

GRAFTON COUNTY DELEGATION MEETING – FY25 BUDGET VOTE
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
June 24, 2024

PRESENT: see the attached sign-in sheet

Rep. Sykes called the meeting to order at 9:09 AM and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Rep. Baldwin called the roll. A quorum was declared with nineteen (19) Representatives physically present and one (1) present via Teams.

MOTION: Rep. Murphy moved to appropriate \$56,222,050 for fiscal year 2025 of which \$27,331,164 is to be raised by taxes. Rep. Muirhead seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rep. Murphy explained that this budget resulted from a lot of work with the Executive Committee. Last year, they took about \$5 million from the undesignated fund balance and created the middle-mile broadband project. At the time, they still had an undesignated fund balance of 16%, which was above the county's policy. This year, the County did not receive the Medicaid ProShare payment as they have in the past, and there was a \$4 million shortfall. In working with the various departments, this budget will leave the County with a 5% undesignated fund balance, resulting in a tax increase of about 3.07%. He thinks this is a fair increase in the taxes, and they have to remember that in the last three (3) years, the County has not had a tax increase. This results in a 3.07% increase over the last four (4) years. Rep. Stringham stated that he wanted to add that the reduction in the undesignated fund balance is below the target. He thinks this budget is very responsible for the taxpayers. The department heads and Commissioners did a lot of work to lower their wants.

Rep. Ladd stated that he looks at this from a cautionary perspective and noted that he first started working on the budget process in 2008. In 2011, they had a performance audit done of the County in reference to the FY12 budget. The statement was made in that audit that the adopted budget was 2.03% higher than the adopted FY2011 budget and 16.34% higher than the actual FY2011 expended dollars. The County also planned on using \$3 million in surplus to help reduce taxes. Rep. Ladd stated that this is an ongoing situation, and he has been asked when enough is enough in terms of dollars spent to run county government. He stated that Haverhill is not a town with high household incomes. There is a significant difference between the northern and southern parts of the County. The proposed FY2025 budget is \$56.3 million. The actual approved budget in FY2024 was \$53.8 million, and therefore, we are increasing what we approved in FY24 by \$2.5 million or a 4.77% increase, and that is not acceptable to his community. Rep. Ladd stated that he proposes being cautious about how they spend their funds. He recommends that the FY25 budget be \$54.8 million in expenses or a 2% increase over FY24. The amount is \$54,844,822.00. He recommends cutting it back, recognizing that the needs are legit, but asked if this is the time to be expanding government as families cannot afford it.

Rep. Simon stated that he has been on the Executive Committee for a few years, and last year, he warned about what could happen if they use the undesignated fund balance as they had, and those concerns happened. He cannot vote for this motion. The County may only need to borrow money for two (2) months, but at \$5 million in total, this will cost the County \$31,000 in interest. If anything goes wrong next year and this balance dips anymore, expenses will continue to rise, and the tax rate will manifest itself. The budget makes it less likely to see a revenue surplus, and his concern is that they will continue to run themselves in a deficit. From his perspective, running a balanced budget means they should be able to cash flow from the beginning to the end of the year without having to borrow money at the taxpayer's expense. Rep. Simon stated that he stated that they should be honest with the taxpayers about what they have spent and not push this onto a future Delegation. He stated that the County has spent money and needs transparency. They have set an 8% minimum for fund balance. They are recommending bringing it down to 5%, and to him, that is hiding money from their constituents, and they are not being transparent about what they are doing, so he will not be able to support the budget.

Rep. Morse stated that having worked on the budget this year and last year, Rep. Simon wanted to raise taxes last year and this year to 6% increase to keep more money in the fund balance. She thinks it is important that they do not focus on this as increasing county government. Costs have increased everywhere, and they must accommodate them; everyone is struggling. She thinks it is irresponsible to say the County has not been responsible for the budget as things have come up unexpectedly. To say they should not have funded the middle mile and have not done the things to better their constituents is irresponsible. Rep. Simon responded by stating many of those statements were not true. He explained that with regard to how he looks at increasing taxes, he looks at that differently, philosophically. As the County spends more money, without the revenue increases, they are delaying the bill coming too. It is not that their constituents are not going to have to pay for it; they will have to pay, but from his perspective, they are pretending like the constituents do not have to pay right now, but they will continue to create a deficit and to maintain what they are doing now they will have to go further into deficit, they will have debt, and he does not think it is a fiscally responsible thing to do. If anything further goes wrong, the County will dig a deeper hole, and it will be harder to get out of it.

