

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' VIRTUAL BUDGET WORK SESSION
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
April 4th, 2024

PRESENT via TEAMS: Commissioners Piper, Ahern, and McLeod. County Administrator (CA) Libby, Assistant County Administrator Burbank, Administrative Assistant Norcross, Nursing Home Administrator Labore, Finance Director Jurentkuff, County Attorney Hornick, Office Administrator Evans

Nursing Home – Administrator Labore, Finance Director Jurentkuff

A. Revenue – Total Request: \$17,955,854.00

NHA Labore is proposing an average daily census of 108. They are budgeting three (3) Medicare residents and six (6) Veterans of that census.

NHA Labore also noted that he is decreasing the Proshare line because they have been told not to expect the same ProShare payment as the last few years, and therefore, he is being cautious.

NHA Labore stated there is a \$2.4 million overall increase in revenue projections for FY25.

B. Expense

NH Admin – Total Request: \$3,055,771.00

1. Wages -Admin – NHA Labore stated that he requested a position title and grade change for their Bookkeeper. He explained that this position has become more of a Medicaid specialist position and is therefore looking to change the title to Resident Financial Resource Coordinator. He has updated the job description and created a position analysis form for HR to see if it warrants the grade change. NHA Labore noted that he had included an additional \$5,000 increase if that were to be approved through HR.

2. Employee Benefits—NHA Labore explained that throughout the current fiscal year, the Nursing Home has utilized a grant from the North Country Health Consortium for certain morale-building programs for the staff. One (1) of those programs has been a Reiki program that has been well received. He stated that they are proposing to keep that program in the budget and fund it through this line. The program is roughly \$9,000.

3. Vehicle Repair and Maintenance—NHA Labore stated that the Nursing Home had a bad year regarding vehicle repairs and over-expended that line. He has increased the line for next year in the event it happens again.

4. Software Maint./Training – This line increased due to budgeting for a new meal solutions program for Dietary staff. NHA Labore explained that the current software prints out tickets for resident meals and does not run in conjunction with the electronic health record. The staff use

these tickets for resident meals, and there is a lot of inefficiency with the program because it is not tied to the electronic health record. Point Click Care has a meal solutions program tied to electronic health records and will be more efficient. It allows more flexibility to adjust to various situations as well as creates the ability to adjust to any allergy a resident may have. This program has a \$1,100 implementation fee and a monthly fee of \$320 a month.

Dietary – Total Request: \$2,244,065.00

1. Wages—Dietary Director—NHA Labore stated that this is a new position in the budget as this is the nursing home's first year operating the department without a food service vendor.
2. Education & Conference – This line shows a \$1,200 increase. NHA Labore explained that the current Dietary Director is looking to do more homemade baked items in the Nursing Home, and he is proposing some additional baking classes to help the staff provide more handmade fresh baked goods from the kitchen.
3. Contracted Dietician – NHA Labore stated that this line shows roughly a \$100,000 decrease due to having a contracted dietician in the Nursing Home rather than the positions that were previously through CURA.

Nursing – Total Request: \$14,302,527.00

1. NHA Labore explained that wages increase due to staff hiring and filling vacant positions.
2. Contract Nursing Services – NHA Labore noted a decrease of \$300,000. He said that he thinks there is more room for improvement. If the LNA classes continue to take place like they are, that number can decrease. He noted that the Nursing Home still uses contracted nurses to fill many evening and nighttime shifts. Commissioner McLeod stated that she would like to bring the contract nurses line down more, given the success of hiring in the Nursing Home this fiscal year.
3. Loan Forgiveness Program – NHA Labore reported that he has left this line-item level-funded as there are three (3) current staff members enrolled in the program
4. Education and Conference – This line shows a \$10,000 increase due to the LNA class the County is offering.
5. LPN Tuition Program—NHA Labore explained that in February, he presented this program proposal to the Commissioners for the County to grow its own LPN program. This \$26,700 is for the second half of the fiscal year. He hopes to start this program in July, enroll people in the class through the fall, and begin the class in January 2025.

