

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
3855 Dartmouth College Highway
North Haverhill, NH 03774
March 24th, 2020

PRESENT: Commissioners Lauer, Morris, Piper, County Administrator Libby and Administrative Assistant Norcross

OTHERS PRESENT: HR Director Clough

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

Commissioner Piper participated electronically according to RSA 91-A: 2 with the reason being risk of exposure to COVID-19 by physical attendance. Electronic participation was at her request. It was noted that all votes must be taken by a roll call.

HR Director Clough – COVID-19 Discussion

HR Director Clough stated that they are now having employees ask about the time they are out and how the County is going to pay that. She stated that right now any absence related to COVID-19 will come out of the employee's extended sick leave. Normally employees are not able to access their extended sick leave unless they are out on FMLA. This is for benefited employees. Unbenefited employees will be unpaid at this time. The other question being asked is child care. Fortunately, we have not been inundated by employees not being able to work due to lack of childcare. There have been some employees out because of childcare and they are asking how they will get paid. She stated that they have gone back and forth on this and would like the Commissioners' thoughts as to if they get paid earned time or sick leave. She explained that the new Families First Coronavirus Response Act that the President signed last week will play a role in this going forward but doesn't go into effect till April 2nd. HR Director Clough stated that this is an extension of the Family Medical Leave Act with the child care portion and it is required that it be paid. As of the 2nd, employees will be eligible under this act to receive 2/3 of their regular rate of pay for up to a twelve (12) week duration in which ten (10) weeks have to be paid. CA Libby stated another question that they are getting is if the employee getting paid 2/3 of their time can use earned time to make up for the time they are not getting paid. HR Director Clough stated that her thoughts are that this is an unprecedented time they are in and if the employees have time in their extended sick bank she doesn't see that is a problem to use it right now, especially with the act that is going into place next week. Commissioner Lauer is in favor of instituting what they will have to institute next week. HR Director Clough stated that they are currently waiting on guidance on the exemptions from the Department of Labor. Commissioner Piper stated that she would think that they would want to accommodate the employees as much as they can, this is no one's fault. Commissioner Lauer agreed stating that keeping their employees' heads above water is the right thing to do. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act also has a provision that appears to allow employers to exclude healthcare workers and emergency responders. The Department of Labor is expected to provide more guidance on this.

CA Libby stated that she has spoken with NHA Labore and he would like to see all of his employees included. He feels that it would really create problems for him if we were to include all employees except healthcare workers. Superintendent Elliott feels that Correctional Officers fall under the emergency responder category and he would like to see them excluded. HR Director Clough stated that she has had several conversations with Supt. Elliott regarding this. Both HR Director Clough and CA Libby agree with NHA Labore that we should be including all of our employees and not excluding some. The Commissioners discussed this and were all in agreement that they felt strongly that they should include all of the employees. They felt that excluding some of the workers who are being asked to perform above and beyond right now would not be appropriate.

HR Director Clough stated that currently in the Nursing Home they have roughly 15-20 people out right now waiting for results or to be tested for COVID-19. They are front line medical staff so they are getting the first priority for testing. Testing is typically taking 3-4 days to get the results back. Currently no employees have tested positive but they are still having a number of staff out each day as they are waiting to get test results back. She stated that what was hard to adjust to was the staff coming into work and then being told they need to go home. The staff now knows, and is used to the screening tool before coming to work. They can give notice that they will not be in due to showing any symptoms. This allows a little more time to find coverage.

HR Director Clough stated that if we have a shelter in place order they need to have a plan as to what to do with non-essential staff. CA Libby stated that she will be sending out a memo to department heads asking how they will handle this. What employees can work from home, can they work a full schedule, reduced schedule or can they not work remotely. She asked the Commissioners for guidance. They also need to ask the question do they lay off non-essential employees for two (2) weeks. CA Libby stated that many private businesses are laying people off but many schools and public entities are paying their employees. She explained that the County is budgeted to pay their employees through June. The money is already accounted for but they need to decide how they are going to tackle this. HR Director Clough stated that they are also seeing from departments that not as much work is coming in due to these various closures. Commissioner Morris stated that as a governmental body they are responsible to keep the wheels moving and not let things collapse. She thinks they need to keep paying employees as long as they can. As dangerous as this virus is, the economic collapse is just as dangerous. CA Libby stated that there are little things they are trying to do for employees to show appreciation and let them know they are being thought of. HR Director Clough stated that they need to make sure these positive enforcements are coming regularly. Commissioner Piper stated that this is budgeted for and feels they should continue to compensate their employees who are considered non-essential. CA Libby stated that NACo is trying to advocate to get the counties included in the new tax credit stimulus package. As of right now the County will not get reimbursed for the extended leave and family leave that we will be required to pay. She noted that County Administrators will be doing weekly phone calls to help share information. She stated that the majority of the County Attorney's Office is working remotely, Alternative Sentencing is mostly working remotely and her staff just implemented a plan to have some work remotely as well. CA Libby stated that NHA Labore has asked if there are employees who are deemed non-essential in other departments to ask if any would be willing to help at the Nursing Home. HR Director stated that her staff is helping serving meals at the Nursing Home. They will continue to figure

out a plan and know that things are changing day by day. They will do what they do to adapt. The Commissioners thanked CA Libby, HR Director Clough and all of the staff members for all of their hard work.

