

GRAFTON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING

Administration Building

North Haverhill, NH 03774

June 13, 2025

PRESENT: Reps. Baldwin, Bolton, Franz, Sellers, Spahr, Stringham, Sykes. Commissioner McLeod, Commissioner Piper – via Teams, Commissioner Hedberg, County Administrator Libby, Assistant County Administrator Elsholz, and Administrative Assistant Norcross.

OTHERS PRESENT: Register Monahan, HR Director Clough, Nursing Home Administrator Labore, Finance Director Jurentkuff, Sheriff Myers, Lt. Hamilton, Director of Communications Paronto, Nick De Mayo – via Teams, Pete Brown – via Teams, Sally Browne – via Teams, Paul Varcak, Ann Garland – via Teams

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

Human Resources – Director Clough

HR Director Clough stated that her budget is steady from year to year. This year has a 2.33% increase after the Commissioners added the 2% COLA.

HR Staff – HR Director Clough explained that this line is up a little more than usual, as she is requesting to transition her HR Assistant to an HR Generalist position. She stated that the difference is that the HR Generalist takes on a broader role in the office rather than the assistant role, which is more clerical. She stated that it is important that each person can equally carry duties, as there are only three (3) people in her office that provide HR services for 450 employees.

Contracted Services – This line has been reduced from \$3,600 to \$830. HR Director Clough explained that they have transitioned the retirees who were on the County's health insurance to a Medicare Advantage plan, which removes the County from eligibility for the retiree drug subsidy. This line included actuarial services for the retiree drug subsidy application process, which is no longer needed.

Advertising – HR Director Clough reported a decrease in this line, as they no longer tend to use paid versions of advertising as frequently. She stated that they typically use Indeed as well as the County website and social media, which are free.

HR Director Clough explained that 80% of her budget is allocated back to the Nursing Home for cost reporting purposes.

Rep. Franz asked about Health Insurance. HR Director Clough stated that there are four (4) employee health insurance plans in her budget, noting that she has a nurse practitioner under her department.

Rep. Oppel asked how Indeed has worked for them. HR Director Clough reported that they receive many applications from Indeed.

Rep. Bjelobrk asked why the Nurse Practitioner is included in the HR budget. HR Director Clough explained that, due to CMS regulation changes, this position was transitioned from the Nursing Home to HR. The Nurse Practitioner is responsible for conducting all pre-employment drug screenings for HR.

Rep. Stringham stated that they are looking at a net expense of \$121,525 for HR. He asked if they are comfortable with 80% being allocated to the Nursing Home. HR Director Clough stated that she feels comfortable at 80% based on the amount of time they spend with the Nursing Home.

Rep. Stringham stated that they have a lot of new members on the board, and they have fiduciary obligations to the taxpayers. He asked HR Director Clough to talk about direct relatives who work in the County, as this is an unusual circumstance. He stated that he wants to ensure the Executive Committee is aware of the relationships within the senior leadership at the County. HR Director Clough asked Rep. Stringham what that has to do with her budget representation. He did not respond to that question. She stated that she does not have a problem disclosing that the County Administrator is her sister and the Farm Manager is her brother-in-law, but noted that this has nothing to do with her budget.

Nursing Home – Administrator Labore, Finance Director Jurentkuff

A. Revenue

NHA Labore stated that they are projecting an average daily census of 124 residents. Their staffing has continued to increase and grow. As staffing numbers increased, so has the census. Their rate for NH Medicaid is going to be higher than budgeted at \$253.36. NHA Labore noted that it is still not what their total cost per day is. He then reported that the daily costs for a private room is \$355 and \$335 per day for semiprivate.

Bed Tax – NHA Labore stated that this is a 5.5% tax that they pay quarterly on patient revenue, and this money is leveraged at the federal government.

NHA Labore reported a 7.6% increase in revenue.

CA Libby stated that they received notification last week that this current fiscal year's ProShare payment will be \$1.4 million. CA Libby explained that the ProShare payment is based on a two (2) year old reconciliation of cost reports. She believes this year's reconciliation will mark the end of some of the volatility associated with those payments, and they expect the payment to become more consistent, as long as the Proshare payment program continues, noting that it is a federal program. She believes that the payment will increase from the \$1.4 million they received this year as long as the methodology to determine Proshare doesn't change.

B. Expense

NH Admin

Employee Benefits – NHA Labore explained that he is requesting a \$6,000 increase in this line. He is proposing adding eight (8) hours a month to their Reiki program. The benefit has been received very well by staff.