Therapeutic Recreation – Total Request: \$555,406.00

Activities Director—NHA Labore proposed a grade change from Grade 14 to Grade 15 for the Activities Director. He explained that the grade change has been warranted through HR, noting

that the Activities Director has assumed additional responsibilities from the former Volunteer Program Coordinator, who retired.

Pharmacy & Physician – Total Request: \$166,148.00

Veteran Prescriptions—NHA Labore explained that these costs were tied in with the other prescription line in previous years. The Nursing Home is trying to break this out to get a better cost associated with the Veteran residents. This line has increased due to the increase in the Veteran census.

Contract Services – Total Request: \$720,093.00

1. Beautician Services – The \$3,000 increase in this line is through the agreement with the Beautician. This request is for a weekly salary increase for the Beautician. NHA Labore noted that this line has not been updated since 2013. The Beautician provides all of her own products, and costs have increased.

2. Chaplain—NHA Labore noted that this line has not received an increase since 2016. He is proposing a \$2,000 increase.

Social Services – Total Request: \$331,943.00

1. Cable TV Service—NHA Labore noted a \$3,600 increase because the Nursing Home has switched to Spectrum Cable for television services. They also discontinued the unreliable satellite TV service.

Capital Reserve – Total Request: \$206,564.00

1. 32 Samsung Chromebooks 15.6” – NHA Labore stated that SNS told him that their Chromebooks need to be updated as they are at the end of their lives. The total cost for this purchase would be \$13,000, and he explained that these Chromebooks are used for LNAs doing charting and for nurses' medication carts.

2. 12 Maxwell Thomas 1 Drawer Bedside cabinets—Several cabinets need to be replaced. He noted that they have not been replaced in many years.

3. 30 Panacea Overbed Tables—NHA Labore stated that he wants to replace outdated tables in the resident rooms.

4. 12 Maxwell Thomas Vincenza Dining Chairs – NHA Labore is looking to purchase twelve (12) additional chairs for the four (4) units.

5. Air Pressure Mattresses – This is the continued replacement of older mattresses.

6. Nurse Call System—NHA Labore explained that he is looking to upgrade the nurse call system to a new technology for improved resident safety and monitoring. The current system is

23 years old, and the technology is outdated. He stated that they had a meeting with a vendor to see what options were out there. They have seen that the technology has improved and has much more to offer for improving resident safety and monitoring. The cost for this new system is \$150,000.

7. Mobile Heated Holding Proofing Cabinets – NHA Labore stated that he is looking to replace the current cabinets due to their inconsistent operation, which impacts the quality of resident food.

8. Phantom Bladder—The Nursing Home purchased a new bladder scanner during this fiscal year. This Phantom Bladder is equipment for competency training for staff.

Commissioner Ahern asked if ARPA funds could be used for any of these. CA Libby explained that the Nursing Home Capital Reserve is a designated fund that does not impact taxpayers, and she does not feel the Commissioners would want to use ARPA for these purchases. She noted that the capital reserve is currently at \$750,000.

Human Services – CA Libby

Total Request: \$8,023,879.00

CA Libby stated that this is the County’s share of the county cap for Medicaid services. Last year, the cap was frozen for the biennium, so this upcoming year is the same as the current fiscal year. She noted that the cap was over-budgeted in this current fiscal year, and in FY25, the budget is \$8,023,879.00.

Information Technology – CA Libby

Total Request: \$1,057,397.00

CA Libby explained that the County contracts with SNS to provide IT services. She stated that the County has recently undergone a change in personnel at SNS. The new Customer Success Manager seems very engaged, willing to help and get up to speed on all the items that have not been taken care of.

CA Libby stated that this budget has the addition of a new IT Director. She explained that Asst. CA Burbank has been working on cyber security with Primex and CISA. In consulting with them, they mentioned how Carroll County has an IT service provider but has recently gone to a hybrid model and hired their own IT Director. This model has had great success, with having their own employee to manage the IT services while working with their IT service provider to provide the services beyond what one (1) person can do. CA Libby stated that the salary figure in the book is based on ten (10) months. She discussed some of the items that she feels would be very beneficial. Many policies need to be written regarding cybersecurity, testing, and many other tasks that need to be done to ensure the county stays compliant. She also stated that there are many IT functions that SNS does not do that need to be done. She stated that she puts together the IT budget, not SNS. She reported many problems with the budget this year, with

