

GRAFTON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Administration Building

North Haverhill, NH 03774

January 27, 2025

PRESENT: Reps. Baldwin, Bjelobrk, Bolton, Franz, Sykes. Commissioner Piper, Commissioner McLeod, Commissioner Hedberg, County Administrator Libby – via Teams, Assistant County Administrator Burbank- via Teams, Administrative Assistant Norcross.

OTHERS PRESENT: Register Monahan, Nick De Mayo – via Teams, Emilie Smith – via Teams

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

Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Five (5) members were physically present and a quorum was declared.

Rep. Sykes stated that the first item of business to be completed was the approval of the November 18<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee minutes and the December 9<sup>th</sup> Delegation minutes.

**MOTION:** Rep. Baldwin moved to approve the minutes from the November 18<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting and the December 9<sup>th</sup> Delegation meeting. Rep. Bolton seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin “yes”, Rep. Bjelobrk “yes”, Bolton “yes”, Rep. Franz “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being five (5) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

**Treasurer Cryans and gave the following Treasurer’s Report:**

TO: GRAFTON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
FROM: MICHAEL CRYANS, TREASURER  
SUBJECT: TREASURER’S REPORT  
DATE: JANUARY 27, 2025



**CURRENT CASH POSITION (as of 12/31/24)**

**Grafton County General Fund**

Checking Account (ICS @ 4.15%)	\$ 8,576,233.71	(Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank)
Investment Account Money Market (4.65%)	\$ 2,511,382.82	(NH Public Deposit Invest. Pool)
Investment Account (ICS @ 4.40%)	\$ 2,538,992.52	(Mascoma Savings Bank)
Investment Account (Checking @ 1.10%)	\$ 8,266.23	(TD Bank)
Investment Account ICS @ 4.45%	\$ 2,518,886.20	(Bank of NH)
Investment Account (ICS @ 4.41%)	\$ 2,560,621.35	(Claremont Savings Bank)
Investment Account (ICS @ 4.50%)	\$ 24,459.21	(Northway Bank)
Investment Account (ICS (4.33%))	\$ 1,006,188.96	(Franklin Savings Bank)
Investment Acct. (Checking)	\$ 1,000.00	(Bar Harbor Bank & Trust)

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### **Grafton County Reserved/Dedicated Accounts**

Deeds Surcharge ICS (2.47%)	\$ 298,187.92 (Claremont Savings Bank)
Dispatch Capital Reserve ICS (2.23%)	\$ 84,672.64 (Claremont Savings Bank)
Nursing Home Capital Reserve (4.75%)	\$ 710,220.95 (Northway Bank)
Northway Money Market	\$ 58.75 (Northway Bank)
American Rescue Plans Funds (4.45%)	\$ 2,675,017.15 (Bank of NH)
NTIA Letter of Credit ICS (4.45%)	\$ 4,517,513.33 (Bank of NH)

### **RECENT TRANSACTIONS of NOTE**

- The Combined Accumulated interest in the current fiscal year (7/1/24-12/31/24) is \$122,095. The FY '25 budget is \$450,000.
- The County borrowed \$4,000,000 in anticipation of taxes during FY '25. In addition to the amount borrowed, we paid \$26,181 in interest on the note. Borrowing was largely due to \$4,274,643 set aside as a cash-secured letter of credit for the NTIA Broadband Project.
- Taxes were due on December 17, 2024. Taxes have all been paid. We had one late town. We have received that payment and have invoiced the Town for the interest due. We collected a total of \$27,331,164 in tax revenue for FY 2025.
- Investment letters were sent to all banks with branches in Grafton County. These letters were sent out on December 4, 2024, with bids due back by the close of business on Friday, December 12, 2024. We received proposals from eleven (11) banks. All monies have been invested as of the second week in January.
- The Commissioners approved the following Investment Plan on December 17, 2024:
  - Franklin Savings Bank – 6-Month CD – 4.33% - \$1,000,000
  - Mascoma Bank – Insured Cash Sweep – 4.40% - \$2,500,000
  - Claremont Savings – Insured Cash Sweep – 4.41% - \$2,500,000
  - Passumpsic Savings Bank – 13 Week CDARS – 4.50% - \$2,500,000
  - Bar Harbor Bank & Trust – 26 Week CDARS – 4.50% - \$2,500,000
  - NH Public Deposit Investment Pool – 4.71% - rate is variable - \$2,500,000
  - Bank of NH – Insured Cash Sweep – 4.72% - rate is variable - \$2,500,000
  - Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank – Insured Cash Sweep – 4.15% - All funds remaining in the County's possession after the investments above were made. This is our operating cash account.
- Although interest rates are favorable, they have dropped during this new round of investing. We will more than likely not reach our budgeted revenue amount of \$450,000.

