

GRAFTON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
June 7th, 2024

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Nursing Home Administrator Labore, Sheriff Stiegler, Director of
Communications Paronto, UNH Extension – Donna Lee, Amy Loader

Rep. Sykes called the meeting to order at 9:15 am and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Nursing Home – Administrator Labore

CA Libby reported that she had a few things to discuss before NHA Labore presented his budget. She stated that issues have come up after the Commissioners' Proposed Budget was finalized. She noted that NHA Labore has some suggested changes to the budget to help offset some of the impacts of the issues that have arisen.

CA Libby explained that the counties receive an annual ProShare payment which is a supplemental payment annually to close the gap between Medicaid expenses and revenue. In each of the last two (2) years, Grafton County received over \$4 million in ProShare payments. This year, the initial ProShare information received was that Grafton County was not receiving any money and they owed the state \$25,000. CA Libby explained that the Proshare is based on a couple of things. The state does a reconciliation of Medicaid cost reports from two (2) years ago, and therefore, the state is doing the reconciliation of 2022 for the 2024 payment. The FY24 interim payment is based on the 2023 unaudited Medicaid cost report. The County's expenses in this report between the two (2) years decreased by \$4 million, so when they made the interim payment in 2022, they overpaid the County. This is done every year but there is not normally such a dramatic change in expenses. She went on to explain that this was due to the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) expense, which is a liability on the books for benefits offered to retirees and this expense is determined by an actuarial attestation. In addition, in FY21, GASB updated the rule that says how OPEB is reported on the financial report. It increased the County's liability in 2021, which is when we picked up the \$3 million expenses in OPEB. CA Libby explained that the County's OPEB has dropped from \$49 million to \$25 million but it impacted the Nursing Home expense on the cost report. When they are calculating the interim payment for 2024, they are looking at the unaudited cost report from 2023, which then showed another \$2.5 million decrease in OPEB. She went on to state that she and NHA Labore have spoken to DHHS, and OPEB is not a required expense on the cost report. Therefore, DHHS allowed them to remove the \$2.5 million reduction from FY23's report, and that has given them a ProShare payment of \$769,475.00. She stated that this is impacting the amount of fund balance they have. She started projecting the fund balance in February, and when she was projecting this year, she was using a payment of \$2.8 million based on what was included in the FY '24 budget. Because of the unexpected drop in the ProShare payment, the projections are short by \$2 million,

and that will have an impact on their budget. In the proposed budget they used \$6,045,000 in fund balance to help reduce the amount to be raised by taxes, and if they stick with that, they will have little to no fund balance left. She is looking to maintain a 5%-6% fund balance and she is working on what that recommendation will be. She stated that this will have an impact on the budget, but NHA Labore has made some changes to his budget as well to help. She stated that she would have a recommendation for the committee at their meeting next Friday.

CA Libby answered questions from the committee.

A. Revenue

NHA Labore explained that CMS changed the payment model roughly six (6) years ago that they use for reimbursing Medicare payments for skilled nursing care. They used to be reimbursed using the RUGS Utilization Group 4 calculation and that was changed to a Patient Driven Payment Model. He explained that CMS wanted uniformity when it came to determining Medicaid rates and they gave states a grace period to transfer over. CMS has now made that transition, and the Nursing Homes were not supposed to expect any dramatic changes to how rates were calculated, but that did not pan out when they received their rates. NHA Labore explained that he initially budgeted to keep it consistent with what they were currently receiving, which was \$256.73 per day for the first six (6) months. He increased that by 3% based on the state budget when they were told rates would increase, which increased that rate to \$261.86. He stated that the rate they received was \$236.51 which is a \$567,878 loss in the budget. NHA Labore further explained that the way that rates are being calculated resulted in a \$9.64 decrease, but the budget adjustment factor is what hurt them the most and decreased their rate by another 28.67%, and that brought them to \$236.51. He has never seen a budget adjustment factor this high, and he feels this is due to the Medicaid pending situation. DHHS had to request an additional \$6 million from the Executive Committee to balance the books, and he feels DHHS did not want to have to do that again; therefore, they increased the budget adjustment factor. The NHAC has signed a letter to the House Fiscal Committee to inquire about this issue. Because of how the rate is being calculated, NHA Labore feels they will see another decrease in the January rate.

