

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONER BUDGET MEETING  
3855 Dartmouth College Highway  
North Haverhill, NH 03774  
April 16<sup>th</sup> 2020

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Alternative Sentencing Director DePalo, Alex Nuti-de Biasi – Journal Opinion

Commissioner Lauer called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and read the following statement:

As Chair of the Grafton County Commissioners, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is a physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting. In accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

a) Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means:

We are utilizing Lifesize for this electronic meeting. All members of the Commission have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through attending at the physical location.

b) Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting. The meeting notice is also provided on the website of the Commission at [www.co.grafton.nh.us](http://www.co.grafton.nh.us).

Please note that all votes that are being taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law.

Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Lauer stated "yes" and there is no one in the room with her during this meeting. Commissioner Piper stated "yes" and there is no one in the

room with her during this meeting. Commissioner Morris stated “yes” and there is no one in the room with her during this meeting.

Director DePalo arrived to discuss a request with the Commissioners. Director DePalo stated that she was approached by the Juvenile Court Diversion Network and asked if they would be willing to start a program in Coos County. Currently Coos County has one (1) program in Berlin run by the Police Department and they do not want to sustain it any longer. Grafton County has offered to take over all of Coos County utilizing Zoom Meetings, Lifesize, electronic meetings with juveniles and help the build a program like Grafton County’s. Director DePalo stated that she is here to explain to the Commissioners what that program would look like and get their permission to move forward.

Director DePalo stated that she has requested a part time position within her budget to assist in the Grafton County Juvenile Program which would leave her available to assist Coos County, their Commissioners, Police Departments and Schools with getting their referrals up. She stated that she feels that Coos County is currently in a place of disservice because there is no Restorative Justice Program for first time offenders; therefore, they are being charged. She stated that they would run the program the same way Grafton County does. They would conduct panels; there are currently panel members in Berlin area. The New Hampshire Court Diversion Network is offering money to use for mileage, any overnight stays needed. She is going to be looking to meet with the different Police Departments and schools to ensure they understand that this is now an option, also how to refer clients and how to do the follow up with clients. The RFP just came out from the state for monies for the juvenile programs. They can request up to \$40,000 for each accredited program. She noted that they have been getting \$20,000 for each program. The Diversion Network is going to work to accredit Coos County underneath Grafton County’s accreditation so Director DePalo can write for both locations. She stated that Grafton County would receive funds from both locations for SBIRT screenings. Commissioner Piper stated that it she understands from Director DePalo that monies are available from the Diversion Network from the state. She asked Director DePalo if she thinks that extending Grafton County’s program into Coos County would cost Grafton County money. Director DePalo stated that it would not cost any money. The goal would be to help run the program for a year or two (2) until she can assist the Coos County Commissioners to establish the program on their own. Commissioner Piper asked id Director DePalo being able to do this would be dependent on Director DePalo getting the part time position funded that she has requested in her FY21 budget. Director DePalo stated that she thinks she can do this without her new request for a part time position. It would be extremely helpful to have that position only because there is so much outreach that needs to be done in Grafton County but does not feel it will hinder her being able to do this work. Commissioner Lauer asked if Coos County has offered any financial compensation for Grafton County taking over their program. Director DePalo stated that Coos County does not have a program. Berlin Police Department started a program and currently have roughly twenty-two (22) juveniles but they do not want to maintain the program. It looks like they want to give the program up to Grafton County and then Grafton County would close out those cases and receive those SBIRT funds. Commissioner Piper asked if this is something they can give her an answer on after they have had time to look at the budget. Director DePalo stated that the goal would be, if this were approved, to have a plan in place by May so they can put out more funding for the Juvenile Programs so they can give Grafton County more money and they need time to

put that together before her budget gets passed. She has a strong belief that her current staff can take over the Grafton County juveniles if need be if they were not given that new part time position. Director DePalo stated that she is excited to educate the Coos County Commissioners about this because she feels that it is a disservice for a County. This is Grafton County starting the program for Coos because they don't have the education and ability to do it. The goal is to get the streamline program in place and then have the Commissioners hire the people they need for the program and take it over. It is helping them get started, it is not long term or permanent. Commissioner Lauer stated that she is ready to support this, Commissioner Morris stated that she would like to see things in writing. Commissioner Piper agreed, noting that she wants to support this, but it is a big extension and she is hesitant to support it without having boundaries on it, that would state this is a transitional program and have conditions put in place. She wants to be sure that Grafton County tax payers are not picking any additional costs. Director DePalo ensured the Commissioners that there are no additional costs and in the time being it will bring in a little extra revenue.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Piper moved to approve the proposal from Director DePalo. Commissioner Morris seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Piper "yes", Commissioner Morris "yes", Commissioner Lauer "yes". Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted "yes" and the motion passes.