**MOTION:** Rep. Bolton moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Rep. Baldwin seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin "yes", Rep. Bjelobrk "yes", Bolton "yes", Rep. Franz "yes", Rep. Sykes "yes". With the vote being five (5) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

## **Commissioner McLeod gave the following Commissioner's Report:**

Commissioners' Report  
January 27, 2025

### **Staffing Update:**

- The County has hired twelve (12) new employees since our last report. We have had thirteen (13) separations from employment; eight (8) of those were in the Sheriff's Department, seven (7) were part-time employees, and one (1) was a full-time deputy. Ten (10) new hires in that period were at the nursing home. We currently have 411 total employees. Due to the continuing national shortage of RNs and LPNs, we continue to face hiring challenges for these positions. We have started an LPN program for our staff. We currently have two (2) LNAs enrolled; we hope to reduce our vacancies by "growing" our own. We currently have 13.35 vacant FTEs for LNAs, 9 FTEs vacant for RN/LPN positions, and four (4) vacant correctional officer positions. We have significantly reduced our nursing home and the Department of Corrections vacancies. At our highest vacancy rates, we had (39.85) vacant LNA FTEs and 18 correctional officers.
- We completed an LNA class in December. Eight (8) students graduated and received their LNA licenses. We intend to have another LNA class beginning in March. This has been a successful initiative to fill vacancies for these positions.
- Contracted Staff: We currently have eight (8) LPNs, down from eleven (11) in July 2023, and four (4) LNAs, down from seventeen (17) in July 2023. Most contract staff work on the evening and night shifts, which are the most challenging positions for the county to fill. Due to our staffing shortages, in fiscal year 2023, we spent \$4,280,891.32 on contract staff. During the first six (6) months of fiscal year 2025, we have spent \$1,124,001. Our efforts to recruit and retain staff have been successful. We are seeing this in the reduction in costs for contract staff. If the plan for an LNA class in March is successful, we will no longer need contract LNAs, further reducing the costs.

### **Nursing Home:**

- The nursing home's census is currently 120.

### **Department of Corrections:**

- The current in-house census is 60, with another 34 out of the facility. We have 21 in pretrial services, 9 in other facilities, 2 serving weekend sentences, and 2 on Electronic Monitoring.

### **Broadband Update:**

- The County received a \$12M grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to construct 210 miles of Middle Mile fiber infrastructure for

Broadband. This grant was received in September 2023. This project will run through twenty-five (25) Grafton County municipalities. The project is 96% aerial running fiber on existing utility poles. A significant portion of this project runs through the White Mountain National Forest, and as such, we have had quite a delay in the Environmental Review process because the USFS has its permitting process that can take up to a year. We are anticipating our permit this month. Then, the entire project will be cleared to begin construction.

- The Environmental Assessment has been 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 hosted a construction kick-off event in November and anticipate that we will start running fiber in the spring. We anticipate that construction will take a 12-to-15-month period.
- The Commissioners have accepted a proposal from Hub 66 to be 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.

