

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Administration Building

North Haverhill, NH 03774

February 17, 2026

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

OTHERS:

In Person: Maintenance Superintendent Oakes, HR Director Clough, Don Bliss – MRI, Bruce Baxter – MRI, Phil Blanchard, Sherri Latulip, Jim Richardson, Bill Latulip, Austin Albro, Chad Miller

Via Teams: Omer C. Ahern Jr., Representative Sellers, Representative Spahr, Register Monahan, Nick De Mayo, A. Champagne, Matt Champagne, Christopher Olsen, Edward Daniels, Jason Blair - CAI Technologies

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

Supt. Oakes arrived and gave the following report (* see attached)

Commissioner Piper stated that, in regard to the possible increase in the Woodsville Water & Light sewer rate, if the bond for WW&L were to pass, the county would see a 65% increase in the sewer rates. She stated that Grafton County is attentive to every line in their budget and explained that something like this is an external factor that is out of their control.

Agenda Items:

1. Commissioner McLeod asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the February 10th meeting. Commissioner Hedberg had one grammatical edit.

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

2. The Commissioners signed the check register 1116.

3. Court System Lease Renewal – CA Libby met with Sarah Lineberry from the state last week. The lease with the state expires June 30th of this year, and they talked through a few different scenarios. CA Libby stated that they agreed on a two (2) year agreement, noting that nothing will happen with the current building in the next two (2) years, unless renovations are done. She stated that the court system is proposing a 3% increase in year 1 and a 2% increase in year 2. The Commissioners discussed the proposal. Commissioner Piper stated that in the past, when the county has negotiated, they have been successful. She asked if there was any reason why they went from 3% in year 1 to 2% in year 2, and if they could increase that to 3% in year 2 as well. Commissioner Hedberg stated that the total increase over the two (2) years would be \$17,112.86. Commissioner Piper stated that they represent their constituents. She asked if they could advocate for their county residents and ask for a 3% increase in year 2 as well. Commissioner

Hedberg stated that she agrees, but feels that all sources of revenue are difficult and they are all doing their best. The Commissioners agreed to request a 3% increase in year 2.

HR Director Clough

HR Director Clough arrived to discuss a response to a question an employee had regarding the employee handbook and the interpretation of the earned time accrual provisions. This question was sent directly to the Commissioners, and last week they asked that HR Director Clough review and provide them with feedback.

HR Director Clough explained that she reviewed the memo from the employee. They are requesting clarification of the county’s interpretation of the policy. She stated that this employee left Grafton County for roughly six (6) months and then came back. HR Director Clough explained that when that happens, according to their handbook, the employee is paid out their time when they leave, and if they come back to Grafton County, they are considered a new employee. The earned time is accrued each year from the employee’s anniversary date. The handbook says if an employee leaves Grafton County and is rehired, the rehire date replaces the employee's original hire date, which changes their anniversary date. HR Director Clough stated that this handbook is clear, once you look at all of the factors involved. She stated that there are other ways they can handle it, but in her opinion, this is the cleanest way to do it. HR Director Clough answered further questions from the Commissioners. The Commissioners asked HR Director Clough to draft a letter to the employee explaining the clarification of the policy.

Agenda Items:

1. Audit Bid Recommendation – CA Libby stated that last week, they opened two (2) bids for their audit for the next three (3) fiscal years. She reviewed the following bids again with the Commissioners.

	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
Vachon Clukay & Company PC	\$45,000	\$47,000	\$49,000
CLA	\$71,000	\$73,000	\$75,000

CA Libby stated that she and Asst. CA Elsholz reviewed both proposals and looked at references. Belknap and Sullivan Counties use CLA, Merrimack County uses a different audit firm that will be going out of business this year, and everyone else uses Vachon Clukay. CA Libby stated that they are happy with Vachon Clukay. Grafton County used them for the last three (3) years, and their bid is significantly less money than CLA. CA Libby answered questions from the Commissioners.

