

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
March 27, 2025

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

OTHERS: DoC Superintendent Lethbridge, Captain Kendall, Farm Manager Libby, Register Monahan, Maintenance Superintendent Oakes, Nick De Mayo – via Teams, Sheriff Myers – via Teams.

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

Department of Corrections – Supt. Lethbridge & Captain Kendall

Memo for Consideration – Supt. Lethbridge stated that they have identified supplies, educational materials and other ongoing expenses that are directly related to substance abuse disorders in their budget. He stated that they have gone through their FY26 proposed budget and identified \$34,975.72 that could be removed if the Commissioners were to approve the use of Opioid Abatement funds. The Commissioners discussed the items Supt. Lethbridge requested to fund using Opioid Abatement Funds.

MOTION: Commissioner Piper moved to approve the request of \$34,975.72 in Opioid Abatement Funds and removing them from the DoC FY2026 budget requests.
Commissioner Hedberg seconded the motion and all were in favor.

A. Revenue

1. Department of Corrections – Supt. Lethbridge stated that this line is made up of revenue from Coos County Female inmates, social security and employee meals. The inmate phone revenue is zeroed out as the DoC can no longer receive revenue from inmate communications. Supt. Lethbridge noted that with law changes taking place, they are also looking at potentially a 25% increase in population and this budget reflects that. Supt. Lethbridge also explained that they have filled many vacant positions, which increases the number of employee meals as well and that is budgeted for.

2. Community Corrections – Supt. Lethbridge stated that this revenue is for inmates out on electronic monitoring. Commissioner Hedberg stated that the 6-month actual is only \$9,364.63. She asked if this increase is due to the changes in bail reform. Supt. Lethbridge stated that they are anticipating more people being sentenced pretrial and more on electronic monitoring, and they have budgeted for that.

3. Federal Inmates – Supt. Lethbridge explained that he decreased this line down to \$200 as they have not had any federal inmates.

B. Expenses

Department of Corrections

1. Contract Services – Supt. Lethbridge explained that with the addition of transport in custody officers, he would like to add psychological evaluations into the hiring process. He stated that he does not want to put firearms into the wrong hands. There is a psychologist who has an office in Nashua, but works mainly out of Massachusetts, who specializes in law enforcement hiring. One of his evaluations is about \$350 per employee. Supt. Lethbridge noted that Hillsborough DoC is using a firm called Critical Hire and rather than the employee having to travel Massachusetts, they do the evaluation on the phone. It uses AI to automatically score and there is a psychologist who is overseeing and reviewing these evaluations. The cost is only \$25. He is asking \$1,000 to incorporate this into their hiring process. He stated that if they received an ambiguous result, he would like to use that psychologist to clarify. He is looking to do 10-20 employee at \$25 apiece and they might need to send a couple to the psychologist.

2. Education & Training – Supt. Lethbridge stated that they used ARPA funds last year for some of these expenses and therefore this year shows an increase because ARPA funds are not available. This line includes funding for the American Jail Association Conference and NHAC Conference.

3. Correctional Officers – Supt. Lethbridge explained that in a previous budget, the former Superintendent removed four (4) vacant correctional officer positions in an effort to reduce the budget because they were very short staffed and did not feel they would be able to fill those positions. The Commissioners put one (1) of those positions back in the budget for this fiscal year and he is requesting that a 2nd position be added back in the upcoming fiscal year. His hope is to add one (1) a year until he gets all four (4) positions back in the budget.

4. Prisoner Clothing/Supplies – Supt. Lethbridge explained that this was a line that was reduced last year when they were asked to cut the budget and they are requesting it be increased this year.

Community Corrections

1. Education & Training – Supt. Lethbridge stated that this line has a large increase due to the cost to send two (2) staff members to national conference for Community Corrections. The total cost for that conference in Louisiana is \$5,737.00. He noted that most of this training budget will be funded through the opioid abatement funds that the Commissioners just approved.

2. Community Corrections – The decrease in this line is due to a vacancy and the officer that filled the role came in at a lesser salary.

Governor's Commission Grant

Supt. Lethbridge explained that this line pays for the FIRRM staff and \$265,000 of this \$362,719 budget is reimbursed to the County through the BDAS grant.