#### **Courthouse Update:**

- The Commissioners have selected Lavallee Brensigner Architects (LBA) from Manchester to complete the Conceptual Design phase of the Courthouse project. Lavallee has extensive experience designing courts and public safety facilities throughout New Hampshire. The County is using ARPA funding to pay for this phase of the project.
- On 12/20/24, LBA and the Courthouse Building Committee held the project kick-off meeting with all the stakeholders to review the conceptual design process phases and project schedule and discuss the programming phase, which is the first phase of the project. Each department has completed programming questionnaires that will be included in the conceptual design. LBA is reviewing those questionnaires and holding individual meetings with departments to discuss them. The programming phase is expected to be completed by early February.
- The final report from LBA with the conceptual design and estimated full costs for construction is due mid-June.
- After receiving the final report, the Commissioners will thoroughly review everything and decide on the next steps. If they would like to move forward with design and

construction, they will come to the Delegation for a proposed Bond Vote to finance the project. This is expected to occur in the late summer/early fall of this year.

**American Rescue Plan Act of 2021:**

- Grafton County received \$17.4M in ARPA funding. Ninety-two (92) ARPA projects were approved by the Commissioners and Executive Committee. Most of the projects have been completed. All funds were 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 unobligated grant funding to the U.S. Department of Treasury beyond the December 2024 end-of-year deadline.
- All of our ARPA funding has been obligated. Eleven (11) open projects have obligations totaling \$1,381,407.33 that will be paid out over the next two (2) years. The deadline to expend ARPA funds is December 31, 2026.
- ARPA spending was allowed in four (4) categories:
  - Public Health
  - Premium Pay
  - Infrastructure (specifically Water, Sewer, & Broadband)
  - Revenue Loss (Local governments can claim up to \$10 million of their ARPA SLFRF grant allocations for revenue replacement)
- Below is the breakdown of Grafton County's obligations:

<b>Response to Public Health Emergency</b>	<b>Premium Pay for Essential Employees</b>	<b>Water, Sewer or Broadband Infrastructure</b>	<b>Revenue Replacement</b>	<b>Total Allocation</b>
\$ 2,565,414.07	\$ 1,158,536.24	\$ 4,058,854.89	\$ 9,676,496.80	\$ 17,459,302.00

Commissioner McLeod reported that CA Libby had informed the Commissioners that the County's broadband funding may be held up in D.C. due to the recent Executive Order. She asked CA Libby if there was an update on that. CA Libby stated that she heard back from NTIA late last week. The broadband funding is not impacted by the Executive Order that was issued. It was mainly targeting energy projects.

Rep. Bjelobrk asked for an explanation of the revenue replacement category in ARPA funding. CA Libby explained that Counties could elect up to \$10 million of ARPA money as Revenue Replacement, which could be used for any general government purposes not specific to the other ARPA categories. That total was not specific to Grafton County's revenue loss. Grafton County elected to \$10 million in lost revenue funding.

**MOTION:** Rep. Baldwin moved to approve the Commissioners' Report. Rep. Bjelobrk seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin "yes", Rep. Bjelobrk "yes", Bolton "yes", Rep. Franz "yes", Rep. Sykes "yes". With the vote being five (5) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

**CA Libby gave the following County Administrators Report:**

County Administrator's Report

January 27, 2025

Financial Reports

- ❖ Cash Management Report – This report shows where the county's funds are invested. This includes operational monies and reserve accounts. County taxes are due on December 17<sup>th</sup> every year. Since we have just collected taxes, our cash position is good. We have money tied up securing our Letter of Credit for the Broadband grant, which impacts our cash flow. We will continue to monitor our cash position.
- ❖ 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 six (6) months complete.

