

## GRAFTON COUNTY COURTHOUSE BUILDING COMMITTEE

Administration Building

North Haverhill, NH 03774

December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025

PRESENT: Maintenance Supt. Oakes, Commissioner Hedberg, CA Libby, Doug Shilo – Lavalley Brensinger, Robert Robicsek – Lavalley Brensinger, Nick De Mayo.

J. Oakes called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM.

R. Robicsek stated that he received an email this morning from J. Oakes but has not had time to read it yet. He stated that it would be helpful to understand the concerns more in depth, beyond the bullet points that J. Oakes provided as to what they need to do.

J. Oakes explained that they had sent out notifications to the department heads and the judicial branch, requesting their feedback as far as reductions for the courthouse. He has not received any response as of yet, but they were given until the 16<sup>th</sup>. He then stated that, as far as Sheriff Myers' concerns about the design of the building, he reached out to her and requested a list of bullet points with her specific concerns so they can look into possibly addressing them.

J. Oakes asked if Commissioner Hedberg had reached out to Register Monahan. Commissioner Hedberg stated that she sent an email to Register Monahan requesting that she fill out the questionnaire, but she was out of the office either through or until yesterday, and she has not heard back yet.

J. Oakes stated that he is expecting to have feedback by December 16<sup>th</sup> and until they get that feedback, there is not much they can do. Lavalley Brensinger is not going to know how much this feedback would alter the plans and what the cost would be until they have the feedback. R. Robicsek stated that it was correct, but it sounds like every department might be reduced in scope. To have a final document, they will have to go back into the program and adjust each department. J. Oakes noted that he also asked the departments to re-evaluate the parking plan as well.

Commissioner Hedberg stated that she is not sure if there is anything they can do to change their minds, but is hoping that once they get numbers back, it may change some people's minds. R. Robicsek asked if there is something in mind in terms of a target or benchmark for costs. J. Oakes stated that he is not aware of any, but in all of the informational meetings that were held around the county, there was resistance to the project as a whole and to the cost. As far as he knows, there have not been discussions about what would be an acceptable number. J. Oakes stated that no matter what, something has to be done that will be a high cost. The Delegation has the final say if this project is going to move forward or not, and he is not aware of a number that would be acceptable to them. He stated that there have been questions from some of the Delegation members about whether the Register of Deeds needs to be included in the project, but there are two (2) Commissioners who feel that the office needs to be included. J. Oakes stated that it would be very helpful to have the Register of Deeds give her feedback on the office space.

J. Oakes stated that he wanted to discuss the Category 3 vs. Category 4 construction and what he understands from emails with R. Robicsek is that Sheriff's Departments and Dispatch have to be a Category 4; it is not an option. D. Shilo explained that when they had initially started the design, they had in-depth conversations with their structural engineer on what this would mean. He stated that to make a portion of this building Category 3 vs. Category 4, they would need to isolate the structure. It would look like one building, but it would structurally be two. When they started going down the path of what that would require, it was determined that it would cost more money, and they would have a less safe building. At that point, they decided, in the design phase, to make the entire building a Category 4 because it saves money and creates a safer building. The committee further discussed the Category 4 vs Category 3.

