

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
April 2, 2024

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

OTHERS: Register Monahan, Darrel Dietlein, Nursing Home Administrator Labore, HR Director Clough

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

Register Monahan – Memo for Consideration

Register Monahan reported that she wanted to combine this request with the cost of uploading all of the new images with Fidlar, but she does not have that number, so she will be back with that request. She stated that it would be roughly between 9,500 and 10,700 images. When they had the first ARPA project with US Imaging of the gap years that were missing from the internet, that cost was \$17,700, and she believes this estimate will be between \$20,000-\$30,000, but she will have that figure soon. She noted that they have to scan some documents twice because there is recording information on the back side of the plan. She stated that both this request and the plan cabinet bid waiver request are included in the ARPA historic plan project.

Register Monahan is requesting a bid waiver for the purchase of two (2) plan cabinets. She explained that they purchase two (2) of these every two (2) years for the mylar. She has always used WB Mason, but they did look into other vendors. She reported that one did not have the bases they needed, and the other was from Grainger, which was imported from China.

Commissioner Ahern asked if these plan cabinets would be easily accessible to attorneys who would like to see the paper rather than trying to view them online. Register Monahan stated that she understands what Commissioner Ahern is saying. They try to suggest that it is unnecessary to see them in person, but they do have surveyors and lawyers who would like to see them in person because a case depends on it. She explained that the mylars are accessible at any time on the main floor, and if someone needs to go downstairs to see the original, they can, but she would suggest they be accompanied by an employee and noted that the fingerprints are what does the most damage.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to waive the bidding process and approve the bid from WB Mason for the plan cabinets, totaling \$12,652.00 to be taken from the ARPA historic plan restoration project. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

Agenda Items:

1. The Commissioners signed check registers 1142-1145; 1147;2024-03.29.2024

Nursing Home Administrator Labore, Darrel Dietlein – Campus Security Committee

D. Dietlein stated that this committee has been an eye-opener, as they have discovered many things that need to be addressed. Those specific concerns are not included in this report for security purposes. He explained that the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) gave a presentation, provided self-assessments for each department, and then conducted a site visit. One of their first and highest recommendations was a dedicated individual or position dedicated to security on the campus. D. Dietlein reported that they have found physical security issues that can be addressed, some with funding and some without. He stated that this has significantly impacted the other work he is supposed to do as a Maintenance Electrician, coordinating with various agencies and all the departments. They have been successful in the thought that the entire committee is very interested in pursuing this further. He stated that an emphasis on a full-time person in charge of security has not been addressed in the past, and people get burnt out with many additional duties that cannot be sustained over a long period. D. Dietlein explained that there may be a concept where there is a position with a dual purpose that can satisfy multiple needs at the same time.

NHA Labore stated that the Nursing Home has an unfilled FTE in their budget for the Life Enrichment Coordinator position. He reported that he had unfunded that position in this current budget to cut costs but that FTE is still unfilled on the books. He would propose splitting the FTE with the County administration to cover these duties. He explained that emergency response and planning are part of CMS regulations for him. Since 2018, it has been a survey expectation, and right now, the nursing home is paper compliant, but NHA Labore explained that does not mean they are providing service to the residents and staff that work in the building. He does not have the time to do the training or have a thorough emergency plan with the staff, from which the nursing home can benefit. Splitting this position will accomplish two (2) very important tasks. NHA Labore stated that he has a good working base with their Emergency Response Plan binder, which this position could use as a tool.

NHA Labore stated that each department is interconnected, and from a security aspect, making sure that thorough, well-drawn-out plans are something that the complex lacks but could be addressed through this position.

Commissioner Ahern stated that he feels this is critically important. The County needs to have this position. D. Dietlein stated that if this position were to be approved, that person could address the deficiencies found and prioritize them in order of importance. He feels this position is very important in getting on board early. D. Dietlein stated that the enthusiasm they received from all departments conveyed this topic's importance and showed that the employees care. They want to make these changes to enhance their safety and the people they serve. Commissioner McLeod asked if the Sheriff's Department could assist in this. D. Dietlein explained that they have discussed it with the Sheriff, but they are understaffed, and oftentimes, they are not available at the County Complex in the event of an emergency. This position is not a security guard, but someone who would facilitate the security needs and policies on the campus, as well as being responsible for coordinating any mutual aid agreements with other agencies for backup

in the case of any event. He noted that this position is not only to help prevent a catastrophic event but also to protect the County's assets.

