

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
March 28th, 2024

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

OTHERS: DoC Superintendent Lethbridge, Captain Kendall, Sheriff Stiegler, Lt. James, Maintenance Superintendent Oakes, Register of Deeds Monahan, and Michael Tamulonis

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

Department of Corrections – Supt. Lethbridge & Captain Kendall

A. Revenue – \$386,148.00

1. Department of Corrections – Supt. Lethbridge stated that the main revenue source is Coos County female inmates. This line also includes employee meals and inmate phone calls.
2. Community Corrections—This line includes electronic monitoring. A bill is pending that would bar inmates on electronic monitoring from having to pay for their bracelets. They have budgeted for that and absorbed that cost.

B. Expense

Department of Corrections – Total Request \$7,484,316.00

1. HISET/Re-Entry Tutor – Supt. Lethbridge explained that the counselor who teaches this class has been moved under the BDAS grant. This position is now fully funded under the grant, and therefore, this line has been zeroed out.
2. Correctional Officers – Supt. Lethbridge explained that in last year's budget, four (4) vacant positions were removed from the budget due to the inability to fill them. He stated that those positions are now needed, and he is requesting to put two (2) of them back in the budget and the intent would be to request the other two (2) in the next year's budget. CA Libby noted that last year when they increased the shift differential, it was absorbed into the budget due to the availability of salary for the vacant positions. She stated that this year, they cannot do that because those positions are filled, which also contributes to the increase in this line.
3. Education and Training – Supt. Lethbridge stated that one of his large requests in the Capital budget would be the introduction of a firearms program at the DoC. The Sheriff's Office does not have the manpower to do hospital details and transports. He stated that his department is doing these transports and details with officers only armed with O.C. Spray. He explained that when the officers take an inmate from their home because they violated conditions, they are

doing this unarmed. He noted that the officers are responsible for protecting the inmate as well. Supt. Lethbridge explained that there is a lot involved with the training, and they would develop a policy, noting that only certified officers would be given firearms. He reported that the firearms would not enter the secure part of the facility; they would only be given to an officer when they were to leave the facility. Supt. Lethbridge explained that he would have two (2) officers become Certified Firearms Instructors and teach the class here in the County, which is the least expensive option.

Supt. Lethbridge stated that a number of uncertified officers will need to attend the academy and that cost is also included in this line.

4. Prisoner Clothing/Supplies—Supt. Lethbridge explained that they are having to change vendors due to the bad quality of the current uniforms, which is increasing the cost.

Commissioner McLeod stated that when hiring a new Superintendent, they knew changes in the budget would occur. Commissioner Piper stated that filling the vacant positions creates an increase in financial responsibility as well.

5. Medical/Dental/Ambulance—Supt. Lethbridge stated that this line can vary depending on the types of inmates in the facility. He noted that inflationary costs are also associated with this increased cost.

Commissioner Piper reported on the Community Re-Entry waiver. She stated that DHHS told her they would give inmates Medicaid coverage 45 days before release. She is unsure if this has happened or if it is something they hope will happen. The idea is to get inmates on Medicaid 45 days before they are released so any behavioral health assistance they might need is covered. She stated that she was told the State Department of Corrections would be the first to receive this, and then Counties could opt-in. Supt. Lethbridge stated that this is the first he has heard of this but agreed that this waiver would be helpful. He also noted that they are investigating a possibility at an insurance company that has started offering insurance to incarcerated individuals.

6. Kitchen Supplies – This line has an increase due to the inflation in the supplies needed in the kitchen.

7. Meals—Commissioner Ahern stated that the farm's original purpose was to grow food for the inmates at the DoC. He would like to see the DoC eat more from the County farm. Supt. Lethbridge stated that he came in after the harvest last year, but he intends to discuss a plan with the chef to maximize the farm's yield to bring meal costs down.