Nightwatchman

Supt. Lethbridge stated that there have been discussions regarding the nightwatchman position. When he was hired, there was one (1) nightwatchman working and another was out on medical leave. It was his understanding that this employee was not going to come back to work and retire once he hit his 50-year milestone but in the last week, he has found out that this employee would like to come back to work. He has a meeting with FM Libby and HR to discuss the nightwatchmen positions at the farm. Supt. Lethbridge stated that there is a nightwatchman four (4) nights a week and then an officer checks the barns the other three (3) nights a week.

Supt. Lethbridge explained that he has been trying to find a new inmate's communications provider to expand the services the jail is receiving to try and stay revenue neutral as well as improve the services for the inmates and give them more visits. Currently they have a paper law library and one (1) inmate at a time could use a book. If they were to have a tablet-based system, every inmate would have access to the law library at any point. It would also allow them to increase the number of visits. If they did this, he would need a part time position in the lobby to scan people through security. He could not ask this of his administrative staff. He was hoping to reallocate one (1) of the nightwatchman positions to a jail lobby receptionist/visitation specialist. This position would assist people with coming in through security, getting them logged in and having their visit. He explained that his current budget reflects this proposal and repurposing the one (1) night watchman position.

C. Capital Outlay

Supt. Lethbridge stated that they are continuing their camera upgrade throughout the facility. He stated that SNS was not looking at long-term replacements for IT equipment and infrastructure. The facility's back end that takes care of door controls is running Windows 7. This equipment is past its best service life. The price to replace eleven (11) devices to control the doors is \$160,000. The biggest piece of this cost is the programing of the computers to work with the facility. Supt. Lethbridge stated that there are emergency plans in place using keys but that is not the way the jail was designed to work. He stated that this is a very important piece to the facility and he would estimate a 10-year target for the lifespan on these new computers. They have looked at alternatives if this were not to be funded and the only thing SNS can do if a computer were to go down is to mirror an existing broken computer.

Commissioner McLeod noted that the increased costs due to bail reform would be helpful to have.

Farm – Manager Libby

Revenue

1. Sale of Milk – FM Libby stated that he has budgeted \$312,000 based on an increase in the amount they sell, while leaving the price they sell it at \$20/hundred weight.
2. Sale of Livestock – FM Libby increased this \$15,000 based on the projected sales.
3. Sale of Produce – This line has been left level funded but FM Libby noted that he has high hopes for this line.
4. Misc Farm Revenue – FM Libby stated that he has increased this line \$17,500. He explained that this line did include sale of eggs but the sale of eggs does not meet the expenses associated with it and therefore he has decided to eliminate the chickens in the next fiscal year. He stated that the Farm does not have a great set up for chickens. It has worked sometimes in the past but it is not working now. This line also includes the sale of feed corn, surplus of equipment and surplus livestock as well.

FM Libby stated that there is an increase in revenue projections of roughly \$20,000.

Expense

1. Farm Manager – This line shows a decrease due to FM Libby being a part time employee.
2. Employee Safety Equipment – FM Libby stated this is a new line. He has budgeted \$750 to purchase safety boots for three (3) employees.
3. Elimination of Chickens – FM Libby stated that it costs more to have chickens then they receive in the sale of eggs. He stated that he will let the chickens produce for the balance of this fiscal year and then they will look to sell and rehome the chickens. Commissioner Piper noted that they have been looking to have innovative decisions made and this is one. They have been wanting to change the direction of the farm and she is happy to see these changes that will benefit the operations of the farm.

FM Libby stated that the last few years the produce at the farm stand has been sold on an honor system. The most successful years have been when someone is over there running the farm stand but noted that this has not been an option due to lack of inmate labor. FM Libby stated that he is thinking about bringing a proposal to do a profit-sharing plan. He would look to have someone come in July – November, who is not a county employee, and be at the farm stand to help run it. If they sell a certain amount of produce this person could receive a percentage.

FM Libby stated that there have been discussions about making what they do seen more by the public. He has talked to Harvest Fadden at the Nursing Home and is looking at the possibility of building a pen where the Nursing Home and members of the public can see some animals.

of building a pen where the Nursing Home and members of the public can observe some animals.

Commissioner Hedberg asked why there is a decrease in the dairy feed expense. FM Libby explained that when the nutritionist comes in, they then determine the mixture the County buys for the cows. He stated that he would rather tell the nutritionist this is what the Farm has for funds available and they come up with the feed mixture based on that.