Commissioner Lauer asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the March 12th budget meeting and the March 17th meeting.

MOTION: Commissioner Morris moved to approve the minutes from the March 12th Budget meeting. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”, Commissioner Piper “yes”, Commissioner Morris “yes”. Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted “yes” and the motion passes.

MOTION: Commissioner Morris moved to approve the minutes from the March 17th meeting. Commissioner Piper seconded the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”, Commissioner Piper “yes”, Commissioner Morris “yes”. Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted “yes” and the motion passes.

The Commissioners signed check registers 42; 1137; 1139-1141.

IDN Payment – CA Libby stated that she received a bill in the mail from the State to pay by Friday but she was under the impression she was waiting for an MOU before a payment is made. Commissioner Piper stated that she has not heard anything about this. She stated that there hasn't been any word on finalizing the MOU. She stated that she would contact Kate Horgan at NHAC and get more information.

CA Libby stated that Director Andross has submitted a Bid Waiver Request for the purchase and installation of the planned upgrade of their Dispatch audio recorder system. This project was planned for FY20 and will upgrade their existing recorder system to a supported model while continuing crucial functionality. In the letter Director Andross states that after doing some research of their options and receiving some preliminary quotations, he would like to continue their relationship with their current provider, EXACOM, Inc. and have them upgrade their system to their newest H4 edition. This will allow them to keep their existing integration with their Motorola console system intact without incurring additional reconfiguration costs from the radio vendors. The EXACOM quote for this project is \$26,289.55. This project was planned for FY20 and funding is available in the Dispatch Capital Reserve expenditures. Work will be done by EXACOM, a Concord-NH based company. Andross noted that EXACOM has provided both their in-house recording solution as well as those in their Mobile Communications Unit vehicles for some time

MOTION: Commissioner Morris moved to waive bid on the purchase and installation of the Dispatch Audio Recorder System and accept EXACOM's quote of \$26,289.55. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion and all were in favor. Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”, Commissioner Piper “yes”, Commissioner Morris “yes”. Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted “yes” and the motion passes.

Health Insurance Rates – CA Libby stated that the County’s GMR was set at 4.4%. They received their final set rates for FY 21 and their insurance rates will be increasing .8%. She stated that the rates are virtually staying the same. She will be redoing the budgets that have been submitted with the new numbers and the Nursing Home budget will be presented with updated numbers.

Sheriff’s Department Request – Staffing – CA Libby stated that in the course of discussions last week to restrict access or close down buildings, Sheriff Stiegler stated that the majority of his Court Security Officers are almost all are over 70 and he has decided that he doesn’t want them screening people who come in to the Courthouse. Sheriff Stiegler is currently using Special Deputies to staff the front door. CA Libby explained that they get a \$108/day reimbursement from the State of New Hampshire for that purpose and that is what people are paid to perform that duty so it is a wash item. Sheriff Stiegler has stated that he would like to staff his full time Deputies and not the Special Deputies at the front door as they are seeing a decrease in their workloads. They are not doing much for transports or civil service. The Courts have requested that someone from the Sheriff’s Department be present in the Courtroom for any in person hearings as well as video arraignments. He is requesting that they be paid at their normal rate of pay. CA Libby stated that they will get the reimbursement of \$108 to offset that and will not be using any Special Deputies. The Commissioners agreed that this make sense and they need to protect their full time employees.

Financial Implications – COVID 19 – CA Libby stated that she has gone through financial reports from February and noted that things look very good this year. This time of year she explained that she does projections for what the surplus will be for the end of the year. She is not sure how to look at this given everything that is currently going on. She stated that the Nursing Home has stopped all admissions and taken nine (9) beds offline and designated an area for potential COVID 19 patients. She is going to try to project this in a few different scenarios but noted to the Commissioners that this will take a hit on the County’s revenue over the next few months.

Future Meetings – CA Libby stated that Emergency Order #12 Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, the Governor is encouraging to use the emergency order and meet remotely as much as possible. She stated that they will still need to provide public access by phone and have to post the meeting. They will have to adjourn the meeting if the public isn’t able to participate. The Commissioners discussed their meeting schedule and how they want to have meetings moving forward. CA Libby noted that the budget also needs to be taken care of. The Commissioners agreed to only meet on Thursdays for their budget meetings in April and will address any normal Commissioner business that will need to be taken care of during their budget meeting. CA Libby stated that if an extra meeting is needed she can post it 24 hours in advance and they can meet remotely.

CA Libby stated that she appreciates the leeway from the Commissioners to make decisions on the fly as she needs to. She stated that she will not be making any large decisions without letting them know

10:33 AM With no further business the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Morris', with a large, decorative flourish at the end.

Marcia Morris,
Clerk