Community Corrections – Total Request: \$837,275.00

1. Substance Abuse Testing – Supt. Lethbridge explained that this line is a part of the proposed SB 578. If it were to pass, the inmates would no longer be required to pay for their electronic monitoring or drug tests, and therefore, the County would have to pick up the cost for that. He stated that the inmates currently pay enough to cover the cost of drug testing and electronic

monitoring, and if this SB 578 were to pass, they would no longer have to pay for that. Supt. Lethbridge stated that this impact would be felt by those pretrial inmates who are out on electronic monitoring.

Governor's Commission Grant – Total Request: \$359,659.00

Supt. Lethbridge stated that the existing positions from the Department of Corrections budget were moved to this budget. This line now accurately reflects the cost of the BDAS program.

Nightwatchmen – Total Request: \$83,917.00

CA Libby explained that former Supt. Elliott reduced the coverage of the nightwatchmen. Currently, only one (1) nightwatchman is working, and the other is out on FMLA. They only provide coverage four (4) nights a week. The DoC sends someone over twice a shift to walk through the barns. She feels this is a conversation that needs to be had to discuss how effective this is. It is not an easy shift to fill and is a low-paying position. She noted that this could tie into the memo the Commissioners received regarding campus security. Supt. Lethbridge stated that he does not know if this is effective, but if the County were to look at a more robust security force for the campus, this may be the seed the County could use to grow it out of. He stated that if the County were to invest in more cameras, someone would need to monitor them, and if they have a small security department already established, it may be easier to use that rather than to start from scratch. CA Libby noted that the Campus Security Committee has requested a full-time position for campus security and explained that this is a subject that would need further discussion.

Capital Outlay – Total Request: \$160,038.00

1. Explorer – Supt. Lethbridge stated that they recently purchased one (1) new Ford Explorer and are looking to purchase a second vehicle to replace one in their fleet.
2. Armory – This line includes the initial purchase of the safe, firearms, and ammunition to train everyone. Supt. Lethbridge stated that he is looking at purchasing fifteen (15) total firearms. He would be issuing a firearm to everyone in community corrections, the Lieutenant, Captain, and himself, as they may receive a call while at home to an issue outside the facility. Commissioner Piper stated that she understands the argument of the need for firearms. She asked how Grafton County compares to other counties. Supt. Lethbridge stated that Rockingham and Hillsborough are armed. Belknap has an armory, but no one is trained to use it. He stated that he does not understand how someone can be asked to do this job without being armed.
3. Tasers – Supt. Lethbridge stated that he would like the officers inside the facility to carry Tasers as they are a much better tool than the O.C. spray. He explained that there are negatives to the O.C. spray. This spray affects everyone else in the unit, and also once you have compliance, the pain is still there. He noted that it also does not always stop the inmates and will make them angry. He stated that he will not be taking the O.C spray away but is looking to give the officers another tool to use.

4. Camera Upgrade – Captain Kendall explained that all cameras, excluding eight (8), are analog. When the facility recently upgraded through Cornerstone, they had to put converters on all analog cameras, and they could no longer replace those cameras. He stated that this price includes twenty new (20) cameras. Their current cameras do not have good sight, and they rely on these cameras for incidents within the facility. These cameras will be placed in the high-population areas of the facility. This also includes costs for Cornerstone to come out and evaluate its camera system.

Farm – Interim Manager White

A. Revenue – Total Request: \$390,750.00

1. Sale of Milk – Interim FM White stated that he has left the sale of milk the same as last year.
2. Sale of Livestock – Interim FM White reported that this is level-funded as well.
3. Sale of Wood—CA Libby stated that the revenue has been included in the last few budgets, but the timber cut has not happened. According to Forester Frohn, the RFP will go out in May and therefore will not be completed in this fiscal year. She stated that she would add that revenue to the budget for next year.

Commissioner Ahern stated that he understands the labor issue but would like to see more vegetables grown and used in the facility. He stated that there is currently legislation to put together a committee to consider allowing farms to process meat without a USDA inspector present when they process meat for use on their own farm.

B. Expense – Total Request: \$682,403.00

Custom Cropping—Interim FM White stated that he will have a better number for this line in two (2) weeks when bids are received.

Bedding & Sawdust – This line shows a \$6,000 increase due to inflation.