NHA Labore explained changes that he has made in the budget to help as well. He stated that he originally proposed a daily average census of 108 and he is now going to propose a census of 116. He will add five (5) Vermont Medicaid residents and is proposing increasing the Veteran's line by one (1). NHA Labore added that he is going to increase the private pay line from fifteen (15) originally to seventeen (17), and that will include a rate increase for private pay residents of \$20 a day. The new rate will be \$355 per day for a private pay single room and \$335 per day for a semi-private room. NHA Labore explained that those rates bring Grafton County to the middle of the pack on their rates. These changes will result in \$990,000 in additional revenue that they will be adding to the budget.

Rep. Sykes stated that his understanding is they still have a waiting list for the Nursing Home. NHA Labore reported that there is a small waiting list. Rep. Sykes asked if the waiting list would be more heavily weighted to the Vermont residents. NHA Labore stated that there are Vermont residents on that waitlist but further explained that their waitlist is often used as a placeholder for

someone who is not ready for nursing home care at that time but wants to start the process. The current wait list is thirteen (13) people and roughly 2-3 of them are of immediate need. Rep. Murphy expressed concerns about preferencing Vermont residents over New Hampshire due to their larger reimbursement rate but understands the situation the nursing home is in due to the ProShare payment and Medicaid rate decrease.

NHA Labore answered further questions from the Committee on the revenue.

B. Expense

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. This request has been approved through HR and warrants a 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. He noted that this line is also used to send floral arrangements to staff members who have lost a loved one.
3. 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.

Dietary

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. They have shifted dollars around in the budget from the previous food service vendor to their own in-house dietary services.
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 their food service vendor.

Nursing

1. Assistant Director of Nursing—The Nursing Home has been recruiting an Assistant Director of Nursing but has decided to postpone hiring for this position until October 1st.
2. Contracted Nursing Services—NHA Labore decreased this line due to the increased hiring of in-house LNAs.
3. LPN Tuition Program—NHA Labore explained that this is a proposal 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. He noted that there is a 2-year commitment level, and the main point of them being in the program is to study and succeed. There are some work requirements but mainly there to study and earn their certification. This will not have a direct impact on the contract nursing at this point, but hopefully, in December of 2025, he expects a class will graduate and come on board. He explained that he is budgeting four (4) people to be involved in the program. He anticipates, if this is successful, requesting a grow your own RN program due to the Biden Administration nursing mandate. He explained that Grafton County currently meets two (2) of the three (3) mandates and explained that they do not meet 24/7 RN coverage. He noted that some days, they meet it, and some days, they do not. He added that statistics show that over the next five (5) years there are 700,000 RNs set to retire. The nursing home has a 5-year implementation period for this mandate and that is why he is looking to implement this LPN program. He answered further questions from the Committee.

Therapeutic Recreation

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

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.

Capital Reserve

1. 12 Maxwell Thomas 1 Drawer Bedside cabinets—Several cabinets need to be replaced. He noted that they have not been replaced in many years.
2. 30 Panacea Overbed Tables—NHA Labore wants to replace outdated tables in the resident rooms.

3. 12 Maxwell Thomas Vincenza Dining Chairs – NHA Labore is looking to purchase twelve (12) additional chairs for the four (4) units.

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

5. 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.

6. 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.

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

8. 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.

Sheriff's Department – Sheriff Stiegler

A. Revenue

1. Sheriff's Dept. Fees – Sheriff Stiegler stated that he expects their fees to remain about the same. He noted that he has submitted a request to the Delegation to increase the rates.

2. Court Bailiff—Sheriff Stiegler reported a significant increase in this line. He asked for an amendment and explained that after he submitted the budget, the Courts asked him to add a Court Security Officer back to the Department of Corrections for those being transported on a court order to and from the DoC. He stated that he needed to add roughly \$20,000 to this line. He noted that this revenue is a wash with the expense budget as it is being billed to the State of New Hampshire.

