

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Administration Building

North Haverhill, NH 03774

October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024

PRESENT: Commissioners Piper, Ahern, McLeod, Assistant County Administrator Elsholz, and Administrative Assistant Norcross

OTHERS: Nursing Home Administrator Labore, Anne Duncan Cooley & Michelle Beaudin – Grafton Regional Development Corporation, Katie Hedberg, Nick De Mayo – via Teams.

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

**NHA Labore arrived with the following bid waiver request:**

NHA Labore stated that the Nursing Home is looking to replace seventeen (17) mattresses as a part of their ongoing mattress replacement, and he is asking for a bid waiver to continue purchasing through WCW. He explained that they found that the WCW mattresses were of very good quality, and the Maintenance Department reported no operational concerns either. This purchase has been approved in the FY25 capital reserve budget at \$15,200, and the price quoted from WCW is \$15,072.59. Commissioner Ahern asked if the Nursing Home needs these at this time. NHA Labore stated that these are needed as only two (2) are left in the inventory, and the census continues to grow.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Ahern moved to accept the Nursing Home Administrator's request to waive the competitive bidding process and accept the quote provided by WCW Inc, for the purchase of eight (8) 35"x 80"x 7" pressure air mattresses with pump; eight (8) 35"x 80"x 7" pressure air mattresses with pump and raised bolster; and one (1) 42"x80"x7" bariatric mattress with pump for a total purchase price of \$15,072.59. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

**Agenda Items:**

1. Commissioner Piper asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the October 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting. Commissioner Piper had a couple of small edits.

**MOTION:** Commissioner McLeod moved to approve the minutes from October 22<sup>nd</sup> as amended. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

2. The Commissioners signed check registers 1055-1059; 2024-10.25.2024.

3. Worker's Comp & Property Liability NTEs for FY 26 – CA Libby reported that Workers' Compensation Insurance will increase by 13.8%, or just under \$27,000, and Property Liability Insurance will increase by 6%, or \$14,000, for the year. She noted that the employer contribution rates for the New Hampshire Retirement System for FY26 and FY27 will decrease.

4. Information Technology Director Position – CA Libby reported that the position has been posted internally and is now being posted externally. They will be accepting applications through November 20<sup>th</sup>.

5. Courthouse RFP Update—CA Libby stated that the Courthouse Building Committee, along with Sarah Lineberry and Steven Lorentzen, will be interviewing four (4) architectural engineering firms. The Building Committee may make a recommendation to the Commissioners the following week, on November 6<sup>th</sup>.

Courthouse Occupant Discussion – CA Libby stated that the Commissioners received a memo from the Register of Deeds asking them to talk with her about the Register of Deeds Office and the location of their office going forward. CA Libby said she also received an email from HR Director Clough inquiring which departments will be located in the Courthouse. Her office needs new space as the public hallway is not a good location for HR, and she noted that they are also out of space as well. Commissioner Piper stated that HR Director Clough also brought this issue forward many years ago. CA Libby stated that HR Director Clough was under the impression that the Register of Deeds was moving to the Courthouse and that she would be okay with moving into their space in the Administration Building. CA Libby stated that if the Register of Deeds is not moving into the new Courthouse, HR space is something the Commissioners will have to discuss as well.

Commissioner Piper stated that she felt the Commissioners should have a conversation regarding the Register of Deeds Memo about the Courthouse and whether the Register of Deeds would be included in the new building. She stated that these are very important decisions that need to be made. Commissioner Piper stated that safety and security are very important to the Register of Deeds Office, and other Registry of Deeds Offices are located in courthouses in other counties. Given the safety and security concerns, she stated that it might be satisfactory for the Register of Deeds to move to the Courthouse. CA Libby stated that in public comment documents, it appears Register Monahan does not want to move to the Courthouse anymore. She stated that Register Monahan has made the comment several times. Commissioner Piper stated that this is new information. Commissioner McLeod feels it would be better for the consumer to access the Register of Deeds Office in the Courthouse. CA Libby stated that it would alleviate the security concerns that Register Monahan has if they were located in the Courthouse. Commissioner Ahern stated that as an attorney, because of the importance of the documents, he feels it is important to have the Register of Deeds in the Courthouse. He would also like to get the Grafton County Bar Association's thoughts. CA Libby stated that the Commissioners should set up a meeting with the Register of Deeds to hear her thoughts. The Commissioners agreed to invite Register Monahan to their next meeting.

