

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET MEETING

Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
March 20, 2025

PRESENT: Commissioners Piper, McLeod, Hedberg, County Administrator Libby – via Teams, Assistant County Administrator Elsholz, Administrative Assistant. Norcross

OTHERS: HR Director Clough, UNH Extension – Donna Lee, Paul Chiarantona, James McKane, Alternative Sentencing Director Mitchell, Conservation District – Pam Gilbert and Rick Walling, Sheriff Myers, Director of Communications Paronto

Commissioner McLeod called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM

Human Resources – Director Clough

1. HR Director Clough stated that she is requesting to make an adjustment to the HR Assistant position. The scope of responsibilities she needs this position to take on is more in line with an HR Generalist role rather than an HR Assistant. In a department of three staff members, it is essential that each can step in for the others. The current employee performs this task on a daily basis, and HR Director Clough believes this upgrade would better suit the role and scope of responsibilities the employee is being asked to take on.

Commissioner McLeod requested a brief overview of the HR Department. HR Director Clough reported that the department has been at its current staffing level of three staff members since 2006. There are approximately 450 employees, of whom about 280 are benefited employees. This requires administering benefits for these employees, onboarding them, ensuring they exit properly when they leave, and providing a variety of employee relations meetings. HR Director Clough stated that this is one of the reasons why she feels it is important for all her staff to be able to fill in for one another, noting an example of an employee who may not feel comfortable going to her with a problem, may feel comfortable going to one of the other staff members. Commissioner Piper stated that the Human Resources Department has been working with a Sr. Generalist and HR Assistant for a while, and the employee base is becoming more robust; therefore, she imagines that they need more support with that HR Generalist role, and she supports it.

Nursing Home Allocation – HR Director Clough explained that 80% of her budget is allocated back to the Nursing Home. Their biggest employment numbers are in the Nursing Home; the majority of their time in HR is spent with that department. The Nursing Home then includes those costs in its cost reporting. Commissioner Hedberg asked why the Nurse Practitioner was located in the Human Resources budget. HR Director Clough explained that for many years, this position was in the Nursing Home budget, but due to CMS changes, it could no longer be included in their budget and was moved to the HR budget. She stated that the Nurse

Practitioner's primary role in HR is to perform the pre-employment physicals and drug testing. The remainder of her duties are in the Nursing Home.

Contract Services – HR Director Clough explained that the County had previously participated in the Retiree Drug Subsidy program through CMS for all of its retirees who were enrolled in the Medicare supplement plan. In January, the County transitioned all of its retirees onto a Medicare Advantage program, which makes them no longer eligible for the subsidy, and therefore, they no longer need the contracted cost for the actuarial attestation. This line has been decreased to reflect that change.

Dues License – HR Director Clough stated that she has increased this line based on the hiring numbers from FY25. The criminal record checks and motor vehicle checks are included in this line, and with the increased hiring numbers, those costs increase as well.

Advertising –HR Director Clough reported that she has decreased this line again this year due to the decrease in paper ads. They are seeing success with other free advertising but noted that they still run paper ads for certain positions.

Alternative Sentencing – Director Mitchell

A. Revenue

Program Fees – AS Director Mitchell stated that she was hoping to generate more revenue with the domestic violence course, but it has been slower than anticipated. She said that they have also started an anger management program, which is open to individuals outside of Alternative Sentencing, not just participants. They have partnered with Drug Court and Drug Court will pay the County to provide life skills groups and anger management. AS Director Mitchell noted that she has left that revenue level funded.

Insurance Reimbursement – AS Director Mitchell stated that they have not yet gotten on board with this because there have been many other things going on. She said that she has been approved as a Medicaid provider. She budgeted \$2,000 in revenue for the upcoming year. She stated that their goal is to resolve the insurance reimbursement issue this Spring.

RJ Initiative – AS Director Mitchell reported that Grafton County received increased funding for this line in the current year, over what was budgeted, but this funding has since been cut, and they are not expecting to see that same increase in the next fiscal year. She has been informed that they will not receive less than the \$35,000 she has budgeted for.