Commissioner Ahern noted that a farm can process a certain number of chickens per month without having an inspector.

C. Capital Outlay – Total Request: \$30,000.00

Contingency for Equipment Failure—Interim Farm Manager White stated that various pieces of equipment need to be replaced. He explained that if bidding out the custom cropping works out, the need to replace some of that equipment could be reduced. He has budgeted \$30,000 in contingency in the event a piece of equipment needs to be replaced.

Registry of Deeds – Register Monahan

A. Revenue – Total Request: \$1,086,500.00

Register Monahan reported they are in a slump, stating there is no inventory. She noted that during her service at the County, she has seen that during presidential election years, they see a slowdown, and she expects the spring to be less than what they have been seeing.

Online Services – Register Monahan stated that all renewals for Laredo come in January, which is why the six (6) month figures do not follow a pattern. She reported that they are also seeing a small migration to the free search, as people are figuring out what works best for their business.

Register Monahan stated that she had previously broken out Tapestry into its own line because it is an expensive search done primarily for the title industry. Fidlar offers it to them to allow them to stay logged into the system and bounce in and out of 350 counties. It is another choice for them. She noted that Coos County relies on Tapestry for public search and that the public must have a subscription. Register Monahan stated that Grafton County was the only one in the state to fight to retain its free public search. She stated that Laredo was introduced to her roughly eight (8) years ago, and they wanted \$1,200 monthly from every user. The County used to get the subscription revenue, and she stonewalled them for three (3) years. The County pays for the Laredo subscription. Their users pay \$120 to set up the account and \$60 a year, which worked well for them.

B. Expense – Total Request: \$498,911.00

Register Monahan stated that her Deputy has announced her retirement, and they have been conducting interviews. She has selected someone but will not know the health insurance numbers until she starts, so the salary lines will likely change by the time the Commissioners finalize their budget. She noted that she has previously stated that she is unsure if it would take 1.5 positions to replace those long-time employees when they retire. She stated that they would be dividing up responsibilities among the other staff members.

Register Monahan reported that she will be looking to keep the part-time, unbenefited hire until the vault project is completed. She is also going to be looking at the idea of an on-offsite, part-time, unbenefited indexer. She stated that this position is a need. It is a quiet proofing job, where one must extract data from the document. Register Monahan stated that she is unsure what will happen with the staffing in their office until they live through it and noted that she will have to see what the new hire is capable of. Register Monahan also reported an issue with not being able to hire her top choice for this position due to the candidate's use of medical marijuana. She stated that she knows there has been talk about eliminating that as part of the drug policy, but she understands the difficulty of being under the County umbrella, which includes law enforcement. In the real world, this policy is changing, and it affects her hiring.

Longevity – Register Monahan stated that this line will decrease due to retirement.

Education & Conference – Register Monahan reported that their affiliate plans on having a discussion at the NHAC Conference this year and she has budgeted a slight increase to account for that.

Microfilm Storage and Annual Production—Register Monahan noted that this expense depends on volume, so it is a flexible number.

Computer Software Contract—Register Monahan stated that this line includes the offsite security with Bastian, which is roughly \$20,000. It also includes the recording of \$2.70 cents per document, which is the variable expense in this line.

C. Surcharge – Total Request: \$9,323.88

Register Monahan reported that they made their major purchase for all of their equipment four (4) years ago. Their contract renews in two (2) years, and they are saving for that. She reviewed her surcharge requests with the Commissioners.

Register Monahan answered questions from the Commissioners.

