

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET MEETING

Administration Building

North Haverhill, NH 03774

March 26, 2026

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

OTHERS: DoC Supt. Lethbridge, Farm Manager Libby, Sheriff Myers, Director of Communications Paronto, Nick De Mayo – via Teams, Ann Garland – via Teams, UNH Cooperative Extension – Office Administrator Bryant, Paul Chiarantona, James McKane

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

Department of Corrections – Supt. Lethbridge

A. Revenue

1. Department of Corrections – Supt. Lethbridge stated that this line has increased due to the increased population. He noted that Coos County DoC is seeing the same increase in inmate population, and therefore, Grafton County is projecting an increase in the number of Coos County female inmates as well.

2. Community Corrections – Supt. Lethbridge noted an increase in this revenue as well due to the increased census.

3. Federal Inmates – He explained that Grafton County has had one (1) federal inmate for two (2) days this year. He stated that he is keeping this line realistic and minimal based on what they have seen.

4. BDAS Funding – Supt. Lethbridge explained that this grant funds the FIRRM program inside the facility and is their largest source of revenue. CA Libby added that this line will be increasing. She stated that they were just notified by BDAS that the county will be receiving additional revenue for FY27. She stated that this revenue line will be roughly \$406,400.00.

B. Expenses

Department of Corrections

1. Correctional Officers – Supt. Lethbridge explained that the increase in this line is in part due to the COLA and step increases. He stated that he is requesting two (2) additional officer positions. These positions will be targeted for the maximum-security unit. He explained that this unit has officer stations outside of the three (3) housing units. This post is designed to be a two (2) officer post. There should not be an officer going into the housing unit with the inmates without an officer being at the post watching. Supt. Lethbridge explained that this is a security risk that he is looking to address. Supt. Lethbridge also noted that in this current fiscal year, they

have used up their overtime. He explained that in the past, when they have gone over in overtime, they have been able to draw from the salaries of the vacant positions, but that is not an option anymore. Supt. Lethbridge stated that the hospital details that officers have attended have contributed to this, as well as the fact that now that they are fully staffed, they have to budget overtime to be able to get all of their yearly training hours in.

2. Medical Personnel – Supt. Lethbridge stated that RN Albee is requesting two (2) more nursing positions in the budget to allow for 24/7 nursing coverage. He has heard from night shift Sergeants that they have appreciated having the 24/7 medical coverage and having medical personnel there to assess the inmates. If this were to be approved, he would look to hire their own personnel and not use a travel nurse. Commissioner Piper stated that she would hate to fund these positions if there were to be no applicants and the positions would have to be filled with travelers. Supt. Lethbridge stated that he intends to hire their own employees; he would need to come back for Commissioner approval before he could hire a contract nurse.

3. Consultant – CA Libby stated that these expenses are currently funded with Opioid Abatement Funds. If the Commissioners were to approve use of those funds, \$37,000 would be removed from this budget.

4. MH Consultant – Supt. Lethbridge explained that the DoC currently contracts with West Central Behavioral Health. They supply the mental health clinic, four (4) hours a week through telehealth. He stated that halfway through this budget year, the DoC was informed that West Central's rates were increasing, effective immediately. Supt. Lethbridge stated that West Central argued that the DoC did not have a signed contract for this year. He stated that he pushed back and argued that he had asked for a contract to sign multiple times, and all the DoC received was a rate sheet. Supt. Lethbridge stated that West Central ultimately agreed to honor the rate for the remainder of this year, but stated to expect a large increase in the next year. The charge is going from \$585 for a four (4) hour clinic to \$959 for four (4) hours. He stated that they are exploring other alternatives. Supt. Lethbridge explained that he has a part-time per diem nurse who is a family health practitioner and has just completed her psychiatric nurse practitioner. She stated that she is interested in taking on this service and is presenting a contract that would keep costs close to what they are paying and increase the hours from four (4) a week to six (6). This nurse is thinking \$600 a week for six (6) hours, and it would be in person rather than telehealth. Supt. Lethbridge stated that he may be able to decrease this line once he knows more.

5. Dues License & Subscription – Supt. Lethbridge stated that this line has a \$6,000 increase. He explained that the law library currently supplies paper copies. This is an area that he has asked for an electronic law library with the new inmate communications system at the vendor's expense. He stated that this is not yet set as they have not selected a vendor and signed a contract. The increase in this line is due to the law library, as it used to be paid out of the inmate phone communication system, along with the jail management software. This money is now coming in as revenue, but they are taking the money to pay for the jail management system out of general revenue as well. He further explained that the jail management software was tied to the phone communication system, and the vendor paid for this as a commission. The FCC then came out with a ruling that these companies could not pay commissions to the jails any longer. Supt. Lethbridge noted that the FCC has come back halfway on some of these rulings, but he

would prefer to keep the jail management system paid for out of general revenue, as it is something they must have.