MOTION: Commissioner Hedberg moved to accept the audit bid from Vachon Clukay & Company, PC, as described in their offer. Commissioner seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

2. Sign Teamsters Contract – CA Libby stated that the Commissioners previously approved the new contract for the Teamsters Union and the Sheriff’s Department, and needed to sign the contract.

3. January Financial Report:

Monthly Variance Report

Revenue – CA Libby reported that they are seven (7) months through FY26. The Nursing Home is still above its revenue projections despite the census decreasing in January. If this trend continues, it will create revenue problems, but she hopes that once they are through winter and illness, the Nursing Home will get back to its budgeted census. She stated that everything else on the revenue side looks good so far. The interest in December they were \$70,000 behind, and in January, they are only \$20,000 behind.

Expense – CA Libby stated that January had three (3) payrolls, which skews their numbers. She also reported that she is watching the Department of Corrections budget. At the end of this month, the DoC only has \$15,000 left out of its \$145,000 medical budget. It is looking like they will be over-expended in the Correctional Officer salary line as well. CA Libby explained that there is money that will be left over in the Human Services budget if they need to transfer some over to the DoC. If that happens and it is over \$5,000, the Executive Committee will need to approve that transfer. They will be looking to do that at their May meeting, if need be.

4. Other Funding Sources Monthly Update – CA Libby reviewed the attached spreadsheet with the Commissioners.

Commissioner Issues:

1. Commissioner Hedberg stated that she has done a first look over of the social services applications. Many of them did not follow instructions and did not include what was needed. She thought they were quite clear on the instructions this year, but many things were not included. She noted that some applications are very well done. Commissioner Hedberg stated that she wanted to let the other Commissioners know, as they review the applications as well.

Municipal Resources Inc. - EMS Study Presentation – Don Bliss & Bruce Baxter

D. Bliss and B. Baxter presented the following PowerPoint (* see attached) and answered questions from the Commissioners. The full report of the EMS study can be found at the county's website: <https://graffton-county.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Grafton-County-NH-State-of-EMS-Study-1-28-2026.pdf>

Jason Blair from CAI Technologies presented interactive maps of EMS services in Grafton County. He reviewed the maps and showed the various data that they provide. D. Bliss stated that these integrative maps are available for anyone to access, and they are available to assist anyone with navigating the maps as well. He stated that they have sent the link to the county, and the Commissioners can decide how to send it out. Here is the link to the interactive maps: <https://arcg.is/1WqjgS1>

Public Comment:

1. Chad Miller, Littleton Fire Rescue– C. Miller thanked the Commissioners and MRI for doing this study, a lot of good information came from it. He stated that he is concerned about the SB245 study. He explained that they are government-run and not set up like a business, and therefore he does not see a lot of the cost that they bear in the fire department budget. In the operating budget for the fire department, there are no capital expenses or debt service. C. Miller stated that there is no funding included for his boss, the town manager, who also makes

decisions. He further stated that the fire department does not pay for payables or payroll services. It is extremely difficult in government to say what percentage of the fire department uses HR. This may work well for businesses, but it does not work well in capturing all overhead costs that go into operating these services in the government sector. C. Miller stated that they are going to need strong advocacy to make sure that this conversation is had, and it is discussed how difficult it is. A template needs to be built to help departments to come up with some of these costs. C. Miller noted that he has advocated this with the New Hampshire Association of Fire Chiefs as well, and he hopes some documents will be coming out to guide the departments.

