

GRAFTON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Administration Building

North Haverhill, NH 03774

November 18th, 2024

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Register Monahan, Harrison Kanzler, Alternative Sentencing Director Mitchell, Treasurer Hill, Nick De Mayo – via Teams

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

Rep. Sykes stated that the first item of business to be completed was the approval of the September 23rd minutes.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to approve the minutes from the September 23rd meeting. Rep. Bolton seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin, “yes;” Rep. Bolton, “yes;” Rep. Morse, “yes;” Rep. Rochefort, “yes” Rep. Stringham, “yes;” Rep. Sykes, “yes.” With six (6) votes in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

Commissioner Piper gave the following Commissioner’s Report:

Commissioners’ Report

November 18, 2024

Staffing Update:

- We continue to add to the employee count. The County has hired eleven (11) new employees since our last report. We have had four (4) separations from employment, increasing our employee count by eight (8) since our September report. All new hires in that period were at the nursing home except one (1). We currently have 413 total employees. Due to the continuing national shortage of RNs and LPNs it remains challenging to hire for these positions. We have not hired any new ones in a few months and are still at 10.95 vacant FTEs. We currently have four (4) vacant correctional officer positions. Our staffing is significantly better than fifteen (15) months ago.
- We began another LNA class in August. The class is scheduled to conclude on November 25th, and all eight (8) students are expected to complete it! Once the students are licensed, hopefully, by the end of the year, the LNA vacancies will be reduced to 13.25 FTEs from a high of 39.85 FTEs in July 2023. We intend to have another LNA class beginning in January.

- We currently have seven (7) LPNs, down from eleven (11) in July 2023, and eight (8) LNAs, down from seventeen (17) in July 2023. Once again, very good progress! Most contract staff work on the evening and night shifts. Those are the most challenging positions for the county to fill.

Nursing Home:

- The nursing home's census is currently 117; of that census, 12 are Vermont Medicaid residents.

Department of Corrections:

- The current in-house census is 73, with another 38 out of the facility. We have 23 in pretrial services, 15 in other facilities, and 2 on Electronic Monitoring.

Broadband Update:

- At their meeting on October 29th, the Commissioners accepted the proposal from Hub 66 as the Internet Service Provider that the County will partner with to bring fiber to homes from the Middle Mile. Hub 66 is currently working in many parts of the County, and we are excited to work with them to deliver high-speed, reliable internet to our constituents.
- With the Environmental Assessment completed on the non-WMNF phase of the project, we are currently working with utility and telecom companies to complete make-ready work on poles to begin to run fiber for our project! This will be done throughout the winter as sections of the project complete make-ready. These sections represent approximately 30% of the total project. The towns included in the first three (3) sections that will be constructed are:
 - Non-WMNF
 - Alexandria Town Hall
 - Grafton Town Office
 - Groton Town Office
 - Lisbon Town Office
 - Lyman Town Office
 - Orange Town Office
 - Monroe Town Office
- We anticipate that the approval from the US Forest Service on the sections that pass through WMNF lands to be completed by the end of 2024. Once that approval is obtained, the Environmental Assessment for those sections can be completed quickly. By spring, we should be ready to start these sections as well.
- Construction Kick-off Event – Tomorrow – Tuesday, November 19th, at 3:00 PM – you are all invited!

Courthouse Update:

- On October 31st, the Courthouse Building Committee interviewed four (4) Architectural firms. The Committee will make a recommendation to the Commissioners at their regularly scheduled meeting tomorrow, November 19th. The Committee has thoroughly

vetted the firms and is excited to have the Commissioners select a firm and get to work on this project!

American Rescue Plan Act of 2021:

- Grafton County received \$17.4M in ARPA funding. Thus far, eighty-eight (88) ARPA projects have been approved by the Commissioners and Executive Committee. Many of these projects have been completed. We currently have nineteen (19) projects that remain open and on-going. All funds are required to be obligated by December 31, 2024. The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) defines an obligation as an order for property or services or the creation of contracts, subawards, or other similar transactions that require payment. ARPA regulations require local governments to return grant funding that remains unobligated beyond the December 2024 end-of-year deadline to the U.S. Department of Treasury.
- We have approximately \$1.8M in unobligated funds. The Commissioners have recommendations for you to obligate the majority of the rest of those funds.

Annual Report and Audited Financial Reports:

- The Audited Financial Reports for Fiscal Year 2024 have been completed. The annual audit went well, and there were no findings to report.
- Annual County Report has been completed and will be available shortly.

We want to take a moment to recognize and thank Representatives Simon, Rochefort, Murphy, and Morse, who have served on the Executive Committee and will not be returning as State Representatives next term. Best Wishes in your future endeavors!