Register of Deeds – Register Monahan

Register Monahan stated that the microphones are improving when listening to these meetings online, but she noted that they still sometimes sound like they are underwater. She suggested extra microphones on the table. Commissioner Piper stated that it is unfortunate that they are experiencing this issue, noting that the same issue is also occurring at the NHAC.

Commissioner McLeod asked if there is any legislation coming through that would impact the Register of Deeds' revenue. Register Monahan stated that they were concerned about the legislation regarding the rental registry, but it did not pass. She further discussed legislation issues with the Commissioners.

A. Revenue

Register Monahan stated that she would like to adjust the revenue figures after she gets her April numbers, noting that she would like to see what happens with the spring growth. She stated that she would have the numbers before the Commissioners set their budget.

Online Services – Commissioner Hedberg inquired about the revenue generated from this line. Monahan stated that when she started, everything was online for free, and because the database was unstable, people were able to screenshot documents without paying. She explained that she had taken the documents offline for free for two years until they developed a more stable program. She stated that they made roughly \$100,000 a year at that time, on copies, and she wanted to retain that revenue. They started charging \$60 a year for their professional service, Laredo. It offers more functionality for lawyers and real estate agents seeking to conduct title searches. She stated that she put up a free public search, and people started to realize they didn't need Laredo, and therefore, she has seen this line decrease because they do not need it. Register Monahan explained that Tapestry is a program that is strictly for the title industry. Commissioner Hedberg asked if this increase in revenue is due to increased usage or increased fees, and also asked if the use of Tapestry helps the Register of Deeds Office or if it only helps the title industry. Register Monahan stated that they receive \$7.95 a copy for Tapestry. Register Monahan stated that the increased revenue is a combination of both increased fees and increased usage.

B. Expense

She stated that they need to train someone to be their Deputy and they need to have someone with legal or real estate experience. She noted that they have gone a year without a Deputy. Register Monahan stated that she would prefer to bring in a memo to the Commissioners discuss staffing in nonpublic.

2. Education and Conference – Register Monahan increased this line, for her and her staff to attend the NHAC conference.

3. Bank Service Charges – Register Monahan stated that Bar Harbor Savings Bank, who is taking over Woodsville Guaranty Savings Bank, will have the same base foundation system as WGSB and will not differ much from what they have now and therefore she has left this line level funded.

Register Monahan stated that they have been charging her Verizon County cell phone to the misc. expense line through Surcharge. She asked if they should have an extra line for emergency services. She explained that in the last three (3) days, Strafford County has gone down with internet and phone for an entire week because of an issue with their internet and phone lines. She stated that they froze everything. People have been unable to close, record documents or perform title searches for financing. She stated that, in order to get ahead of a situation like that, she has reached out to SNS and asked if she enabled the laptop they purchased during Covid with Fidler, as well as the new laptop they just purchased, and use her County cellphone's VPN at home, could someone index at home and the answer was yes. She asked, since they are able to do that now, should she put a new Verizon or emergency line under the surcharge to break out that expense. CA Libby stated that she would recommend breaking out the Verizon cell phone expense.

Maintenance – Superintendent Oakes

Supt. Oakes reviewed the following summary of his budget.

FY26 Maint. dept. repair & maintenance budget – Summary

FY25 Budget Request (before allocations) - **\$3,098,542**

FY26 Budget Request (before allocations & COLA) - **\$3,255,103**

(Difference: **\$156,561** / Increase: **5.05%**)

Wages & Benefits (accounts 001 – 130)

- Salary increases:
 - (002) full year maintenance assistant vs. ½ year in FY25
 - (004) New, higher paid employees replaced custodians who left/retired
 - (005) New higher paid employee replaced custodian who left. Bumped up custodial supervisor's pay to where it exceeds those under him.
- Wages in Lieu of Health Insurance (010) decrease: Went from 5 to 2 employees due to 1 retirement and 2 transitioned to health insurance plans

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- Health Insurance (120) increases:
 - Increased premiums
 - Greater number of plan participants over FY25. Three new people transitioned to plans that are either new hires or transitioning from Wages-in-lieu of HI.
- Retirement (130) decrease: Reduction in county contribution percentage

Contract Maintenance (accounts 291 – 299)

Most accounts have negligible changes

- DOC (297) major decrease: No replacement cost in FY26 for a sewer grinder whereas in FY25 there was

