

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
April 23rd, 2026

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

OTHERS: Nursing Home Administrator Labore, Finance Director Jurentkuff, DoC Superintendent Lethbridge, Administrative Assistant Sutherland, RN Allbee, HR Director Clough – via Teams, Sheriff Myers – via Teams, Nick De Mayo – via Teams.

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

Nursing Home Administrator Labore & Finance Director Jurentkuff

NHA Labore reported that he received the initial Proshare payment projection, which is estimated at \$1.9 million for the current fiscal year. NHA Labore stated that because their projected census in the next fiscal year is mirroring what was proposed for this year, he feels comfortable increasing the proposed ProShare payment for next year by \$100,000 to the \$1.9 million. NHA Labore noted that last year, there was a tremendous amount of concern regarding the ProShare calculation, specifically the 60% threshold for customary charges to per diem costs. He stated that this was also discussed during that call, and this is no longer a concern going forward. The State Medicaid Director has done something to ensure that there will no longer be a concern about that threshold. Because of this, NHA Labore stated that he is comfortable in proposing that they increase private pay rates by \$15 per day, and this would add another \$120,450.00 in revenue. The private room rate would be \$370 per day, and the semi-private room rate would be \$350 per day. He stated that these are safe assumptions to make, and they are comfortable making these changes.

Commissioner Piper stated that there were questions about the figures in the nursing budget and how those were developed. This turned into a deeper discussion about the methodology that is used generally for budgeting wages at the nursing home. NHA Labore reviewed the attached sheet with the Commissioners on how these salary lines were figured.

Commissioner McLeod asked for an explanation on how they annualized the salary lines through February. NHA Labore explained that they take the payroll figures accumulated from July 1st through the end of February, and annualize those numbers, which are used to budget for the next year. Commissioner Piper stated that other departments budget differently for their salaries. FD Jurentkuff stated that the RN, LPN, and LNA lines are the only three (3) lines that they annualize. The rest of the nursing home is broken out by position and the actual salary rates. FD Jurentkuff explained that when she has budgeted for each position in the past, it has always been inaccurate, and they would be over-expended. CA Libby stated that this would not be true if they were budgeting for all of their vacancies during the years when the positions were not filled, there would be more money left. CA Libby stated that the problem with budgeting like this is that they fluctuate so much from year to year. When the nursing home budgets are based on

lower staffing levels in one (1) year, but then they hire more staff in the following year, they are over-expended. CA Libby stated that the nursing home has always fallen back on the contract nursing line, but that line is over-expended as well as these three (3) wage lines, and this does not make sense to her. If they are increasing their staff, why are they over-expending on contract nursing?

Commissioner Hedberg stated that this way of budgeting is confusing to her.

Commissioner Hedberg stated that CA Libby had explained that they do not pay the retirement contributions on per diem or part-time employees, and there is a large increase in the retirement line as well. NHA Labore explained that they had open positions when they put this current year's budget together, and when people were hired and filled those empty positions, this has increased the retirement. Commissioner Hedberg stated that this is where budgeting like this makes it challenging as well, because if those vacant positions were budgeted for, rather than annualizing, the retirement levels would be more accurate.

Commissioner Piper asked if there was a way to reconcile these numbers to get more accurate figures. CA Libby stated that she is trying to understand this process. She needs more time to think about it before she can give any input. Commissioner Hedberg asked for the hard numbers through nine (9) months for these wage lines. CA Libby gave the following information: that the LNA line through nine (9) months is \$3,873,783.58, the LPN line is \$1,075,130.33, RN line is \$1,224,157.31.

CA Libby asked if they know why the contract nursing line and all three (3) nursing salary lines will be over expended. She stated that this is the first time she has seen that happen, noting that there is normally a surplus in one or the other. NHA Labore stated that there was a higher rate of contract nursing in the first half of the year, while they had vacant nursing positions, and they had the LNAs in the course, getting ready to graduate.