We would also like to thank Treasurer Karen Liot Hill, who will be leaving to become the new Executive Councilor for District #2. Best Wishes!

Commissioner Piper and CA Libby answered questions from the Committee.

Rep. Stringham shared follow-up from their last meeting regarding the discussion they had on the net economic impact of having fewer traveling nurses at the Nursing Home. He stated that he has received feedback, and it is roughly \$50,000 in savings per employee to have our own nursing rather than contracted staff, even with the higher salaries.

MOTION: Rep. Rochefort moved to approve the Commissioners' Report. Rep. Morse seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin, "yes;" Rep. Bolton, "yes;" Rep. Morse, "yes;" Rep. Rochefort, "yes;" Rep. Stringham, "yes;" Rep. Sykes, "yes." With six (6) votes in favor and none in opposition, the motion passes.

Treasurer Hill arrived via Teams and gave the following Treasurer's Report:

TO: GRAFTON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

FROM: KAREN LIOT HILL, TREASURER

SUBJECT: TREASURER'S REPORT

DATE: NOVEMBER 18, 2024



CURRENT CASH POSITION (as of 10/31/2024)

Grafton County General Fund

Checking Account (ICS @ 4.80%)	\$ 633,134.93	(Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank)
Investment Account Money Market (5.32%)	\$ 7,264.15	(NH Public Deposit Investment Pool)
Investment Account (ICS @ 5.13%)	\$ 36,313.62	(Mascoma Savings Bank)
Investment Account (6Mo. CD @ 5.00%)	\$ 8,251.10	(TD Bank)
Investment Account ICS @ 4.80%	\$ 16,277.97	(Bank of NH)
Investment Account (ICS @ 4.45%)	\$ 58,067.27	(Claremont Savings Bank)
Investment Account (ICS @ 4.50%)	\$ 24,276.11	(Northway Bank)
Investment Account (ICS (4.25%))	\$ 5,221.63	(Franklin Savings Bank)
Investment Investment Acct. (26Wk CDARS @ 5.10%)	\$ 1,000.00	(Bar Harbor Bank & Trust)

Grafton County Reserved/Dedicated Accounts

Deeds Surcharge ICS (5.00%)	\$ 291,137.89	(Claremont Savings Bank)
Dispatch Capital Reserve ICS (5.00%)	\$ 84,297.77	(Claremont Savings Bank)
Nursing Home Capital Reserve (5.10%)	\$ 704,558.40	(Northway Bank)
Northway Money Market	\$ 58.69	(Northway Bank)
American Rescue Plans Funds (4.80%)	\$ 4,200,297.73	(Bank of NH)
NTIA Letter of Credit ICS (4.80%)	\$ 4,482,313.20	(Bank of NH)

RECENT TRANSACTIONS of NOTE

- The Combined Accumulated interest in the current fiscal year (7/1/24-10/31/24) is \$57,137.28. The FY '24 budget is \$450,000.
- Tax Invoices have been sent out. We have received payment from four (4) towns. Taxes are due on December 17th.
- FY 2025 Tax Anticipation Note: We secured a \$7,000,000 line of credit from Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank at an interest rate of 4.29%. Through October 31, 2024, we have drawn down \$4,000,000.
- Investment letters will be sent out during the first week of December to develop our Investment Plan for taxes to be received in December.

- As this is my last Treasurer’s Report, I would like to thank the citizens of Grafton County for entrusting me with this responsibility for the past eight (8) years. I have enjoyed my time as Grafton County Treasurer, and I look forward to working with Treasurer-elect Cryans for a smooth transition in January.

MOTION: Rep. Morse moved to approve the Treasurer’s Report. Rep. Stringham seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin, “yes;” Rep. Bolton, “yes;” Rep. Morse, “yes;” Rep. Rochefort, “yes;” Rep. Stringham, “yes;” Rep. Sykes, “yes.” With six (6) votes in favor and none in opposition, the motion passes.

CA Libby gave the following County Administrators Report:

County Administrator’s Report
November 18, 2024

Financial Reports

- ❖ Cash Management Report – This report shows where the county’s funds are invested. This includes operational monies and reserve accounts. Due to having money tied up securing our Letter of Credit for the Broadband grant and the significant reduction in ProShare monies received this year, our current cash position is low. As reported earlier, we have had to draw down \$4,000,000 of our Tax Anticipate Note thus far. In the past week, we have started receiving tax payments. Taxes are due December 17th.
- ❖ The Monthly Variance Report compares the budget to actuals on an equal monthly basis and looks at the positive (black) or negative (red) variances. These reports represent two (2) months complete.

