

GRAFTON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING

Administration Building

North Haverhill, NH 03774

June 16, 2025

PRESENT: Reps. Baldwin, Bjelobrk, Franz, Oppel, Stringham, Sykes. Commissioner McLeod, Commissioner Piper, Commissioner Hedberg, County Administrator Libby, Assistant County Administrator Elsholz, and Administrative Assistant Norcross.

OTHERS PRESENT: Register Monahan, Nick De Mayo – via Teams, Pete Brown- via Teams, Sally Browne – via Teams, Paul Varcak, Sheriff Myers – via Teams, Ann Garland – via Teams

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

Rep. Sykes asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the May 19th meeting, the June 6th budget meeting, and the June 9th budget meeting.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to approve the minutes from the meetings held on May 19th, June 6th, and June 9th. Rep. Oppel seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin “yes”, Rep. Bjelobrk “yes”, Rep. Franz “yes”, Rep. Oppel “yes”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being six (6) in favor and none in opposition, the motion passes.

Budget Deliberations

Revenue

CA Libby stated that she has removed \$119,034 from the Haverhill Plymouth Area Circuit Court Prosecution revenue and noted that there are offsetting expense reductions as well. The new total for this revenue line will be \$158,545.

CA Libby stated that she has also increased the Dispatch billing by \$10,369 based on the approved dispatch billing for FY26 that they discussed.

Rep. Franz stated that she would recommend lowering the surplus amount by \$250,000 to \$2,000,000. Rep. Sykes stated that they would have that discussion about the surplus, but he does not want to have CA Libby repeatedly changing numbers until they get through the end of the budget.

Expense

County Attorney’s Office

CA Libby stated that the following accounts have been reflected as noted for the removal of the Circuit Court Prosecutor.

Asst. County Attorney – \$816,587.00
Social Security - \$108,292.00
Health Insurance - \$228,318.00
Retirement - \$180,257.00

CA Libby stated that there is a total reduction of roughly \$138,036.00.

Register of Deeds

Rep. Stringham stated that he was persuaded that the prioritized need for additional staff was a solid argument. The statement about the current age of employees in that office had the most influence on him. He stated that this is a critical service and it is profitable. It helps the tax increase. Rep. Sykes stated that if they get to a point where all the staff are new, they would be putting their resources at risk. He feels this was a reasonable request and would see if they could have offsetting cuts elsewhere. He would propose that they accept the addition of the new position. CA Libby asked if this would be for six (6) months or the full year. Rep. Sykes stated that it would take time to hire someone. Rep. Stringham asked the Commissioners what a reasonable start date would be, October or January. Rep. Oppel stated that the idea is long-term, not getting themselves in a position where the entire senior staff is leaving at the same time, leaving them with only new staff. He does not see the danger in waiting till January 1st, when this is a long-term issue that they are addressing.

CA Libby stated that the cost for that position for six (6) months is roughly \$43,142.00.

Rep. Sykes stated that he also feels something should be done about this issue because one of his concerns is that there has been brain drain in government, and it is important that, where possible, they have the deepest bench, so they are not caught with a department that does not have the full expertise necessary.

Rep. Oppel stated that, in light of that statement, the Commissioners may want to consider an overall view of leadership in the County and their current status in terms of succession planning.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to create a new Deputy Register of Deeds position effective January 1st, 2026. Rep. Oppel seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rep. Bjelobrk stated that she feels this is appropriate because the Register of Deeds Office generates more revenue than needed to compensate for its expenses.

The Committee voted on the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin “yes”, Rep. Bjelobrk “yes”, Rep. Franz “yes”, Rep. Oppel “yes”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being six (6) in favor and none in opposition, the motion passes.

Sheriff's Department

Rep. Stringham asked about the request for an increase to the cruiser repair and maintenance line if they do not get all their funding for three (3) cruisers. He stated that he would recommend a \$1,000 increase in that line.

Rep. Stringham then stated that one (1) of the Deputy positions was created by the COVID ARPA funds. They have been careful at the state level with using one (1) time money for one (1) time uses and not creating an ongoing future cash issue. His view is that the need to increase the deputy staff is not higher than it was five (5) years ago, and he would recommend going back to the staffing levels they previously had at nine (9) deputies. CA Libby stated that ARPA money was not used to create a Deputy position. That was a budget decision made last year by the Commissioners and Delegation in response to a specific need.