Commissioner Piper stated that it sounds as though the priority, in terms of fiscal expenditures, is that the position would be first before the physical security issues are addressed. D. Dietlein stated that for complex systems, yes, but in terms of some of the simple fixes, they can begin doing localized things that would be beneficial for specific areas, which they would then propose to the Commissioners with the costs associated if there were any. He noted that the Security Committee had a presentation by a company called BlueU, and they talked about all the infrastructure items they could assist the County with. Still, the County would also engage with vendors to receive the best recommendations and prices.

Commissioner Ahern stated that he would like to ask a question regarding the safety of the facility in the nonpublic session. Register Monahan requested to be present during the nonpublic session, noting that she is a committee member and elected official in this building.

Commissioner Ahern said he would like only the Commissioners, the Administration, and the two (2) committee members.

MOTION: * 9:33 AM Commissioner Ahern moved to enter into a non-public session for the purposes of consideration of matters relating to the preparation for and the carrying out of emergency functions, including training to carry out such functions, developed by local or state safety officials that are directly intended to thwart a deliberate act that is intended to result in widespread or severe damage to property or widespread injury or loss of life according to RSA 91-A: 3, II (i). Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern said "yes," Commissioner McLeod said "yes," and Commissioner Piper said "yes,". Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted "yes" and would now go into non-public session.

*9:34 AM Commissioner Piper declared the meeting back in public session.

Register Monahan requested that the Commissioners go into a nonpublic session to discuss her concerns with this report and the security in her department.

MOTION: * 9:35 AM Commissioner McLeod moved to enter into a non-public session for the purposes of consideration of matters relating to the preparation for and the carrying out of emergency functions, including training to carry out such functions, developed by local or state safety officials that are directly intended to thwart a deliberate act that is intended to result in widespread or severe damage to property or widespread injury or loss of life according to RSA 91-A: 3, II (i). Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern said "yes," Commissioner McLeod said "yes," and Commissioner Piper said "yes,". Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted "yes" and would now go into non-public session.

*9:42 AM Commissioner Piper declared the meeting back in public session.

MOTION: Commissioner McLeod moved to permanently seal the minutes from the just completed non-public session because they could affect the reputation of someone other than those of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “yes,” Commissioner McLeod said, “yes,” Commissioner Piper said, “yes.” Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes,” and the motion passes.

CA Libby stated that the Commissioners are in the middle of the budget and asked what this new position looks like in terms of cost, who it will report to, and what budget it will be in. NHA Labore stated that there is not a job description drafted yet, nor is a position analysis form completed, but if there is support from the board to go to that next step, he will work on the position analysis form to have HR score and then return to the Commissioners before their budget is finalized. CA Libby asked if the salary and benefits for this position were going to be the only things included in the budget for this upcoming year and allowed this person to review and assess what would be needed in this first year. NHA Labore explained that there are things that have been discussed in the committee that are little to no cost, but he would not anticipate any large request in the budget. D. Dietlein added that they would like the concept's approval before spending a lot of time getting the budget figures. He stated that the committee feels it is important to prioritize and address the specific items that are little to no cost. Assuming everything goes forward with the position, that person would then take on the list of priorities for approval. The goal would be to address the issues they have already identified that are little to no cost and prioritize the larger more costly projects. NHA Labore stated that the goal would be to have a year with this position to assess and improve where they can, while coming up with further plans to bring to the Commissioners for next year.

Register Monahan added that some of the things they have addressed were policy items, with Homeland Security backing their concerns regarding the fact that Nursing Home employees can be in the Administration Building, unsupervised, 24/7. She stated that this is a risk to her assets, in the records.

Commissioner Piper asked if the Commissioners could make a motion to accept the review and move it forward as a budget item.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to accept the Security Committee's review for inclusion in the budget. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion.

Discussion: Commissioner Piper stated that she would like to see the overview of the budget before making a motion regarding this. She thinks this is an important need but is competing with other needs this budget season. She asked if the Commissioners could make a motion to accept the review and move it forward as a budget item that would either be approved or not. Commissioner Ahern stated that this is an important item, and he feels they should proceed with this proposal, to accept it but not finance anything right now.

Commissioner McLeod stated that she feels they should give the Security Committee permission to move forward and see what the costs are going to be for their recommendations.

The Commissioners voted on the motion and all were in favor.