Nursing Home Revenue:

Payer Source	FY 2025 Budget	FY 2025 YTD Actuals
NH Medicaid	69	64
VT Medicaid	20	16
Medicare	3	7
Private Pay	17	19
Veterans	7	6
Total	116	112

- The nursing home has made great strides in increasing the census since our September meeting. We currently have a census of 117. We are still averaging below our projected census by four (4) residents but if we can maintain the census at the level, it is currently at that will continue to improve. Our payor source mix is also off some, but we are averaging higher in our Medicare residents which is helping to offset the lower VT Medicaid census. We have also received preliminary information that our NH Medicaid rate will increase by \$14.57, which we did not budget for, we budgeted for a slight decrease so that will also help offset the lower census. We continue to see a negative revenue variance through October, but I do anticipate this to improve.
- Proshare/Bed Tax – ProShare is a lump sum payment received in June. Bed Tax is paid quarterly. We did receive our 1st quarter payment on Friday, November 15th in the amount of \$463,021.85, which is on-target for our projected revenue.
- The Department of Corrections shows a favorable variance of \$4,725.21 currently.
- The farm shows a positive variance of \$73,744.61! We have finally completed the logging operation that was scheduled for years. The revenue is included in October's numbers.
- The Register of Deeds revenue shows a favorable variance of \$78,731.75.
- County Attorney/Victim Witness. These grants are direct reimbursements for expenditures. Reimbursements are requested quarterly.
- the Sheriff's Department are showing an unfavorable variance of \$27,246.45, that is due to timing of revenue receipts.
- Interest Income shows an unfavorable variance of \$92,962.72 due to less cash currently invested. We will solicit investment bids at the beginning of December. It will be interesting to see what interest rates come in at.

Revenues have begun to increase we will continue to monitor.

Expenses

- Through four (4) months, the variance report continues to show multiple departments with negative variances. Each month continues to show improvement and I believe that most of the negative variances are a result of timing of expenditures. I don't see any trends that are concerning at this point. The bonded debt line shows a negative variance because the only bond payment for the fiscal year was made on July 1st.

- ❖ Pro-rated Report: This report looks at the percentage of the year completed, and then pro-rates revenues and expenses based on known variations in revenues and expenses.
 - 33.33% of the fiscal year completed. On the pro-rated report, I factor in the revenue and expenses that are either over or under at this point in the fiscal year. Based on the October reports, we are at 32.73%, below revenue by \$309,236, and at 32.36% or under-expended by \$546,552. This has improved since our August reports.
- ❖ Over Expenditure Report – This report shows any over-expended line item at month-end.
 - We currently have several overexpended accounts, the most significant being the IT Telephone line item, which we are working on resolving with Consolidated. Resolving the billing issue is taking longer than anticipated.

MOTION: Rep. Bolton moved to approve the County Administrator’s Report. Rep. Morse seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin, “yes;” Rep. Bolton, “yes;” Rep. Morse, “yes;” Rep. Rochefort, “yes;” Rep. Stringham, “yes;” Rep. Sykes, “yes.” With six (6) votes in favor and none in opposition, the motion passes.

New Business:

ARPA Requests: Commissioner Piper stated that the County has \$1.8 million left that needs to be obligated by December 31st. The Commissioners decided to prioritize housing with those remaining funds. She stated that they are looking to fund \$ 1 million for AHEAD for the Pathways to Homeownership for Grafton County. She stated that the Commissioners feel this is an extremely worthy program that provides downpayment assistance to eligible homebuyers. The second program, transitional housing, was put forward by Alternative Sentencing Director Mitchell. It is meant to address an immediate need for those in the Alternative Sentencing Program to provide hotel rooms during the winter. Commissioner Piper introduced Harrison Kanzler from AHEAD.

Harrison Kanzler, Executive Director for AHEAD, explained that the Pathways to Homeownership would provide up to forty (40) downpayment assistance grants for eligible homebuyers. This program is actively running in Coos County, and this ARPA funding would extend the program to Grafton County. The program provides downpayment assistance for prospective homeowners. There are requirements: you must be employed in Grafton County, and you must be purchasing a house in Grafton County. The money is staying in the County and going to those working here. They recommend a \$20,000 maximum award, which is a 5% downpayment on a \$400,000 house. They are looking at 5% downpayment awards up to a cap of \$20,000. H. Kanzler stated that they have accounted for a total of 40 maximum awards with this \$1 million in ARPA funding. They will hold this money in an interest-bearing account. They estimate 40 at the maximum but they anticipate 50-60 awards as not everyone will get the total award. There is a 5-year requirement to stay in the home. If someone sells or cashes out equity within the first five (5) years, they are required to pay back the award they received on a pro-rated basis. H. Kanzler noted that they would look at this as seed money to grow the program and

be able to offer more for the Upper Valley area as well. H. Kanzler answered questions from the Committee.

