

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
May 13th, 2025

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

OTHERS: Farm Manager Libby, Rep. Bjelobrk

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

Farm Manager Libby arrived and gave the following report:

1. Milking 52 – shipping 7800 lbs.
2. Spring work update – FM Libby reported that all manure has been spread. He noted that one (1) of the manure spreaders broke down, and they had Murdow Limlaw spread the rest of the manure. All of the corn ground has manure. They have plowed the location for potatoes this year, which is new ground. FM Libby said he hopes the potato crop will be better than the last couple of years. He went on to state that they are preparing pumpkins as well. He has communicated with the Woodsville Elementary School Principal, discussing things the elementary school can do. They are talking about having 3rd graders come and plant a couple of rows of pumpkins that they would then come harvest in the fall.
3. FY25 Budget info in response to Employee Council Mtg – FM Libby stated that he wanted to correct misinformation that the Employee Council put out there during their meeting with the Commissioners. He said that he was dismayed and his staff disrespected when the Employee Council wanted to fund their raises by eliminating the farm because it does not make money. He stated that is false and reported at the nine (9) month mark, the farm is ahead of revenue and behind in expenses. The farm is in the black by \$5,000 at the ten (10) month mark. If they end up with a small deficit, it is not the deficit that was budgeted. FM Libby stated that he wants this corrected on the public record. He has stood up for the Employee Council in the past and he feels disrespected for his full-time people. He stated that if you are going to put information out there, people need to make sure to do their homework and get the correct information. The farm is making money, roughly \$500,000 in revenue. There is one (1) department at the County that makes money, which is the Registry of Deeds. No other department balance expenses with revenues. The only other department that has the opportunity to do so is the Farm and they are working very hard to do that.

Commissioner McLeod stated that the County has a good person in place to make these changes with the farm. FM Libby stated that he has dedicated staff that allow them to think outside the box. Commissioner Piper stated that she wanted her comments in last week's minutes to be clarified. She does not want it to come across that she does not support FM Libby and the work

the farm is doing. In the last set of minutes, she had stated that she heard the argument before but the point she was trying to make was that she has heard about competing constituencies on campus before. That is usually because of other elements of discretionary spending and gave social services funding as an example. Commissioner Piper stated that she wanted to make her position clear, that her issue with the farm is the sustainability of the farm. They have been trying to figure this out for a long time, which is why they asked FM Libby to come in and see what he can do. She is pleased that the farm is in the black. FM Libby is getting things done and she appreciates that.

Commissioner Hedberg stated that she thinks the pumpkins are a great idea with the 3rd graders. She asked about the farmland and if it floods often. FM Libby explained that it has the potential to flood, noting that the island is the most flood-prone area of their property. When they do have flooding, the whole island is under water. There are areas on the meadow where they plant corn that can flood, but it would take significant flooding for that to happen.

Agenda Items:

1. Commissioner McLeod asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the May 6th meeting.

Commissioner Piper had the following clarification:

2nd to last paragraph – Page 4- Commissioner Piper added language to the following sentences to clarify what she meant:

She changed the sentence “They have an enormous problem with funding the care for the elderly and disabled because the disabled are included. She wishes they could support community services more robustly and wonders about that in targeting their social services budget. ” To read, “They have an enormous problem with funding the care for the elderly and disabled because the disabled are included in Long Term Services and Supports. She wishes they could support community services for this population more robustly and wonders about that in targeting their social services budget.

Commissioner McLeod stated that the motion on page 5 states she made it, but Commissioner Hedberg made the motion.

MOTION: Commissioner Piper moved to approve the minutes from the May 6th meeting as amended. Commissioner Hedberg seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

2. The Commissioners signed check registers: 1152-1156; 2025-05.09.2025.

3. Probation & Parole Lease Agreement – Commissioner McLeod signed and initialed the lease agreement. Commissioner Hedberg signed the Certificate for Municipalities.

4. Employee Council – CA Libby stated that she wanted to discuss last week’s conversations. The minutes said the farm did not generate revenue, which is not true. She noted that she also

wanted to point out that if she looks at the FY26 budget and the budgeted deficit for the farm, it represents .004% of the overall budget. The farm is not as much a financial discussion as a philosophical one. She explained that if they chose to eliminate the dairy operation, expenditures still need to be budgeted, as they need to maintain the buildings. Commissioner McLeod stated that there are employees, and the County has contracts that support other local businesses as well.