**Anne Duncan Cooley & Michelle Beaudin – Grafton Regional Development Corporation Quarterly Report.**

A. Duncan Cooley reported that GRDC approved \$230,000 in loans and noted that just yesterday, they approved a loan for a business to reopen in downtown Plymouth. A new tenant is looking at the Enterprise Center tomorrow as well. She stated that they are looking at housing and establishing a revolving loan fund. Accessory dwelling units are also being investigated a lot. She answered questions from the Commissioners.

Michelle Beaudin gave an update on what GRDC is doing to help with childcare in Grafton County. She reported contacting all licensed family providers in the region they had been assigned. There were five (5) licensed providers, and she developed relationships with two (2) of them. She explained that when she first started speaking to the two (2) providers, they both

indicated they would be shutting down within the next year. One (1) provider was unable to fill her available slots for various reasons, and the other needed to paint her house to maintain her license but was unable to. M. Beaudin stated that these providers were connected with GRDC business coaches, and one (1) of the providers was able to fill all of her slots and is able to stay open, and the other was able to receive grants to take care of the issues at her home to maintain her license.

M. Beaudin answered questions from the Commissioners regarding licensed childcare in the County. A. Duncan Cooley stated that they have applied for and were awarded an extension, and therefore, they can continue this work with the childcare providers for another year. They were awarded additional funding as well because they showed good results. She noted that the work they have been doing the last four (4) has been a pilot program that has now been extended. M. Beaudin stated that she has asked to have the program expanded to upper Grafton County, and she will have an update for the Commissioners on where that request stands at their next quarterly meeting.

M. Beaudin reported on the Microenterprise grant program. She stated that they had completed the first quarter and enrolled ten (10) clients. They have accepted seven (7) grant applications, and she reviewed the list of equipment requested through those grants.

Commissioner Piper stated that she feels this information is what the Executive Committee is looking for in terms of the success of GRDC and the businesses it is helping.

#### **Broadband Committee – Ed Morris, Tim Egan, Austin Albro**

CA Libby stated that on October 4<sup>th</sup>, the County received proposals from Internet Service Providers for the broadband project. Three (3) different official proposals were received from Hub 66, Consolidated Communications, and Entrypoint Networks. The Broadband Committee met and agreed they wanted to have a follow-up interview with HUB 66 as their proposal most aligned with what the County is looking for. Hub 66 is building out many areas in Grafton County already. The Broadband Committee met last week and made a motion to recommend that the Commissioners accept Hub 66.

E. Morris explained that the company out of Salt Lake City would be using subcontractors and would not have knowledge of the area. He said he deals with Hub 66, and their dealings have all been positive. They resolve issues very quickly. After their interview, the Committee felt comfortable that this was the right company. T. Egan stated that it was imperative for them to look at a New Hampshire-based company with New Hampshire workers to ensure that there would be an immediate response to any issues.

**MOTION:** Commissioner McLeod moved to accept the Broadband Committee's recommendation, accept Hub 66's proposal, and engage in contract negotiations with them. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

CA Libby noted that the Broadband Construction Kickoff event is being held on November 19<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Agenda Items:**

1. September Financial Reports – CA Libby reported that the nursing home is behind on revenue due to the census being down, but it was noted that the nursing home is on target for most of their payor sources, with the exception of Medicaid. She noted that many other departments that

were showing behind have caught back up. She stated that tax bills are going out tomorrow and noted that the County has had to borrow more than half of the TAN money. She said that she will continue to watch the numbers.

CA Libby reported that the County continues to trend overextended. She hopes that will turn around soon, but she will continue to watch that as well.

Prorated Report—CA Libby explained that the Rated Report shows the County's under-expenditure by \$100,000 overall and under-revenue by \$377,000.

2. ARPA Funding Discussion – CA Libby stated that there is a minor issue with the Architect and Engineering proposals for the courthouse. She explained that \$761,050 was approved for the first phase, and the fee proposals range from \$215,000-\$500,000. CA Libby stated that they are all significantly less than the money set aside, and she does not know how to obligate the remaining money that is not being used. She is trying to figure out how to obligate the rest of those funds and allow them to go towards the project, but she will need to do more research into Treasury guidelines. She stated that the Commissioners may have more than the \$1.8 in ARPA funds left.