Electricity (accounts 619 – 628)

All accounts saw a 16% cost increase per KWh / Demand, Cost of Power Adjustment & meter fees remained unchanged

- Admin. Building (619) 20,000 KWh decrease
- Courthouse (620) 43,000 KWh increase
- Alt. Sentencing (621) 17,000 Demand increase
- M/F Building (625) 10,000 Demand decrease / 1,000 KWh increase
- DOC (627) 10,000 Demand increase
- Biomass Plant (628) 1,000 KWh increase

Water (accounts 629 – 638)

All accounts saw 15%-meter fee increase / FY25 water fee was double the projected increase and Jan 2026 the water fee is projected to increase another 7%

- Nursing home (632) 100,000-gallon increase
- DOC (637) 100,000-gallon increase

Sewage (accounts 639 – 647)

All accounts: FY25 sewer rates were 1.25% greater than projected / FY26 is projected to have a 7% increase

- Nursing home (642) 100,000-gallon increase
- DOC (647) 100,000-gallon increase

Fuels (accounts 649 – 658)

Fiscal Year →	FY25	FY26	Change
Woodchips	\$71.8 per ton	\$71.80 per ton	\$0
Propane	\$1.55 per gallon	\$1.6449 per gallon	9.5 cent increase per gallon
Diesel	\$3.265 per gallon	\$2.977 per gallon	29 cent reduction per gallon

Heating Oil	\$3.265 per gallon	\$2.829- per gallon	44 cent reduction per gallon
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- Nursing Home (649) Reduced heating oil 3,500-gallons / Reduced woodchip 25-tons
- Admin. Building (650) Reduced heating oil 6,500-gallons
- Courthouse (651) Reduced heating oil 5,500-gallons
- Alt Sentencing (652) Increased propane 100-gallons
- Farm (654) Reduced propane 300-gallons
- DOC (657) Increased diesel 750-gallons / increased wood chips 25-ton

Repair & Maintenance (accounts 805 – 838)

Most accounts have negligible changes

- Nursing Home (830) 3.8% increase due to pending window replacements
- DOC (837) 1.9% increase for concrete work to support electronic visitation kiosk project Tim is planning

Structure insurance (accounts 930 -938) All are up approximately 7% on average.

New Equipment & Small Tools (accounts 970 -971)

- Small Tools & Misc. (971) Increase to meet higher costs and greater use of supplies.

Capital Outlay

1. AST Replacement – DoC – Supt. Oakes explained that the existing Ast is corroding from the inside out. Fuel on the West end are laden with heavy rust particles and despite fuel polishing the rust is prolific. Supt. Oakes stated that rust particles can clog the generator fuel filter and make the generator unreliable. The cost for this is \$67,600. He is having a second look and it may come in lower but he is keeping this first figure budgeted for now.

2. Replace Commercial Dryer – DoC – Supt. Oakes stated that the existing dryer controls are no longer manufactured. One of the dryers has experienced numerous shutdown faults. Despite having the controls repaired by an independent electronic repair vendor, the problem persists, but not as frequently. The inability to procure a new needed part hinders the DOC laundry operations due. The dryer shuts down uncommanded, multiple times/daily. The cost for this dryer is \$11,911.00.

3. Asphalt Crack Sealing – Supt. Oakes stated that there are numerous cracks have accumulated in all paved areas and need to be sealed to prevent water intrusion to prevent freeze/thaw damage to asphalt. If gone unaddressed, it will accelerate the breakdown of the asphalt, requiring more frequent paving intervals, which is more costly. The cost for the sealing is \$19,363.00.

4. Restripe Pavement Markings – Supt. Oakes stated that after crack sealing is finished, he is looking to restripe all pavement markings throughout the complex. Various pavement markings are faded and once all paved surfaces are crack sealed, the existing pavement markings will be defaced. The cost for this \$12,772.00.

Supt. Oakes answered various questions from the Commissioners regarding his budget.

Commissioners Office/Misc- CA Libby

Commissioners' Office

Education and Training - CA Libby stated that this line conference registrations & offsite training for staff.

Consultant – CA Libby stated that she \$1,000 in this line as an if needed.

Audit Services – CA Libby explained that every two (2) years an actuarial attestation needs to be done on their Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) and therefore there is an increase in the upcoming budget to cover that cost.