CA Libby stated that regarding the Broadband project, the County is making pole applications with seven (7) utility companies that need to put their fiber on as they build the middle mile. She explained that part of the requirements for those applications are insurance requirements. The County does not carry commercial insurance, and Primex does not provide it. CA Libby stated that they had gone out to Telcom. This company specializes in this type of insurance to obtain commercial liability insurance as well as surety bonds for the four (4) companies that require those. Telecom has provided a quote for the items the County needs, and they are ready to move forward. CA Libby stated that Telecom needs a resolution that gives her the authority to sign for the surety bonds. It is \$29,500 for the year for the four (4) companies that require it. She reported that there is money in the NTIA grant to cover these costs. She noted that the insurance is going through Telecom as the broker, but the insurance is through Liberty Mutual.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to give CA Libby authority to enter into the agreement with Telecom. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Maintenance – Superintendent Oakes

A. Expense - Total Request: \$3,186,389

Supt. Oakes gave the following budget summary:

FY25 MAINT. DEPT. REPAIR & MAINTENANCE BUDGET – SUMMARY

FY24 Budget Request (before allocations & COLA) - **\$3,084,661**
FY25 Budget Request (before allocations & COLA) - **\$3,186,389**
(Difference: **\$101,728** / Increase: **3.3%**)

Wages & Benefits (accounts 001 – 130) Increases

- 25% health insurance

- New hire

Contract Maintenance (accounts 291 – 299) Increases

- Inflation
- Resume HVAC/refrigeration PM program in lieu of in-house HVAC/refrigeration tech

Electricity (accounts 619 – 628) Reductions

- FY24 Cost of Power Adjustment (COPA) turned out to be less than what Woodsville Water & Light (WW&L) projected.
- 110,000 KWh reduction at nursing home due to department energy initiatives

Water (accounts 629 – 638) Increases

- WW&L projects a 7% rate increase in January 2025

Sewage (accounts 639 – 647) Increases

- WW&L projected an 8% increase for FY24, but actual increase was 55%
- WW&L projects a 7% rate increase in Jan 2025.

Fuels (accounts 649 – 658) Woodchip and propane prices remain stable, and diesel costs have gone down. Commodity price changes are listed below:

Fiscal Year →	FY24	FY25	Change
Woodchips	\$71.8 per ton	\$71.80 per ton	\$0
Propane	\$1.55 per gallon	\$1.55 per gallon	\$0
Diesel	\$3.36 per gallon	\$3.265 per gallon	(\$0.095) gallon
Heating Oil	\$0 (did not budget)	\$3.265 per gallon	+ 22,500- gallons of oil

Budgeting for \$7,500 gallons for each of our three Underground Storage Tanks as a contingency measure but won't buy unless needed.

Repair & Maintenance (accounts 805 – 838) Increases.

- Inflation
- In FY24 we incurred many expensive, unexpected breakdowns which put us heavily in the red. To hedge against this in the future, I've bolstered the DOC and nursing home budgets along with a few other smaller buildings where I feel current budgets are too low.

Structure insurance (accounts 930 -938) All are up approximately 22.5% on average.

New Equipment & Small Tools (accounts 970 -971) Increases

- Inflation
- Grading and compaction equipment for county gravel road repairs vs. having a contractor do it every time.

Supt. Oakes noted that one (1) of his staff members is working to obtain his master's electrician license. Once that certification is obtained, this budget includes an increase in pay.

Supt. Oakes also explained that this budget includes a new entry-level maintenance assistant position. He stated that his department has had a few years where they have fallen behind on the upkeep of certain buildings because they have not had adequate staffing levels. He noted that the cost for that position, for both salary and benefits, is \$85,000. He explained that if the new position were not approved, he would request that \$85,000 go into the capital outlay budget to pay for a contractor to complete the tasks that must be taken care of. Therefore, it is a one-time cost rather than the ongoing yearly cost for a new position.

B. Capital Outlay Total Request: \$229,094.00

1. Standing Seam Roof— Supt. Oakes explained that he is looking to replace the roof on the Commissioners' porch and main entrance porch with a standing seam roof. These two (2) are original and in need of replacement.

2. ADA Parking—Supt. Oakes noted that Register Monahan requested this handicapped parking project to add two (2) new parking spots closer to the ADA entrance.

3. Refurbish Main Entrance Steps & Porch Landing—Supt. Oakes explained that water has entered the rooms below the porch due to failures of surface materials and sealants. Winter salts have also penetrated these areas and rotted portions of the concrete.

