it is hard to do work with the full Delegation, and he thinks it’s helpful to come up with a recommendation prior, too. He said he is willing to meet an extra day if needed. Rep. Sykes stated that he thinks meeting ahead of time is a good idea. The Committee discussed and agreed to meet on April 22nd to discuss a recommendation for Elected Officials' salaries.

Register Monahan reported that 75% of the plan restoration project is complete and Kofile has done fantastic work. She stated that Grafton County’s project will be one of the last projects at the St. Johnsbury plant as they are closing. They will be moving to North Carolina, and seven (7) books from Grafton County may have to be sent to North Carolina to be completed, but Register Monahan reported that she was told that the books could be completed before the move was made. She stated that she is thrilled with the company and the product.

10:20 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Heather Baldwin, Clerk