Commissioner Hedberg stated that they had a question about the Reiki as well. She understands that it is helpful for staff, and they are looking to expand it to the residents. In their budget as a whole, in some ways, it does not seem like a lot, but between staff and proposed residents, it is \$17,000 for the Reiki program. She asked if the county is paying for it, and whether they should pay for it for the residents to improve their health, rather than a perk for the staff. NHA Labore stated that for the residents who have received it, there have been benefits. Taking it away from the staff is not something he would want to do, noting that it is rare that there are available slots on the days that the provider is here. NHA Labore stated that he is not sure how many residents would participate in it; there is a level of projection in that. He would hope that more residents would take advantage of it, but he cannot guarantee that it would be utilized because not all residents would want it or understand what it is, but with the staff it is a known benefit. This is an intent to expand the program, but there may not be as many participants. Commissioner Piper asked how long they have offered Reiki to staff. NHA Labore said this has been offered for two (2) years, and the feedback has been very positive.

Commissioner McLeod asked about the transition in the housekeeping department and making sure that this would be effective. NHA Labore explained that the Assistant Environmental

Director they anticipate filling the full-time director role in November of 2027. This request would be a six (6) month position to backfill her position so she can have more 1-on-1 training with the current director. She is not well-versed in the laundry side of the Environmental Services Department, and this would allow her to be more hands-on and learn the department. Commissioner Hedberg asked if there was a way to have a shorter transition period. NHA Labore stated that with the challenge in filling housekeeping positions, he cannot say they will spend that money on January 1st. He feels it will take a couple of months to fill that position, and they would not likely start spending those funds until March. He felt they could wait until April 1st. He is open to feedback from the board on what they think is fiscally best for the budget. Commissioner Hedberg asked if they can post a position with a date when it is available. CA Libby stated that if the position were approved to start January 1st, they could start advertising prior to that date and have an effective date of January 1st.

Commissioner McLeod asked about the increase for the contracted dietician. NHA Labore stated that they budgeted based on someone at a lower rate, but that person is not the one who filled the position. Their current dietician was brought in at a higher rate, who has done a great job and been very successful. This is why they are asking for a \$2.00 increase to her rate.

Capital Reserve – Commissioner McLeod stated they are afraid they will not be able to replenish those funds if they are spent down. NHA Labore explained that he has spoken with CA Libby, and they need to figure out a way to fund this going forward, as they have used excess ProShare revenue, and it seems they will not have that going forward.

NHA Labore stated that if there is an overall goal of reduction within the nursing home budget that the Commissioners would like to see, if they can let him know, they can work with that and make some changes.

Commissioner McLeod stated that there has been discussion to add the position for campus security, and part of this would be filling needs at the nursing home as well. It has come back up as a recommendation from the Joint Loss Management Committee. She asked about NHA Labore's thoughts and why it was not included in this budget. NHA Labore stated that, given what they were looking at with the challenges with the budget this year, they did not include this position, but he noted that this does not mean he does not feel this position is important. This was going to be funded 50/50 with the nursing home and the rest of the county for campus security and emergency preparedness. NHA Labore explained that the emergency preparedness regulations continue to be a focus across the country. CMS is closely examining emergency plans and the response of staff in addressing these situations. There are not enough hours in his day to do justice to the importance of training to be prepared for these situations. This position would focus on training, ensuring that the staff is well-versed in their response. Commissioner Piper stated that, from what she understood from their discussion, it was not that the JLMC recommended this position again unprompted. There was a request to bring back the Campus Security Committee, and the Commissioners asked if there was any desire from the JLMC to reconvene that committee. The thought from JLMC was that the Campus Security Committee came up with their final solution, which was this position, and it was not funded.

