

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET MEETING
3855 Dartmouth College Highway
North Haverhill, NH 03774
March 25, 2021

PRESENT: Commissioners Piper, Lauer, Ahern, County Administrator Dorsett, Finance Director Libby and Administrative Assistant Norcross.

OTHERS PRESENT: County Attorney Hornick, Office Administrator Evans, Maintenance Superintendent Oakes, IT Manager Ruggles.

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

1. County Attorney's Office – County Attorney Hornick, Office Administrator Evans

A. Revenue

1. VAWA & VOCA Grants – Atty. Hornick stated that these grants are set amounts they will receive.
2. Circuit Court Prosecution – Atty. Hornick explained that this revenue is for Atty. Bartlett. This number is a wash. She explained that they tell the towns that he provides services for what the cost is and they are reimbursed monthly for 100% of the expenses. Commissioner Ahern stated that he is concerned with all budgets he has seen. He is concerned with counties doing things that are outside the traditional realm. As he goes through the IT Department, he is seeing a lot of computer equipment tagged to the IT dept. He is going to be requesting that all IT equipment be budgeted to the individual departments and not under IT. Atty. Hornick noted that most County Attorney's Offices do have Circuit Court Prosecutors under their umbrella. Atty. Bartlett's position is not anything new or different.
3. Roving Advocate Grant – Atty. Hornick stated that Karen Stewart was hired to oversee this grant. She has received permission to apply for this grant again and the number has increased because they are expanding the roving advocates.

B. Expense

County Attorney's Office

1. Clerical – Atty. Hornick stated that they have reduced some overtime hours. They also had funding for a part time file clerk, which they have removed. Commissioner Ahern stated that he would like to know how many clerical staff and Attorneys are in the office. Atty. Hornick stated that she will get that to them.

2. Investigative Services – Atty. Hornick explained that Detective Fortier retired two (2) years ago and at the time, she did not fill the position, as they did not find the quality to fill it at that time. She stated that they are now looking to fill that position again as it has become a critical need.
3. Education and Conference – Atty. Hornick stated that since the pandemic hit many trainings went online and they were able to reduce the training costs. They tried to find the middle ground for the upcoming year and feel \$4,000 will be sufficient for what they will need.
4. Expert Costs – Atty. Hornick explained that it is hard to estimate this line. The cases that did not go to trial this year due to Covid are set to go in the upcoming fiscal year and they will need to expend these expert costs.
5. Sexual Violent Predator – This is a challenge to predict whether they will need it or how much it will cost.
6. Dues and Licenses – Atty. Hornick explained that all of these licenses and dues are required for them to do their jobs. Commissioner Piper asked if it is the custom in all of government, municipal or state for the taxpayers to pay the dues and if someone is working for a private law firm if they pay the dues. Atty. Hornick stated that across the state, bar dues are paid for. Part of this is the exchange for accepting a lower level pay, these options are included to make the offers better.
7. Litigation Expenses – Atty. Hornick stated that the County would have to pay for witnesses that may come out of state. The Attorney General’s Office used to pay for these but it has been taken out of their budget.
8. Postage – This may decrease as they are not mailing as much but they are hesitant to decrease this line anymore because there are many big cases coming up that will require mailing.
9. Travel Expenses – This line has decreased due to having done more online. Those numbers are starting to increase again due to things opening back up.
10. VAWA Grant

This grant pays for \$30,000 of this specific budget. They have an attorney who is partially paid under this grant.

11. Victim Witness

FD Libby explained that the Victim Witness Program budget is split up into two (2) budgets. One is for the part of the budget that is grant funded and then the rest that is not grant funded. Commissioner Piper asked how long the program has been here. FD Libby stated that the program is at least 30 years old. Commissioner Piper stated that she shares the concern that

there is an incentive to begin such programs coming from the federal government but Grafton County is not a wealthy county. Her philosophical concern is that they get the grant money to start the program but then it grows or it does not pay all the expenses and taxpayers pick up the costs. She stated that she does not lack compassion for victims but asked what this program does. Atty. Hornick stated that this program helps define the criminal justice system for a victim. The victim's world has been turned upside down by a crime and this program helps them navigate the criminal justice system.

12. Roving Advocate Grant

Atty. Hornick stated that former Atty. Saffo had applied for this in October 2018. This three (3) year grant supplies an advocate in rural areas for victims of sexual and domestic violence.

13. Medical Referee

Atty. Hornick explained that this number has been increasing over the years. These are services of those who show up at unattended/untimely incidents and provide reports.

2. Maintenance – Superintendent Oakes

Supt. Oakes handed out the following summary of his FY22 budget.

FY21 Overall Budget (before allocations) - **\$2,319,230**
FY22 Overall Budget (before allocations) - **\$2,419,251**
(Difference **\$100,021** / Overall Increase **4.31%**)

- A. **Wages & Benefits (accounts 001 – 130)** are up based on hiring one new full-time Maintenance Assistant and giving merit increases to eligible employees. A decrease in health insurance offset the increase due to a change in employees and healthcare choices.
- B. **Contract Maintenance (accounts 291 – 299)** are up across the board due to inflationary costs and more expensive reoccurring maintenance requirements that are due this year. Examples are listed below.
 - Automatic Transfer Switch (ATS) Preventative Maintenance (PM)
 - Generators are due major PM this year
 - Starting a new Building Automation System PM program and JACE licensing requirements
 - More frequent pumping of in-ground grease traps
- C. **Electricity (accounts 619 – 627)** GV rates are up slightly and G rates are down slightly due to ongoing tariff structure changes. Most buildings have experienced stable kWh usage.

