

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
April 2, 2026

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

OTHERS: Nursing Home Administrator Labore, IT Director Tetreault, Attorney Hornick, Office Administrator Evans, Sheriff Myers – via Teams, Nick De Mayo – via Teams, Emilie Smith – via Teams.

Commissioner McLeod called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

Agenda Items:

1. Commissioner McLeod asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the March 24th and 26th meetings.

Commissioner McLeod had a grammatical edit on the March 24th minutes.

MOTION: Commissioner Piper moved to approve the minutes from the March 24th meeting as amended. Commissioner Hedberg seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Commissioner Hedberg had the following edit on the March 26th minutes.

- Page 6, #4 – She stated that the word ratification should read eradication.

MOTION: Commissioner Piper moved to approve the minutes from the March 26th meeting as amended. Commissioner Hedberg seconded the motion and all were in favor.

2. Health Insurance – CA Libby stated her and HR Director Clough have put together a few options for health insurance. She explained that currently, the county has two (2) different plans through HealthTrust, which is Anthem health insurance. There is a higher cost plan that has a \$1,000/\$3,000 deductible and employees pay either 15% or 20% depending on their date of hire. She noted that there are thirteen (13) employees left who pay the 15%. This plan is increasing 16%. The lower cost plan that the county offers has a \$3,000/\$9,000 deductible and employees currently pay 10% of the premium. These employees also receive a \$500 contribution to a Flexible Spending Account and the county pays the first 50% of their deductible. This plan is increasing 25.9% for FY27.

CA Libby stated that the increase for their current plans for next year, with no changes, is \$1,018,890.00 or 22.4%. She explained that she and HR Director Clough first looked at how to keep HealthTrust and make it more affordable for the taxpayers. She stated that they have looked at raising the copays from 10% to 15% for the low cost plan and the higher cost plan would increase to 25%. They would do away with the \$500.00 FSA contribution but continue to cover

the first 50% of the deductible. CA Libby stated that in doing this, it would bring down the cost in the proposed budget by roughly \$400,000 and leave a 13.5% increase for health insurance.

CA Libby stated that the county received a viable option from Harvard Pilgrim as well. Harvard Pilgrim mirrored the same plans, as close as they could and they would look at increasing the copays as well. She explained that the Harvard Pilgrim higher cost plan and the HealthTrust higher cost plan are identical in price. There is no savings to the county for the higher cost plan by switching to Harvard Pilgrim. The savings would come from the lower cost plan. CA Libby explained that the FSA, HRA and Cobra fees are currently all bundled with HealthTrust. If they were to switch to Harvard Pilgrim, these services would have to be contracted with other providers. Harvard Pilgrim has also offered a \$90,000 premium credit as well as a rate cap of 15% for year two (2). CA Libby noted that if the county were to leave HealthTrust, they would not be able to go back for two (2) years. In doing this, it would decrease the budget \$700,000 over what is currently in the proposed budget or a 6.4% increase over FY2026.

CA Libby stated that this information was given to the nursing home union and the Employee Council. A decision has to be made by April 30th if the county were to switch providers. HealthTrust needs to be notified before May 1st and retirees need to be notified, letters dated by April 30th. She stated that they are looking for employee feedback in that time frame and a decision will need to be made by the Commissioners by then as well.

Nursing Home – Administrator Labore

A. Revenue

NHA Labore stated that they are projecting a census of 124 residents. He stated that based on how the current fiscal year is operating, where they have been able to maintain a higher census for the first six (6) months, he feels a census of 124 is reasonable. They are budgeting for one (1) additional private pay resident. NHA Labore stated that they will also be maintaining their private pay rates in the upcoming fiscal year as well.

NHA Labore stated that in regard to the Medicaid Rate for New Hampshire, they are budgeting a \$4.00 decrease due to what they experienced with the steep cuts that they were faced with in January. This rate decrease puts them in the range that they would have been at, if they did not receive those cuts. NHA Labore stated that this is a cautious estimate because he would rather budget lower and not receive that large of a decrease when their rates are set for July.

Veterans – NHA Labore stated that they entered into a new contract with the Veterans Administration. Under the new agreement, it is a streamlined process and improved the rates that the nursing home is receiving for reimbursement. An average rate for veterans is \$545.17 and this is a \$55 increase in the rate they were previously receiving.

Medicaid PSP – NHA noted an \$800,000 decrease and this is more in line with what they are projected to see going forward with ProShare payments.