CA Libby stated that she also wanted to discuss last week's conversation with the Employee Council about meeting with the Executive Committee and Delegation. She explained that employee negotiations are not done at the Executive Committee and Delegation level. They are not involved in negotiating with the Employee Council, which needs to be clarified. She stated that the Employee Council is not scheduled to meet with the Executive Committee. She wanted direction from the Commissioners to allow her to reach out to the Employee Council to clarify this. Commissioner McLeod apologized for not speaking up. Commissioner Hedberg apologized as well and stated that she did not know this. Commissioner McLeod asked CA Libby to briefly discuss the Commissioners' role. CA Libby explained that the Delegation approves a bottom-line budget with the amount to be raised by taxes. The Executive Committee goes through the budget line by line, but overall, they approve the amount of money per department to be expended. The Commissioners' role, as the chief executive officers of the organization, is to decide how the funds that are appropriated are spent. She gave an example: if the Delegation wanted to cut \$100,000 from the budget, the Commissioners would decide where that money would be cut. The Delegation is not able to make decisions regarding policy. The Commissioners' role is to negotiate with the employees and get that funded by the Delegation.

5. Teamsters Collective Bargaining Agreement – CA Libby stated that last Wednesday, the Teamsters union voted on the tentative agreement on the bargaining agreement. She gave the Commissioners each a copy to review and will discuss it further next week. She stated that this agreement includes a 3% COLA retroactive to July 2024 and noted that these funds were included in the budget; therefore, there is no fiscal impact to this year's budget. Employees voted to go with Allegiant Care for insurance, which is the Teamsters' health insurance, and this change will likely happen by July 1st. CA Libby stated that, other than that, what is in the contract is almost identical to the employee handbook. This agreement expires June 30th, and they do not have an agreement for the next fiscal year. CA Libby said she would like the Commissioners to vote on this next Tuesday.

6. CA Libby reminded the Commissioners that the Executive Committee Meeting is next Monday at 9 a.m. She then gave them a draft of the presentation for next Tuesday's public hearing on the proposed budget. She asked the Commissioners to review it and let her know if they had any corrections or changes. CA Libby stated that she is waiting to hear from the Sheriff to set the meeting time for next week's Commissioner meeting. She will confirm with the Commissioners once she hears.

6. IT Director – CA Libby gave the resume of the new IT Director, Scott Tetreault, to the Commissioners. She stated he is exceptionally qualified and has been here for several interviews. Getting him on board has taken a long time, as they do a complete background investigation. He was scheduled to start on May 28th, but due to personal reasons, he has asked to start on June 9th.

CA Libby stated that she is very excited to get him on board. She would like to wait until he starts for the Commissioners to make a motion to appoint him. She can bring him to the Commissioners meeting on the 10th to meet him, and they can make the formal appointment.

7. Meeting Format – Commissioner McLeod stated that she changed the title to meeting format to encompass more possibilities, after some discussion with others. She stated that she does not want to talk about this in a public session because some of what she has to add would include talking about someone's reputation. Commissioner Hedberg stated that when they had a previous discussion, Commissioner McLeod had told them to do their research. Commissioner Hedberg reported that she had done her research but had not found the same information, so she asked Commissioner McLeod to share her research. Commissioner Piper stated that she asked for this issue to be added to the agenda because her phone is ringing off the hook with her constituents. Their perennial question is, can Commissioner McLeod's decision be changed if the majority of the board disagrees with it? This was a unilateral decision, and no discussion was had; disagreement was not welcome. To her, one (1) person cannot obstruct the democratic process. Commissioner Piper noted that since the Commissioners have been told to Google this, an educated constituent asked her why they do not seek legal advice. She said that the County needs to, and her understanding was that it was happening, but the County Administrator was told not to seek legal advice. She stated they need legal advice because no professional board should rely on Google. Commissioner Piper stated that she has asked CA Libby what she found in her research and will ask her to share that information.