B. Expense

Alternative Sentencing

1. Alternative Sentencing Staff – AS Director Mitchell stated that this line includes a new Case Manager position that she has discussed with the Commissioners.

2. Education and Training – The \$1,500 increase in this budget is due to training needs for the new case manager. AS Director Mitchell noted, she is currently working with the State of New Hampshire on an initiative. All of her staff are getting trained as Certified Community Health Workers through grant funding. If it works out, they will become an apprentice work site, and the staff will receive stipends for participating in the program, and the Alternative Sentencing Department will also receive a stipend for each staff member participating.

2. Treatment Services – AS Director Mitchell stated that she increased this line by \$450.00 due to a new anger management assessment tool.

3. Vehicle Repair & Maintenance – AS Director Mitchell explained that their routine maintenance contract for their vehicle has been free until now, but is no longer included, so she has budgeted an increase in this line to cover those costs.

4. Travel Expense – AS Director Mitchell stated this line shows an increase, mostly due to her and a staff member traveling to schools to meet with Juvenile Restorative Justice kids.

AS Director Mitchell noted most of the increase in this budget is due to the new case manager position.

Alternative Sentencing -SUD Treatment

1. Education and training – There is a decrease in this line because they have decided not to attend a training out west and stay on the east coast to get their best practice training to maintain their licenses.

2. Dues/Subscriptions – They have a new electronic health record case book that has been added to the IT budget, and therefore, they were able to decrease this line.

3. Satellite Office Rental – Director Mitchell explained that they have relocated their office. The budget shows an increase, but they split the rent with NCHC, which shows up in their revenue line.

UNH Cooperative Extension – Office Administrator Lee, Paul Chiarantona, James McKane

COA Lee discussed the various programs that UNH Extension offers throughout the County and answered questions from the Commissioners.

1. Salary—Professional Staff—COA Lee explained that the County pays 25% of the field specialist positions and 75% of the program manager positions. The County fully pays for their two (2) Administrative Assistants, who are County employees.

Conservation District – Pam Gilbert and Rick Walling

The County supports the Administrative Assistant position for the Conservation District. There is a decrease in this budget due to the current Administrative Assistant's upcoming retirement and the hiring of a new staff member at a lower rate.

Other materials were provided for the Commissioners' review.

Dispatch – Director of Communications Paronto

A. Revenue

1. Dispatch Fees – Director Paronto stated that this revenue is based on the towns' usage of the services. The year the numbers are based on runs through March, and therefore, he will return to the Commissioners at a later date with his final number for FY 26 dispatch billing. He noted that he does not foresee any significant changes in that number from the current fiscal year.

Director Paronto stated that he wants to formalize the exact percentage of their operating budget that they are billing out. They have been billing out between 62% and 68% of their staff budget, and he would like to formalize that exact number, so when he talks to the towns, he will have a concrete formula that he can justify. He hopes to finalize that number by April.

B. Expense

1. Overtime – Director Paronto noted a \$4,000 increase in this line based on the fact that he is relying more on full-time staff rather than part-time to fill shifts, and therefore overtime has increased.

2. Vehicle Repair and Maintenance – Director Paronto reported that Dispatch was able to repurpose one of the vehicles that was going out from the Sheriff's Department. He has increased this line \$500 to cover items such as oil changes for that car.

3. Fuel & Oil – This line has also increased due to the addition of the vehicle from the Sheriff's Department.

C. Capital Reserve

1. \$32,000 – Director Paronto explained that the Capital Reserve account has been historically funded by setting aside a percentage of revenue from dispatch fees to allow for improvements within Dispatch. They use it for Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) and any infrastructure upgrades.

The Dispatch Center provides MDTs for the towns they dispatch to. The pricing of those continues to increase, and he anticipates purchasing 3-4 computer devices in FY26.

CA Libby noted that the Dispatch Capital Reserve contribution traditionally was 10% of the dispatch fees. Over the last three years, the County has contributed 5%. As a starting point for FY'26, CA Libby has increased back to 10%. They are going to expend a significant portion of the funds in the reserve, and she feels it is essential to try to return it to the 10% contribution.