NHA Labore stated that there is a 2% reduction in their projected revenue from the current year but noted that he believes they will make this up through their census.

B. Expense

NH Admin

NHA Labore stated that within this budget there will be expenses associated with a few of his capital reserve requests. He explained that they are trying to create efficiency through the use of technology.

NHA Labore noted that salaries include the COLA and step increases.

1. Office Contract/Supplies – There is an increase of \$6,000 due to an increase in color copies. NHA Labore stated that they will be working to reduce their copies and utilize sending PDFs to staff members where they are able too.

2. Software Maint/Training – NHA Labore stated that this line is where they will see some of the expenses associated with their capital requests.

- NHA Labore stated that they are looking to add a new managed care billing component to their existing Inovalon software. He stated that they are looking to purchase Inovalon Managed Care Billing. He explained that a change to the VA CCN Contract requires electronic billing submissions. This platform also allows Managed Care insurance claims to be sent electronically rather than through the mail and secondary insurance claims will automatically bill out. Currently VA claims are reimbursed three (3) months out and these will be reimbursed in two (2) weeks at a higher Medicare PDP rate. The cost in the capital reserve account is \$1,554.00.
- Software Setup Fees Dietary MealSuite Go Paperless – NHA Labore stated that they are looking to streamline the process of generating production records which Dietary staff use during the delivery of meal service on resident neighborhoods. Currently, Dietary staff print 130 pages of paper each day, which list what the resident ordered for each meal as well as allergies and other special requirements each resident may need. This process will allow Dietary staff to make changes to diet orders and allergy information from a computer and will be displayed at a monitor located in each dining room which Dietary staff will be able to view and follow. It will create efficiency and a savings in labor and equipment costs (ink/toner) associated with the printing of meal tickets.
- Software Setup Fees Finance MealSuite POS EE Dining Room & Hardware – NHA Labore explained that currently employees initial paper meal sheets in the employee entrance dining room. Every (2) two weeks they are tallied by the administrative assistant, who also prints out fresh sheets/updating them with new hires and terms. They are then given to the Payroll Coordinator for manual payroll deduction entries for each employee. This POS system eliminates paper and digitalizes the entire

process creating a csv file that can be uploaded in the payroll software. This will save time from the administrative assistant, who spends on average three (3) hours per pay period compiling this information.

Dietary

1. Supplement – NHA Labore stated that there is \$6,000 increase in this line. He explained that they are currently using many supplements for residents, given the acuity of the residents they are seeing.

Nursing

1. Contract Nursing – NHA Labore stated that they are projecting a \$150,000 decrease. There is an LNA class currently ongoing and if everyone passes, they will add five (5) LNAs to their staff and only foresee the need of possibly one (1) or two (2) contract LNAs. NHA Labore explained that they are still seeing issues hiring nurses on the 2nd and 3rd shifts and that is where they have budgeted the majority of this contract nursing line for.

2. Education & Conference – NHA Labore explained that this \$10,000 decrease is in part due to the LNA classes they are holding. White Mountain Community College has lowered the cost per student for Grafton County. They had been budgeted for quarterly LNA classes but they have been holding three (3) classes each year.

3. Nursing Supplies – NHA Labore stated that they are proposing to have a supply of Covid tests available for staff. Given the fact they have had a lengthy issue with the flu in the facility this year, they are proposing to purchasing 3 in 1 Covid/Flu A/Flu B tests. When they were focusing on Covid, they had used the supply that was received from the federal government and were given to staff to have at home as well. Those tests are now expired and unsafe to use. He stated that to help the staff out, they are looking to purchase these tests. It is a benefit for the nursing home to help prevent staff coming in sick.

4. Nursing Supplies Gloves – NHA Labore stated that they have a healthy supply of gloves and felt they could reduce this line for this year. The money spent out of this line can be focused on nitrile gloves for nursing and housekeeping.

Restorative Nursing

1. Rehab Supplies/Wellness Programs – NHA Labore stated that this \$9,000 increase includes an \$8,000 request to create a Reiki program for residents. They currently have a program in place for staff. When there has been a cancellation with a staff member, their Reiki provider has gone out into the units and provided the service for residents. NHA Labore explained that they have seen many benefits for the residents.

Plant Operation

1. Minor Equipment/Repair – NHA Labore stated that they are looking to install new audio-visual equipment in the activities room. They would like to add a better amplification system for residents to hear during large gatherings.