Rep. Bolton asked why there was a decrease in the Employee Immunizations. NHA Labore stated that they had budgeted for the purchase of the COVID vaccine, but have not seen the requests for it, and therefore they have reduced this line.

Bed Tax – The increase in this line is due to a projected revenue increase.

Rep. Oppel asked if NHA Labore has historical information on employee turnover. NHA Labore stated that he has that information but not with him and will send it to them.

Computer Hardware & Maintenance – NHA Labore stated that he is requesting a \$4,000 increase as he has ideas to enhance efficiency in the Nursing Home and wanted to budget money for those. He will work with the new IT Director on the best ways to implement these ideas.

Dietary

Food Supplies – This line includes all food purchases for residents and staff. NHA Labore stated that this \$115,000 increase is due to both the increase in census and inflation. Rep. Bjelobrk asked how much of the farm's resources are utilized. NHA Labore stated that he cannot put a percentage on it but they do utilize vegetables from the farm during the summer.

Nursing

Contract Nursing Services – NHA Labore reported that he has decreased this line by another \$900,000, as they have been able to hire staff. However, he believes that any contracted nursing going forward will be on the night shift, as they are still having a hard time filling those shifts.

Education & Conference – NHA Labore stated that this is where the LNA class is budgeted. He stated that he is looking to have CPI training (Crisis Prevention Institute). He stated that this is crisis training for staff on how to respond to events, and defensive training. He explained that in June of last year, they had an LNA taken hostage by a male resident on the dementia unit and have since decided to look into de-escalation training for staff. NHA Labore stated that he is also looking to have a phlebotomy course is an opportunity to improve the number of staff who feel comfortable drawing blood. Not all nurses feel comfortable drawing blood. He explained that this is related to lab contract issues with Cottage Hospital. Due to staffing issues at the hospital, they are unable to visit the Nursing Home once a week to draw labs as their contract requires. This training would enable more staff to be on hand to draw blood.

LPN Tuition Program— NHA Labore stated that there are two (2) LPNs in the program. He is anticipating that they will have more staff interested in this upcoming year and he has increased

this line for that potential increase. NHA Labore stated that there is a 2-year commitment and they have to work on a shift that the Nursing Home identifies as a need, which will allow them to work on staffing their night shift.

Rep. Stringham stated that the increase in census has helped the whole healthcare system in the state, and the drop in contract nursing is pleasing. He said that he wonders if there is any other authority NHA Labore needs that might help bring that number down. NHA Labore stated that they have looked at shift differentials, and they are at par or above average. Ultimately, it comes down to the fact that night shift work is undesirable. He stated that the LPN Program will help them with staffing the night shift.

Restorative Nursing

Coordinator – The increase in this line is due to the hiring of a new coordinator at the high end of the wage chart.

Pharmacy & Physician

This increase is based on the increased census.

Contract Services

Therapy & Rehab – Medicare A – NHA Labore stated that the rehab contract takes a percentage of the revenue that the County receives from a resident's rehab stay, and this is where the expense is recorded.

Capital Reserve

Beam Guardrail – NHA Labore stated that, after a recent motor vehicle accident at the Nursing Home where a vehicle drove into the building, they are requesting to install a guard rail in front of the 2003 building.

Expansion of Secure Care Wander Guard System – NHA Labore stated that they will use this system on their dementia units if there are any residents whom they worry about eloping. They wear a transponder on their ankle, and when they approach a door, it triggers an alarm and locks the door. He would like to expand this system to the Maple and Profile units. He explained that there is an increase in dementia residents, and not all of them can be on the dementia unit. He stated that if the fire alarm is activated it will override this system and allow the doors to open.

Ice Cube Maker – NHA Labore stated that they are looking to replace the aging ice cube maker in the Nursing Home kitchen, which malfunctions regularly. The current machine is 20+ years old.

25/EA Resident Beds – Prior to COVID, NHA Labore explained that they began a bed replacement cycle. They had stopped that replacement when the census decreased. This is the final year of a phased replacement for beds. As the census increases, they will need these beds.

20/EA Air Pressure Mattresses with Pump – This is the continuation of replacement mattresses.

5/EA reach in Dual Temp Cabinet Refrigerator – NHA Labore stated that they are looking to replace the unit refrigerators and the one in the activities room due to failing equipment.

Field Conversion Kit for Weight Scale – NHA Labore stated that they are requesting the addition of a digital weight scale to two (2) of their resident bathing tub chair lifts.

