

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

3855 Dartmouth College Highway

North Haverhill, NH 03774

January 30, 2018

PRESENT: Commissioners Lauer, Ahern and Piper, County Administrator Libby, Admin. Asst. Norcross.

OTHERS PRESENT: Todd Eck, Anne Duncan Cooley - Grafton RDC, Harold Brown.

Commissioner Lauer called the meeting to order at 9:00am and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Lauer noted that they had a member of the public present and asked him to introduce himself. Todd Eck introduced himself noting that he used to work at both the Sheriff's Department and Department of Corrections. He stated that he has taken an interest in politics and wants to learn more about County government.

Commissioner Lauer asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the January 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Commissioner Piper had a few edits.

Commissioner Ahern moved to approve the minutes as amended. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion and all were in favor.

The Commissioners signed check registers 43-46; 1113; 1118; 1120-1124.

CA Libby submitted an Educational Assistance Application for a nursing home employee who is looking to take a Human Growth and Development course. CA Libby stated the class is \$858 and the materials are \$82. After the course is finished the county will reimburse her 50% of the costs provided she has the adequate grades.

Commissioner Ahern moved to approve the Educational Assistance Application. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion and all were in favor.

CA Libby stated that last week she sent an email back to the Administrative Office of the Courts regarding the proposal that the Commissioners put forth of a 1.5% increase per year the first three (3) years and a 2% increase the last year for the renewal of the court space at the courthouse. They came back with 1.5% increase per year for all four (4) years. The Commissioners were all in agreement to accept the court's proposal.

Commissioner Piper moved to accept the Administrative Office of the Court's proposal of a 1.5% increase per year for four (4) years of their new lease. Commissioner Ahern seconded for discussion purposes.

Discussion:

Commissioner Ahern asked what the state originally proposed. CA Libby stated the original proposal was a 1% increase per year for the first three (3) years and 1.5% increase the last year. The Commissioners countered with a 1.5% increase per year the first three (3) years and a 2% increase the last year. The courts have come back with 1.5% per year for all four (4) years.

The Commissioners voted on the motion and all were in favor.

CA Libby stated that the NACo Legislative Conference is being held in Washington, DC from March 3<sup>rd</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup>. She stated that they have budgeted money for a Commissioner to attend if any of them are interested. Commissioner Lauer stated that Commissioner Piper had expressed an interest in attending. CA Libby gave the brochure on the conference to Commissioner Piper to review.

CA Libby submitted the following CDBG Drawdown requests for Commissioner Lauer to sign.

- NCIC – 2017 Micro - \$30,000
- WREN – 2017 Micro - \$15,000
- GRDC – 2017 Micro - \$22,500

CA Libby stated that the Health Insurance Committee had their first meeting yesterday and had representation from most departments. One (1) of the questions that was asked a few times was what kind of increase is acceptable to the Commissioners. Commissioner Lauer stated that it is almost an impossible question to answer. She stated that speaking for herself, the dollar amount that she would accept would depend on the damage that it would do to the employees. CA Libby stated that the only way that they will get down to a reasonable increase in the insurance is making changes to the health insurance coverage that the employees have. She stated that essentially the employees will be paying more for less insurance. Commissioner Ahern noted that part of the problem is there isn't any competition in New Hampshire. There are very few health insurance companies. He said that the issue with rising premiums and deductibles is the same as everyone else is facing outside the County. Commissioner Piper recognized that this is a universal problem and asked if the County has ever considered health savings accounts. CA Libby noted that some of the insurance companies won't quote the county because of the claims. Commissioner Lauer asked if the county is still offsetting some of the deductible costs. CA Libby stated that the county is paying 50% of the deductible. Commissioner Lauer then asked if by increasing the deductible costs if we were then spending more money to cover the 50% of the increased deductibles. CA Libby that they would be increasing their HRA expenses because of the higher deductible. Commissioner Ahern stated that he agreed with Commissioner Lauer that they do not have a way of answering the employees question at this time. CA Libby stated that they are meeting again with the committee next week and they will be presenting some alternative plans.

Anne Duncan Cooley arrived to give the quarterly update for the Grafton County Regional Development Corporation. She stated that both of their business incubators, Dartmouth Regional

Technical Center and the Enterprise Center at Plymouth are full and busy. The third floor suite in Plymouth was finished in October and it was rented the same day. That room now has a business with seventeen (17) Plymouth State University interns. They will be finishing the next phase of the building with the Northern Borders grant over the summer and this is going to create a Student Innovation Co-working Lab on the first floor and a co-working area. The Dartmouth Regional Technical Center holds twenty (20) businesses and one hundred (100) employees. A. Cooley invited the Commissioners to come visit either of the business incubators. She went on to discuss the various programs within the incubators and answered questions from the Commissioners.

The lending program continues to be very strong. She stated that as of this morning they approved their first microloan this year to a person buying a small business. Commissioner Lauer asked what the default rate is on these loans. A. Cooley stated that it is surprisingly low. Their loan officer does a great job in sensing what loans will work for people. She stated that they are not a bank; they are a partner trying to help a business work. She noted that they have small business advisors so if it looks like a business is heading in a bad direction they can provide a resource for free to help the business owners get back on track.

Commissioner Ahern stated that Grafton County is holding a Farm and Forestry Day on June 23<sup>rd</sup> at the county complex. He stated that Grafton RDC may want to have a booth set up at the event.

Commissioner Ahern then asked A. Cooley if they provide any ag loans for people who want to get into agriculture. A. Cooley stated that she would be happy to talk to anyone about what that means and if they aren't able to provide that assistance to get them the resources they need and be that conduit to make something happen.

Commissioner Piper asked A. Cooley if she has been able to have a conversation with the new CEO of Dartmouth Hitchcock, as she commented on workforce housing issues similar to those Anne Duncan Cooley has noted.

#### Commissioner Issues:

Commissioner Piper attended the last TIF meeting. She stated that there were not many updates from the prior meeting. Jack Dugan did not attend the meeting. The other consultant that was hired did include the impact on the county. The impact was simply how much tax revenue the county would forgo because of the incremental increase going to the TIF. They are going to take this to the city council on February 7<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Ahern contacted the scheduler for Governor Sununu's office inviting him to Farm and Forestry Day.

Commissioner Ahern attended the UNH Extension Advisory Committee meeting.

Commissioner Lauer stated that all three (3) Commissioners attended the UNH Cooperative Extension Advisory Council meeting. She also noted that the Commissioners Council meeting will be held at 11:00am on Friday.

Commissioner Ahern stated that he will be giving his weekly update at PBTv in Plymouth.

T. Eck asked about the Association of Counties meetings and if they are open to the public. CA Libby stated that this upcoming meeting is a Commissioners Council meeting to discuss the budget and she would assume that it is a public meeting as it is all the Commissioners in the State of New Hampshire.

Harold Brown was in attendance and asked CA Libby if the bonds on the jail prohibited them from housing federal inmates. CA Libby stated that the bonds that they have do not prohibit them from housing federal inmates and they do not currently have a contract with the federal prison system to house those inmates. Commissioner Ahern stated that they had a conversation with the DoC Superintendent last week regarding the potential to house Vermont State Prisoners and looking into what it would take to be able make that happen.

10:15AM with no further business the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Wendy A. Piper,  
Clerk