

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Office of the Commissioners
3855 Dartmouth College Hwy.
N. Haverhill, NH 03774
Tuesday September 15, 2009

PRESENT: Commissioners Michael Cryans, Ray Burton, and Martha Richards,
Executive Director Clough and Secretary Martino

OTHERS: H. Brown

Commissioner Burton moved to approve the minutes from September 1, 2009, which was seconded by Commissioner Richards. Commissioners Burton and Cryans were in favor, Commissioner Richards abstained.

Commissioner Richards moved to approve the minutes from September 8, 2009, which was seconded by Commissioner Burton. An edit was made. Commissioners Richards and Cryans were in favor, Commissioner Burton abstained.

The Commissioners signed the check registers.

The Commissioners reviewed the DoC Superior Court Report.

Director Clough read a request from UNHCE asking to close on the 24th of December with the Grafton County staff using their earned time off.

Commissioner Richards moved to approve the closing of UNHCE on the 24th of December with the Grafton County staff using their earned time for that day, which was seconded by Commissioner Burton. All were in favor.

Director Clough presented a letter addressed to the Commissioners from the Register of Deeds Association which basically stated that the Association had taken a vote in the beginning of September stating that the Grafton County Register of Deeds does not have the authority to speak on behalf of the Association.

Director Clough updated the Commissioners on the HR Director position saying that they have whittled the playing field down to two candidates and that those two people will meet with the other Department heads and the Commissioners for a final interview.

Cal Perkins, Denis Ward and Gary Peters from the Farm Advisory Committee (FAC) had been invited at the request of Commissioner Richards to voice their concerns about the future of the FAC. FM Kimball was out working with H. Hatch cutting the corn and could not attend.

Director Clough said that she had been contacted by Cheshire County last Friday who called her to participate in a conference call regarding their farm. She was asked questions about the Grafton County dairy operation. She said that it appears as though Cheshire may be considering closing their farm. She and other will be attending the

County Conference in Coos tomorrow and that too is a conversation about their farm. With the bleak future in milk prices some farms may be opting out of the production.

Commissioner Richards said that she feels there is great potential for the Grafton County Farm and the FAC has come up with some great goals but they need to be implemented. She said it was time to “fish or cut bait” and some strong action should be taken to promote the Farm. She said that she does not want to lose the FAC and asked them to address their issues to the Board.

Commissioner Burton said that ideas come down to money and personnel time in order to carry out the events. He said that maybe next budget year a person can be put in place to promote the Farm. He said that he is interested in what the FAC has to say and that they bring much expertise and knowledge to the table.

C. Perkins said that he is bothered by the fact that FM Kimball is hesitant to take any actions at the Farm on his own without being sanctioned by the Commissioners. He said that he didn't feel as though there was any commitment from the Commissioners to support any of the goals put forth by the committee which leads to inaction or no changes and he said that he feels the support must come from the Commissioners in order for the FAC to feel as though their time is worth spending.

G. Peters said that he also feels that some authority should be given to R. Keniston to manage the herd otherwise he won't have any incentive to succeed with anything. Peters also said that he didn't feel that FM Kimball was a real manager and that the FAC is just spinning their wheels. Peters added that next year may be even more difficult because of milk prices and in his opinion the Farm needs to get a real Farm budget which could be done by Dennis Capella from UVM who can help with a Farm budget and business plan.

D. Ward said that when coming to the meetings, he's heard the same problems over and over and no solutions. He said that there really doesn't seem to be any interest from the FM to take any of the advice, though he did take the advice about lessening the amount of grain feed.

Ward said that he didn't think that the number of events will cost the County anything and said they could publicize what the Master Gardner do, get some vegetable growers in and have a seminar with H. Bryant from UNHCE or have a seminar on artificial insemination. He said that there are many things that can be done and much of it wouldn't take the Farm Manager's time. Ward said that he didn't expect the Farm to make a profit, or to break even but at least be heading in that direction.

Ward said that he thought it would be easy for the Commissioners to accept the goal presented and thought that adding incentives would enable the employees to feel more useful and purposeful.