Commissioner McLeod asked for a nonpublic session, noting that Commissioner Piper's comments are very pejorative and incorrect. Commissioner Piper stated that she is not talking about anyone outside the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner McLeod noted that she would like to talk about a situation they have been involved in. Commissioner Piper responded and stated that all of this would be in public session because they were discussing items with the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner McLeod stated that she would state in public session a situation that Commissioner Piper had asked for with an elected official. She added that assuming the chair was a discussion that was had with Commissioner Piper as well, and they can discuss that in a public session if she would like. Commissioner McLeod then requested a nonpublic session to discuss the issue's root.

MOTION: * 9:58 AM Commissioner Piper moved to enter into a non-public session for the purpose of matters which, if discussed in public, would likely affect adversely the reputation of any person, other than a member of the public body itself, unless such person requests an open meeting. This exemption shall extend to any application for assistance or tax abatement or waiver of a fee, fine, or other levy, if based on inability to pay or poverty of the applicant RSA 91-A: 3, II (c). Commissioner Hedberg seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner McLeod called the roll. Commissioner Piper said, "Yes", Commissioner Hedberg said, "Yes," and Commissioner McLeod said, "Yes." Commissioner McLeod stated that a majority of the board voted "yes" and would now go into non-public session.

* 10:52 AM Commissioner McLeod declared the meeting back in public session.

MOTION: Commissioner Hedberg moved to permanently seal the minutes from the just completed non-public session because they could affect the reputation of someone other than those of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion. Commissioner McLeod called the roll. Commissioner Piper, "Yes," Commissioner Hedberg, "yes," Commissioner McLeod, "yes." Commissioner McLeod stated that a majority of the board voted "yes," and the motion passed.

Commissioner Hedberg stated that she felt they needed to discuss the current pause on virtual meetings. She is in favor of virtual meetings. There are concerns on both sides, and she would like to propose a compromise in the short term. She stated that there is a meeting policy, but she would suggest that the Commissioners add items that pertain to virtual meetings, such as chat comments, while still having a viable public comment time. She said she would be okay with not having virtual meetings while they work on the policies or bylaws as a compromise.

Commissioner McLeod noted that they have a public comment policy. Commissioner Hedberg stated they could have a meeting policy and include the public comment policy. She also thinks they should have the agenda posted before the meeting, even if it is preliminary. Commissioner Hedberg added that while they are on this pause, they are already looking into getting the audio recordings posted to the website. Her understanding is that they are very large files to upload to the website, and that issue is being looked into. She stated that when they have the new IT Director, she would like to reinstate real-time virtual meetings and something on video to post on a YouTube channel. Commissioner Hedberg stated that these are the things she would be looking towards, to provide the transparency that she would like to see and that her constituents would like to see. She would like to address these items in the short term with a goal of getting things back up as soon as possible for real-time virtual meetings. Commissioner McLeod felt that was reasonable.

Commissioner Piper stated that, with all due respect, Commissioner Hedberg started by stating that this is a current pause, but the meetings going offline were never described as a current pause. They stopped, and as she and Commissioner Hedberg stated many times, that was a unilateral decision. She stated that the issue they are discussing is the lack of real-time online access. She added that Commissioner Hedberg stated there was a compromise and asked what that compromise was. Due to constituent demand, Commissioner Piper asked if they are returning to real-time online access. She supports being online in real time with virtual meetings. The constituents that she speaks with support that and are asking for it. Commissioner Piper stated that it sounds like Commissioner Hedberg is saying there is a compromise, but she stated that a motion should be made to have this an official act for the sake of their constituents. She does not have any confidence that in one (1) or two (2) months, there will be agreement that they can come back online in real time, and added that the real-time online meetings should not have been stopped in the first place, and she does not think this pause should be continued.

Commissioner McLeod stated that she thinks the issue is not the real-time access. Members of the public can make comments, or they can contact their Commissioner. Commissioner Piper noted that the minutes state that it was the issue. Commissioner McLeod stated that it is Commissioner Piper's opinion, and her opinion is that the issue is not the access to real-time

meetings; it is about the Commissioners coming up with meeting procedures or bylaws. Commissioner Piper stated that what she had requested to be on the agenda this week was not on it. She had asked two (2) weeks ago that this issue be revisited, due to constituent demand. The Commissioners decided to wait until this week because there was a hard stop time last week. She requested that this topic be put on the agenda. This is not what was put on the agenda, and it looks as though even her agenda request was vetoed, and she stated that to her is obstruction.

