

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
February 11, 2025

PRESENT: Commissioners Piper, McLeod, Hedberg, County Administrator Libby, and Assistant County Administrator Elsholz, Administrative Asst. Norcross

OTHERS: HR Director Clough, Farm Manager Libby, Nick De Mayo – via Teams, Janice Novak – via Teams, Omer C. Ahern Jr. – via Teams, Eddie Qi – via Teams

Commissioner McLeod called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

HR Director Clough arrived to discuss a memo for consideration.

HR Director Clough explained that right now, Nursing Home employees have to be out for up to eleven (11) days, and the soonest they can be back is eight (8) days when testing positive for a communicable disease. Employees have two (2) leave banks available: earned time and extended sick leave for extended illnesses. HR Director Clough explained that employees cannot access extended sick leave until they are out three (3) days with a doctor's note. Employees who are out with these communicable diseases do not go out on FMLA and do not normally have a doctor's note, as they are testing at home. She stated that she is requesting the Commissioners amend the policy and waive the three (3) day earned time requirement for those who are out during the outbreaks of communicable diseases and allow them to draw immediately from their extended sick leave. The Commissioners discussed the request.

MOTION: Commissioner Piper moved to approve the following amendment to the current policy:

Nursing Home employees who test positive for a communicable disease requiring the employee to miss scheduled days off of work due to work exclusion requirements for healthcare personnel as stated by current Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance shall have the 3-day earned time requirement waived and will be paid for the required work exclusion period stated by the CDC, out of their extended sick leave bank.

Commissioner Hedberg seconded the motion.

Discussion: Commissioner McLeod asked if, given what is going on with the CDC, if the CDC changes its guidance, the County wants to leave that part out of the policy. HR Director Clough stated that if the CDC guidance goes away, but the County is still telling the employees they cannot be at work during that time frame, she would think they would still want to allow Nursing Home employees to use their extended sick leave. She stated they could revisit the policy and change the wording if necessary.

The Commissioners voted on the motion, and all were in favor.

Farm Manager Libby arrived and gave the following report:

1. Milking 60-shipping 9000 lbs.
2. Memo for Consideration – FM Libby requested that the Commissioners waive the bidding process and continue contracting with Limlaw for this year’s custom cropping. He explained that M. Limlaw stated he would stay at the current price the county is paying. FM Libby also reported that he visited Howard Hatch at Hatchland Farm to discuss this to ensure they were not interested in bidding on the custom cropping if he were to put it back out to bid. H. Hatch stated that as long as M. Limlaw treats taxpayers fairly, he would not be interested in bidding. FM Libby stated that Limlaw has done fantastic work for the County and has been a great partner. Given the rising costs everywhere, he feels that locking in this price for FY26 is a win for the County. CA Libby noted that due to the timing of the crop season, it crosses through two (2) fiscal years. Farm Manager Libby also stated that he has always appreciated Mr. Hatch’s advice and willingness to help out the County Farm. The County is lucky that we have such a good neighbor, and he will look for ways to work with Hatchland Farm in the future

MOTION: Commissioner Hedberg moved to waive the bidding process and extend the 2024 Custom Harvesting contract with Limlaw through 2025 under the same conditions. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

3. Future timber cut revenues – FM Libby stated that he has participated in some of the discussions for the shooting range and is trying to find an appropriate location for it that will not affect the farm. He stated that those involved in those discussions have been discussing the possibility of looking at future timber cut revenue for the shooting range. Historically, the revenue goes to the farm budget, and FM Libby stated that if the Commissioners choose to change that going forward, he needs to know sooner rather than later.
4. Upcoming Artificial Insemination (AI) Certification Course—FM Libby reported that the farm will be hosting this course, which will be held sometime in March and offered to whoever would like to attend. The County will provide the site and the live animals for artificial insemination. He noted that the two (2) animals they have selected have proven hard to breed.
5. FM Libby reported that most of the farm’s egg supply has gone to the Department of Corrections to help offset their costs. He noted that there have been some upset members of the public as the number of available eggs to the public has decreased. He stated that they are doing the best they can, but he feels that right now, it is important to help offset the cost to the DoC. Commissioner Hedberg asked if there was a concern about the bird flu on the complex. FM Libby stated that the number of pigeons on the complex was his concern, as they have access to the cows, but the pigeon population seems to be healthy, and there are no concerns at this time. He noted that the chickens are closed off in their area.

Agenda Items:

1. Commissioner McLeod asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the February 4th meeting. Commissioner Piper had the following edit:

Page 6, Last Paragraph – Commissioner Piper changed the sentence “He stated that the federal well is drying up, and taxpayers should be on the hook for exorbitant projects” to read “He stated that the federal well is drying up, and taxpayers shouldn’t be on the hook for exorbitant projects.”

MOTION: Commissioner Piper moved to approve the minutes from the February 4th meeting as amended. Commissioner Hedberg seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

2. The Commissioners reviewed the Superior Court Report for January.

3. CA Libby stated that the Commissioners need to hold public hearings for CDBG grants, so one of their meetings needs to be moved to the afternoon. The Commissioners discussed and agreed to move their March 4th meeting to the afternoon to accommodate the public hearings.