Commissioner Lauer asked if everyone had a chance to read the minutes from the April 9<sup>th</sup> Budget meeting. Commissioner Piper had a couple of grammatical edits.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Piper moved to approve the minutes from the April 9<sup>th</sup> Budget meeting as amended. Commissioner Morris seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Piper "yes", Commissioner Morris "yes", Commissioner Lauer "yes". Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted "yes" and the motion passes.

CA Libby sent the Commissioners the check registers that are in need of approval.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Morris moved to approve check registers 46; 1154-1155. Commissioner Piper seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Piper "yes", Commissioner Morris "yes", Commissioner Lauer "yes". Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted "yes" and the motion passes.

White Mountain Forest Contract – CA Libby stated that this is \$12,000 for the Sheriff's Department to patrol the White Mountain National Forest generally in the Lincoln area and is in need of Commissioner approval.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Piper moved to approve the White Mountain Forest Contract. Commissioner Morris seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Piper "yes", Commissioner Morris "yes", Commissioner Lauer "yes".

Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted “yes” and the motion passes.

CA Libby submitted a drawdown request for NHARDC in the amount of \$60,121.00 for Commissioner Lauer to sign. Commissioner Lauer gave approval for CA Libby to use her signature stamp.

CA Libby submitted a list of appropriation transfers in the amount \$45,370. She stated that there is nothing out of the ordinary and she is hoping that these transfers will take care of these accounts through the rest of the fiscal year.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Piper moved to approve the appropriation transfers in the amount of \$45,370. Commissioner Morris seconded the motion. Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Piper “yes”, Commissioner Morris “yes”, Commissioner Lauer “yes”. Commissioner Lauer stated that the majority of the board voted “yes” and the motion passes.

CA Libby stated that March continued to be a good month for them financially, they didn’t see any reductions in the revenue.

CA Libby stated that it has been requested by the NHAC to put together a list of expenses and lost revenues through June 30<sup>th</sup>. Tomorrow there will be a presentation on the counties needs to access the \$1.25 billion that the State of New Hampshire is receiving from the third Coronavirus Stimulus package. She stated that they are working on breaking out all costs associated with COVID -19 as well as breaking out overtime costs and absences.

CA Libby stated that she also sat in on four (4) conference calls yesterday. Governor Sununu announced the \$300 stipend for front line workers, they are still waiting on details. They know it is \$300 a week for full time employees and \$150 for part time. She explained the steps they are taking to set up that stipend for their employees. She noted that they still have no positive COVID – 19 cases at this point in time. They continue to get by and do the best they can with what they have.

Commissioner Piper stated that she was on the NHAC Executive Committee conference call to get the New Hampshire counties to sign onto a letter written by NACO to amend legislation for the 4<sup>th</sup> stimulus package so counties under 500,000 people can be included.

### Budget Discussion

CA Libby emailed the Commissioners a budget summary document outlining where they are currently at with the budget, potential additions and adjustments that have been made since their last meeting.

CA Libby stated that Dispatch has added \$180,000 back into their revenue. Director Andross came up with a new formula that reduced the billing but not by the full \$415,000. Commissioner

Piper stated that she does not want to let go of any of this revenue. She asked how urgent is this and why do they need to do this. CA Libby stated that the revenue is going to be at least \$60,000 less because Woodstock has left which is what has prompted this whole discussion. Woodstock left because they got a financially better deal. Director Andross is afraid towns are going to start risking public safety for to save money. She stated that Grafton County is the only County that bills the towns. Director Andross wants this to be a starting point to show the towns they are working towards not billing them but they can't do this all in one year. Commissioner Morris stated that she has heard complaints for years from people in her area about the cost of dispatch services. She likes the direction they are heading in and feels that this will require much more discussion as they move forward. Commissioner Piper said that she was grateful to Commissioner Morris for this additional information. In her own District, Commissioner Piper said, she has not heard these complaints and so was unaware that there was an issue with Dispatch fees in some towns. She would now support this decrease in revenue proposed by Director Andross

CA Libby stated that she has increased proshare revenue \$150,000 to help offset the bed tax increase.