Automation of Entry/Exit Doors to Resident Units – NHA Labore explained that the entry and exit doors are too heavy for residents to open independently. This project will enable them to enter and exit the unit as they wish without having to wait for staff assistance. He noted that residents covered by the Wander Guard system will not be able to leave the facility. Rep. Sykes suggested looking into a system that requires a hand wave by a sensor to open a door, rather than having everyone push a button.

Rep. Franz asked about the loan forgiveness program. NHA Labore explained that they have a program that has been in place for at least five (5) years where a new graduate, LPN or RN, who has graduated, the County will cover up to 60% of their student loans for a two (2) year commitment to the Nursing Home. They offer an additional 20% for a third year.

CA Libby noted that the capital reserve account has no impact on the budget.

NHA Labore reported that they were notified last month that the lifts they use for residents are no longer serviceable for mechanical parts, given their age. He stated that they learned this when a lift failed a test and they were unable to get the parts to fix it. NHA Labore reported that they will need to replace lifts going forward if there is a failure, noting that they have had two (2) fail already. There is a total of nine (9) lifts that will be impacted by this at some point. He stated that he is adding an additional request in his capital reserve to replace these lifts when they fail. The total cost is \$48,000 because they have already purchased two (2). They are looking to have this allocation in the capital reserve in the event more fail.

Dispatch – Director of Communications Paronto

A. Revenue

1. Dispatch Fees – Director Paronto stated that this revenue is based on the towns' usage of the Dispatch services. He stated that he has recommended the FY26 Dispatch billing fees to the Commissioners and the updated number for the budget is \$730,369.

Rep. Stringham asked if there are towns that do not participate in the Grafton County Dispatch. Director Paronto stated that several towns do not use the County's Dispatch. There are other dispatch centers throughout the County. He said that he feels some towns prefer local-level control over their dispatch centers.

B. Expense

1. Overtime – Director Paronto noted a \$4,000 increase in this line, citing that he is relying more on full-time staff rather than part-time staff 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. They utilize this vehicle for staff to attend training. He has increased this line \$500 to cover items for that vehicle.

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

Rep. Sykes asked where they are in terms of open positions. Director Paronto reported that they currently have an open position but there is a conditional offer in place. They also have a 34-year supervisor who is retiring this month. They will have a conditional offer on that position as well.

C. Capital Reserve

Director Paronto stated that he was at a previous Delegation meeting where he had requested funds be taken out of the Capital Reserve to stay aligned with the state core, which is important for their mobile radio network. He reported that he has not spent the money that was allocated because the state has not completed their upgrade. Director Paronto stated that he has been in constant negotiations with the Department of Safety and is working very hard towards the idea of phasing in the County's equipment with their process. He stated that he hopes the amount will be significantly less than what was requested, or that he will not have to spend that money at all.

Director Paronto explained that the Capital Reserve account is funded by setting aside a percentage of revenue from Dispatch fees to allow for improvements within Dispatch. He stated that \$30,000 is for MDT replacements. He explained that this is for the Sheriff's Office as well as some local municipalities, as they try to offset some of the MDT costs for the municipalities by assisting with the purchase of them if the municipality purchases a new cruiser.

Sheriff's Department – Sheriff Myers & Lt. Hamilton

A. Revenue

Court Bailiff – Any expenses from this line are reimbursed by the state.

Sale of Equipment – Sheriff Myers stated that there are five (5) cars in their fleet that are going to need repairs. One (1) was given to the farm, and they have budgeted for the sale of two (2) of them.

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 transport this year.

Grants – Sheriff Myers reported that they have the Marijuana Ratification grant for \$5,000. She noted that they had just applied for a \$40,000 Northern Shield Grant and were waiting to hear back.

B. Expense

Deputies – Sheriff Myers stated that this line is showing an increase due to the full-time position approved in the current budget, which took effect on January 1st. They have one opening, but there is a conditional offer on that position. The part-time Special Deputies line has also been moved into this line.

Education & Conference – Sheriff Myers reported an increase in this line. She explained that last year, they only needed 16 hours of training to maintain certification, but this year, the requirement has increased to 24 hours. She noted that many trainings are free, but for any supervisory or specialized training, a fee is normally associated.

Investigations Line - Sheriff Myers explained that there has been a significant decrease in this line due to the removal of licensing for the Gray Key. She explained that the forensics lab had moved to the Lincoln Police Department, and there was no one in her department interested in taking this on at this time; therefore, they had removed the licensing. She noted that she has allocated funds for background investigations of their new hires.