Laundry

1. Supplies – NHA Labore stated that they had equipment that was not included in the capital budget in the current year due to an oversight and that is why the six (6) month mark is almost at the full budgeted amount.

Housekeeping

1. Wages Housekeeping Staff –NHA Labore stated that they are proposing a half year position beginning January 1st to replace their Assistant Environmental Services Director. NHA Labore explained that in 2027, the Environmental Services Department Director is planning to retire as well as their most senior laundry operator. When both of those employees retire, they are looking at losing 70 years' worth of experience in that department. NHA Labore explained that this position will allow the Assistant Director to work hands on with their soon to be retiring Environmental Services Director so she can better understand the overall operation. She is currently very focused on the housekeeping side but this will give her the opportunity to work directly with the director to understand the whole process of the department. This position will help them maintain the overall operations of this department smoothly during the retirement transitions.

Pharmacy & Physician

1. Veterans RX – NHA Labore stated that these are costs the nursing home has to pay upfront but are reimbursed for through the VA contract.

Contract Services

1. Contracted Dietician – NHA Labore stated that in the current fiscal year, they identified a Dietician that wanted to work with them but her rate was higher than anticipated. This budget increase reflects that price and includes a \$2.00 increase. NHA Labore noted that this dietician is doing a great job in helping to work on weight management for residents, educational information for staff and the overall health of the residents. She is very committed and he wants to recognize that by giving her an increase.

Capital Reserve

NHA Labore stated that he has spoken about three (3) capital items previously in his expense budget.

1. Installation of Additional Panic Alarms – NHA Labore stated that they have had instances this year where they had people coming into the facility that they did not want there. Given that they are a 24/7 operation they are looking to install three (3) additional panic alarms to alert Sheriff's Dept. to security concerns taking place in the nursing home. He stated that these will be located on the lower floor.
2. Grout replacement for Granite Neighborhood – NHA Labore stated that this was a request from Supt. Oakes. There is missing grout in the tile floor of the shower area on Granite, which is causing water damage to the shower room on Meadow, due to leaking from the floor above.
3. HVAC Evaluation - NHA Labore stated that this is a request of Supt. Oakes as well. He explained that all of the HVAC & refrigeration equipment in the nursing home is at or past life expectancy per ASHRAE standards. Most equipment needing replacement currently uses R22 refrigerant, which is exponentially scarce and very expensive to purchase.
4. Hobart Conveyor Type Dishwasher – NHA Labore reported that this is the replacement of a 23+ year old machine. Upon replacement of this item, all of their kitchen equipment will have been updated within the last ten (10) years.
5. Vitamix 5205 XL 4.2hp Variable Speed Blender – This is a high-capacity blender to mechanicalize meals for residents requiring altered meal textures.
6. Hatco GRAH 48" Glo-Ray High Wattage Infrared Food Warmer – NHA Labore stated that they are looking to purchase food warmers to be installed on Maple and Profile neighborhoods to ensure plated food remains warm prior to being served to residents. He stated that they had made this purchase for the Granite Unit in the current fiscal year and it has been very successful.
7. Maxwell Thomas Essential Series Laminate Tabletop 36" Square – NHA Labore stated that this is the replacement of ten (10) tabletops to a smaller size to help with crowding in resident dining rooms that results from the number of larger Broda wheelchairs that many residents use on the floors.
8. Renovation of Staff Development Office – NHA Labore stated that they are looking to renovate the current Staff Development office to create a dedicated nursing education simulation lab. He stated that at times they have had to bring up a bed from the basement for simulation training. He noted that they currently do more on paper training rather than hands-on. This would give them the ability to do more hands-on training for staff. Grafton County Maintenance will do all renovation work and Valley Floors will install new flooring after removal of carpeting.
9. Advanced TERi Geriatric Patient Skills Trainer with Auscultation – This is an advanced training dummy for nursing staff to practice skills/demonstrate competency. This will be based in the nursing simulation lab.
10. Resident Mattresses – NHA Labore stated that this is the continuous yearly replacement of mattresses.

11. Computer Replacement – This is the replacement of eighteen (18) desktops and one (1) laptop that are past useful life.

12. LNA Handheld Documentation – NHA Labore stated that currently nursing assistants will provide care to residents and throughout the course of the day they will sit down at the computer and document. He explained that they are proposing to purchase forty (40) iPhone 15 phones to be used by LNAs for handled documentation which will allow for more accurate and timely coding of care provided to nursing home residents.