Rep. Oppel stated that, in reference to Rep. Stringham's first comment, he appreciates the Sheriff and CA Libby obtaining the fleet mileage report and hopes that they implement a regular replacement cycle. CA Libby stated that they do have a replacement cycle; they purchase three (3) cruisers every year. They had a year under Sheriff Dutile where they purchased two (2) cruisers because of budgetary issues, and Sheriff Dutile came back the following year and said that did not work well, and they needed to do three (3) a year. Commissioner McLeod stated that they had discussions where Sheriff Myers stated she would find grants for one (1) cruiser, and because she was so low on staffing, they wouldn't need the 3rd as the vehicles were not being used as much. She would recommend that they fund the one (1) in the budget and look for alternative funds for the others. Rep. Sykes stated that an increase in the maintenance budget would be a prudent move.

Rep. Sykes inquired about the Deputy positions and whether they are currently filled. CA Libby stated that there may be one (1) Deputy that has not started as of yet, but an offer has been made. Rep. Sykes asked if this proposal were approved, would it result in layoffs? CA Libby stated that it would. Rep. Stringham stated that he feels as though nine (9) Deputies are enough to do the job, given the year they are in. This is a pure expense area, and he feels comfortable removing a Deputy position and bringing them from ten (10) to nine (9). Rep. Sykes stated that he is not comfortable with the decision to lay off a public safety employee. Rep. Oppel stated that he would associate himself with the chair's remark. Rep. Sykes asked if Rep. Stringham is willing to separate the two (2) motions.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to increase the Cruiser Repair and Maintenance budget by \$1,000. Rep. Oppel seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin "yes", Rep. Bjelobrk "no", Rep. Franz "yes", Rep. Oppel "yes", Rep. Stringham "yes", Rep. Sykes "yes". With the vote being five (5) in favor and one (1) in opposition, the motion passes.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to fully fund nine (9) full-time Deputy positions. There was no second.

Rep. Oppel stated that he continues to wonder, regarding dispatch services, if there is a better way to coordinate with other agencies to save money. Commissioner McLeod stated that they are doing an EMS study, and she does not know if Dispatch will come up with that as well. Rep. Oppel stated that the goal should be an increase in security and coordination. If they can reduce costs, that would be a benefit as well. He feels it is worth looking at if they can do a better job with more coordination.

Rep. Bjelobrk stated that she would like to freeze COLAs and step increases. Rep. Sykes stated that it is a conversation they can have at the end of their meeting.

Human Services

CA Libby stated that there is an increase of \$81,000 to this budget to account for the 3% increase in the County Cap.

Department of Corrections

Rep. Stringham stated that there is overcapacity at the county-level prisons statewide. They have a system where every county has its own facility. He stated that Grafton County was at less than a quarter of its capacity a few years ago. He noted that the calculations, made 4-5 years ago, indicated that they could save \$3 million a year by sending inmates elsewhere. If the facility were available, they know what it would be used for. He stated that, even though their census is higher now, he would encourage the Commissioners to look to empty the facility based on economic considerations. He still believes there is a way to provide the services they are required to provide while doing it with less burden on the taxpayer. Rep. Stringham stated that he does not recommend changes to the current budget, but feels that this should be looked into.

Social Services

Rep. Stringham stated that he heard the reasons for not funding Responders Together NH. He stated that he is familiar with this organization, which is a group dedicated to enhancing the lives of officers and other public servants. They provide training and largely started on the basis of suicide prevention. He would like to include the \$5,000 request and offset that by reducing Visions for Creative housing by \$5,000. He added that Visions for Creative Housing only asked for \$5,000, and this reduction would still give them \$10,000. Commissioner McLeod explained that they changed the funding structure of social services to be more consistent based on the number of people the agencies serve and the services they provide. Commissioner Hedberg stated that she has worked with this organization, and it is a very good organization. The Commissioners looked at the County's statutory obligation of keeping people in their homes and reducing recidivism. With the Responders Together application not providing the necessary information due to confidentiality concerns, the Commissioners were unable to find a way to fund them. Rep. Oppel stated that he is very sympathetic to this organization and feels they are just starting to encourage them to seek mental and physical health. He wonders if they should encourage the Commissioners to reach back out to the organization. If privacy is a concern, they could provide the number of people they serve, and maybe the opioid funding is an option. He feels the mission is worthwhile. Rep. Stringham stated that they do not have the time to revisit

this agency and feels that they should make a recommendation on this now. He is confident that the Commissioners were trying to do their due diligence.