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

1. Vermont Medicaid Rate Increase – NHA Labore explained that historically, the County has had residents of the Vermont Medicaid program in the Nursing Home. Until this year, Vermont has always set its Medicaid rates based on what New Hampshire has set. He stated that when they started receiving more referrals from Vermont when one of their facilities closed, he put together an argument for the State of Vermont to look at increasing their rates. VT has agreed and is now paying the full \$569.29 daily. NHA Labore reported that this has been backdated to January 1st and will be \$752,000 in additional revenue for this fiscal year and a \$1.3 million potential increase yearly.

NHA Labore and the Commissioners discussed the delays in the New Hampshire Medicaid application process and the reimbursement costs from New Hampshire Medicaid. He stated that he planned to discuss this during his budget presentation with the Executive Committee.

2. Congressional Directed Spending Request: Landscape Project Update—NHA Labore reported that the Nursing Home has received the funding and will receive a check for \$750,000 for the landscape project. He does not anticipate this project happening this year but hopes to break ground next spring.

3. State Survey Plan of Correction Update – NHA Labore reported that their plan of correction has been accepted, and the Nursing Home is back in compliance with the State of New Hampshire and CMS.

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

Health Insurance – HR Director Clough stated that she is looking for direction from the Commissioners with regard to health insurance. She explained that the County currently offers employees two (2) plans, one with a \$500 deductible and one with a \$1,000 deductible. She explained that employees on the \$500 deductible plan contribute 20% towards the premium, and a small group of grandfathered employees contribute 15%. Employees on the \$1,000 deductible plan contribute 12%. HR Director Clough stated that these plans came through with a 24.2% increase for FY25. She stated that after looking at their options, they would like to recommend going to two (2) new plans. The first is a \$1,000/\$3,000 deductible, and the second is a \$3,000/\$9,000 deductible plan.

HR Director Clough stated that they would like to make some offers to the employees to lessen the impact of these changes but there would still be a savings to the County while incentivizing the employees to stay with that lower premium/higher deductible plan. She stated that she would

propose that the County still offer the 50% deductible reimbursement, but employees on the lower-cost plan would also receive a \$500 contribution to a Flexible Spending Account, which can be used to help pay their portion of their deductible. HR Director Clough stated that these two (2) new plans are the exact same plans the employees currently have; the only changes are the deductible and copay. With this lower-cost plan, the employee contribution would decrease from 12% to 10%. She stated they would want to encourage employees to stay and/or go to the lower-cost plan. Commissioner McLeod asked if it was possible to offer only the lower-cost plan, and HR Director Clough stated that it was an option. This lower-cost plan would result in an overall reduction in the cost to the County.

HR Director Clough further discussed the health insurance plans with the Commissioners and answered questions. Commissioner McLeod stated that she thinks the County should only offer the lower-cost plan to the employees. Commissioner Piper stated that she agrees and likes the idea of one plan only rather than offering two (2), but she does not feel like this should be brought to the employees until they see what they can do with their proposal. She cannot decide until she knows what the overall budget looks like.

Agenda Items:

1. Commissioner Piper signed a CDBG Drawdown Request – CEDC Micro for \$29,014.45.

2. Letter from Sheriff Stiegler (*see attached) – CA Libby stated that part of the letter is inaccurate. She explained that Grafton County does not provide retirees a yearly \$300 stipend. Commissioner McLeod asked what is provided through the NH Retirement System. CA Libby stated that NHRS does not provide anything for Group I employees who retired after July 1st, 2009. The County has subsidy-eligible retirees through the New Hampshire Retirement System for their health insurance for those who did retire before July 1st, 2009. CA Libby stated that Group II has a subsidy that applies to anyone actively contributing as of June 30th, 2000. These are New Hampshire Retirement System medical subsidies for health insurance for eligible retirees and not a County policy. CA Libby explained that the County's policy, which has been in place for over 30 years, originally applied to employees who retired after 10 years of continuous service at 62. In 2009, the Board of Commissioners revised that policy to now state employees who retire with 20 continuous years of service at age 62 or 30 continuous years at the age of 60 are eligible for a single plan of health insurance 100% covered by Grafton County. Once they are 65, they then have to go on a Medicare Supplemental plan. The County does provide that benefit.

CA Libby went on to explain that 28 current employees have more than 25 years of service, and there are another 20 that have over 20 years of service, all of whom were hired with the understanding that they would be eligible for this benefit. Commissioner Piper asked how this plan interacts with Group I and Group II. CA Libby explained that if someone receives a subsidy through the State, the County pays the difference. Anyone who retired after 2009 does not receive a medical subsidy through the State. She reported that 22 retirees are receiving the subsidy, 48 retirees over 65 on the Medicare supplemental, and seven (7) under the age of 65 who receive the 100% coverage.