Rep. Almy asked what they are growing in government. She stated that the main problems this year were the unanimous vote to use \$5 million in surplus to fund the broadband project and the federal government changing the formula for calculating the cost of Medicaid patients, which reduced the ProShare payment. The County has never had something like this hit them from Medicaid before.

Rep. Sykes stated that there are several new positions in the budget. He explained that one (1) is to fill a correctional officer position that was once removed but is now needed again and another is an IT Director. He explained that Lebanon has a budget similar to the county's, spending three (3) times as much as the county on IT costs. Rep. Sykes stated that he feels that sometimes adding positions is necessary, as much as they do not want to increase the budget. Rep. Sykes stated that a 3.07% increase compared to other

governmental bodies is good. He added that costs are increasing, but the County's costs are increasing as well, and it is a balancing act.

Rep. Ladd stated that in FY12, the Commissioner's approved budget was \$36.8 million. The Commissioners' approved budget for this year is \$56.3 million. That is an increase in government of \$20 million. Rep. Ladd asked what the actual costs are right now. CA Libby stated that their projected expenditures for year-end are \$51.2 million. Rep. Ladd stated that when they are looking at an approved budget of \$53.7 for the current year. He explained that if they were to look at the increase based on the increases CA Libby just gave them to what is being requested, it would be much higher than 3%. Rep. Murphy stated that the rates fifteen (15) years ago are not the same as now with regard to the budget. The department heads have sharpened their pencils and reduced their budgets due to the ProShare payment. There were positions added out of safety concerns. In defense of the budget, he feels the department heads have done the work. They have spent a lot of ARPA money, and 95% of funding was spent on one (1) time expenses. Everyone has tried to make the budget as lean as possible, recognizing they are asking for a 3% increase. Rep. Stringham added that the Nursing Home population has increased by 20% in part due to good operational management as well as the targeted increases in nursing wages. He stated that costs increase when they bring in more residents, but the County also brings in more revenue. Rep. Brown asked what the increase is. CA Libby reported that the budget is increasing by 4.56%, but the taxes are increasing by 3.07%.

MOTION: Rep. Sellers moved to amend the motion to accept Rep. Ladd's 2% increase over FY24 and change the FY25 budget to \$54,844,822.00. Rep. Ladd seconded the amendment.

Discussion: Rep. Sellers stated that being on the Executive Committee, there are a lot of needs, and prices have gone up. The County is only spending \$51.7 million, and there is room in the budget. He questioned whether they need 22,000 gallons of diesel fuel and said that some departments are overstaffed. Rep. Ladd stated that, looking at the amount of money proposed for the amendment, the actual cost of this amendment is another 4 million dollars. It is up to the Commissioners to determine how to reduce the budget and decide what their priorities are. Rep. Morse pointed out that anything that does not get spent goes back into the undesignated fund balance and would help to balance that. Rather than decreasing the taxes by a small margin, there is the potential to hold some back to protect that balance for next year if they do not spend the entire budgeted amount. Rep. Simon asked if they were to go with this proposal, and they reduced the proposed spending. Would that change the amount they are taking from the undesignated fund, or would that reduce taxpayer spending? CA Libby stated that if this motion passes, the delegation will need to discuss it.

Rep. Baldwin called the roll on the amendment. Rep. Almy "no", Rep. Baldwin "no", Rep. Bolton "no", Rep. Brown "yes", Rep. Cormen "no", Rep. Fellows "no", Rep. Fracht "no", Rep. Greeson "yes", Rep. Hakken-Phillips "no", Rep. Ladd "yes", Rep. Lovett "no", Rep. Massimilla "no", Rep. Morse "no", Rep. Muirhead "no", Rep. Murphy "no", Rep. Sellers "yes", Rep. Simon "yes", Rep. Stringham "no", Rep. Sullivan "no", Rep.

Sykes “no”. With the vote being five (5) in favor and fifteen (15) in opposition the amendment to the motion fails.

Rep. Sellers stated that he was disappointed because the Executive Committee reduced the budget, but he feels more “fluff” could be reduced.

Rep. Baldwin called the roll on the original motion. Rep. Almy “yes”, Rep. Baldwin “yes”, Rep. Bolton “yes”, Rep. Brown “no”, Rep. Cormen “yes”, Rep. Fellows “yes”, Rep. Fracht “yes”, Rep. Greeson “no”, Rep. Hakken-Phillips “yes”, Rep. Ladd “no”, Rep. Lovett “yes”, Rep. Massimilla “yes”, Rep. Morse “yes”, Rep. Muirhead “yes”, Rep. Murphy “yes”, Rep. Sellers “no”, Rep. Simon “no”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sullivan “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With a vote of fifteen (15) in favor and five (5) in opposition, the motion passes.