2. Phil Blanchard, Haverhill – P. Blanchard stated that he wanted to speak to an item from the previous Commissioners' meeting as well as today's meeting. He stated that he is the Fire Chief for the Town of Haverhill. He explained that they had village districts and merged two (2) of the three (3) departments. P. Blanchard stated that, as the Fire Chief, they are going to be looking at the regionalization of all services at some point. The recruitment and retention that was mentioned today is great. This is something that needs constant attention, and they cannot let up. If they do, it will fall back to the old ways. P. Blanchard stated that with regard to the Commissioners' last meeting, he watched H. Hatch give a history lesson on farming and everything he has done. They are talking about private and public enterprises. He explained that he plows driveways and has a plumbing business, but cannot do that work for the County; they hire people to save money. He stated that if the county takes the revenue from milking cows out of the farm, the vegetables will last two (2) years because there will be such a high cost to it. P. Blanchard stated that he appreciates what H. Hatch said about getting out of milking when the price of beef is high. P. Blanchard asked if any other farms in the area are selling their cows right now and stated that they are not. Those farms are continuing to milk. As good as it may sound to possibly get out of this, he stated that it is crazy that one (1) person can come in and sway the Commissioners in one direction or another. He stated that the Commissioners' job is to look at the total cost of everything. \$30,000 is a lot less of a loss than the farm has had in the past. P. Blanchard stated that back in the day, he believes Hatchland Farm was one of the companies providing field work. It appears to him, by reviewing past county budgets, that the farm is trending in the right direction for a change, and it would behoove the Commissioners to let that play out. G. Libby is doing a great job. With inflation right now, everything is more expensive. He stated that G. Libby is saving the county money at a time when inflation is highest, but they were spending more money back in the day, and that was fine. P. Blanchard stated that he would not want to be a County Commissioner who ended 160 years of history. He thanked everyone for everything they do.

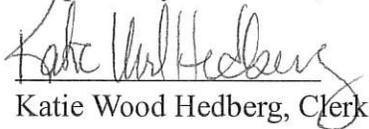
3. Representative Sellers stated that as he was listening, he had a few concerns that he wanted to raise. He stated that grants are good, but if they are a one-time grant, they cannot build out an EMS service that is going to be year after year. They have to find a way to make it sustainable. Rep. Sellers added that some departments do not want just EMS service; they want EMS and fire training as a combination, yet there are some people who do not have the strength or ambition to do the fire side, and therefore, they lack personnel that can be used for EMS. Part-timers are not being paid the same typical wage as a full-timer, and they are not given benefits. Rep. Sellers asked, as far as equipment goes, van-style versus truck-style ambulance, what the goal is. Is the emergency service trying to get someone to the hospital, or are they trying to treat the patient on site and doing more than they should be? There is a big price difference between a van-style and truck-style ambulance. He further added, as far as the comment about keeping people in their

homes instead of staying in the hospital, they may have more costs to the community because these people may end up requiring ambulance services more often than if they were to stay in the hospital. Rep. Sellers stated that in the Bristol area, they have EMS services to four (4) towns with a budget of \$2 million, which includes fire as well. He wonders how the successful ambulance services are running. He stated that his last comment is about the Department of Justice and increasing their costs. The County should not be taking what they want to give them; they need to tell the DOJ they are paying a certain amount, and that may increase each year as the county needs to cover their costs and repairs.

4. Nick De Mayo stated that group purchasing is a good idea. The county should look into that, and maybe they could get lower prices for vehicles. He stated that the county should also look into casinos. Through the legislature, they should make that part of the casinos kick back to the county for building the casinos. Some of that money could go to EMS. N. De Mayo stated that they could also charge user fees to the skiers and hikers coming in, to offset the costs to the taxpayers. He stated that another way to reduce costs is student teaching with nurses and people in the medical field who are taking four (4) year courses. He stated that when he was in school for teaching, his last semester was spent teaching for free in a school as part of his degree. He did not get paid.

11:50 AM with no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Katie Wood Hedberg, Clerk

MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT TO GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Jan 20 - Feb 16, 2026

Complex

Road Salt – A couple weeks after briefing you on Morton’s salt shortage, Morton was able to fill our 90-ton order out of their South Portland, ME depot.

Sprinklers Systems – Hampshire Fire Protection technicians completed quarterly inspections and tests of all the complex sprinkler systems. All systems passed inspection/test.