D. Ward said that he wasn't here to bash the Farm Manager but that the Farm should not be chopping the corn right now as it is too wet and nutritionally not the right time to cut. He said the only reason that it is being done now is to accommodate vacation time, which probably should have somehow been rescheduled. He said it's things like this that are killing the Farm little by little. Ward said that it's hard to be on the committee and just listen to the problems.

Commissioner Cryans said that he felt that the Board did discuss the goal presented and in fact agreed with having events, just not 15 of them. He said that he liked the fact that

Grafton County has a working farm and he personally, has not heard anything negative from anyone in his district about it.

Commissioner Cryans noted that this farm is different than other farms in that the farmer has no interest in the property or ownership of it. He said that he comes to work like any other employee.

Commissioner Cryans also said that he has confidence in the new Forester, Dave Falkenham, in establishing a forestry plan.

Commissioner Cryans said that the Farm is something to be proud of and he wants to see it survive, though it may be the last one standing.

D. Ward said that ultimately, the taxpayers are going to be the deciders of whether or not the Farm stays and added that if they saw some benefits from it, it would make a big difference. Commissioner Cryans said that community effort is important but the Commissioners have a big impact on whether the Farm stays or goes.

C. Perkins said that he felt that communication between the FAC and the Board was important.

G. Peters questioned how to instill frugality into Farm Manager when he doesn't appear to seem to need it. Commissioner Cryans said that the Farm Manager is an employee and not an owner and again, that is different.

G. Peters said that he thinks it's important to understand that there are times when the Farm staff needs to be here and referenced again the corn cut.

Commissioner Richards asked if Supt. Libby was FM Kimball's supervisor and Director Clough said that he was.

Commissioner Richards said that she thinks that having outreach programs would be great and brought up the fact that there needs to be a sign that publicizes the fact that there is a Farm here and that tours are available.

Commissioner Richards moved to purchase a sign that advertises the Farm, which was seconded by Commissioner Burton.

Discussion:

Director Clough asked where the money for a sign would come from as there is none budgeted. Commissioner Richards said that she would donate the money to get a sign made.

Commissioner Burton said that he supports getting this underway and that it should be publicized when it happens. He said that tours of the Farm should be made by appointment only.

When the vote came down, all were in favor.

There was a discussion about having someone come look at the Farm "books" and whether or not that should be someone from UNH or as G. Peter's suggested, UVM. G. Peters said that he thought that D. Cappela would be a huge resource and help although he wasn't sure that M. Lunak would agree with that.

D. Ward said that he honestly thought that M. Lunak could look at the financial ends of things and should probably be asked first.

Commissioner Richards said that she would like to re-visit the vacation time of the Farm staff, particularly when it is not a good time to take off.

Commissioner Burton asked C. Perkins to relay the fact to the FAC that they are very important to the whole scheme of the Farm and asked G. Peters, whom he called well respected, to not leave the committee.

Commissioner Burton wondered aloud if the Commissioners have the authority to ask the UNH staff to coordinate some of the functions, noting that these things take time. C. Perkins said that he thought that UNH would like to do these things and that it would show their involvement with the County.

Commissioner Burton said that the Delegation could always make a motion at budget time to close the Farm but frankly, he didn't see the votes there. He also said that a public/private partnership could be an option and the Farm could go out to bid.

Commissioner Burton said that he hasn't been the strongest advocate for the Farm but he will make it a point to try harder with his voice and his vote.

Commissioner Cryans said that he sees a lot of value in the Farm and appreciates all the FAC does. He said that he knows that farming is hard work and some of the inmates actually like that hard work, which they are sentenced to, and discipline.

He also said that he has appreciated all that the FAC has had to say today and that the goal for the Farm is the same although sometimes the means to get there can be different.

Commissioner Cryans said that the revenue loss of the Farm is miniscule in the whole scheme of the budget and to lose the Farm would be a loss of a great heritage.

He said that communication was key and hopefully no one will leave the committee.

Commissioner Richards vowed to become a stronger liaison for the committee.

The Commissioners thanked everyone for coming.

Nursing Home Administrator Eileen Bolander provided her report and began by saying that their census was 131. She said that she had a number of staff out on FMLA and may be forced to use traveling nurses for cover, though it would not be her first choice as their contract is 13 weeks.

NHA Bolander said they will not be winning the Quality of Life award this year and attributed that to budgetary cuts and restraints.