4. Commissioner McLeod signed a drawdown request from NHARDC for \$24,568.52.

5. CA Libby submitted the Superior Court Lease for FY2026 for Commissioner McLeod to sign and initial. Commissioner Hedberg signed off on the Certificate for Municipalities.

MOTION: Commissioner Hedberg moved to enter into the lease with the State of New Hampshire for the Superior Court with a 2% increase for one (1) year and authorize Commissioner McLeod to sign the documentation. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

6. NACO – Counties for Housing Solutions – CA Libby reported that NACO has an initiative for housing solutions, and there is an application period open for a 6-week technical assistance program that works towards counties using surplus-owned land for creating housing solutions for their communities. She stated that this application is for any counties with populations over 200,000, which most counties in New Hampshire do not have. NACO has said they will allow one (1) application for all ten (10) counties in New Hampshire, and Sullivan County has stated that they will take the lead and submit the application. CA Libby wanted to see if the Commissioners wanted Grafton County to participate in this application. The Commissioners discussed the initiative and their thoughts on Grafton County participating. They felt it was worth it to see if any feasible land for housing was available on the complex.

MOTION: Commissioner Hedberg moved to include Grafton County on the list of Counties interested in the NACO Housing Solutions program. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

7. SNS Acquisition – CA Libby stated that on February 4th, SNS was acquired by a company called Thrive. Grafton County is a very large client of SNS, and Thrive has reached out to the County. They will be assigning the County a team of three (3) people. Thrive will have the same

staff, and no immediate changes will occur. CA Libby stated that the County's contract with SNS is up at the end of this fiscal year. The new IT Director will start in a couple of weeks, and that contract will be one of the first things discussed. They may look at a one (1)-year contract with Thrive to allow the new IT Director to have time to look further into it.

Recording of Meetings – CA Libby stated that last week, they had discussed recording meetings. Commissioner Hedberg noted that many organizations post online meetings, and she thinks it can be beneficial. She said their meeting minutes are good, but people can still misunderstand. If there were audio and visual means for meetings, that may emphasize the transparency they all strive for. She thought it was worth talking about. CA Libby stated that she does not know much about YouTube streaming, she feels they would need equipment that the County does not currently have. They could have more in-depth conversations with the new IT Director. The Commissioners felt that increasing access to the public would make this worth looking into further with the new IT Director once he had time to settle into his new job. Commissioner McLeod noted that she is interested in looking into using AI to assist with minutes as well.

Commissioner's Issues:

1. Commissioner Hedberg reported that she and Commissioner McLeod spoke in opposition to the increase in Grafton County Commissioners from three (3) to five (5) and going from the rotating 4-year terms down to all two (2) year terms. There was more opposition than people in favor. Commissioner McLeod added that HB 643 was missing the Town of Piermont, and the five (5) districts are not equal in population. The committee picked up on all of this as well. The intent of this bill was not clear, and the sponsor, Rep. Barton, did not show up to introduce the legislation. There was an increased cost to the County by adding two (2) Commissioners' salaries and mileage. Commissioner McLeod stated that she felt the legislation was not going to go anywhere, as there was a lot of opposition.
2. Commissioner Piper stated that she attended the NHAC Executive Committee meeting. There was a state legislative update, and Kate Horgan discussed the bills in legislation. CA Libby noted that she attended the Awards Committee meeting, and the nominations are open. She stated that Grafton County has not had any award recipients in the last couple of years, and she is going to advocate to change that this year.

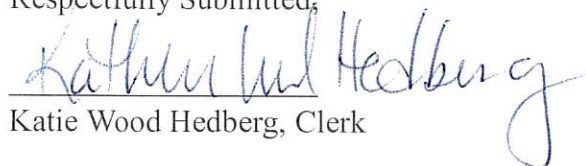
Public Comment

1. Mr. De Mayo thanked Commissioner Hedberg for addressing the transparency of their meetings. He stated that one (1) thing that should be considered when hiring people to work at the County is that they should speak clearly when they come before the Commissioners. He stated that it would be appreciated if they were instructed to speak slowly and clearly. Mr. De Mayo suggested that those who come before the Commissioners take a class to teach them how to speak publicly.

2. Mr. De Mayo spoke about HB643. He stated that he believes Rep. Barton introduced that bill because of the size of Grafton County. He stated that three (3) people are making decisions regarding the budget before it is passed on to the Executive Committee and then the Delegation. Having more people on the Board of Commissioners would be a great service for the people of Grafton County. Mr. De Mayo stated that there is no public input and there should be some availability to taxpayers asking questions. They are not allowed to ask questions. Commissioner Piper wanted to clarify some of Mr. De Mayo's comments. She stated that if the sponsor of a bill is not present at the committee level, it typically does not go anywhere. Concerning the budget, what is being missed is that when it is passed onto the Executive Committee, it is given to those who are closer to the public. Commissioner McLeod stated that the public elected them to do this work, and the public also elected the 26 members of the Delegation. Commissioner Piper noted they are not passing it up to a smaller group. It is more people reviewing the budget. She encouraged Mr. De Mayo to attend the public hearing on the budget. The citizens have many opportunities throughout the budget process to speak up.

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

Respectfully Submitted,


Katie Wood Hedberg, Clerk