Rep. Sykes stated that he would not support a cut to Visions for Creative Housing as it is a wise use of County funds. Rep. Stringham stated that they could increase the overall spending by \$5,000, and they would still be \$34,000 under last year's funding level. Rep. Sykes stated that there is no way to approve money conditionally. Rep. Oppel stated that it sounds as though the Commissioners tried to change their approach to the funding. He is sympathetic to Responders Together NH, but he wants to support the Commissioners' approach and not send a message that it is ok not to respond to the application as requested. Commissioner Piper stated that her colleagues did a good job of explaining the social services funding and the reasoning behind its implementation. She stated that this is a change that was spearheaded by Rep. Stringham a few years ago, because social services grew so much that the County looked to go back to their statutory requirements, and Responders Together did not meet those requirements. She stated that Visions for Creative Housing is a very large organization and does excellent work. Because of the reformulation, they are noticing a large increase in Visions, but they have not noticed a big decrease in West Central Behavioral Health. She appreciates Commissioner McLeod's effort to reformulate these agencies.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to fund Responders Together from Opioid Abatement Funds, provided the necessary information is submitted. Rep. Oppel seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin "yes", Rep. Bjelobrk "no", Rep. Franz "no", Rep. Oppel "yes", Rep. Stringham "yes", Rep. Sykes "yes". With the vote being four (4) in favor and two (2) in opposition, the motion passes.

Rep. Bjelobrk stated that Grafton County is very generous to Social Services. In a good economy, she understands that, but she is coming from a constituent base that is hurting. She stated that she had several suggestions for the agencies.

MOTION: Rep. Bjelobrk moved to reduce NANA to \$7,136.00. Rep. Franz seconded the motion.

Discussion: Commissioner McLeod explained that they came up with a figure based on the numbers NANA served. Commissioner Piper stated that most of these increases or decreases were due to reformulation. Rep. Sykes stated that he is inclined to support the Commissioners' request, but at the moment, he would not be in favor of this particular motion.

Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin "no", Rep. Bjelobrk "yes", Rep. Franz "yes", Rep. Oppel "no", Rep. Stringham "no", Rep. Sykes "no". With the vote being two (2) in favor and four (4) in opposition, the motion fails.

MOTION: Rep. Bjelobrk moved that Grafton County Senior Citizens Council overall be reduced by \$25,000, as they were just awarded \$25,000 by the Town of Haverhill. There was no second.

Rep. Stringham appreciates Rep. Bjelobrk for bringing this forward. She is thinking about other criteria. He stated that there are other comments that they may want to consider to make this funding more impactful.

Rep. Sykes stated that West Central Behavioral Health's reduction is significant. He is trying to be mindful of the Commissioners' new funding method, but this agency is in his district, and the demand for their services is bigger than ever. His city does provide funding for this agency, but he stated that federal funds are drying up, and the demands are growing. Rep. Sykes stated that when times are bad, that is when they need to think about increasing services of this nature because that is when they are needed. He further stated that he does not think they can use the lens of how difficult economic times are to completely dry the discussion on social services. West Central Services provides services that help keep people out of the Nursing Home and the Department of Corrections. Rep. Sykes further explained that they support the city fire department in their mental health response. Instead of arriving with a police response, they respond, if appropriate, with a community nurse, paramedic, and someone from West Central. This helps avoid jail time for those individuals. He stated that it is incredibly short-sighted to cut this budget this much, but noted that he is mindful of the budget.

MOTION: Rep. Oppel moved to level fund West Central Services at \$38,060.00. Rep. Stringham seconded for discussion purposes.

Discussion: Commissioner McLeod stated that if they are looking at one (1) mental health agency, they need to look at them all. They are trying to introduce some equality into these agencies, which might request different amounts because that is their standard practice. She stated that Lakes Region is seeing twice as many people as West Central. Commissioner Hedberg indicated that they had discussed this extensively and felt that the way each organization counted people might differ, but they had done their best to compare them apples to apples. All three (3) of these mental health agencies are overwhelmed with patients. Rep. Sykes stated that they are aware of the other revenue sources for different organizations. Some may have access to funds beyond what West Central offers. West Central is located in Lebanon, where the cost of doing business is very high. Rep. Sykes stated that the other two (2) organizations are close to level funded, not cut in half. Commissioner Hedberg indicated that they had requested the percentage that county funding makes up in the revenue of each of the agencies. Rep. Oppel stated that it appears there is a geographic discrepancy in their client service area. Commissioner Hedberg noted that all community mental health agencies are divided by catchment areas.

Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin "yes", Rep. Bjelobrk "no", Rep. Franz "no", Rep. Oppel "yes", Rep. Stringham "no", Rep. Sykes "yes". With the vote being three (3) in favor and three (3) in opposition, the motion fails.

MOTION: Rep. Baldwin moved to add \$5,000 to Northern Human Services – Adult OP, Lakes Region Mental Health Center, and West Central Behavioral Health, for a total of a \$15,000 increase. Rep. Oppel seconded the motion.

Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin “yes”, Rep. Bjelobrk “no”, Rep. Franz “no”, Rep. Oppel “yes”, Rep. Stringham “no”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being three (3) in favor and three (3) in opposition, the motion fails.

Rep. Stringham stated that he would support this request at a \$2,500 increase for each of the three (3) agencies.

MOTION: Rep. Baldwin moved to add \$2,500 to Northern Human Services –Adult OP, Lakes Region Mental Health Center, and West Central Behavioral Health. Rep. Stringham seconded the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin “yes”, Rep. Bjelobrk “no”, Rep. Franz “no”, Rep. Oppel “yes”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being four (4) in favor and two (2) in opposition, the motion passes.

Nursing Home Capital Reserve

The Committee agreed to add the additional \$48,000 for the lifts as requested by NHA Labore.

MOTION: Rep. Bjelobrk moved to freeze COLAs and step increases for the 22 positions making over \$100,000 based on hourly wage. Rep. Franz seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rep. Stringham stated that, in general, he has been uncomfortable with the budget process because it includes step increases and COLAs for employees. Everyone gets a pay increase above the CPI. He would love to see the budget move in the direction of fewer step increases, less inflationary, and more recognition for people for performance. He stated that one of the reasons he brought up relations among the senior management team was that he recognized it was already a challenge to have people who are related. He stated that certain organizations do not allow these types of relationships to exist among senior people. Rep. Stringham gave an example of when the acting President of New Hampshire Electric Coop was promoted; his wife resigned as part of that move due to the potential for creating a cultural problem. He stated that he is not aware of any of those challenges here, but it is something to be mindful of when reviewing the numbers and examining them closely, particularly if they involve related individuals.

Rep. Stringham stated that regarding the motion, he does not recommend taking longevity away from those who are receiving it, but he would not increase it to a higher level. He stated that many organizations recognize people who have been there the longest are making the most, and they realize they can save money by offering people early retirement and give them a few months of extra bonus pay, which would allow them to go from paying someone \$150,000 a year to paying someone \$90,000. He would recommend leaving longevity, but would keep it at the same amount.

CA Libby explained that one (1) longevity program the County has been in place the entire time she has been here, 35 years. She stated that this was discontinued in September of 2010. Any employees who were hired prior to that receive \$100 per year after their 6th year of employment. Last year, a new longevity program was negotiated,

with bonuses awarded in segments of years. Rep. Oppel stated that he does believe there should be a more comprehensive review of all compensation. He is not comfortable with voting on a motion that includes everything, as he feels they would want to look at them separately. There should be a provision that step increases should be based on merit, rather than being automatic. CA Libby stated that step increases, although the majority of employees receive them, are not automatic. They are based on an employee's evaluation. Rep. Sykes stated that he is comfortable with the idea of looking at the positions making over \$100,000, and he is comfortable talking about doing something with a COLA, as that is not guaranteed. He stated that, regarding the step increases, if he is correct, there is a place where these are memorialized. CA Libby stated that step increases are in the employee handbook. Rep. Sykes stated that although it is not a contract, step increases are outlined in the handbook given to employees when they are hired. He would entertain pieces of this motion, but not all of it. Rep. Franz asked what the average step increase on a salary is. CA Libby stated that it is close to 3%. Rep. Bjelobrk stated that they are talking about 22 positions of people who make six (6) figures. The majority of employees will not be affected by this; it primarily affects upper management, aimed at helping to balance the budget. Commissioner McLeod asked about the dollar value of this and what it would save. CA Libby stated \$121,000. Commissioner McLeod stated that these are some of their most important employees. Some are at the nursing home; these are the most skilled individuals who keep things together. She is worried about the disruption of services. Commissioner McLeod stated that she would suggest conducting a rate study rather than risking the potential consequences for certain positions if this were to pass. For \$121,000, she is concerned about the overall impact. Rep. Oppel asked if the \$121,000 represents the savings from not having a COLA or a step increase. CA Libby stated that eleven (11) of those twenty-two (22) employees are at max, so they are not getting a step increase. Eleven (11) people would lose their only increase.