Elevators – A Stanley Elevator technician completed quarterly inspections and tests of all the complex elevators. All passed inspection/test.

Ozone System Maintenance – A Daniels Equipment Co. tech completed the required 120-day maintenance on the Nursing home and DOC laundry ozone systems.

Backflow Device Testing – Completed testing of nearly 50 backflow devices throughout the complex. Two failed tests. Rebuilt one and disassembled and cleaned the other to get them to pass.

COURTHOUSE

Preventative Maintenance (PM) – My staff performed various PM tasks throughout.

HVAC – Air handler AC1 has a hot water leak on a 3-way valve that controls water flow to the heating coil. We were able to source the needed part and replace the bad one.

Plumbing

- We replaced the cold and hot water isolation valves that feed Chambers 1 bathroom and the mop closet on the back side of it.
- Biomass hot water return sensor bad...ordered new one. Will replace once we receive it.
- Boiler make up water backflow device failed 6-month test...installed rebuild kit and retested good.

NURSING HOME

Preventative Maintenance (PM) – Department employees performed various PM tasks throughout.

Lighting – As light ballasts failed, we upgraded several inside lights from fluorescents to energy efficient LEDs.

Secure Care Extension Project – All 11 door locations slated for addition to the Secure Care system were upgraded to accommodate this system. A 12th location needs to be added but parts were not available to complete it the same time the others were completed. When the ESL Distributing technicians come back to

MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT TO GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Jan 20 - Feb 16, 2026

do the 12th door location, they will also be upgrading the circuit cards at three original locations, so all system doors are on the same frequency.

HVAC

- Air handler HRU 2 has a small pin hole leak in its heating coil in addition to have its last three coils plugged with sludge, which causes nuisance trips of the unit's freeze-stat, causing the unit to shut down prematurely. *I ordered a replacement coil, which has a 6-8-week lead time. Once on hand we will replace it.*
- Air handler HRU 5 had its hot water coil burst. We patched the coil and reinstalled it. I also had to have Alliance Building Automation make some programming adjustments to this air handler to help prevent a recurrence.

Sprinkler – Hampshire Fire Protection technicians replaced a section of the dry system pipe up in the 69 Building attic to fix a leak.

Life Safety Inspections

- Fire & Smoke Door Inspections – We received and installed the smoke door seals on several doors that needed their seals replaced.

Resident Bathrooms – Four-bathroom floors have vinyl lifting at the entrances. Valley Floors fixed one on 1/30/26 but did not have enough material to complete the other three. They've ordered the material and will return to complete the others once they have the material in hand.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING

Preventative Maintenance (PM) – Department employees performed various PM tasks throughout.

Heating – Accounts Payable Office heat stopped working...replaced Belimo zone valve.

Dept. of Corrections (DOC)

Preventative Maintenance (PM) – My staff performed various PM tasks throughout.

HVAC

- Heat pump WHP-B2 had a bad high-pressure switch. Once we received the ordered part, we installed it to correct the problem.
- Heat pump B16 had its fan fail. We replaced dt fan motor.
- Heat pump B10 failed to heat. Replaced actuator.

Sprinkler – The inmate in cell C03 damaged the sprinkler head in his cell. My staff replaced it.

MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT REPORT TO GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Jan 20 - Feb 16, 2026

Fuel Storage Tanks – After polishing the entire contents of the Underground Storage Tank (UST) three times, Lakes Region Environmental returned and restored the new day tank back to its original configuration where it gets AUTO filled from the UST.

Backflow Device – One of the water main backflow devices failed its test...disassembled and cleaned to get it to pass test.

MAINT/FARM BUILDING

Preventative Maintenance (PM) – My staff performed various PM tasks throughout.

Sprinkler System – Dry system air leak in upper attic above wood shop. Hampshire Fire Protection technicians replaced a bad section of pipe.

Farm

Pig Barn – Alarmco replaced the panel circuit board to clear the TROUBLE alarm generated by this alarm system.