Nursing Home Revenue:

Payer Source	FY 2025 Budget	FY 2025 YTD Actuals
NH Medicaid	69	62
VT Medicaid	20	18
Medicare	3	10
Private Pay	17	22
Veterans	7	6
Total	116	118

- The Grafton County Nursing Home is a 135-bed skilled nursing facility. Our census due to COVID and staffing has been low for several years. We were at a low point of 89 residents in June 2023.
- In fiscal year 2025, we budgeted for a census of 116 broken down by the payor sources as listed above. The current census at the nursing home is 120. We are now averaging two (2) residents above our projected census. We are still showing a negative revenue variance because we have been below our budgeted projections for the first four (4) months of the year. If we can maintain the census at the

current level, revenue numbers will continue to improve. Our payor source mix is also off some, but we are averaging higher in our Medicare residents, helping offset the lower VT Medicaid census. In addition, our NH Medicaid rate increased by \$14.24, which we did not budget for; we budgeted for a slight decrease, which will also help offset the lower census.

- Proshare/Bed Tax – ProShare is a lump sum payment received in June. Bed Tax is paid quarterly. The figure included in this report is only for the first quarter, which is on target for our projected revenue. We will not receive the second quarter until mid-February.
- The Department of Corrections currently shows a favorable variance of \$11,145.76.
- The farm shows a favorable variance of \$100,520.84! We did complete a logging operation this summer/fall that produced \$42,832.74. In addition, our sale of livestock revenues are exceeding estimates, and we were able to sell several acres of standing corn at the end of the season.
- The Sheriff's Department shows a favorable variance of \$48,612.55.
- County Attorney/Victim Witness. These are both grants. We receive \$30,000 in grant funding from the Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA), which is used to offset the salary of the prosecutor who does this work in the County Attorney's office. We also received funding from the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). This grant reimburses costs associated with our Victim Witness program. It is a direct reimbursement for expenditures. Reimbursements are requested quarterly.
- CA – Circuit Court – The County Attorney's office provides prosecutors who provide Circuit Court services for police departments throughout the county. We have two (2) contracts that reimburse the expenses for these two (2) positions.
- Alternative Sentencing is currently showing an unfavorable variance of \$6,769.74. That is due to the timing of revenue collection.
- The Register of Deeds revenue shows a favorable variance of \$94,742.43.
- Interest income shows an unfavorable variance of \$ 103,054.61. This is due to less cash being invested in the fall than anticipated. Tax revenues have been invested, and we will see a rebound in this revenue. Interest rates have decreased somewhat, and we will likely not realize all the projected income.

Overall revenues appear to be on target for the budget. We will continue to monitor.

## Expenses

- Through six (6) months, the variance report shows several departments with negative variances. This has been the trend this fiscal year. Each month continues to show improvement, and most of the negative variances result from the 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 1<sup>st</sup>.

Overall, expenditures are trending lower than budget in most areas. We will continue to monitor that as well.

- ❖ 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 expenditures.
  - 50% 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 December reports, we are at 49.68%, below revenue by \$164,993, and at 47.57% or under-expended by \$1,367,003.
- ❖ Over-Expenditure Report—This report shows any over-expended line item at month-end. Per the by-laws of the Grafton County Delegation, the Commissioners have the authority to transfer money within departments to cover department over-expenditures. In addition, they have permission to transfer up to \$5,000 between departments. Anything above \$5,000 requires approval of the Executive Committee.
  - We currently have five (5) over-expended accounts. The first two on the list will have posting corrections in January to correct the over-expenditure. The Community Corrections—Strategic Monitoring is a revenue offset line that sometimes, due to the timing of receipts, will show over-expended but will not be after receipts are posted. The Tax Anticipation Note Interest and Outside Counsel lines will require transfers into them greater than \$5,000. I will make that request at a later meeting date.

**MOTION:** Rep. Bolton moved to approve the County Administrator's Report. Rep. Bjelobrk seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin, "yes;" Rep. Bjelobrk, "yes;" Bolton, "yes;" Rep. Franz, "yes;" Rep. Sykes, "yes." With the vote being five (5) in favor and none in opposition the motion passes.

Comments from the Delegates: Rep. Bolton thanked CA Libby and the Commissioners for making the nonprofit application process easier and allowing applications to be sent via email.