Uniform Allowance – Sheriff Myers stated that many deputies are in expired safety gear, and several do not have their Class A uniforms.

CA Libby explained that the Sheriff's Department has two (2) agreements with Axon. One (1) is for the Tasers and the other is for Body Cameras. They were part of an ARPA project that the former Sheriff had approved. The amounts ultimately exceeded the ARPA project approval amounts. One (1) of the agreements has two (2) years left to pay on, and the other has one (1) year left. It will be a continued expense, and once these contracts are completed, the Sheriff will need to decide if any upgrades are necessary. They will likely see expenditures like this in the budget going forward.

Rep. Sellers asked for an explanation on the increase in the clerical line. Sheriff Myers explained that the two (2) positions were vacant when she took office and were empty for a couple of months. They recently hired two (2) individuals at a higher step on the wage chart than the previous employees were at, and then the COLA is included in that line as well.

Rep. Stringham asked if they have been using the bus that was purchased. Sheriff Myers stated that they have used it only once since she was sworn in.

Rep. Sykes inquired about the contract with Homeland Security, noting that one of his concerns was budgetary. He asked Sheriff Myers if she could provide them with any information on the costs associated with participation in this. Sheriff Myers stated that they have not spent any money in that agreement and do not intend to. It will save them time if they encounter someone

with an ICE detainer, as they now have a fast-track process to transport them directly to Merrimack County.

C. Capital Outlay

CA Libby noted that the Capital Outlay is different than the Capital Reserve. These are expenditures that are part of the actual budget. There is no reserve account for the Sheriff's Department.

Sheriff Myers explained that historically, they have always asked for three (3) cruisers and received three (3) cruisers. This keeps them up to date on their fleet. They currently have five (5) cruisers that are at 100,000 miles or over, and that is typically when they start seeing large repair costs. Understanding that they are trying to cut the budget down as much as possible, they discussed it at a department head meeting, cutting one (1) of those cruisers out but the Commissioners have recommended only funding one (1) cruiser. Sheriff Myers stated that she disagrees with that because it will set them back. With the addition of a full-time position, they will already be short. She stated that there are four (4) special deputies who work numerous days a week, and they put many miles on the cars because they have a large county. Any resources or facilities they transport to are not located in the County. She gave an example of the state hospital in Concord. She asked that the Executive Committee keep that in mind as they go through the budget; they would like to have at least two (2) cruisers. Sheriff Myers also noted that it takes approximately a year to order a vehicle, outfit it, and put it on the road. Rep. Sykes stated that as a former public safety official, he has a problem with public safety agencies having to use older equipment. He asked if the maintenance budget has been increased due to the aging vehicles. Sheriff Myers stated that if they are allotted one (1) cruiser, they will need to increase their repair and maintenance line.

Rep. Oppel stated, in regard to the 287g program, he thinks it is really important for the Sheriff to be as transparent with constituents of Grafton County as possible. He stated it would be very helpful for the Sheriff's Department to be more proactive in their communications. He noted that he understands budgets are tight, but there may be other ways to accomplish that. Sheriff Myers asked if Rep. Oppel had any recommendations. She stated that they have spoken about this in meetings, and she feels that, unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation being spread about it. They have not spent any money and have not taken any action under this agreement. Rep. Oppel stated that he has been involved in communications throughout his career and offered to sit down with the Sheriff to discuss further some ideas that may not require any additional funding.

Commissioner McLeod stated that monthly meetings with the Commissioners have always been a standard with Department Heads, and that would be a good way to have transparency. The Commissioners have always received monthly reports from the Sheriff, and adding a category to that report would be a way to ensure transparency in reporting any incidents that have occurred as part of that agreement.

Rep. Sellers stated that it sounds as though the Sheriff's Department needs a Public Relations line. This would allow the Sheriff to get ahead of these issues and have the funds to do so. He stated that he knows his constituents want to be safe and there are people here that are illegal. If

they need a line item that would allow the Sheriff's Department to send out notices or mailings to constituents, then they should do that. Rep. Sykes stated that as they move forward, the Executive Committee will have the opportunity to conduct a full discussion if any changes to the budget are needed, and that is when they can further discuss this.

CA Libby asked the Executive Committee if there was any other information that they would like that would be helpful for their deliberations on Monday. They discussed various information that they would like to have.

11:12 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Heather Baldwin, Clerk