Department of Corrections – Superintendent Lethbridge, Administrative Assistant Sutherland, RN Allbee

Department of Corrections

Commissioner McLeod stated that the request is to reinstate two (2) full-time equivalent positions. They asked what the DoC would do if they could only reinstate one (1) position. Supt. Lethbridge stated that he would sit down with the command staff and figure out how to best utilize that position. Commissioner Piper asked what would happen if there were to be no reinstated positions. Supt. Lethbridge stated that they would continue to operate as is. There has not been an incident at this time, but he noted that incidents are predictable and therefore they are preventable. Commissioner Piper stated that she appreciated Supt. Lethbridge's response in stating that they could continue to operate as is, it suggests to her that this is a want versus a need. With a budget that is still at a 16% increase, she does not feel the need to go into a nonpublic session to discuss security because she feels she has the answer to the question she asked. Commissioner Hedberg and Commissioner McLeod disagreed.

Supt. Lethbridge noted that the Commissioners will be meeting at the DoC next week and he plans to use the maximum security unit during their tour for more information. Commissioner Piper stated that she is very concerned about the nurses. Commissioner McLeod stated that she was concerned about the vulnerability.

Supt. Lethbridge stated that in terms of a want versus a need, he used the example and explained that he wore a bulletproof vest his whole career, and it never stopped a bullet, but the officer in Ashland appreciates having that vest. He stated that they have not had an incident yet, but that does not mean that they never will.

Medical

Supt. Lethbridge stated that the nightshift supervisors have said contract nurses have been lifesavers. He explained that if there were only an increase in population based on previous inmate trends with only young inmates, they would not be facing a nursing crisis. The 18–29-year-old population is decreasing, and the 40–50-year-old population is increasing, which has increased the need for medical personnel. The nursing staff is handling a lot of fragile inmates. Supt. Lethbridge noted that there is currently an inmate at Dartmouth who suffered a stroke, and he is in his mid-60s. He has also had five (5) heart attacks since 2025. Their nursing staff does a lot to try to keep the inmates stable to avoid these high medical costs, but it is not always possible. RN Allbee stated that her concern is that if they do not address this need, it is that they will lose the nursing staff they have.

Commissioner Hedberg stated that RN Allbee had mentioned previously how long it takes to do medication passes. She asked if it would be a benefit to have an MNA do the med passes. RN Allbee explained that it would not be a benefit because med pass is always a sick pass as well, and an MNA can not do a medical assessment on the inmates. She does not feel it would provide a benefit. She noted that the contract nurses at the DoC are blown away by the current evening shift med pass and how many inmates there are. There would have to be a nurse in the building

at all times with an MNA. If there were no overnight nursing staff and just an MNA, it would not help the overnight issues that they have. Commissioner McLeod stated that this is all justifiable and the only thing she saw as a possible compromise was possibly one (1) officer instead of two (2).

Commissioner Hedberg stated that there has been a 20% increase in population, but asked if there was any legislation that would continue to see increases or if they have stabilized at the current levels. Supt. Lethbridge stated that there is no current legislation that would affect the population, and he is estimating it in the low 100s.

Commissioner Hedberg noted that there was a 20% increase in population, but the DoC budgeted a 100% increase in supply requests. Supt. Lethbridge explained that they have had a steady increase since he was hired. The population the day he was interviewed was 55, and now it is in the 90s. The supplies they had for inmates had been drawn down due to the decreased census. Now that the census has increased, they have depleted their stock and need to be rebuilt.

Commissioner Hedberg stated that they have had many discussions on high acuity in medical. The amount requested is just over double what was requested in the current budget. She asked if they are anticipating that amount of medical expenses and what savings they might have in the medical/dental/ambulance line, with having overnight nurses, noting that they have mentioned savings with the current night nurses not needing to transport. RN Allbee stated that she believes that they will save many ER visits, but with the age and acuity of the population they are seeing, many specialty needs require trips to Dartmouth for various health issues.