items that she thought SNS was taking care of, but they were not, or items that SNS did not communicate to her that were needed but not budgeted for. CA Libby stated that she is not an IT professional and does not know what the County has for IT systems or what is needed. She added that the County could keep an IT Director very busy. This position would be the liaison between the County and SNS. CA Libby stated that there are many ways to do things better and save the County money if they were able to have someone here who was an expert in the field. She stated that she is stretched thin, and this is a position that is outside of her profession. She said she does it to the best of her ability, but it is not what the County needs. She stated that she knows the County is in an overall position with the budget, but she wanted to put it out there for discussion. CA Libby also noted that the contract with SNS expires in June 2025, and she thinks having this person puts the County in a much better position to negotiate a new contract or put together an RFP to go out to bid.

Commissioner Piper stated that the relationship with SNS has been disappointing. She asked if the County needs the services from SNS. CA Libby stated that she does not feel the County is ready to return to its in-house IT department. She feels the first step would be to bring in a director who can decide the best route for the County, but she does not feel the County is ready to take that step. This would be a step to help the County figure out what is best for them.

County Attorney’s Office – County Attorney Hornick, Office Administrator Evans

A. Revenue – Total Request: \$477,927.00

1. Circuit Court Prosecution – Atty. Hornick reported a \$34,000 increase in this revenue line. This revenue is a wash line item for the attorneys who provide services to the towns with which the county has contracts.

B. Expense

County Attorney’s Office – Total Request: \$2,213,129.00

1. Investigative Services—Atty. Hornick explained that this position is being worked into the budget through ARPA funding. This year, it is 25% funded through ARPA, which explains the increase in this line.

2. Dues & Licenses – Atty. Hornick noted a decrease of \$9,500. She explained that \$8,000 of that decrease is no longer having a need for Evidence.com, which was originally budgeted for in this current budget. She noted that through conversations with their software vendor, PBK, they have decided they do not need the Evidence.com software.

3. Litigation Expenses – Atty. Hornick explained that there has been an increase in requests for deposition and transcriptions. Therefore, she has increased this line by \$8,000.

Information Technology – cont.

Allocated Services to the Nursing Home – CA Libby stated that this line was initiated in the early 2000s. She had a conversation with NHA Labore and Finance Director Jurentkuff, and there is no basis or justification as to what this allocation is for or based on. Therefore, they have decided to do away with it. She explained this is a wash item between the IT and Nursing Home budgets.

Contracted Services – CA Libby explained that there is currently an agreement in place where the County potentially would receive a subsidy from USAC for IT services for rural healthcare. The County’s contract with SNS is broken into two (2) contracts: a rural healthcare contract for the Nursing Home and Commissioner’s Office, and then all of the other services. CA Libby stated that for the current fiscal year, the County has not been awarded the subsidy as of yet. Last year, the County received a subsidy that covered 65% of the SNS contract, but 15% of that subsidy goes to NETC to handle the administration. Therefore, the County received a 50% subsidy. The current fiscal year’s budget included the 65% subsidy, but it will look like that line item is over-expended where it has not been approved. CA Libby explained that to be cautious, she is using a lower subsidy amount of 50%, which was received in the first year, and therefore that is increasing the budget. She added that she has been told this subsidy is taking much longer to approve, and she is worried that the County will not get the full subsidy amount.

Software Maintenance & Renewal—This line shows a \$100,000 increase. CA Libby explained that the IT budget will be overextended in the current fiscal year because the County has items that she was not made aware of and that were not included in the current budget.

CA Libby reviewed the various software item requests in the budget with the Commissioners and answered questions. She stated that the IT budget has increased by \$357,948.00 and added that she has spoken with SNS about the importance of staying within the budget and how she cannot have another budget like this year.

Commissioner Piper stated that she believes they bought a bad product when the County signed on with SNS. She stated that CA Libby is doing a great job but noted concerns about CA Libby not being told about these expenses. She is sympathetic to the new position but asked if this could wait a year. CA Libby explained that waiting a year on the Director position puts the County in a position not to be able to make a change if that were the direction the County wanted to go. This position puts the County in a position to be ready to make that move at the appropriate time. Commissioner Piper stated that this increase is unacceptable, and they need to find places to bring this down. CA Libby further discussed the IT budget and answered questions from the Commissioners.