Exception

- Courthouse (account 620) is estimated to increase 30,000 kWh based on an increase in outside air to mitigate Covid-19 concerns, resulting also in elevated mechanical cooling and heating costs.
- D. **Water (accounts 629 – 638)** despite a 5% rate hike projected for January 2022, decreased water use will keep costs flat.

- E. **Sewage (accounts 639 – 647)** despite a 5% rate hike projected for January 2022, decreased water use will keep costs flat.
- F. **Fuels (accounts 649 – 658)** costs in propane and diesel will increase but will be offset by slight reductions in propane and wood chip usage.
- G. **Repair & Maintenance (accounts 805 – 838)** are slightly up due to inflationary costs or increased contingency for unexpected repairs.

Exception – Account 812 is down significantly since we have no planned flooring replacement plans as we did in FY22.

Commissioner Piper asked if there are repairs budgeted for in the farm buildings that would overlap with farmdoc or would be unnecessary if steps were taken to implement FarmDoC. Supt. Oakes stated that they have some structural repairs they are looking to complete but nothing that would pertain to FarmDoC.

Commissioner Ahern asked Supt. Oakes if he is planning to implement FarmDoC in his budget. He asked if there is there any money. Supt. Oakes stated that there is nothing targeted to that document in his budget program.

Commissioner Ahern noted that he would be voting against a new Kubota vehicle in the capital budget. .

3. Farm – Manager Nelson

A. Revenue

1. **Sale of Milk** – FM Nelson stated that the projection is a little over \$17/hundredweight and therefore that is what he has budgeted for.
2. **Sale of Livestock** – FM Nelson stated that his six (6) month numbers are up but some of these sales will not be duplicated in FY22 and he feels they should air on the side of caution.
3. **Sale of Wood** – This is a very rough estimate, as Jim Frohn, the County Forester, has not marked trees for the timber sale yet.
4. **Sale of Produce** –FM Nelson stated that he anticipating less revenue from the Farmstand as they are not planting the normal amount of vegetables this upcoming year.

B. Expense

1. **Seed, Fertilizer & Spray** - FM Nelson stated that based on what he is seeing on petroleum prices increasing he has increased this line as well as fertilizer tends to follow those prices.

2. Bedding & Sawdust – They have switched companies for their bedding and sawdust, which is a lower cost.
3. Feed, Swine – FM Nelson explained that he is going to supplement the slop with feed to get the pigs more nutrients and has budgeted accordingly for that.
4. Farm Stand Expense – Commissioner Lauer stated that they are reducing the farm stand so significantly and asked what they will still need \$7,500 for. FM Nelson stated that he broke out costs for growing potatoes specifically and the spray. This line is the cost of the production of the vegetables.

C. Capital Outlay

1. Mower – FM Nelson stated that their mower is a 2002 and has a lot of use. He is budgeting \$30,000 with a \$5,000 trade in for a total of \$25,000.
2. Interlocking Rubber Mats for Calving Pens – FM Nelson stated that he has budgeted \$3,500 for these mats, which will give the cows more comfort and footing when they are getting up.

4. IT – Manager Ruggles

A. Expenses

1. PC Support/LAN Tech – ITM Ruggles stated that this increase of \$3,000 is based on step increases.
2. Education & Conference – ITM Ruggles stated that he has not used any to date. He has carried over the same figure for FY22 and he can remove that if need be.
3. Contracted Services – This line has an increase due to the email software project for the County Attorney’s Office.

B. Department Requests

ITM Ruggles reviewed the list of various IT requests from the departments with the Commissioners and answered questions.

Software Maintenance & Renewal – ITM Ruggles explained that the \$236,000 increase is due to Director Andross putting in a request to replace his Dispatch software. Director Andross stated that the growth of the police departments being served has become a nightmare and they have issues with security, as the current software is very old software. Commissioner Piper asked what would happen if this expense were not approved. Director Andross explained that it is not just Dispatch, but it is also 11 police departments including the Sheriff’s Department and their record keeping and any issues they have with this software affects these eleven (11) agencies. He stated what would happen is ITM Ruggles and himself

would keep their fingers crossed that nothing goes wrong. Director Andross noted that they would like to be on this system by August and that Dispatch anticipates recouping some of these costs in their Dispatch billing system. Director Andross further discussed the software with the Commissioners and answered questions.

C. Capital Requests

1. ITM Ruggles discussed his capital outlay requests with the Commissioners noting that there are yearly payments that come out of his Capital budget. He stated that he is on the 3rd and final payment of their scale server cluster and the final payment on the Window Server 2019 Licenses.
2. New Scale 3 Node Server Cluster 2021 – ITM Ruggles stated that this cluster went down last year with a generator issue. He explained that IT is holding on to equipment longer than they should. The total cost for this cluster is \$113,000, which will add additional capacity. The IT Department will need this expansion for a safety net and buffer. ITM Ruggles stated that if something crashes, the IT Department will lose servers and that will not be good.
3. Video Conference Cart for Hosting Video Meetings – ITM Ruggles explained that this system would be for the Administration Building. This system has a 65-inch touch screen television bolted to a cart on wheels that can be moved around the building. It has an operating system that would allow communication with Zoom, Lifesize, among others without being stuck with one (1) vendor. He stated that this has a built in camera as well. He stated that he hopes the pandemic ends soon but having the ability to hold video conferencing meetings has become part of the “new” way of doing things and the IT Department only had a system that has been pieced together. Commissioner Lauer stated that the alternative to purchasing this cart would be to continue to suffer with their current set up. Commissioner Piper asked how much suffering the current set up has been causing. FD Libby stated that during big meetings people on Zoom are unable to hear or see the Commissioners. She stated that she also believes this purchase may be able to be made from the Covid funds they will be receiving.

12:17 PM with no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Omer C. Ahern, Jr
Clerk