MOTION: Rep. Almy moved to authorize the Treasurer to borrow Tax Anticipation Loans in an amount of up to \$7,000,000. Rep. Fellows seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rep. Simon stated that this is also taxpayer money if things go a certain way. Rep. Almy stated that she believes that \$7 million is more than they have asked for in the past. CA Libby stated that they used to ask for \$8 million. She explained that in the last two (2) years, they requested \$5 million as they were in a better cash position. Rep. Sellers stated that this is only used if needed and is short-term. Rep. Almy noted that this is needed because the budget is set in July, and they will not receive tax payments until December. Rep. Ladd asked if this goes out to bid and if the County uses local banks. CA Libby stated that it does.

MOTION: Rep. Fracht moved to contribute \$35,000 from Dispatch Fees for fiscal year 2025 to the Dispatch Capital Reserve Account. Rep. Hakken-Phillips seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Almy, “yes,” Rep. Baldwin, “yes,” Rep. Bolton, “yes.” Rep. Brown “yes”; Rep. Cormen “yes”, Rep. Fellows “yes”, Rep. Fracht “yes”, Rep. Greeson “yes”; Rep. Hakken-Phillips “yes”; Rep. Ladd “yes”; Rep. Lovett “yes”, Rep. Massimilla “yes”, Rep. Morse “yes”, Rep. Muirhead “yes”, Rep. Murphy “yes”, Rep. Sellers “no”, Rep. Simon “yes”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sullivan “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being nineteen (19) in favor and one (1) opposition, the motion passed.

MOTION: Rep. Cormen moved to expend \$29,000 from the Dispatch Capital Reserve account for equipment for the Dispatch Center. Rep. Massimilla seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Almy “yes”, Rep. Baldwin “yes”; Rep. Bolton “yes”, Rep. Brown “yes”, Rep. Cormen “yes”, Rep. Fellows “yes”; Rep. Fracht “yes”, Rep. Greeson “yes”, Rep. Hakken-Phillips “yes”, Rep. Ladd “yes”, Rep. Lovett “yes”, Rep. Massimilla “yes”, Rep. Morse “yes”, Rep. Muirhead “yes”, Rep. Murphy “yes”, Rep. Sellers “yes”, Rep. Simon “yes”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sullivan “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being twenty (20) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

MOTION: Rep. Bolton moved to expend \$206,564 from the Nursing Home Capital Reserve account for equipment at the nursing home. Rep. Murphy seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rep. Sellers asked what was included in the capital reserve requests. Rep. Sykes stated that the requests include bedside cabinets, overbed tables, dining chairs, air pressure mattresses, a nurse call system, mobile-head holding cabinets, a phantom bladder, and Chromebooks.

Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Almy “yes”, Rep. Baldwin “yes”; Rep. Bolton “yes”, Rep. Brown “yes”, Rep. Cormen “yes”, Rep. Fellows “yes”; Rep. Fracht “yes”, Rep. Greeson “yes”, Rep. Hakken-Phillips “yes”, Rep. Ladd “yes”, Rep. Lovett “yes”, Rep. Massimilla “yes”, Rep. Morse “yes”, Rep. Muirhead “yes”, Rep. Murphy “yes”, Rep. Sellers “yes”, Rep. Simon “yes”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sullivan “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being twenty (20) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

MOTION: Rep. Baldwin moved to expend \$22,324 from the Register of Deeds Surcharge account for equipment. Rep. Simon seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Almy “yes”, Rep. Baldwin “yes”; Rep. Bolton “yes”, Rep. Brown “yes”, Rep. Cormen “yes”, Rep. Fellows “yes”; Rep. Fracht “yes”, Rep. Greeson “yes”, Rep. Hakken-Phillips “yes”, Rep. Ladd “yes”, Rep. Lovett “yes”, Rep. Massimilla “yes”, Rep. Morse “yes”, Rep. Muirhead “yes”, Rep. Murphy “yes”, Rep. Sellers “yes”, Rep. Simon “yes”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sullivan “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being twenty (20) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