6. Medical/Dental/Ambulance – Supt. Lethbridge stated that he is requesting the purchase of three (3) hospital beds for the facility. The facility had two (2), one (1) of which came from the old facility and is in very poor condition. At their peak this year, they have needed four (4) hospital beds in the facility. They were able to borrow two (2) from the Nursing Home, but there is no guarantee those will always be available.

7. Kitchen Equipment – Supt. Lethbridge stated that they are housing roughly twice as many inmates. The expenses have gone up on food, laundry detergent, and other day-to-day items. This increase is due to the increased census.

CA Libby asked about the hospital beds and questioned if this needs to be a capital outlay request due to the cost. Supt. Lethbridge stated that these beds are \$1,750 per bed. He stated that these are very basic hospital beds, noting that they want as little powered equipment on them as possible.

Community Corrections

Supt. Lethbridge noted that the salary line has increased due to them filling a position that had been vacant at a higher level on the wage scale.

He noted that he is also budgeting for a new laptop for their Operation Impact officer.

Governor's Commission Grant

Supt. Lethbridge stated that Officer Gordon has completed his Licensed Drug and Alcohol Abuse Counselor certificate. He is still working at the officer position CRSW salary line. He would like to reclassify that position to a Corporal/LADC. This would keep him at an appropriate salary as well as keep him as a certified officer, which makes him multipurpose. Supt. Lethbridge stated that he would like to have a second LADC in terms of succession planning as well. He does not feel that he would be able to keep this employee if they do not pay him the LADC-appropriate salary.

C. Capital Outlay

1. Supt. Lethbridge reported that they replaced one (1) dryer last year and now the other dryer has become a large maintenance issue. Both this and the request for a new dishwasher are supported by the Maintenance Department because the cost of maintaining these items is higher than the cost to replace them. Supt. Lethbridge explained that the dishwasher has to be working correctly as the Department of Health and Human Services comes in to inspect it. Supt. Lethbridge noted that this is not a normal household dishwasher.

2. Corner Stone Cameras – Supt. Lethbridge stated that this is part of their replacement plan for cameras.

The total increase in the DoC is \$1.7 million, and \$579,500 of that increase is for the four (4) new positions.

Farm – Manager Libby

Revenue

1. Sale of Milk – FM Libby stated that he decreased this line based on the current price of milk. He stated that he has budgeted \$18.00 per hundredweight and has been told that the price of milk should start to increase in May.
2. Sale of Livestock – This line shows an increase due to an increase in livestock sales.
3. Sale of Wood – Forester Frohn is planning to do a timber sale in the upcoming year.
4. Sale of Produce – FM Libby stated that they will not be planting potatoes this year. He explained that the price of seeds and fertilizer has increased. This is from the past year; they did not make much of a profit off potatoes due to the cost to produce them. He believes they can make up the revenue with the sale of pumpkins and squash.
5. Misc. Farm Revenue – FM Libby stated that he increased this line based on current numbers. He plans to continue to board heifers.

FM Libby stated that revenue projections have increased by \$47,507.

Expense

FM Libby stated the largest increases in the expense budget are salaries and benefits.

1. Gas & Oil – There is an increase in this line due to the current pricing.

Seed, Fertilizer & Spray – FM Libby noted a decrease in this line due to not planting potatoes.

Farm Stand Expense – FM Libby stated that the farm will not have the expense of buying potato bags this year, and therefore, he was able to decrease this line as well.

FM Libby stated that there is a \$21,216 overall increase. He reported that the budgeted deficit for FY25 was \$266,000, the budgeted deficit for the current fiscal year is \$229,000, and for FY27 the budgeted deficit is \$203,000. Commissioner Hedberg stated that, considering the salary line increases, FM Libby has done a good job with the expenses.

Capital Outlay

FM Libby noted that FY17 was the last time the farm had a capital outlay request.

Manure Spreader – FM Libby stated that the farm currently has two (2). The newest one is twelve (12) years old, and the older spreader went down in the first part of winter. It has rotted through the back. He explained that the farm keeps two (2) manure spreaders in the event one (1) goes down; they have a second. This is an important piece of equipment.

8' Tiller – FM Libby stated that the farm currently has one that has been a part of the farm equipment for many years. Last year it broke, and it is something that they cannot repair.

Breast Boards – Heifer Barn – FM Libby explained that when the cows lie down, there is a breast board for them to lie against. He stated that all of those boards have been broken and need to be replaced. This is the cost for materials only; replacing them will be done in-house.

The total request for the three (3) capital items is \$66,000.

Dispatch – Director of Communications Paronto

A. Revenue

1. Dispatch Fees – Director Paronto explained that the numbers do not close on their billing cycle until April. He uses the previous year's numbers as a placeholder when presenting his budget, and he will be back to meet with the Commissioners in May to set next year's Dispatch Fees.