Commissioner Piper stated that the \$300 stipend mentioned in this letter is inaccurate. Commissioner McLeod stated that Sheriff Stiegler has requested that the County end the practice of providing 100% health insurance for qualifying retirees at their next meeting. Commissioner Piper stated she believes they need to keep the promises to the employees that have been hired. She noticed that the state stopped providing a medical subsidy in 2009 and that the county should consider not providing a 100% single plan for retirees going forward as of a particular date.

Commissioner Piper noted that in Sheriff Stiegler's letter, he states that he has spoken with the other Sheriffs, and as of now, seven (7) out of the ten (10) counties do not provide healthcare benefits. CA Libby noted that Sheriff Stiegler checked with the other Sheriff about this benefit and added that Sheriff Stiegler has been here five (5) years and just learned of this benefit, so there may be other Counties that offer this benefit that the Sheriffs are not aware of. Commissioner Piper stated that she feels they should see where Grafton County is compared to other Counties. Department heads repeatedly tell the Commissioners that there is real difficulty in hiring. The prospective applicants do not value the benefits that used to be valued, and she would not support changing any benefits they have already provided, but she would think that they would look into the possibility of not continuing to provide this benefit in the future, and that could help to offer more to new hires.

CA Libby noted that the Commissioners cannot make the change for the unions. That would need to be negotiated. Commissioner McLeod stated that she feels they should respond to Sheriff Stiegler with accurate information. He is telling the Commissioners what to do without giving them the correct information, and this letter has no context. She stated that Sheriff Stiegler is getting false information from somewhere, and that is being given to others. HR Director Clough explained that the County does not provide 100% coverage to every retiree, the employee has to qualify for it under one (1) of the two (2) categories. If an employee does not qualify, they can still obtain the coverage, but the cost is 100% covered by the employee. Commissioner McLeod stated that the state provides coverage to spouses after retirement and added that this benefit is not something only Grafton County does. HR Director Clough stated that this should be a conversation the Commissioners have on their terms, with the correct information and when they are ready.

3. Budget Discussion - CA Libby reported that the revenue is currently up \$2.8 million. She stated she is projecting that there could be a \$3 million decrease in the overall fund balance. She used \$5.5 million in the budget projection as the amount to use to reduce taxes, and if all stays the same, the undesignated fund balance percentage would be at 6.16%, which is below their target. The total bottom line right now is \$58,729,692.00, an increase of \$4,960,259.00 or a 13.74% increase in taxes before a COLA is added. She noted that salary and benefit lines are up \$2,260,128.00, and the operational budget is up \$471,040.00. The Commissioners and CA Libby discussed the budget and ways to reduce it.

CA Libby stated that she needs a wage proposal for the Teamsters Union by next Tuesday. Commissioner Piper requested to go into nonpublic session to discuss wage proposals.

MOTION: * 11:29 AM Commissioner Ahern moved to enter into a non-public session for the purposes of matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine, or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant according to RSA 91-A: 3, II (c). Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern said “yes,” Commissioner McLeod said “yes,” and Commissioner Piper said “yes,” and Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and would now go into non-public session.

*12:05 PM Commissioner Piper declared the meeting back in public session.

MOTION: Commissioner McLeod moved to permanently seal the minutes from the just completed non-public session because they could affect the reputation of someone other than those of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern “Yes,” Commissioner McLeod said, “Yes,” Commissioner Piper said, “Yes.” Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted “yes,” and the motion passes.

4. CA Libby stated that in regard to Thursday’s budget meeting and the potential storm that is forecasted, she asked the Commissioners if they wanted to change their meeting. The Commissioners discussed and agreed to change their meeting to a virtual work session via Teams and noted that no decisions or motions could be made during that meeting.

12:08 PM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Martha S. McLeod, Clerk

Grafton County Nursing Home Commissioner's Report: April 2, 2024

Census

Medicare: 7
Medicaid: 80
VA: 6
Hospice: 0
Private: 14
Total: 107

FY '24 Budgeted Census

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

Monthly Admissions/Discharges

Admissions: 5
Deceased Residents: 1
Discharges: 0

Other Topics:

- 1) Vermont Medicaid Rate Increase
 - NH Medicaid Pending
- 2) Congressionally Directed Spending Request: Landscape Project Update
- 3) State Survey Plan of Correction Update

Grafton County Human Resources Report
 Karen Clough, Human Resources Director
 April 2, 2024

HR Activity Report (03/05/2024-04/01/2024)