Commissioner Hedberg stated that one of the questions they were asked a number of times was in regard to right-sizing the building. The committee reached out to their department heads and elected officials to see if they felt their departments were right-sized or if they could cut back. Most of the explanation was between the expertise of Lavalle Brensinger and EH Danson, and the right size of the building was determined. Commissioner Hedberg then stated that people were asking if there were outside consultants who could verify that. She asked what R. Robicsek and D. Shilo thought about that. R. Robicsek stated that they are the experts, and the court piece came from the Bureau of Courts. The court needs are based on a tried-and-true program. These are statewide standards that they are using. R. Robicsek stated that, in his opinion, looking for an outside consultant would be a waste of money. Supt. Oakes stated that Lavalle Brensinger has been the other entity that reviewed the size of the building. The EH Danson report presented a 78,000 sq. ft building. LBA is a second entity with no relation to EH Danson, and they have helped reduce the building to roughly 64,000 sq. ft. He agrees that they would be wasting money getting a third opinion. D. Shilo stated that the trend seems to be that the end goal they are trying to reach is not clear, and because it is not clear, there is the feeling that they could do better. He stated that how much better is undefined. When they look at the EH Danson report, they have a price to renovate and expand the building, and that still led to large deficiencies. Even with all of those downsides, it had a price, and he views that as LBA is doing better than that. They have priced a new building with better security, state-of-the-art building assemblies, and it meets all of the needs of the departments. He stated that they did question each department and their needs to see if there was room to downsize or share spaces. Commissioner Hedberg stated that the committee agrees with that and feels that what they presented was a great plan. She asked this question because it was brought up by constituents at least two (2) of their meetings. R. Robicsek stated that they are all New Hampshire residents, and they understand the issue with taxes in New Hampshire. He stated that they can provide a paragraph explaining these answers.

R. Robicsek asked if the county is looking for the courts to reduce their space as well. J. Oakes stated that he has reached out to the courts. Sarah Lineberry stated that they were going to be looking at their space and get back to the county. J. Oakes stated that he did not receive any pushback. He stated that he understands that the courts have standards to follow, but they have asked everyone in the building to look at the space. J. Oakes had a question regarding the parking spaces and if what was included was all that was needed or if there was a section of parking that was in addition to what was needed. D. Shilo stated that he believes that all the

parking spaces were accounted for as being needed, but he would look into that to confirm. J. Oakes stated that he feels they should see what feedback they receive from the departments, and that can help them come up with a finite plan for the parking lot.

Commissioner Hedberg stated that they are asking all of these questions because there was so much pushback, and they wanted to make sure they reviewed everything. She felt they did a very good job in coming up with a proposal that would be acceptable.

R. Robicsek asked what the timeline is that they are looking at and noted that LBA is closed the week between Christmas and New Year's. J. Oakes stated that the Executive Committee meets again on January 26<sup>th</sup> and wanted an update on the project. He further discussed the schedule he was looking at regarding getting the information and feedback from department heads. He was hoping to give LBA the December 29<sup>th</sup> through January 21<sup>st</sup> timeframe to work on it. J. Oakes stated that he would like to meet with LBA the week of January 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> to come up with something to present to the Commissioners, who could then pass it on to the Executive Committee. He stated that if they need more time to work through this, then they give the Executive Committee an update on January 26<sup>th</sup> with what has been done and what they are currently working on. R. Robicsek stated that with the holidays, realistically, to do a good job on this, he is looking at mid-February, but they can give an update to the Commissioners on January 19<sup>th</sup>. He stated that if they are going through all of this, they do not want to rush it. It needs to be done right. D. Shilo stated that they will keep drawing designs until they are told to stop, but noted that there is a point where they get to diminishing returns, and when they are talking to the Delegation, keep in mind that building escalation is a real factor. Each quarter, construction prices increase and will continue to do so. He stated that he would hate to get to the point where they have cut a lot out of the building and the building still ends up costing more money.

R. Robicsek suggested having another meeting on either the 18<sup>th</sup> or the 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss any feedback that was received. The Committee agreed to meet at 10:00 am on the 19<sup>th</sup>.

CA Libby joined the meeting and stated that if they need to take more time and are not ready for the January 26<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee, then that is what they need to do. She does not want to put them in a position where they are rushing.

**Public Comment:**

N. De Mayo stated that this project is untimely, from what he has observed with all the meetings he listened to. A lot of people are against this project. He stated that the Town of Littleton has put off a vote on a bond for an elementary school which is drastically needed. This building project that has been put off for so many years, is having a dangerous affect on many towns and communities in Grafton County who have local projects to do. N. De Mayo stated that the Town of Littleton also has a sewer problem that is going to cost them \$2.5 million more in taxes. In his mind, an elementary school comes before a courthouse. He stated that they should be listening to the public and he does not feel they are.

12:10 PM With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.