CA Libby reviewed the attached list of requests the Commissioners currently have for ARPA funds. She stated that the Town of Lincoln has asked if the County is accepting applications, and she told them no. The towns of Dorchester and Wentworth did not ask if the County was accepting applications; they just sent requests.

CA Libby stated that she felt the proposal from AHEAD was a phenomenal program that would help many families in Grafton County. It dedicates almost the rest of the money that needs to be committed to a specific category. To qualify for this program, someone has to be a Grafton County resident and be employed in Grafton County. Commissioner Piper stated that she also supports AHEAD's program as they have a proven record. She also supports the SIM Transitional Housing as proposed by Alternative Sentencing Director Mitchell, which would block off three (3) rooms at three (3) different hotels, one (1) in each hub of the County, for 365 days, but she questions the average rate of the rooms. Commissioner Ahern stated that the County should put that money towards building its own building to house these people rather than putting it into hotel rooms that may not be used. CA Libby explained that the proposal is to have rooms in each hub of the county, and AS Director Mitchell is also looking for an immediate fix for the upcoming winter. Commissioner Ahern stated that there are organizations out there to provide emergency housing; they just need to be asked. Commissioner McLeod noted that some funds are very limited for those organizations. Commissioner Ahern stated that he believes the County has an important Alternative Sentencing program but does not want to gamble with taxpayer money. There is no guarantee how much money will be needed for housing, and to give the money to a for-profit business, he cannot do that.

Commissioner McLeod asked if they could approve the amount and purpose but not their specific proposal and work through that so they do not feel as though they are gambling with the funds. CA Libby noted that this is in the early stages as well, they are trying to work fast to meet the obligation deadlines. Commissioner McLeod stated that it should be worked on where the County does not pay the full rate. CA Libby noted that \$150-\$200 per night is high for a hotel in Grafton County, specifically the rural areas, and she would want to pay the going rate for the room. CA Libby asked if there was an organization that would handle these funds and pay the hotels rather than giving the funding to the for-profit hotels directly. She suggested that Eric

Becker come in from Tri-County Cap to discuss this. CA Libby stated that the Alternative Sentencing request is to address an immediate need for the homeless population as winter is setting in, but she understands the issue of spending that much money to hold rooms that may not be used. They can look into that issue further, but she felt the Commissioners could vote today to move forward with the program proposed through AHEAD.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Ahern moved to approve the AHEAD Request for Pathways to Home Ownership for \$1,000,000 to be funded through ARPA. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Commissioner McLeod recused herself from voting as a member of the Board of AHEAD.

**MOTION:** \* 11:12 AM Commissioner Ahern moved to enter into a non-public session for the purpose 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." Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted "yes" and would now go into non-public session.

\* 11:22 AM Commissioner Piper declared the meeting back in public session.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Ahern 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 McLeod seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Ahern "Yes," Commissioner McLeod "yes," Commissioner Piper "yes." Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted "yes," and the motion passed.

11:25 AM - The Commissioners attended the employee recognition luncheon at the Nursing Home.

12:35 PM – The Commissioners reconvened the meeting.

**MOTION:** \* 12:35 PM Commissioner Ahern moved to enter into a non-public session for the purpose of Consideration of legal advice provided by legal counsel, either in writing or orally, to one or more members of the public body, even where legal counsel is not present 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.

\* 1:40 PM Commissioner Piper declared the meeting back in public session.

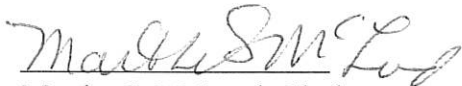
**MOTION:** Commissioner Ahern moved to permanently seal the minutes from the just completed non-public session because they could affect the reputation of someone other than those of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner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

**Commissioner’s Issues:**

Commissioner Piper stated that during the last Executive Committee meeting, Rep. Stringham asked what the difference would be between what the County pays for contract nurses versus employees brought on as full-time employees with benefits. She stated that she reached out to NHA Labore, and he stated that the County is saving roughly \$50,000 per employee versus contract nurses.

1:43 PM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Martha S. McLeod, Clerk