MOTION: Rep. Lovett moved, pursuant to NH RSA 104:3, to increase the Sheriff’s Fees by 3.5% for FY 25. Rep. Cormen seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Almy “yes”, Rep. Baldwin “yes”; Rep. Bolton “yes”, Rep. Brown “yes”, Rep. Cormen “yes”, Rep. Fellows “yes”; Rep. Fracht “yes”, Rep. Greeson “yes”, Rep. Hakken-Phillips “yes”, Rep. Ladd “yes”, Rep. Lovett “yes”, Rep. Massimilla “yes”, Rep. Morse “yes”, Rep. Muirhead “yes”, Rep. Murphy “yes”, Rep. Sellers “yes”, Rep. Simon “yes”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sullivan “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being twenty (20) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

MOTION: Rep. Hakken-Phillips moved, Pursuant to NH RSA 24:14, to authorize the Grafton County Board of Commissioners to apply for, receive, and expend federal and/or state grants and/or other unanticipated funds that become available during the course of FY25, and also to accept and expend funds from any other governmental unit or private source to be used for purposes for which Grafton County may legally appropriate money, and the expenditure of such funds shall be exempt from restrictions on over-expenditures of appropriations. Rep. Bolton seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rep. Ladd asked if we have obligated all ARPA funding. CA Libby stated that they have roughly \$2 million in unobligated funds. They have to be obligated by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026.

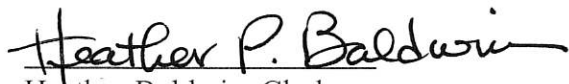
Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Almy “yes”, Rep. Baldwin “yes”; Rep. Bolton “yes”, Rep. Brown “yes”, Rep. Cormen “yes”, Rep. Fellows “yes”; Rep. Fracht “yes”, Rep. Greeson “yes”, Rep. Hakken-Phillips “yes”, Rep. Ladd “yes”, Rep. Lovett “yes”, Rep. Massimilla “yes”, Rep. Morse “yes”, Rep. Muirhead “yes”, Rep. Murphy “yes”, Rep. Sellers “yes”, Rep. Simon “yes”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sullivan “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being twenty (20) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to appropriate \$4,000 for the Grafton County Unincorporated Place of Livermore for FY 2025. The Unincorporated place of Livermore’s Budget for 2025 is adopted separately from the Grafton County Budget. This motion is to comply with the NH Department of Revenue Administration’s instructions. Rep. Almy seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Almy “yes”, Rep. Baldwin “yes”; Rep. Bolton “yes”, Rep. Brown “yes”, Rep. Cormen “yes”, Rep. Fellows “yes”; Rep. Fracht “yes”, Rep. Greeson “yes”, Rep. Hakken-Phillips “yes”, Rep. Ladd “yes”, Rep. Lovett “yes”, Rep. Massimilla “yes”, Rep. Morse “yes”, Rep. Muirhead “yes”, Rep. Murphy “yes”, Rep. Sellers “yes”, Rep. Simon “yes”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sullivan “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being twenty (20) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

Comments from the Public: Register Monahan thanked the service of Rep. Simon, Rep. Morse, and Rep. Murphy for bringing their levelheaded judgment to the Executive Committee.

10:15 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Heather Baldwin, Clerk



Delegation Meeting

June 24th 2024

Sign In Sheet ~ **PLEASE PRINT**

- 1 William Bolton
- 2 Jerry Stringham
- 3 Susan Hing
- 4 George Sykes
- 5 MARY HAKKEN-PHILLIPS
- 6 JIM MURPHY
- 7 David Fracht
- 8 Thomas Cormen
- 9 Russell Muirhead
- 10 Corinne Morse
- 11 Jim Oakes
- 12 Tim Lethbridge
- 13 Nicole Mitchell
- 14 Marcie Hornick
- 15 Craig Labor
- 16 Peter Lovett
- 17 Karen Clough
- 18 Alisa Evans
- 19 Pam Gilbert
- 20 Teresa Locke
- 21 Jeff Stiegler
- 22 Alex Auti-de Biasi
- 23 Kelley Monahan
- 24 Heather Bryant
- 25 Julie Libby
- 26 Holly Burbank
- 27 Sam Norcross
- 28 Karen Lot Hill
- 29 Garry Brown
- 30 Rep Sellers

- 31 Rep Jeffrey Green
- 32 Rev Matthew Simon
- 33 Rep Sallie Fellows
- 34 Linda Massimilla
- 35 Jared Sullivan - via Teams
- 36 Heather Baldwin
- 37 Rick Ladd
- 38
- 39
- 40
- 41
- 42
- 43
- 44
- 45
- 46
- 47
- 48
- 49
- 50
- 51
- 52
- 53
- 54
- 55
- 56
- 57
- 58
- 59
- 60