CA Libby asked if there are any areas where they can make reductions to the budget. Supt. Lethbridge stated that they are working on that right now. He stated that it has been embarrassing for him, having to come back to the Commissioners repeatedly with a budget issue and not having enough funding. He stated that he has never come in over budget in any area he has ever been responsible for, and he does not want to do it again next year. He stated that they are working on going through the budget and noted that they can possibly make reductions, but it may put him back in the same position next year.

CA Libby asked why there is so much overtime for programs in the Community Corrections budget. Supt. Lethbridge explained that the program's staff is responsible for supervising when they are in AA or ministers and they are coming in to do so. CA Libby asked if their schedules could be altered to keep them at 40 hours per week. Supt. Lethbridge stated that he can look further into that as well. RN Allbee added that the substance abuse class is full during the week, and there is a wait list. During the regular business hours, the program's staff handles those classes.

Capital Outlay

Supt. Lethbridge stated that Supt. Oakes' main priority is the dishwasher over the dryer. He noted that the dryer is currently working, but noted that the sister dryer that was replaced last year was installed at the same time, and parts were not available to fix either of them. He stated that this dryer will die at some point, and maintenance will not be able to fix it. Supt. Lethbridge stated

that if it were to die and they could not get it working some way, they would need to look at alternatives, possibly looking to work with the nursing home if dryer space was available or shifting their schedules to make them longer. Supt. Lethbridge stated that the camera replacement will always remain a priority, but this is a long project. They have upgraded twenty (28) cameras and there are 119 more cameras to go. They are asking for seven (7) in this budget. Next year's cameras will go in the kitchen, where there are a lot of incidents due to having inmate workers in there.

CA Libby noted that she plans to have a discussion on capital with the Commissioners.

Budget Deliberations

Health Insurance

CA Libby stated that they have come to a tentative agreement with the union at the nursing home, and they have had buy-in from the Employee Council as well. The recommendation is to switch from Health Trust, Anthem coverage, to Harvard Pilgrim on July 1st. There would still be two (2) plans. The higher cost plan will have a 25% employee contribution, and a 12% employee contribution on the lower cost plan, which is an increase from what the employees contribute now. The County would continue the HRA contribution for the low-cost plan, as well as a \$250 FSA contribution. CA Libby explained that this reduces the budget by \$560,000. She stated that HR Director Clough needs to notify Health Trust of their termination by April 29th and start the process with Harvard Pilgrim. CA Libby noted that there will be no disruption to the retiree population as Anthem has agreed to keep its plans as is for the Medicare Advantage Plan.

MOTION: Commissioner Hedberg moved to switch from HealthTrust Anthem insurance plans to Harvard Pilgrim. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion, and all were in favor.

CA Libby reviewed a budget spreadsheet with the Commissioners, with the changes that have been made so far. The amount to be raised by taxes is currently at \$35,074,534.00 or 15.05%. She stated that to get to a single-digit tax increase, they would need to find roughly \$2 million between either increasing revenue or decreasing expenses.

Surplus

CA Libby reviewed the surplus projections with the Commissioners. The fund balance policy is to have a fund balance at 8-16%, and this would leave them at 3%. She stated that if they were in a different situation with the budget she would recommend, they would use much less of the surplus, but explained that as they reduce what is used from surplus, they have to increase the amount to be raised by taxes. She will redo the projections again, but does not foresee any big changes. As they continue to spend close to what they budget for and bring in what they budget for in revenue, they are budgeting at a deficit. CA Libby stated that she has sent out a memo to all departments asking them to reduce spending where they can for the rest of the fiscal year, but noted that there is very little discretionary spending available. The higher they estimate the

revenue and the tighter they budget their expenses, the more they exacerbate their surplus problems.

Capital Outlay

CA Libby stated that she has asked that the departments prioritize their capital requests. Sheriff Myers has stated that she needs two (2) cruisers. They have had a three (3) cruiser replacement cycle for a long time, and last year, they only purchased one (1). Supt. Oakes' highest priority was the underground storage tank sump repair, and the second priority was the asphalt crack sealing/restriping. Supt. Lethbridge's priority is the dishwasher, and FM Libby's priority is the manure spreader. CA Libby noted that the one (1) manure spreader they currently have broke down yesterday.