There was a discussion about the difficulty that Counties were having getting the upper limit payment for Medicaid information and the formula for calculations.

NHA Bolander said that due to shortage of staff, the morale rate at the NH is the lowest she's ever seen it.

Commissioner Burton said that Glencliff Home, who also had budget cuts, received both a deficiency free survey and received the Quality of Life Award.

Commissioner Richards asked why, specifically, was the Quality of Life Award missed and NHA Bolander said because the residents complained about the lessening of the specialty things and that with budget cuts it was more difficult to have the extras required for the award. She said that next year she may not even apply for it.

There was a discussion about the stress level at the NH and how it is being addressed. NHA Bolander said there was a planned meeting to review the situation and how to rectify it.

Commissioner Cryans asked about NHA Bolander's outside commitments and she said that she has reduced them considerably, again, due to budget cuts.

Human Services Administrator Bishop arrived with her report and said there is no hold harmless clause for FY11 which could be an increase of \$781,300. to the budget next year.

The proposed appropriation of incentive funds will be going to Governor and Council on the 7th of October to be voted on. Appropriations are based on what the agencies received last year, but at a reduced rate. The current rules have expired and the new rules have yet to be approved.

There was further discussion about the distribution of funds.

Commissioner Cryans said that he thought that the appropriations should be approved so that at least the agencies will receive some money. If the G & C vote against the appropriations they could be held up and that won't help anyone.

HSA Bishop asked if the Commissioners were interested in approving the rules and Commissioner Cryans said that he felt that funds should go back to local control for distribution.

HSA Bishop informed the Commissioners that NACo has changed County Government Week to the whole month of April so that Counties could celebrate it anytime during that month. She is also working on the pilot program for the NACo Dental card.

Register of Deeds Sharp arrived to discuss some items with the Commissioners that were of a recent matter and brought along a load of paperwork which he felt was pertinent to the matter and passed it along to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Cryans asked RD Sharp about the letter that was sent from the Deeds Association and he said that he had read it and understood its meaning and that the Assoc. did not want him to speak on their behalf.

RD Sharp referenced the letter that was sent to the Commissioners from Atty. St. Hilaire about document redaction and said that he feels he is acting responsibly as Register. RD Sharp asked the Commissioners to direct the County Attorney to advise RD Sharp and Commissioner Cryans said that according to the letter, Atty. St. Hilaire had openly offered to be of assistance and that no directive was necessary.

Commissioner Richards asked RD Sharp to be more judicious in his use of paper saying that it was excessive. She also urged RD Sharp to utilize the County Attorney if needed.

Commissioner Cryans asked RD Sharp what the Association of Deeds was referring to in the letter they sent and he replied that it was because he included all the registries in a statement he made and they took exception to that. RD Sharp said that he didn't feel he was doing anything wrong and he was trying to do what was best for the registries.

Director Clough passed around a letter to the Commissioners that was sent by an ex-employee regarding the HR Director position.

Director Clough recommended that the Commissioners adjust the wage scale for the HR Director position to a grade 9 which was recommended by the wage consultant at last review. She said that upgrading now when there was no person in the position made sense.

Commissioner Burton moved to upgrade the wage scale position of HR Director from grade 8 to grade 9 as per the recommendation of the wage consultant in 2008, which was seconded by Commissioner Richards.

Discussion:

Director Clough restated the reason for doing this and pointed out that it would have no affect on the person being hired as they would come in under the salary amount outlined in the advertisement. Commissioner Richards was not willing to make the concession for the salary adjustment even though it would have no repercussions as there was no one in the position.

Commissioner Burton said that he felt that this was a key position and that it warrants a proper grade.

When the vote came down, two Commissioners (Cryans and Burton) were in favor and Commissioner Richards was opposed.

Maintenance Superintendent Oakes arrived to recommend to the Commissioners that Seal-Tec Asphalt Coatings, Inc be awarded the bid for re-stripping the parking lots. He also would like to use an additional \$1250 from his budget and have all the areas done. Supt. Oakes checked all references and called other customers and the company received glowing remarks.

Commissioner Burton moved to approve a bid of \$10,401.50 from Tec Asphalt Coatings, Inc., to do the parking lot sealing and re-stripping, which was seconded by Commissioner Richards. All were in favor.