13. Activities Courtyard Furniture – NHA Labore explained that they are looking to purchase various pieces of furniture for the Activities Courtyard. He noted that furniture/décor could not be included in federal funding for the Courtyard renovation.

14. Resident recliners for common areas – This request is to ensure residents have access to appropriate recliners for use in resident sitting areas on neighborhoods.

15. Aztec Guzzler Solution Retrieval Machine – NHA Labore stated that this is a piece of housekeeping equipment. This would help maintain the condition of the floors throughout the nursing home.

CA Libby explained that historically the capital reserve was funded through the larger ProShare payments the county had received but she noted that they have not made a contribution the last couple of years. She stated that the current balance is \$254,402.02 and the total capital reserve requests for this budget are \$240,938.79. CA Libby noted that there are current open capital projects that will come in under expended. She stated that this is worst case scenario if every dollar that was budgeted was spent.

Information Technology – Director Tetreault

1. Education & Conference – IT Director Tetreault stated that he has added \$2,000 to this line. He would like to attend trainings and those are usually centered around cybersecurity. He also noted that Grafton County is also hosting the NHAC Conference and he would like to attend that as well.

2. New Equipment – IT Director Tetreault stated that over the years, as a county, they have not kept up to date with their computer replacements. He stated that one of the biggest problems with the current fiscal year the fact that Windows 10 became end of life and they had to upgrade to Windows 11. This line includes sixteen (16) pcs that are too old to upgrade to Windows 11 and need to be replaced. He would recommend going to a three (3) year replacement cycle. CA Libby stated that prior to 2021 the county had a five (5) year replacement cycle but when their internal IT department was done away with and they contracted with a service provider, they no longer had a replacement cycle.

3. Software Maintenance & Renewal – IT Director Tetreault stated that all software contracts have yearly inflationary increases. This line includes all software used throughout the complex.

Commissioner McLeod asked if IT Director Tetreault felt employees were doing well with noticing phishing emails. IT Director Tetreault stated that from what he sees from Thrive, employees are doing ok but he has included in his budget to work with a company to have monthly tests for employees.

Human Services – CA Libby

CA Libby stated that there is a decrease in the County cap. She explained that they budgeted \$7,812,227.00 in the current fiscal year but the actual cap is \$7,367,000. The cap is dispersed on a percentage basis based on a three (3) year claims history. CA Libby explained that Grafton County's percentage has been going down every year. While Grafton County is aging, so is the rest of the state and the other counties are aging faster than Grafton County is. CA Libby stated that \$139,879,303 is the gross cap for all the counties. She used a 5.9% for Grafton County's portion for FY27, which resulted in a \$153,000 decrease over last year's budgeted cap but is an increase in the amount that they actually paid.

County Attorney's Office Budget – County Attorney Hornick, Office Administrator Evans.

A. Revenue

Atty. Hornick noted that she had previously met with the Commissioners to discuss a request from a small town asking the County to provide Circuit Court prosecution. She stated that she has not completed a case this fiscal year. This is another revenue source but it is minimal

1. VAWA Grant – Atty. Hornick stated that this is the Violence Against Women Act and they have applied for \$30,000.
2. VOCA Grant - Atty. Hornick stated that they have applied for more Victims of Crime Act funding.
3. Circuit Court Prosecution – Atty. Hornick noted that this revenue covers the expense for the attorney that the county provides to handle circuit court prosecution for the contracts that are in place with various towns.

B. Expense

County Attorney's Office

1. Investigative Services – Atty. Hornick stated that they hired an investigator three (3) years ago using ARPA funds and those funds are no longer available. This position was 50% funded through ARPA funds in the current fiscal year and they have budgeted for the full position FY27.
2. Litigation Expenses – Atty. Hornick stated that they are looking to purchase a transcription software that will allow them to become more efficient.

3. New Equipment – Atty. Hornick stated that the copier they have needs to be replaced and they are looking to enter into a lease for a new one.

VAWA Grant

1. Atty. Hornick explained that budget is for the Assistant County Attorney that handles these cases and is offset by \$30,000 in grant funds. CA Libby noted that this is also another piece to the budget that is broken out due to the grant funding that is received. She stated that this position used to be included in the regular operating budget for the Attorney’s Office but for reporting purposes, it was put into its own budget.

Victim Witness – Non-Grant Funded

1. CA Libby noted that the Victim Witness department is broken out into two (2) budgets, similar to the Alternative Sentencing Department due to the grant funding that is received.