B. Expense

1. Telephone - Director Paronto noted that Sheriff Myers cleaned up their cellphones and was able to eliminate a couple of phones that were not in use. They were able to decrease this line by \$1,000.

2. Vehicle Repair and Maintenance – Director Paronto stated that they received a new vehicle in the previous fiscal year, and he was unsure how much he would need to spend on repairs. He budgeted high in the current fiscal year, and now he is able to decrease this line by \$1,000 for FY27.

C. Capital Reserve

1. Recorder Upgrade - Director Paronto explained that these are at the end of life this year. The company he received a quote from has just notified him that they are selling. He stated that he has asked for a quote for a one-year contract to see if there are any effects on the sale of the company. He has left the \$27,000 in capital, but may be back to remove it depending on what happens with this company.

Director Paronto noted that during his first Delegation meeting last year, he requested a \$58,000 request for a core update to their LMR. He reported that they never used those funds; the upgrade was paid for by the state. That money that was set aside for that will no longer be spent.

Commissioner Hedberg asked about the decrease in the health insurance, noting that all other departments are seeing large increases. Director Paronto explained that he has two (2) new employees who are receiving wages in lieu of health insurance. CA Libby also noted that the Sheriff's Department union insurance increase was 10% and not the same as the rest of the county.

Sheriff's Department – Sheriff Myers

A. Revenue

1. Sheriff's Department Fees – Sheriff Myers stated that they are on track to surpass this year's revenue and has increased this line by \$5,000 for next year.
2. Sale of Equipment – Sheriff Myers stated that they will be looking at trading in their two (2) oldest vehicles in the upcoming year, rather than putting them out to bid, to offset the cost of their request for two (2) cruisers.
3. District Court Prisoner Transport – Sheriff Myers stated that they have seen a large increase in transports and she predicts that number will be higher in the upcoming year.
4. Grants – Sheriff Myers stated that they receive the marijuana eradication grant which is \$7,500. They also receive the Northern Shield grant for \$40,000 and the Highway Safety grant for \$8,500.

B. Expense

1. Deputies OT – Sheriff Myers stated that she increased this line due to the Northern Shield grant that they receive. This expense is a wash with the grant.
2. Deputies – There is a decrease in this line due to retirements and new staff coming in at a lower rate.
3. Court Bailiffs – Sheriff Myers stated that there is a slight increase in this line for retention. She explained that they increased the pay from \$169.00 to \$184.00 per day. The \$169.00 is reimbursed by the state, and the additional \$15 a day will come out of their budget. CA Libby stated that there is \$250,000 in revenue to cover the cost of the Bailiff, and the county will cover the \$15 per day increase.
4. Cruiser Fuel – Sheriff Myers stated that historically, they have budgeted \$50,000, and they do not seem to use this amount. She has decreased this line by \$2,000. Commissioner Hedberg noted concerns about the increasing gas prices, and she wants to make sure they are not putting the Sheriff's Department in a position where they need more funding. Sheriff Myers stated that she has still budgeted higher, and she is comfortable with decreasing it.
5. Equipment Long-Term Purchase Agreement – CA Libby explained the increase in this line. She stated that these contracts were originally set up as ARPA requests. In the current fiscal year,

the Sheriff's Department had to pick up some of those expenses, and in the upcoming year, they are picking up the contracts that they no longer have ARPA funds for.

C. Capital Outlay

Sheriff Myers stated that they received pricing for 2026 Chevy Tahoes. They are roughly \$60,000 for the vehicle and \$20,000 for upfitting. She noted that they will be trying to trade their two (2) oldest cruisers to offset the cost of the new vehicles. Sheriff Myers stated that she feels they can get more money for their cruisers by trading them in rather than putting them out to bid.

Commissioner Hedberg asked if there had been any ICE activity in the Sheriff's Department. Sheriff Myers stated that there has not been.

Commissioner Hedberg wanted to offer condolences to the family and friends of former Commissioner Ahern, who passed away. She stated that he was a dedicated public servant in New Hampshire for many years.

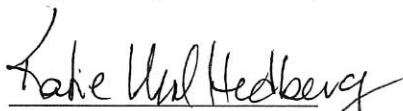
UNH Cooperative Extension – Office Administrator Bryant, Paul Chiarantona, James McKane

Salary—Professional Staff—COA Bryant explained that the County pays 25% of the average field specialist positions and 75% of the average program manager position. The County fully pays for its two (2) Administrative Assistants, who are County employees. There are four (4) field specialist positions and one (1) program manager.

COA Bryant stated that the increases in their budget are associated with salaries and benefits.

11:05 AM with no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Katie Wood Hedberg, Clerk