• ***New Hires***

<u>Department</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>Position(s)</u>
Nursing Home	8 (6 FT, 2 PT)	1 FT Activity Aide, 1 PT Dietary Aide, 1 PT Housekeeper, 5 FT LNA Program
Corrections	1 (1 FT)	1 FT Cook
Sheriff's Dept.	1 (1 FT)	1 FT Dispatcher

Separations

<u>Departments</u>	<u>#</u>	
Nursing Home	3 (2 FT, 1 PT)	1 FT Dietary Aide, 1 FT LNA 1 PT LPN
DOC	1 (1 FT)	1 FT CO

Reasons:

- Resigned personal reasons/no reason-2
- Termination – 2
- Deceased -
- New job/career change –
- Relocated –
- School –
- Retirement –
- Not Reappointed -
- Not meeting Per Diem / Part Time Requirements -

Status Changes/ dept transfers: 2 FT LNA's to Per Diem, 1 FT RN to per diem

Active Leave of Absences between March 5, 2024 to present

<u>Department</u>	<u>#</u>	
Nursing Home – Nursing	12	(9 are intermittent, 8 for self, 4 for family)
Nursing Home – Non-Nursing	8	(7 are intermittent, 6 for family, 2 self)
DOC	1	(1 intermittent, 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	2	(1 intermittent, 1 family)
Maintenance	2	(1 intermittent , 1 family, 1 self)

TOTAL: 31

Oriending April 3:
1 FT Register of Deeds Clerk
1 FT Activity Aide

Current Jobs posted/advertised

LNA's/Unit Aides (26.75 FTE's vacant)
RN/LPN (10.95 FTE's vacant combined)
ADON
CO's (5 FTE's)
Housekeepers
Dietary Aide (1 FTE)
RN – DOC (2 FTE's)
Cook – Nursing Home
Skilled Maintenance Asst. (HVAC technician)
Restorative/Rehab Nurse Manager

Other business: Health Insurance



Jeffrey F. Stiegler
Sheriff

Grafton County Sheriff's Department

3785 Dartmouth College Highway • Box 6
North Haverhill, NH 03774-4936
www.graftoncountysheriff.net

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March 27, 2024

Grafton County Commissioners
3855 Dartmouth College Hwy.
North Haverhill, New Hampshire
03774

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to you with great concern regarding the definition and application of two current Grafton County benefits.

Most recently in contractual negotiations I learned that Grafton County has a policy/benefit to provide both 100% single person health care coverage while also providing a yearly stipend of \$300.00 or more for retiree's from Grafton County.

With employee's working to provide services for our county at an established 80/20 split for health care cost and no \$300.00 stipend each year this does not provide parody for any active employee doing the work at Grafton County.

Most concerning is that for many years, the now retired employee had received a paycheck that did not bounce, premium health care benefits and employer sponsored retirement contributions along with social security contributions in most county positions. Continuing to compensate anyone who retires from Grafton County is simply not fiscally prudent in my view. No current Grafton County employee should be entitled to these benefits and the practice should cease immediately.

As a Grafton County taxpayer and an elected official, I expect every taxed dollar coming into our county to contribute to forward progress and not continuing to compensate someone who already retired with these benefits while in retirement. Any elected official or employee of our county who believes they are entitled to this or somehow grandfathered is mistaken and is only serving a personnel narrative for financial success on the backs of our constituents, who pay the tax bills. Any employee or elected official who contests this with you is certainly showing his or her self-serving priorities and lack of concern for the future financial solvency of Grafton County.

As of today, after checking with all my fellow County Sheriff's, I've heard from Carroll, Sullivan, Belknap, Cheshire, Strafford, Hillsborough and Rockingham counties. I am waiting to hear from Coos and Merrimack County but as of right now seven other New Hampshire counties do not provide health care benefits or a \$300.00 check each year to retired employees and I'd bet the other two counties are just as financially responsible.

I suspect Grafton County is on the hook for anyone retired and receiving the health care benefit as of right now but this practice/policy could be ended at your next regular business meeting in April, 2024. I respectfully ask that you take action in this matter as our constituents deserve better. Grafton County taxpayers should not be financially strapped to benefits they receive know return on and already paid for once, when the retiree was and employee. Insurance cost will increase and more employees will retire, it is not a financially solvent path. Put simply, everyone was payed while they worked under the county umbrella, keeping them dependent upon County government in retirement creates a parasite on the back of the taxpayer.

Sincerely,

Jeff Stiegler
Grafton County Sheriff
603-787-2111 Ext. 5001