Sheriff's Department – Sheriff Myers

A. Revenue

1. Court Bailiff – Sheriff Myers reported that the Bailiffs do not receive another cost-of-living increase until 2027.
2. Sale of Equipment – Sheriff Myers stated that there will only be two (2) cars to phase out in the next fiscal year and has adjusted the revenue line accordingly based on those numbers.
3. Contract Special Details – A revolving fund bill is pending in the Senate, which may alter this budget line.
4. District Court Prisoner – Sheriff Myers stated that with the change in bail reform, they may see an increase in this revenue. She noted that they have also seen an increase in transports lately.
5. Grants – This line indicates a \$98,000 decrease resulting from the cancellation of the Drug Task Force grant from the state budget.

B. Expense

1. Deputies – Sheriff Myers stated that this line is showing an increase due to the full-time position approved in the current budget, which will take effect on January 1st. The Special Deputies line has also been moved into this line.
2. Retirement – increase due to the new full-time position
3. Education & Conference – Sheriff Myers reported an increase in this line, as last year they only needed 16 hours of training to maintain certification, and this year that requirement has increased to 24 hours. She noted that this line had already been over-expended before she took office in January.
4. Investigations Line - A significant decrease resulted in the removal of licensing for the Gray Key. They allocated funds for background investigations of their new hires.

5. Uniform Allowance – Sheriff Myers stated that this increase is necessary to outfit four new deputies.

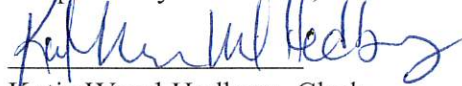
Commissioner Hedberg stated that she does not see any increases in the Sheriff's budget for funds resulting from the new contract with ICE. She asked if Sheriff Myers had considered the costs associated with that agreement. Sheriff Myers explained that she will not assign deputies to ICE details on shifts. She stated that she signed this contract so that her staff would be trained in case an event does happen with an undocumented person. She does not anticipate any additional expense. Commissioner Hedberg stated that if the Sheriff's Department is so short-staffed, she worries about someone having to transport them down to Strafford County and back when they are needed here. That would be an expense for travel and the time of a Deputy. Sheriff Myers stated that Manchester has a large population, and Grafton County is more rural. Therefore, she does not foresee this happening often, if at all. Commissioner McLeod asked what the benefit of signing this contract is. Sheriff Myers explained that if Grafton County has someone trained and ICE does come to the region, they have someone on staff who can make sure these people are treated fairly. Commissioner McLeod asked why they would want to be involved with this and stated that she has people calling her very concerned. County taxpayers do not want to pay for this to continue. Commissioner McLeod added that from a budget perspective, it is hard for her to support that at this time. Commissioner McLeod stated that she wished Sheriff Myers had discussed this with the Commissioners before she signed the agreement. Sheriff Myers explained that she is not trying to take people. ICE is going to come in regardless, and this contract will allow them to be involved and receive training on how ICE operates if they do come into our area. Commissioner Piper noted that Sheriff Myers has very valid points regarding the safety of her deputies and residents and added that Sheriff Myers knows more about her department than she does. Commissioner Hedberg stated that it was not clear to her in the MOA whether the Sheriff's Department does the training and then decides that this is not what they want to do, if they can get out of that MOA. Sheriff Myers stated that she believes you can withdraw at any point. Commissioner Hedberg stated that there are many unknowns about how this will play out, and she would like Sheriff Myers to provide more information. Commissioner McLeod stated that she is opposed to this agreement and believes that alternative arrangements could have been made for her deputies to receive their training.

C. Capital Outlay

1. Sheriff Myers explained that they had three (3) cruisers in the last budget cycle, but two (2) of them ended up being paid for with ARPA funds. She is budgeting for three (3) this year, and that is why there is a large increase.

10:57 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,



Katie Wood Hedberg, Clerk