Social Services – Total Request \$634,185.00

Commissioner Piper stated that she is going to propose that the County go back to a suggestion that a Delegation member made a few years ago and focus fully on funding those agencies that directly feed to the County’s two (2) statutory requirements. The behavioral/ mental health issues have increased and that is a feed into their direct responsibility to the Department of Corrections. Commissioner Piper suggested that the County level fund the agencies from last year that have a direct relationship with the two (2) statutory requirements, any activity that relates to frail elders

and any activity that has to do with behavioral health, then fund all the other reoccurring applications at a reduced level, 30% or 50% reduction. She suggested to do this with the intention of phasing out that social service funding that is not directly tied to the two (2) statutory duties. Commissioner Piper explained the reason for her proposal, stating that they are in a new world, post covid and what they are seeing in their current budget seem to be nonnegotiable items they have to fund, adding that the targeted increases have worked, but that comes at an increased cost. She wants to focus on the County's statutory requirements. She noted that she thinks the budget discussion from the other day has to be considered preliminary. Commissioner Piper also wanted to note that for many of these social services agencies, the percentage of the County portion of funding in their budgets is very small. She knows there are agencies in her area that would be ok without the County's funding.

Commissioner McLeod noted that providing funding to these agencies also saves the County money as they are keeping people out of the Nursing Home on Medicaid or the DoC. She asked how to reduce this funding when many agencies have asked for increases. Commissioner McLeod suggested establishing a set amount of money to fund behavioral health agencies and then another amount for nursing-related agencies. She added that \$500,000 out of the County budget is not much, but the County receives a lot from these agencies.

Commissioner Piper stated that she feels that the competition for these funds does not come from the communities but from those on the County campus. She is trying to do her best with what they have on campus and noted concerns about the employee's satisfaction after their discussion on Tuesday.

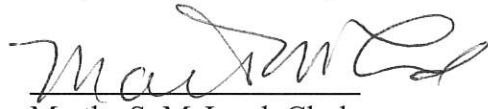
Commissioner Ahern stated that he would like Grafton County government to return to the two (2) essential responsibilities. He would like to know how much the Directors make working for these nonprofit organizations. He stated that the County does not need to fund any of these organizations, and he does not think taxpayers should be forced to fund these organizations.

Commissioner Piper asked CA Libby for her opinion. CA Libby stated that each brings a different perspective to this conversation. She stated that she manages the day-to-day aspects of the campus, so it is easier for her to look at what is needed on campus and take care of the people we already care for. She stated that in order for the County to take care of its statutory requirements, it needs employees, and to be able to get employees, the County needs to pay them and provide them benefits. She stated that she respects and understands what Commissioner McLeod is saying, but finding the balance of supporting organizations while supporting the complex operations is tough. CA Libby discussed the Commissioner's conversations about potentially only offering one (1) health insurance plan and noted that there are 100 employees who choose to pay more for a better plan for their own personal reasons. For \$280,000, half of the money they are talking about with Social Service funding, the Commissioners want to make a change to take that away. CA Libby stated that the issues that would create on the campus for \$280,000 out of a \$55 million budget, she wonders if it is worth it. She stated that if it is up to her whether to pay \$280,000 to allow the employees to choose which health insurance plan they want and cut \$280,000 out of Social Service funding, that is an easy decision for her but noted that she looks at it from a much different perspective.

Commissioner McLeod stated that she cannot compare offering employees a cadillac health insurance plan to feeding people that may not have other options for food. She stated that the Commissioners can cut this budget but when it comes to the Delegation, they are going to do something different. The more the Commissioners cut, the more the Delegation is going to notice. She stated that she is trying to figure out a way to offer systematic funding that gets away from the current way of funding.

The Commissioners agreed to continue this discussion at next week's budget meeting and see what ideas they can develop for funding.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Martha S. McLeod', written over a horizontal line.

Martha S. McLeod, Clerk