CA Libby stated that as a starting point for discussion, she has included in the capital line items one (1) cruiser/safety equipment for the Sheriff's Department, the Underground Storage Tank for Maintenance, the dryer and camera upgrade for the DoC. She noted that on the farm, the breast boards are not a capital item at \$2,500; they should be in the operating budget, and she has removed that, and she included the tiller in the capital budget. The total capital in the operating budget ended up being \$122,069. CA Libby stated that, looking at the rest of the requests, she took the remaining cruiser/safety equipment, asphalt crack sealing/line striping, and the manure spreader all out of ARPA interest, for a total of \$173,031. She then suggested purchasing the dishwasher at the DoC with LATCF funds. She stated that this is a starting point for the Commissioners' discussion, but it is important that they leave funding in the capital outlay because these other funding sources will eventually be gone, so she has left the smaller ongoing costs in the operating budget.

The Commissioners agreed with CA Libby's recommendations for the capital outlay requests.

New Positions

CA Libby stated that if they could establish what the consensus goal is of the Commissioners, she knows what they are working to get to. She stated that the challenge in going back and saying each department needs to make cuts is that, for example, the Commissioner's Office budget, aside from the three (3) months overlap for her position, has nowhere to cut, as it is all operating expenses to run the office.

Commissioner Piper stated that she feels that the three (3) months overlap for the County Administrator position will be a hard sell.

Commissioner Hedberg stated that from what she could find, the average LPN salary in New Hampshire is \$35-\$40 per hour. The Commissioners discussed the possibility of hiring an LPN and an RN rather than two (2) RNs. Commissioner Hedberg stated that it is timely that they are meeting at the DoC next week, which will allow them to ask more specific questions.

CA Libby stated that she will annualize through April 30th for nursing salaries at the Nursing Home and see where they compare to what the nursing home has budgeted. She noted that there are currently fourteen (14) vacant LNA positions, and if they keep continuing to fill them, the contracted nursing staff should decrease, which is why she is struggling to understand why the budget is what it is. CA Libby stated that she is going through each contract nursing invoice from this year and making a spreadsheet that shows hours worked so they can come up with an FTE count of what is being used to compare to what their vacancy rates are. CA Libby stated that she will work with NHA Labore and FD Jurentkuff on the salary lines. Commissioner Hedberg suggested that the nursing home could start to work this upcoming year to transition from annualizing salaries to budgeting for available positions.

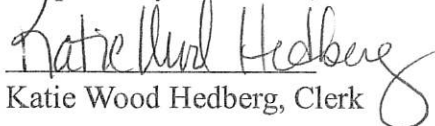
CA Libby stated that they need to have May 8th as a target date to be finished up with the budget due to statutory requirements. She added that the Commissioners will meet next week on the 30th, which was their if-needed date, and will likely meet the following week again.

Public Comment:

Nick De Mayo asked, since they are trying to reduce the budget and help departments, if it is possible for the Commissioners to ask the Sheriff if she can self-fund her cruiser under the Seizure and Forfeiture Act, which is supposedly a law by capturing drug dealers and confiscating their vehicles and sell them at auctions. The Sheriff may be able to get three (3) cruisers instead of two (2).

11:33 AM with no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,


Katie Wood Hedberg, Clerk

Process for determining salary lines within the Nursing Department:

1. We annualized the salary lines through February
2. We applied the 3.03% COLA to the annualized salary figure
3. We added a 3% wage increase
4. We added shift differentials based on 7-month figures of:
 - a. LNAs = \$326,144
 - b. RNs = \$72,018
 - c. LPNs = \$72,018

We added a cumulative OT of \$467,000 broken out across the three lines based on annualized usage.