4. DOC Shower Repairs—Supt. Oakes stated that he is looking to remove damaged epoxy areas from seventeen (17) showers and rebuild/recoat them. The walls are bubbled and peeling, which poses an unsanitary condition for shower users.

5. Sidewalk Infills – He is looking to remove granite infills in six (6) sections and backfill with concrete. Supt Oakes explained that the granite pavers heave every winter, creating a sidewalk tripping hazard. It's also a hazard to the person plowing when the plow edge catches the edges of the pavement.

6. Equipment Storage Expansion—Supt. Oakes stated that he is looking to add a concrete pad on the east side of the shipping container and build a lean-to over it to enlarge the storage area and cover the new man lift and other equipment.

7. Capital Reserve – Supt. Oakes noted that this \$85,000 request is what he had previously discussed in the event the new position is not funded.

Sheriff's Department – Sheriff Stiegler, Lt. James

A. Revenue - Total Request: \$610,550.00

Court Bailiff—Sheriff Stiegler reported that the Bailiffs will receive a 2% COLA from the state. He explained that this line item is a wash.

DCYF Transport – He stated that he reduced this revenue due to more being done remotely.

B. Expense – Total Request: \$2,460,205.00

1. Overtime – Sheriff Stiegler explained an increase of \$25,000 in the overtime line. He stated that he is still down two (2) deputies. He has good potential with one (1) conditional offer, but the conditional offer will be deployed, and therefore, he will be down two (2) deputies for at least another six (6) months.

2. Deputies – Sheriff Stiegler stated that he is requesting a 3/5s Administrative Deputy that will encompass many of the duties of the previous Office Assistant position. This position will also be responsible for providing additional assistance with court security transports and pre-employment investigations for all Sheriff’s Office applicants. He added that this part-time position is a sworn officer and puts another person here to respond to an emergency at the County complex. Sheriff Stiegler stated he is also requesting a new full-time deputy position. He stated that the last time a new deputy position was approved was 25 years ago. He explained that between the increase in training requirements, reporting mandates, and vacation time, there are fewer hours available to do the daily work, and this additional deputy is needed. He noted that their deputies are not always available to assist the DoC in their transports because he does not have the manpower to do so.

3. Education & Conference – There is an increase in this line due to an increase in the courses that they are looking to attend.

4. Special Deputies—Sheriff Stiegler explained that this increased also due to being two (2) Deputies short and using either overtime or special deputies to cover that shortage.

5. Forensic Investigations – Sheriff Stiegler stated this line has a \$38,000 increase. He explained that the City of Manchester has a bundle package with the Crimes Against Children, and the more subscribers they have to Graykey results in a reduced rate, and those savings are passed down to the users. Sheriff Stiegler stated that they have not received 100% funding for this license, which is why this line has a large increase. Lt. James explained that the County is still receiving additional licensing and equipment from the Internet Crimes Unit, which, if the county were to obtain it on its own, would cost roughly \$100,000. Lt. James stated that the County has been told that the Internet Crimes Unit cannot fund this license for the upcoming year based on their budgeting needs. He explained that the Sheriff’s Department is continually trying to find funding sources, but this year, they have not found a solution for this license. If the County were to receive the funding from the grant they applied for recently, the funding would not be in on time before the licensing is due. This increase is needed to continue providing this service to the local community.

6. Fuel—Sheriff Stiegler reported an increase due to pricing and the addition of the transport bus to the fleet.

7. New Equipment – Sheriff Stiegler stated that the total request for new equipment is \$8,500. He stated that this request includes a 50-inch monitor and components for their conference/interview room, laptop computer, Axon Taser 10 yearly qualification cartridges, replacement pepper spray containers, new restraints for Court Security Staff, replacement flashlights, new transport gear and first aid kit for the transport vehicle and a new shotgun for a patrol Deputy Sheriff.

C. Capital Outlay – Total Request: \$216,105.00

1. Sheriff Stiegler stated that their capital requests are for three (3) 2024 Chevy Tahoes and the safety equipment for each.

12:14 PM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. McLeod', written over a horizontal line.

Martha S. McLeod, Clerk