

GRAFTON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING  
Administration Building  
North Haverhill, NH 03774  
June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024

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

OTHERS PRESENT: County Attorney Hornick, HR Director Clough, Register Monahan, Supt. Lethbridge, Captain Kendall,

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

**County Attorney's Office – County Attorney Hornick**

*A. Revenue*

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*

CA Libby noted that all elected officials' salaries in the current proposed budget will need to be adjusted as they do not reflect the increases made by the Delegation when they set salaries.

1. 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 software which was originally budgeted for in this current budget.

2. 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.

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

**Human Resources – Director Clough**

1. Recruitment & Retention – HR Director Clough reported a slight decrease in this line. She stated that she found they did not use as much this current year. The Commissioners had asked for reductions and this is the line she reduced from.

2. Contracted Services – This line has a slight increase and HR Director Clough explained that they have a Retiree Drug Subsidy Actuarial cost that they have to pay for as well as a fee they are charged through HealthTrust for the insurance they provide.

3. Dues License Subscriptions – HR Director Clough explained that they increased this line based on usage. They pay for criminal record checks and motor vehicle record checks and she explained that with the increase in hiring over the last year, that means an increase in these costs as well. This line also includes annual memberships for the HR Staff and the Nursing Home Nurse Practitioner that are included in their budget.

3. Advertising—HR Director Clough explained that she has reduced this line by \$15,000, noting that her department is doing less paper advertising and is having success with Indeed.

### **Miscellaneous Revenue – CA Libby**

#### State/Federal Funds

1. Abandoned Property—CA Libby explained that the County receives abandoned property money from the State of New Hampshire annually in June, and the amount they receive is not known. She stated that she has ten (10) years’ worth of data and averages that out to come up with a budget figure. She stated that she has increased that line by \$15,000.

2. Federal PILT– CA Libby explained that this is a payment the County receives annually from the federal government because of the White Mountain National Forest Land located in Grafton County. She noted that she keeps an average of these payments as well, but noted this one is more consistent. She has increased this line by \$10,000.

#### Interest

CA Libby stated that the County has collected over \$400,000 in interest this year. She has increased this line to \$450,000, noting that interest rates are projected to slightly increase or stay stable.

#### Courthouse Rent

This increase is based on a new rental agreement with the State of New Hampshire

#### Human Services

1. Enhanced FMap – This was revenue the County was receiving due to the change in the federal Medicaid match rate during COVID. Once the federal health emergency ended, so did the FMAP payments, and therefore there is nothing budgeted for this upcoming year.

2. Recoveries – CA Libby explained that these are monies received from the State of New Hampshire for Medicaid recoveries. She stated that they budget \$100,000 and the County typically receives that.

Dividends/Misc.

Retiree Drug Subsidy—On January 1st, Health Trust will switch all retirees from a Medicare Supplemental plan to a Medicare Advantage plan. Once this happens, the County will no longer receive the retiree drug subsidy. CA Libby budgeted for half the subsidy, which will be received between July and December. After that, there will no longer be RDS revenue, and therefore, this line has been reduced by \$17,500.

CA Libby answered questions from the Committee.

**Register of Deeds – Register Monahan**

*A. Revenue*

Register Monahan stated that she has increased her revenue and noted that CA Libby had asked her for a comment regarding the increase in the PowerPoint presentation from their public hearing. Register Monahan then read the following statement:

“ Grafton County is a prime location for living, working, and recreating. With the expansion of internet service availability, there is no stopping growth and further development. As land comes out of current use and is considered for development, we see increases in revenue in recording fees and copy fees. As land changes hands, we will continue to see the growth of our four percent share of the Real Estate Transfer Tax. The most critical service that a concerned and dedicated citizen can provide is to step up to local planning boards and zoning boards of adjustments in order to continue to keep Grafton County development with local control, oversight, and lawful decision making on new projects.”

Register Monahan stated that she could expand on that at another time, as well as what they are seeing from the public at the counter, what they are hearing from planning boards and state boards, and the conflict they are seeing on development.

Register Monahan answered questions on the revenue.

*B. Expense*

Register Monahan stated that her budget was the only budget that was down roughly \$30,000. She noted that her Deputy retired very quickly and they replaced her with a much less expensive employee. They are trying to see how quickly this new employee can come up to speed as well as how quickly her other employee can come up to speed and how quickly they can manage to distribute all of the former Deputy's responsibilities. Register Monahan stated that they are holding their own, but one of the downfalls of her department is that they are such a small team, and one of her staff members is going out on FMLA, so she will be short-staffed. She noted that she has budgeted for overtime.