MOTION: Rep. Morse moved to approve \$1 million for AHEAD's Pathways to Homeownership in Grafton County. Rep. Bolton seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rep. Stringham suggested holding off on this motion until they have heard the rest of the requests, in case they want to change any of the funding amounts.

Rep. Morse withdrew her motion.

2. Alternative Sentencing Director Mitchell stated that as a part of the SIM Program Committee she is involved in, they are looking to rent hotel rooms in Lebanon, Littleton, Plymouth area to use as transitional housing for participants in their programs. They would look to have contracts with hotels to house individuals in the program while they work with case management to get back on their feet and into the community. The goal is to keep the individuals safe and reintegrate into the community. She explained that they are requesting \$300,000 over one (1) year, which would cover three (3) rooms per motel. The hotels in Plymouth are willing to work with them at \$500 a week or less, and she hopes the other hubs will also. AS Director Mitchell answered various questions from the Executive Committee.

3. Commissioner Piper stated that the Commissioners recommend another round of municipality funding at \$500,000. This would be a maximum of \$12,820 if each community were to apply. The last round of funding had twenty (20) towns apply. There have been a handful of requests currently for municipalities, and they thought to open it back up to all.

4. Commissioner Piper stated that Commissioner McLeod and Commissioner Ahern have received numerous complaints from constituents about no longer receiving WMUR on their TV due to these areas of Grafton County being designated as part of the Burlington, VT/Plattsburg, NY viewing area and not the Boston, MA market. CA Libby explained there is a market modification process that can request the FCC to modify a broadcast station's local television market, which is initiated at the county level. Grafton County does not have the resources to make this happen. A constituent talked to the FCC and the FCC suggested that the county contact an attorney to help this process. She stated that the County has reached out to WMUR but has not heard back from them yet. Commissioner Piper stated this is an important issue to Commissioner McLeod and Commissioner Ahern, as several constituents have contacted them. Commissioner McLeod stated that this would be a wonderful service for their constituents. Rep. Sykes stated that he was having difficulty putting this request into the county's main focus. CA Libby stated that this is more of a constituent services situation. Since counties are the only body that can do this market modification, and the county had had several constituents asking the County for help the Commissioners believe that it is a reasonable request.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to approve the following four (4) ARPA projects: AHEAD for \$1 million, \$300,000 to transitional housing, offer funding to 39 municipalities for \$500,000 and up to the designation of \$50,000 for the STELAR Market Modification for WMUR. Rep. Baldwin seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rep. Rochefort stated that he is concerned that the transitional housing project should be a budget item rather than a one-time expenditure. It is needed, but he worries that this isn't the appropriate route. Rep. Sykes stated that he would be willing to see in future budget cycles that this become more sustainable but would rather start right away with the approaching weather. CA Libby stated that this is an appropriate ARPA funding request under Treasury guidelines and an immediate way to get this program off the ground. Rep. Rochefort stated that he supports it, but they must keep the ball rolling into the future. Rep. Stringham stated that there is a tremendous need for mental health across the state, and there are many programs that are underfunded.

Rep. Baldwin called the roll: Rep. Baldwin, "yes;" Rep. Bolton, "yes"; Rep. Morse, "yes;" Rep. Rochefort, "yes;" Rep. Stringham, "yes;" Rep. Sykes, "yes." With six (6) votes in favor and none in opposition, the motion passed.

Rep. Morse thanked everyone for all of the good work that has been done, as this is her last meeting as a State Representative. Rep. Sykes thanked all the departing members as well.

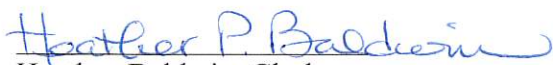
Next Meeting Date – Reorganization Meeting December 9th at 9 am.

Audience Comment—N. De Mayo expressed concerns with the Alternative Sentencing housing arrangements and asked what the overall concern of the law-abiding citizens in Grafton County is. If the support systems are strained, what is their recourse? Rep. Sykes stated that while he understands N. De Mayo's concern, he thinks it is incumbent upon Grafton County to provide services, and he is unsure if they are qualified or if they should respond to that question.

Treasurer Hill thanked the staff in her comments and stated that it has been a pleasure to work with CA Libby, Asst. CA Elsholz, and Administrative Assistant Norcross. She stated that the residents of Grafton County can rest assured that they are in good hands.

10:36 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Heather Baldwin, Clerk