The Commissioners discussed the weathervanes and the removal of the asbestos shingles from the pig barn roof. Supt. Oakes said the weathervanes will stay and the shingles are being properly disposed of.

Director Clough said that she responded to a Right to Know Request on September 11th from H. Brown regarding County grants for FY09 and FY10.

Director Clough informed the Commissioners that the Governor's Commission Grant has increased its funding to the DoC by \$6,640 to take the grant to an amount of \$76,800 which means that the County will not have to fund that additional amount. This is the amount that has been received in the past.

Director Clough read a resolution for certificate of vote to the Commissioners as follows:

RESOLVED: That this County enters into a contract with the State of New Hampshire, acting through its Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Community Based Care Services.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Director is hereby authorized on behalf of this County to enter into said contract with the State and to execute any and all documents, agreements, and other instruments; and any amendments, revisions, or modifications thereto, as he/she may deem necessary, desirable, or appropriate. Julie L. Clough is the duly appointed Executive Director of the County.

The foregoing resolutions have not been amended or revoked and remain in full force and effect as of September 15, 2009.

Commissioner Richards moved to approve the resolutions which was seconded by Commissioner Burton. All were in favor.

Commissioner Burton as Clerk signed the resolved certificate of vote.

Director Clough, Supt. Oakes and Supt. Libby will be attending the Haverhill planning board meeting this evening to go over the revised Jail plans.

The Delegation will meet on September 21st and will hear the revised plans for the Jail. No additional information will be available to them such as staffing or operational costs. Because none of the information will be available, Director Clough has drafted a letter which outline what information will be provided to the attendees so that questions can be structured only in that direction.

Director Clough asked the Commissioners to begin thinking about nomination for their dedicatees for the annual report.

Director Clough gave a copy of a news release from WCAX which discussed the Jail. She said that the census today was 144 and there is potentially a very dangerous situation there because of this. There was further discussion about how frustrated Supt. Libby is at present and if the law suit could somehow be expedited.

Draft minutes from the Littleton Board of Selectmen meeting were passed out to the Commissioners wherein Representative Ward had very negative things to say about the County. Director Clough said that Rep. Ward is running the leadership of the County into the ground. Statements were also made about Supt. Libby and he felt compelled to pen a letter to the board which included the cost of labor provided to the town by inmates. There was discussion as to how this should be addressed and Commissioner Burton asked that Director Clough draft a letter which addressed the non factual remarks and allegations that were made. Commissioner Richards wanted that letter to also go to the Littleton Courier and Caledonian Record.

Commissioner Cryans said that he felt that this was a conflict between the Commissioners and the Littleton Board and that a response letter should come from the Commissioners and not Supt. Libby.

Commissioner Cryans said that he thought that Rep. Ward interpreted the Executive Committee's vote of 5 to 2 (re: budget changes) as a indication that he would have more allies on his side, however, after the Delegates heard about the already reduced budget and the one time monies that were coming in, he did not have the backing he expected to try to increase the County revenues.

Commissioner Burton said that calculations for inmate labor should also be done for surrounding towns.

Commissioner Cryans said that on top of there being a letter sent to the Littleton BOS, the Commissioners should attend one of their meetings in person.

Director Clough is working on the application for the Energy Grant and noted that it has been a very difficult process. The application is due on Saturday. Commissioner Richards said that she has asked for an extension but wasn't granted one. She said that she spoke with someone from DOE who assured her that the County would get the money but there may be more work required.

COMMISSIONER ISSUES:

Commissioner Burton attended the Haverhill Selectmen's meeting where Cecil Smith was sworn in as Chief of Police.

Commissioner Burton said that Glencliff just had its 100 year anniversary celebration which he attended.

Next week Commissioner Burton will be a Fort Drum in New York visiting with the National Guard.

Commissioner Burton is working with Rep. Ladd to get the Woodsville Armory transferred over from the State to the town of Haverhill.

Commissioner Cryans said that he attended the acknowledgement of New Hampshire and Vermont Veterans at the Hanover Inn on September 12th. He recognized Steve Schlosser at the Inn and said there must have been 200-300 people attending.

12:45 PM being no further business the meeting adjourned

Raymond S. Burton, Clerk