Register Monahan stated that in reviewing that her budget was down roughly \$30,000, she did not respond to the request from the Commissioners to cut another 1.5%. She noted that in fourteen (14) years, her budget has never been adjusted by the Board of Commissioners, especially without speaking to her. She stated that her office supply line was cut in half and she has explained for fourteen (14) years that they buy bulk paper in June. Register Monahan requested that their office supply line be funded at her original request.

Postage – Register Monahan questioned her \$3,000 request for postage and the Commissioners recommended \$300. CA Libby noted that was an error and should read \$3,000.

Register Monahan stated that if cuts need to be made she requested that her legal line be cut instead of the office supply line, as they have not had to use it. She added that when she does have to hire an attorney, the cost will be a commissioner-level expense. She will not fund a legal line. She noted that they had just survived a case in Strafford County, where they were sued, and it cost them \$10,000.

Rep. Morse asked Commissioner Piper for an explanation as to why the Commissioners cut the office supply line. Commissioner Piper explained that the Commissioners were originally looking at a large tax increase. After all department heads submitted budgets, they asked them all for a 1.5% decrease, and all of them complied, with the exception of the Register of Deeds, who did not respond. Commissioner Piper stated that they had to work with what they had, but increased communication with regard to the information on the legal line being able to be cut would have been helpful. They did not have a response, and therefore, they had to work with no information. Register Monahan stated that for fourteen (14) years, she has said that the six (6) month figures on her supply line are not reflective. Rep. Sykes stated that as a part of their deliberations on Monday, they will discuss this request.

Register Monahan answered questions from the Committee.

### *C. Surcharge Account*

Register Monahan submitted a letter requesting a supplemental surcharge request as the decision for this need came up after she presented her budget to the Commissioners. The request is for \$13,000 to purchase new hardware for the Registry of Deeds one (1) year ahead of their five (5) year replacement schedule as recommended by SNS and Fidlar Technologies to add additional layers of security by transitioning the Register of Deeds to the Grafton County Microsoft 365 in the domain. Rep. Sykes asked if there was a process and timeframe that would allow this request to happen. CA Libby explained that this is a part of the budget process. Now that the Executive Committee has this request when they deliberate on Monday, they can change the original surcharge request of \$9,324.00 and include this \$13,000 to make it \$22,324.00.

CA Libby stated that the statute states that the surcharge expenditures have to be approved by both the Commissioners and the full Delegation, and therefore, the Commissioners should look at it before their Monday meeting as well. Commissioner Piper noted that the Commissioners were not given the information.

## **Social Services – Commissioners Piper, Ahern & McLeod**

Commissioner Piper reviewed the Commissioners' recommendations for Social Service funding totaling \$539,655.00. She stated that because of the large tax increase that the Commissioners were looking at, they were focused on reductions. She explained that they level-funded all agencies and did not accept new applications this year. She noted that they have also seen many times where an agency will not submit an application, they do not reach out to say they forgot. The majority of the Commissioners thought that if they were able to get by one year without funding, then they could do it again. She stated that this was the case for Twin Pines Housing. They did not apply for FY 2024 but applied for FY 2025, and the Commissioners made the decision not to fund them. This also applied to Visiting Nurses and Hospice but Commissioner McLeod made a good point that because of SB36, which was moving Medicaid money into homecare, they were actually trying to make the home care constituency more robust and therefore the County should fund Visiting Nurses and Hospice because they are trying to, as a state, shift the money away from institutionalized care to homecare.

The Commissioners answered various questions from the Committee.

## **Department of Corrections – Supt. Lethbridge & Captain Kendall**

### *A. Revenue*

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 revenue from electronic monitoring.

### *B. Expense*

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 one (1) of them back in the budget, with the intent being to request the other three (3) over the next few years to fill those positions. Supt. Lethbridge noted a schedule change for officers that has created an increase in pay as well. He explained that this schedule gives the officers more of a work-life balance and every other weekend off. This new schedule gets six (6) extra hours per staff member in a two (2) week period.
3. Education and Training – Supt. Lethbridge explained that this increased cost reflects the firearm training for staff members for the purchase of the firearms recently approved through ARPA.
3. Security Equipment & Repair—Supt. Lethbridge stated that this increase includes the cost of installing the new cameras that were approved through ARPA.

Governor's Commission Grant

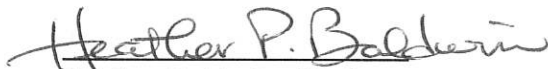
Supt. Lethbridge stated that the existing positions from the Department of Corrections budget were moved to this budget. This line now accurately reflects the cost of the BDAS program. \$291,000 of the \$354,894.00 from this budget comes back to the County through the BDAS grant.

Capital Outlay

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. They have two (2) remaining vehicles that need replacement.

11:44 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Heather Baldwin, Clerk