Victim Witness – Grant Funded

1. CA Libby stated that this is the portion of the Victim Witness budget that is completely offset by the grant.

Social Services – Commissioners

The Commissioners reviewed the applications for social services funding. They noted that ADAPT, Families Flourish Northeast and TLC Family Resource Center are all new requests. CA Libby stated that the county used to fund TLC Family Resource Center in the past but they have not applied the last few years. She also noted that Visiting Nurse & Hospice of VT & NH did not apply for funding this year and she then learned that they were acquired by Dartmouth Health. The Commissioners discussed the agencies that could possibly be funded through Opioid Abatement funding. CA Libby stated that there is \$143,000 available in Opioid Abatement Funds, if they were to include the Department of Corrections opioid requests that were presented in their budget.

The Commissioners stated that they would like to know when ADAPT would be up and running as it is a new program, as well as get a list of their Board of Directors. CA Libby stated that she would reach out to get that information.

The Commissioners further reviewed the social services applications and discussed what level of funding they wanted to provide and whether or not any could be funded through Opioid Abatement funds. They had questions for some agencies regarding their applications. CA Libby stated that she will get answers to the questions the Commissioners had and during one of their budget deliberation sessions, they will finalize the social services budget.

Agenda Items:

1. Opioid Abatement Requests – CA Libby stated that these requests are follow ups to items that have already been requested or approved.

- Lisbon Fire Department – The Commissioners approved up to \$50,000 for a Zoll Cardiac Monitor pending an estimate. The quote the Lisbon Fire Department received was for \$74,404.30 and they are requesting approval for the additional \$24,404.30.
- Woodsville Ambulance – CA Libby stated that Woodsville Ambulance forgot to request funding for the brackets they need to mount the equipment that was awarded through Opioid Abatement funds and are requesting an additional \$19,085.00.

CA Libby stated that there are \$30,000 remaining in Opioid Abatement Funds. Commissioner Hedberg asked if Woodsville Ambulance has already ordered the ventilators. She suggested that if they had not ordered them yet, that they could purchase three (3) ventilators instead of four (4) and use the remaining funds to purchase the mounting hardware. CA Libby stated that she would reach out to Woodsville Ambulance. The Commissioners further discussed the Lisbon Fire Department request and agreed to wait to further discuss that request.

Public Comment:

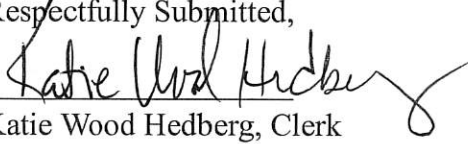
1. Nick De Mayo stated that he is very disappointed that he was not notified that there was a Courthouse Building Committee meeting. He stated that it came in at the last minute and it may have met the legal requirements of posting 24 hours beforehand, but it would have been respectful to him as a taxpayer who attends every meeting, to alert him to the fact that Supt. Oakes was having a meeting with the architects. It was very disrespectful and not representative of the taxpayers to not let him know that there was a meeting. N. De Mayo stated that if they are giving level funded money to these social service agencies and all of a sudden subjectively give them \$2,000 more, the cumulative effect over the years means an increase in years to come. He stated that he feels the Commissioners would go by the applications that were filled out and not be so subjective. It should be an objective process by looking at their application. N. De Mayo stated that if an agency does not fill out an application, he does not think the county is required to give them any money and noted that he feels this could lead to fraud when the county is audited.

2. Emilie Smith stated that insurance coverage for Grafton County employees is beyond what most citizens have. She stated that she believes Covid/Flu tests are covered and therefore the county does not need to pay for covid/flu tests for employees as a part of the budget. She asked if the Commissioners have surveyed to see what the average citizen's insurance coverage is and asked that they do so because their normal coverage does not cover reiki. She asked why the typical citizen in Grafton County should cover reiki for Grafton County residents. E. Smith stated that she understands that it may be beneficial but it should first be beneficial to the residents and not the employees. E. Smith stated that she would like to have pretty outdoor furniture and it would be better to have outdoor furniture that a grant would cover to allow all residents to access the outdoors and fresh air rather than pretty furniture that some residents would be able to access. She wants all residents to access the outdoors. E. Smith questioned if the current panic alarms in the nursing home are sent directly to the DoC or the Sheriff's

Department and if not, why not. She stated that this is the first step and to forget about any other steps to expand what connections they have. E. Smith stated, who cares about connecting the finance office, they need to connect the nursing staff first.

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

Respectfully Submitted,



Katie Wood Hedberg, Clerk