Commissioner Piper stated that Commissioner McLeod is talking about meeting format, but the constituents are being done a disservice with the removal of online real-time. Commissioner McLeod stated that she made the decision to end their COVID-era real-time virtual access. This was not something they did regularly. This was something that was used during COVID and then for Elected Officials. It was not until more recently that they had a request from one (1) constituent to be on every week, and it has caused a lot of work for staff, and it has caused misinformation to be spread. She stated that she has joined at least two (2) times virtually and agreed with the constituents who said that the audio was terrible and she could not understand what was said. The Commissioners did not have meeting procedures for introducing people or the topic. It was a terrible approach, but noted that the Commissioners still have complete transparency, as the audio recording in the room is very clear and available immediately after the meeting. She said that the media and newspapers use those recordings, which is often how they write their stories. Commissioner Piper stated that if the audio is available and people can put articles in the newspapers based on the audio recording, why end something that every other public body does? Commissioner McLeod added that she has heard from one (1) constituent. She has had a couple of emails from State Representatives she has spoken to, who have responded that they understood and were comfortable with them working towards a different solution when the new IT Director comes on board. The Commissioners have discussed a YouTube channel, and Commissioner Hedberg came up with good ideas to move forward. Coming up with meeting procedures and bylaws and posting the agenda online, are good ideas. She stated that she thinks the new IT Director can help come up with solutions that will not be expensive, but right now, the audio recording is available. She noted that she is sorry that Commissioner Piper does not have any confidence in what they are talking about. Commissioner Piper stated that it was decided two (2) weeks ago that this subject would be revisited. The agenda item was changed after she discussed it with CA Libby on Friday, but stated that at least now, constituents know that what they are actually discussing is online participation.

Commissioner Hedberg stated that she would like to pick a date they would revisit this discussion, noting that if there is not a date, things can end up not being followed up on. If they expect the IT Director to start June 9th, out of respect for the new Director and giving them time to adjust, she would think they should visit this a month after the IT Director comes on board. Commissioner Hedberg proposed a date of July 8th and said she's offering this as a compromise. Commissioner McLeod stated that the Commissioners can work on the meeting format and procedures. Commissioner Hedberg added that she thinks it is valuable to have the public comments in the minutes

MOTION: Commissioner Hedberg moved, despite her support for real time online virtual participation, to continue a pause while they are working to develop specific

meeting procedures and how they relate to real time virtual meetings and continue work on getting the recordings of the meetings posted online as well as posting an online agenda, she would like this revisited no later than July 8th. Commissioner McLeod seconded the motion.

Discussion: Commissioner Piper appreciates Commissioner Hedberg's spirit with what she is offering. However, she doesn't think it is the right answer to make their constituents wait until July 8th. She has never heard a convincing reason to take the meetings offline, so she does not support the motion.

The Commissioners voted on the motion. Commissioner McLeod and Hedberg were in favor, and Commissioner Piper was opposed. With two (2) votes in favor and one (1) in opposition, the motion passed.

Commissioner's Issues:

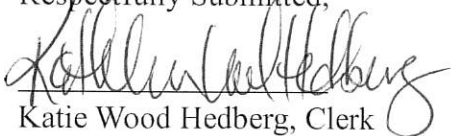
1. Commissioner Hedberg reported that she heard on Vermont Public Radio that Vermont has lost some of their broadband funds, and she asked if the administrative staff has heard anything about the County's funds and if they are at risk. CA Libby stated that they are unaware that their funds are affected right now.

Public Comment

Rep. Bjelobrk stated that she has received close to 1,000 emails regarding the loss of the virtual meeting link, and there are concerns on both sides. There are currently \$400,000 in tax liens, and people are worried about keeping their homes. Transparency is important to them, and it would comfort them to have access to these meetings again. She stated that the reinstated date of July 8th is after the budget and is not good optics for the Commissioners. Transparency in government is essential.

11:36 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Katie Wood Hedberg, Clerk