Rep. Oppel stated that if it has been four (4) years since the last wage study, it is time to do it again. Commissioner Piper stated that they conduct wage studies, and she had requested to review the step and grade system, but this did not occur. It is not universal among counties. Many do the step and grade system, but she has had a difficult time offering a universal 5% increase across the board, knowing what the economy is like. Rep. Franz asked if Rep. Bjelobrk would consider amending her motion to freeze all COLAs. Rep. Bjelobrk stated that she would not amend her motion. Rep. Franz asked if it is discriminatory to freeze COLAs for high-end employees and not everyone.

The Committee voted on the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin "no", Rep. Bjelobrk "yes", Rep. Franz "yes", Rep. Oppel "no", Rep. Stringham "yes", Rep. Sykes "no". With the vote being three (3) in favor and three (3) in opposition the motion fails.

MOTION: Rep. Franz moved freeze COLAs for those employees who are not under collective bargaining units. Rep. Stringham seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rep. Bjelobrk asked if Rep. Franz would amend the motion to freeze COLAs to just the 11 of 22 upper management. Rep. Franz stated that she cannot support that as

she does not know if it is discriminatory. Rep. Oppel stated that it seems unfair to say 11 senior employees will not get anything. CA Libby cautioned everyone about the messages that this sends. She stated that they could see much more union action if they gave COLAs to union members, rather than non-union members. Rep. Sykes stated that he is very anxious about creating inequalities regarding the COLA. Rep. Franz asked if the union contracts include a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). CA Libby stated that there is a tentative agreement with the Nursing Home that includes a 2% COLA as a part of the contract. Rep. Sykes stated that the cost of renegotiating contracts would be more than the savings from eliminating the COLA. He stated that, in his view, they must be careful not to put their negotiators in a position of unfair labor practice. They are bargaining in good faith, and they need to support their efforts where they can. He stated that he would like to find something to save money, but be reasonably fair. CA Libby stated that they have negotiated and tentatively agreed to a 2% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) with the Nursing Home Union. They are scheduled to start negotiations with the Teamsters next week. Rep. Stringham asked if the union agreements include steps, and CA Libby stated that they do. Rep. Sykes stated that he could live with an adjustment for employees who are making over \$100,000. He cannot vote for a motion that will affect all employees because people in the lower wage scale depend on the COLA to keep them in line with the cost of living. He stated that he cannot support the current motion as it has a significant impact on those on the lower end of the wage scale. Rep. Stringham stated that this Delegation has been willing to give pay increases outside the normal structure, noting the targeted wage increases for nurses and correctional officers. He would like to see more based on merit and less based on formulaic structuring. Rep. Sykes stated that the pay increases they provided directly led to the formation of another bargaining unit in the Sheriff's Department, and that is why he is hesitant about this motion.

The Committee voted on the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin "no", Rep. Bjelobrk "no", Rep. Franz "yes", Rep. Oppel "no", Rep. Stringham "no", Rep. Sykes "no". With the vote being one (1) in favor and five (5) in opposition, the motion fails.

MOTION: Rep. Bjelobrk moved to freeze the COLA for the 22 upper management positions that are currently making over \$100,000. Rep. Stringham seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rep. Oppel asked about the impact of that motion. CA Libby stated that it would reduce the budget by approximately \$50,000.

The Committee voted on the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin "yes", Rep. Bjelobrk "yes", Rep. Franz "yes", Rep. Oppel "no", Rep. Stringham "yes", Rep. Sykes "no". With the vote being four (4) in favor and two (2) in opposition, the motion passes.

Undesignated Fund Balance Discussion:

Rep. Franz stated that in general, the budget needs to be reduced by a percentage; however, they want to do it. She stated that her proposal is a 5% reduction in the budget and adding \$250,000 back to the unassigned fund balance. She stated that she would recommend freezing hiring for new employees, as well as reducing travel and conferences. It appears to her that this budget does not accurately reflect the difficult times they are experiencing, as some expenses are inflated. Rep. Stringham stated that he is not a fan of overall budget cuts. He stated that they go through each line item, and then, when they cannot figure out what to cut, they say to reduce by an overall amount. How much are expenses going up, and how much do they need to raise taxes? Rep. Stringham stated that this budget is only going up roughly 2.5%, and they did not make any significant adjustments. The reasons they are considering the increase are the ProShare payment and the County Cap. He does not support a back of the budget cut. Overall, he appreciates the Commissioners having a 2.5% increase. Rep. Sykes stated that he cannot support the motion of an across-the-board cut, as that is not their job. He agrees that it is concerning that the undesignated fund balance is so low. He shared that the US total inflation rate for last five (5) years is 20.75%, the US average annual inflation rate has been 4.15% and the Grafton County tax increase for past five (5) year's total was less than 1%, which is an average inflation rate of .9%. He stated that even if they have a large increase this year, on balance, the taxpayers are ahead of the actual cost of doing business over the last five (5) years. He would vote against this motion as it has a blanket reduction. Rep. Bjelobrk stated that her understanding of the Executive Committee is that they have no power over individual line items; their authority extends to the full budget. Rep. Sykes stated that they have always made minor corrections like this, and CA Libby comes back with a number of what that does to the overall budget. CA Libby noted that Rep. Bjelobrk was correct and that the Executive Committee's authority is to set a budget; it is not to mandate policy or how the money is appropriated.

MOTION: Rep. Bjelobrk moved to reduce the entire budget by 3.5%. Rep. Franz seconded the motion.

Discussion: CA Libby stated that she would like to put into context what that motion means. She stated that she had sent numbers to the Executive Committee showing that 62% of the budget is allocated to wages and benefits, and another \$8 million is allocated to the State of New Hampshire for Medicaid. She explained that to make a \$2 million cut to the budget, they will have to consider staff reductions and reductions in the services they offer. That is the reality of where they are, and she noted that their budget did not increase by \$2 million. Commissioner McLeod noted that most of the reduction would have to come from the Nursing Home, as it is the largest department they have. CA Libby added that if they reduce staff at the Nursing Home, they must also reduce the census, which in turn reduces their revenue. Rep. Sykes stated that he would not support this motion.

The Committee voted on the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin "no", Rep. Bjelobrk "yes", Rep. Franz "yes", Rep. Oppel "no", Rep. Stringham "no", Rep. Sykes "no". With the vote being two (2) in favor and four (4) opposed, the motion fails.

MOTION: Rep. Oppel moved to reduce the amount of surplus to be used to reduce taxes, so they maintain at least 5% in their undesignated fund balance. Rep. Stringham seconded the motion.

Discussion – Rep. Oppel stated that he is concerned about revenues coming in. He stated that it is essential to take steps to rebuild the surplus and return to their recommended levels of funding. Previous Commissioners and Delegations have chosen to use surplus to reduce the impact on taxpayers at a time when they were substantially doing better at the federal level. The overall last five (5) years, even if they add this \$500,000 back into surplus, they are still looking at a relatively, year over year, a well-managed budget. CA Libby stated that, based on the budget figures she has, after all changes had been made, they would need to use \$1.7 million in surplus to reduce the amount to be raised by taxes, which would leave them with a 5.02% undesignated fund balance. Rep. Franz stated that this is a \$550,000 increase in expenses. CA Libby noted that it is not an increase in expenses, but an increase in the amount to be raised in taxes.

The Committee voted on the motion. Rep. Baldwin called the roll. Rep. Baldwin “yes”, Rep. Bjelobrk “no”, Rep. Franz “no”, Rep. Oppel “yes”, Rep. Stringham “yes”, Rep. Sykes “yes”. With the vote being four (4) in favor and two (2) in opposition, the motion passes.

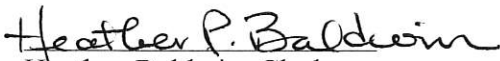
Next Meeting – Full Delegation Meeting on Monday, the 23rd at 9:00 am.

Register Monahan stated that she would be happy to discuss, at length, her fifteen (15) years of experience with the salary survey.

Nick De Mayo stated that he believes Rep. Sykes made a mistake when he said all prices are up, noting that gas prices are actually down. He stated that the Country has \$37 trillion in debt. A new courthouse is expected to cost nearly \$100 million. He added that microphones are needed at this table, as it is hard to hear. N. De Mayo stated that some states have cut back on COLAs. After teaching for 35 years in Rhode Island, the Governor cut COLAs, and they are still fighting to get them back. He stated that this may happen in Grafton County if they continue to raise COLAs and step increases. There may be a revolt where people go to the legislature to cut everyone’s COLA. He stated that the County is too generous in its benefits.

12:30 PM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Heather Baldwin, Clerk