Rep. Franz asked for the total cost of the new courthouse. Commissioner Hedberg explained that they do not have a price yet but noted the EH Danson report from 2021 on the County website, which was from when the County first started this process. That report compared pricing to renovate the current building versus building new. She stated that now, with ARPA funds, the

County has hired an architectural firm, and each group with offices in the Courthouse has filled out a questionnaire about what they have now, what they need, and what they feel they will need looking into the future. Once those are put together, the Courthouse Building Committee will look at all the information and get back together with the architect and stakeholders. They will then know more about what they are looking at for needs in late spring, and then a cost will be determined. Commissioner Hedberg noted that the EH Danson report from 2021 was looking at 78,000 sq ft for a new courthouse, and they are currently looking at 60,000 sq ft.

Rep. Franz asked how much ARPA funds were allocated for this project. CA Libby stated that \$761,000 was allocated out of ARPA. The schematic design phase that they are currently in costs approximately \$265,000. The remainder of the funds will be used at a later point in time if the project is approved to move forward. Commissioner Piper added that the original report stated the cost was \$33 million to build and \$35 million to renovate the existing courthouse. Commissioner Hedberg explained that one of the biggest issues with the current courthouse is that the mechanicals are all outdated, and some of the companies are no longer in business. Getting parts for repairs is difficult. She also added that the current building is very inefficient in terms of energy; it is not ADA compliant, there is no sprinkler system, and there are no separate hallways for when people from the Department of Corrections are being brought into court.

Rep. Sykes stated that the longer they wait to decide, the more expensive it will get. He thinks it is prudent for the Delegation to determine what they will do. Rep. Bjelobrk asked how many estimates were received to determine the cost of building versus renovation. CA Libby stated that the County hired EH Danson to provide that cost. She further explained that when they are done with the current schematic design process, if there is a vote to move forward, the whole project would be put out to bid, and they would receive several prices from various construction firms. Rep. Bjelobrk asked what the rental costs are for the state. CA Libby stated that she does not have the costs for each department, but she will send that information to the Committee. She stated that the County receives roughly \$400,000 a year in rent from rental agreements that are in place. Commissioner Piper explained that the County tries to get the most revenue it can from its state partners. Traditionally, the County has asked for a 2% increase in rent, but this year, the State requested 1%, and the County said no. She stated that there are state-owned courthouses, but Grafton County is not on the state's priority list. Commissioner McLeod stated that they had to utilize their Executive Councilors to get members from the state court system to meet with the County.

Next Meeting Date – March 24<sup>th</sup> at 9am.

### **Public Comment:**

1. Nick DeMayo questioned if it would be better to wait until the new federal administration is in place and prices come down to build a new Courthouse. He stated that he was told by a member of the County staff that this Courthouse has been kicked down the road by past Commissioners in order to do social work throughout the County and therefore many of the problems they are encountering now could have been prevented years ago, but it was neglected by Commissioners who decided not to put money into the Courthouse. His suggestion is to wait until President Trump gets the economy under control, and they can then build a cheaper courthouse. N. De

Mayo further stated that there are many communities throughout Grafton County that are trying to do local infrastructure programs such as Littleton, with an Elementary School and he feels that would take priority over giving judges and lawyers more comfort in a new courthouse. The education in Littleton supersedes a new Courthouse.

2. Register Monahan stated that this will be her 15<sup>th</sup> budget cycle and she watches how the spring builds into June. She explained that the roadblock in the past to starting the budget process sooner was the insurance rates were not set until mid-April. That obstacle has been removed, as the rates are now set in October. She suggested that the Commissioners start the budget in February and not give up the full month of March and April. If the Executive Committee listened in on Teams while department heads presented to the Commissioners that would save time as well. This would prevent the Executive Committee from coming to the complex every Monday and Friday in June and allow them to be in Concord. Register Monahan stated that this her suggestion, as their summers are short and their time for public service is already tight.

10:03 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
Heather Baldwin, Clerk