CA Libby stated that when she tried to project their surplus she is showing a \$7.3 million total fund balance at the end of FY '20. She is comfortable going from using \$1.6 million they used last year to reduce taxes to \$2 million this year. She stated that they will have to think about the possibility of what is going to happen if towns can't pay their taxes in December. This makes for a \$400,000 reduction. Commissioner Lauer agreed with the increase stating that this is not the year to gain ground on the fund balance, this is the year to try and stay level. CA Libby stated that they still haven't decided on a COLA. She thinks 2% is fair at this point. She explained that her thoughts on the COLA have changed and feel that their employees are still employed and many of them are receiving stimulus checks as well. Commissioner Lauer stated that she would hate to go below that but this is not the year to do much better. Commissioner Piper stated that she thinks that 2% is reasonable given the potential for hazard pay along with the other factors they have discussed.

CA Libby shared with the Commissioners some thoughts on possible reductions in the budget. She stated that she thinks that they should not fund three (3) new MNAs in the Nursing Home budget because right now they have 3.8 FTE MNA positions. They are not using the positions they have currently and it's not reasonable to think in this environment they are going to become fully staffed. That is \$156,000 that can be reduced. CA Libby stated that a second thought is they should reduce the amount of contract nursing services and tell the nursing home that they need to try to work within those limits. Commissioner Piper stated that she and the Executive Committee have been told repeatedly this is an unavoidable expense. She doesn't know how to explain the expense differently from the information that she's been given regarding the need for contract nurses. CA Libby suggested reducing by \$100,000. She understands they need the staff but they also need to work harder at thinking of other solutions. She noted another county in the state is giving an incentive for working overtime and that has their own staff filling in the shifts rather than contract nurses. The vacant FTE's don't match the amount they are spending on contract nursing. CA Libby stated that they need to have an in-depth conversation with NHA Labore. Commissioner Morris stated that she would like to talk to NHA Labore before they finalize this

piece. The Commissioners agreed and CA Libby stated that she will schedule NHA Labore to meet with them at their next meeting.

CA Libby stated that she has sent NHA Labore's revised capital requests. They had \$150,000 to contribute to the capital reserve and that has been decreased to \$100,000. CA Libby stated that they are at a \$306,562.00 decrease as of right now. If they add \$400,00 to surplus, give a 2% COLA and reduce the budget by \$306,000 that would leave them at a 3.6% tax increase.

Commissioner Piper stated that she wants to have conversations about other things and wants to get the increase down lower than that. She noted a concern about the Unit Managers stating that she is not sure about them. NHA Labore stated last year that these positions were essential and yet they have never been filled. He has asked for those positions to remain in case a new Director of Nursing wants to work with that model. Commissioner Piper stated that they are having trouble even hiring a DON. She stated that with respect, she feels the Nursing Home budget is sometimes a wish list and she does not think that it is any different this year. NHA Labore has said that the candidate he has spoken with for DON had used a Unit Manager model and that is his reason for leaving them in. She does not support them in this budget; they have not had them. Commissioner Lauer stated that it seems they are doing fine without them and they can't hire them anyways. The Commissioners all agreed to not fund the Unit Manager positions.

Commissioner Piper stated that she still thinks there's items open for discussion. The Sheriff has a lot of capital expenses and seems like some of them are smaller. Commissioner Lauer stated that she questions the \$11,000 in office furniture and space configuration when they are looking at a change in the courthouse in the near future and asks if they will have different plans after that happens. Commissioner Morris stated that thinks this will have a big change in their office for little costs and supports it.

CA Libby also stated that they need to consider what is going to happen with milk prices as that will have a big impact on the Farm revenue.

Commissioner Piper stated that she does not feel the HR Wage Study across the board for every position in the County is going to change the efficiency or happiness in which they function and feels they can put it off a year. Commissioner Lauer stated that she agrees, the study needs to be done and is important but feels a one-year delay won't hurt. Commissioner Morris also noted that she thinks so many things can change this year given what is going on and maybe putting this off one year would be better.

Commissioner Piper asked Commissioner Morris if she wanted to discuss social service funding for the Upper Valley Haven. After Commissioner Morris' remarks, the Commissioners agreed to provide funding to the Haven.

The Commissioners discussed the shift differentials and agreed to not increase them this year.

CA Libby stated that she will send a revised comparison spreadsheet and note additional things they need to talk about. She will schedule NHA Labore for next Thursday to discuss his budget

with the Commissioners. She stated that she will also get back to both the Employee Council and Union with the 2% COLA.

10:56 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.

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Marcia Morris,  
Clerk