3. Contracted Special Details – This increase is based on an increase in demand for special details this current year.

B. Expense

1. Deputies OT- Sheriff Stiegler reported a \$10,000 increase as they are currently short staff members. He is hopeful to get another Deputy hired soon.

2. Deputies – Sheriff Stiegler stated that he has requested a new full time Deputy position to start January 1st. He explained the need for this new position, noting that he is hopeful to fill the vacant position they currently have soon, and then a new Sheriff-Elect can have a say in who would fill this new position. He stated that if the Delegation were to decide not to move forward with this new position, he would ask that they consider adding additional money in the overtime line as they will need someone to cover these shifts.

3. Forensic Investigations—Sheriff Stiegler stated that this line has a \$38,000 increase. He explained that they were able to reduce this line last year as they were able to be included with the State’s Internet Crimes Against Children for this equipment. Sheriff Stiegler stated that they no longer have that funding source, which is why this line has a large increase. They are currently pursuing a grant that they have not heard back on from Senator Shaheen’s Office.

4. New Equipment—Sheriff Stiegler explained that this request includes a 50-inch monitor and components for their conference/interview room to assist with mandatory training they must attend. He noted that he is also looking to purchase a first aid kit for the transport vehicle, new restraints for Court Security Staff, and other ancillary items that are needed.

Capital Outlay

1. Sheriff Stiegler stated that the Commissioners funded two (2) out of the three (3) vehicles he had requested in his Capital Outlay out of ARPA, and he is looking to purchase the 3rd vehicle out of the capital budget.

Dispatch –Director of Communications Paronto

A. Revenue

1. Dispatch Fees – Director Paronto stated that the Commissioners just set the FY25 fees at \$719,133.00

B. Expense

Rep. Murphy asked about the large increase in health insurance. CA Libby explained that the County received a 25% Guaranteed Maximum Rate increase from HealthTrust and because of that, the County is switching plans starting July 1st. They will continue to offer two (2) plans for employees. One (1) of those plans is a 9% savings over the current cost and the other is a 9-10% increase from the current plans. She stated that many more employees had selected the lower-cost plan, and therefore, they may see health insurance costs lower than anticipated.

Director Paronto stated that their budget is very similar to the FY24 budget. The slight increases are mainly due to staffing.

C. Capital Reserve

1. MDT Replacement – Director Paronto stated that this is the Mobile Data Terminal for the new vehicle in the Sheriff’s Department. He explained that these are replaced continuously to provide and maintain support to the towns that they provide services for.

UNH Extension – County Office Administrator Lee & Amy Loader

1. Salary—Professional Staff—COA Lee explained that the County pays 25% of the field specialist positions and 75% of the program manager positions.

2. Extension Operations—This line includes travel expenses and other expenses for the office's six (6) staff.

3. New Equipment – COA Lee stated that they replace computers on a rotating basis and any other equipment that may need to be replaced. They did reduce this line by \$2,500 when the Commissioners asked them to make a reduction in the budget.


A. Loader explained that UNH Extension provides programming in Food and Agriculture, Community and Economic Development, Natural Resources, Health and Wellbeing, and 4-H. She explained that they take the university's research-based information and convert it for people to use in their everyday lives. She discussed various subjects and issues that their department addresses and answered questions from the Committee.

A. Loader stated that she is the new Interim Director of Extension. Every six (6) years, they ask the chair of the Grafton County Delegation and Commissioners to sign a memorandum of understanding with UNH to show their intention to keep UNH Extension at the County and review their budget each year. She handed out copies of the MOU to Rep. Sykes and Commissioner Piper for their review.

CA Libby stated that she sent an email to the Committee regarding the Courthouse and the ARPA request. She went on to state that Monday’s budget meeting looks like it will be done no later than 11:30, and she asked if that would be a good day for the Committee to tour the Courthouse after their meeting. The Committee agreed to tour the courthouse.

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

Respectfully Submitted,


Heather Baldwin, Clerk