BIOMASS PLANT

Preventative Maintenance (PM) – My staff performed various PM tasks throughout.

Sprinkler System – Hampshire Fire Protection technicians replaced a few bad seals on a couple of control valves that were leaking.

ALTERNATIVE SENTENCING BUILDING

Preventative Maintenance (PM) – Department employees performed various PM tasks throughout.

Flooring - Valley Floors technicians installed a section of carpet and cove base molding in the old breakroom area where the kitchen cabinet once resided. This space now looks like a normal office.

OTHER

Staffing – I've been down one man almost 3-months due that person's FMLA. He is scheduled to return to work in mid-March.

FY27 Budget – Woodsville Water and Light informed me that they are seeking a bond vote in March to complete a 6.5-million-dollar renovation of their sewer treatment plant. If it gets approved, all customers will see a 65% increase in their sewer bills sometime in 2027.

The State of EMS in Grafton County, NH

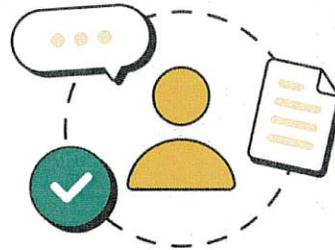
Presentation to the Grafton County Commissioners
February 17, 2026



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Process

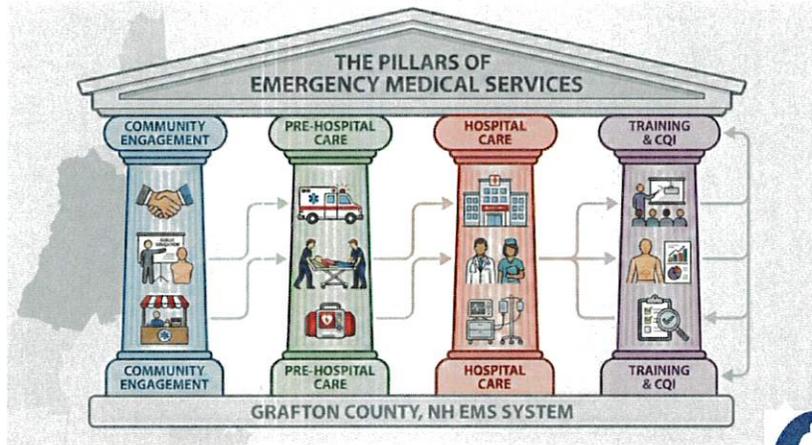
- Stakeholder survey
- Site visits
- EMS resources review
- Data analysis
- Demographics & growth
- In-person interviews
- Phone and virtual interviews
- SCOT analysis
- Mapping tool



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Pillars of the Grafton County EMS System



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3



- Financial Support & Oversight
- Volunteers
- Public Education

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4



- Communications & Dispatch
- First Responders
- Basic & Advanced Life Support
- Ambulance Transport
- Medical Direction & Protocols
- Mobile Integrated Health (MIH)

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5



- Critical Access Hospitals
- Stroke Centers
- Trauma Centers
- Interfacility Transfers (air & ground)

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6



- Recruitment & Retention
- Training
- Certification & Licensing
- Continuous Quality Improvement

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Current State of EMS

- System Overview
- Rising Demand
- Service Gaps
- Workforce Crisis



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Critical Challenges & Threats

- Financial Instability
- Equipment Costs
- Housing Barrier
- Recruitment/Retention
- Interfacility Transfer Bottleneck



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Opportunities for Improvement

- Regionalization
- Funding Shifts
- Rural Health Transformation (RHT)
- Telemedicine



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Mapping Tool



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Key Recommendations for Commissioners

- Establish a Strategic Task Group
- Volunteer Recruitment & Retention Program
- Advocate for Data & Funding
- Funding Initiatives to Support Communities



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Conclusion & The Path Forward

- Status Quo is Unsustainable
- No “One-Size-Fits-All” Solution
- Call to Action



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Thank You



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www.mrigov.com

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