Office Supplies – CA Libby stated that she has increased this line \$1,500. There have been many things happening this year and they are almost over expended at nine (9) months. She noted that this line was cut last year to reduce the budget and she is increasing it back in the next fiscal year. She noted that a year's worth of shredding for fiscal records is included in this line as well.

Dues – CA Libby noted a \$1,000 increase due to additional dues assessment for the NHAC for the 50th anniversary conference. She noted that NHAC is working on an Amazon Prime membership for all counties.

Postage – There is a \$500 increased based on usage.

Advertising & PR – CA Libby noted that she increased this line \$300 to purchase new frames and name plates for Commissioners pictures that are hanging up in the buildings on the complex. She explained that the current frames are several years old and in need of replacement.

Travel & Expense – This line has a \$4,500 increase so all three (3) Commissioners can attend the NHAC conference. This line also includes funds to send two (2) Commissioners to the NACo conference.

CA Libby stated that her total budget increase is 3.74%.

Miscellaneous Revenue – CA Libby

State/Federal Funds

1. Abandoned Property – CA Libby explained that she does a rolling average of twelve (12) years' worth of data. She has increased that line by \$10,000.
2. Federal PILT– She noted this line increased by \$5,000. This is money received for property that is in Livermore.

Interest

CA Libby decreased this line \$175,000 based on rates. She stated that she had a discussion with Treasurer Cryans and they are comfortable with this number. This year's interest will be around \$350,000 and next year they will have less to invest.

Courthouse Rent

This increase is based on a new rental agreement with the state.

Recoveries

CA Libby explained that recoveries are monies received from the state of New Hampshire for Medicaid. \$100,000 is roughly the average the County receives annually.

Dividends/Misc

Retiree Drug Subsidy – This line has been zeroed out because HealthTrust changed to the Medicare Advantage plan.

Miscellaneous Expense Accounts – CA Libby

Wage & Benefit

1. Flexible Spending Administration – CA Libby noted that this line includes \$500 for all employees who are a part of the SOS insurance plan.
2. Earned Time Buy Back –This line is increased roughly \$17,500 based on usage.
3. Employee Benefit Pay Out – CA Libby explained that this line is for all non-nursing home employees. When an employee resigns or retires, they are paid out earned time and a percentage of sick leave. She stated that she decreased this line \$45,000 based on projects for the upcoming year.

TAN Interest

CA Libby stated that she has increased this line as she feels they will be borrowing earlier next fiscal year.

Contingency

1. Outside Counsel – There is an increase of \$25,000 based on usage. CA Libby stated that there are still several pending ongoing cases.

2. County Government Promo – CA Libby reported that she increased this line \$3,000. The County did not host an employee recognition dinner last year and instead, held two (2) lunches. She stated that they have received rough pricing to host a dinner at Hatchland Farms for the employees and it is not a whole lot less to host it there than what they did this year with the lunches. CA Libby stated that this year was not as much of a success and noted that the employees have appreciated the dinner and being able to bring a guest in the past. She stated that this is something for the Commissioners to think about as they work through the budget. Commissioner McLeod stated that she supports it. It gives the Commissioners a chance to interact with employees, as they are just as important as their constituents.

County Delegation

CA Libby increased this line by \$2,500 based on usage.

Transfer to Dispatch Capital Reserve

1. CA Libby stated that they have traditionally set this amount at 10% of the Dispatch fees. The last couple of years, it was cut, and this year, the request is the full 10%.

Treasurer

Mileage – CA Libby noted that she has increased this line \$2,000 due to the change in Treasurer. Treasurer Cryans comes to the complex each week to sign checks, which the previous Treasurer did not do.

Grafton Regional Development Corporation

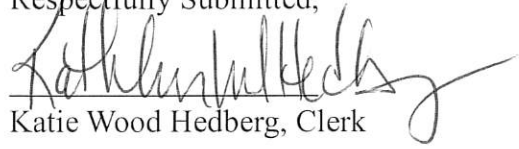
CA Libby reported that GRDC has requested level funding at \$40,000.

Public Comment

Mr. De Mayo stated that with regard to Supt. Oakes talking about the fuel and light costs, he thinks the County should look into nuclear energy. The State of Rhode Island has introduced legislation to have the whole state go nuclear from New Hampshire and Connecticut.

12:07 PM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katie Wood Hedberg", written over a horizontal line.

Katie Wood Hedberg, Clerk