

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET MEETING
3855 Dartmouth College Highway
North Haverhill, NH 03774
April 8th 2021

PRESENT: Commissioners Piper, Lauer, Ahern, County Administrator Dorsett, Finance Director Libby and Administrative Assistant Norcross.
Commissioner Piper called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

A. Budget Hearings

FD Libby submitted a spreadsheet of the budget as presented by the department heads and discussed it with the Commissioners. She stated that the expense budget has a .37% increase over last year or \$178,450.00. She stated that department heads did a good job bringing the Commissioners an almost level funded expense budget despite the increases in the retirement and health insurance. She noted that the bad news is the loss in revenue, which has created a 7.67% tax increase due to the loss in revenue. Commissioner Lauer asked if some of the loss of revenue is recoverable with the American Rescue Act. FD Libby stated that they have not received guidance from the Treasury as to how they are allowed to use that money and how they calculate their losses but she believes some of it may be able to be recouped with that money. FD Libby asked the Commissioners what they wanted to do in terms of their public hearing date. She explained that they could push the public hearing date back and wait for the guidance from the Treasury, which would allow them to form a more accurate budget or they can present the budget without that information and state that they are waiting to hear from guidance on how the American Rescue Act money can be used.

Commissioner Lauer stated that she is in favor of pushing the public hearing back, which would allow them to have a chance to get guidance and form a more complete and accurate budget. If they do not wait, this would give the public a possible inaccurate number for their budget. Commissioner Piper and Commissioner Ahern were both in agreement.

FD Libby stated that she attended a meeting to go over Grafton County's projected proshare payment for this year and noted that it is estimated to be higher this year than last year at this point. They are potentially looking at \$3.4 million this year.

FD Libby requested to go into nonpublic session to discuss personnel.

MOTION: * 9:34 AM Commissioner Ahern moved to enter into non-public session for the purposes of the dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her, unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a meeting and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted according to RSA 91-A: 3, II (a) Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Lauer "yes"; Commissioner Ahern "yes" Commissioner Piper "yes" Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the board voted "yes" and would now go into non-public session.

* 10:43 AM Commissioner Piper declared the meeting back in public session.

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to permanently seal the minutes from the just completed non-public session because they could affect the reputation of someone other than those of the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion. Commissioner Piper called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes” Commissioner Ahern “yes” Commissioner Piper “yes”. Commissioner Piper stated that a majority of the bo

Commissioner Piper stated that they are tentatively looking at a 2% COLA and no step increase. She is in favor of no new positions this year well, which would include new positions in Dispatch, Attorney’s Office and Maintenance.

B. Dispatch

1. Education and Conference – The Commissioners agreed to decrease this line by \$4,000 down to \$10,000
2. Remote Storage Rental – FD Libby noted that this \$15,000 is for the mobile communications trailer. She stated that this is being stored somewhere where they provide dispatch services for and they have given them reduced fees as a payment for the storage. She said that she would like to discuss that with Director Andross and if they plan to move it elsewhere, where they will need the full \$15,000 in this line.

C. Sheriff Department

1. Forensic Investigation – Commissioner Piper stated that there is no revenue budget to offset this increase in software expenses. The Commissioners have agreed that Sheriff Stiegler needs to charge fees for agencies outside of Grafton County to offset these costs and they have not received an answer from him. CA Dorsett stated that he has spoken with and received an email from Sheriff Stiegler stating that their department receives the equipment from the Secret Service but they may take the equipment back if the county is using it to create revenue. Commissioner Piper stated given the extremely full discussion with the Sheriff regarding this topic she will not support this increase until the revenue is figured out. Commissioner Ahern asked if this really an essential requirement that the Sheriff provide this service. Commissioner Lauer stated that she would support leaving it in right now but also pushing the fee structure. It is a very valuable asset and she would hate to see it lost because of a delay in getting a fee structure set in place. She feels she would be punishing the individuals of Grafton County because of the delay of response from one (1) person. The Commissioners agreed that they need answers when they meet again in two (2) weeks. Commissioner Ahern stated that he is not sure if Grafton County can justify doing this, it should be done by other agencies. CA Dorsett stated that from a financial standpoint, if the service isn’t done by the County, the County would bring devices to an entity that does and there are expenses to that as well, which could cost more than doing it inhouse. FD Libby stated that in her opinion, it is such a benefit that they can do it on a regional level, the communities can come to the county, they have one of the best people in the country that knows how to do it. There is a very valuable piece to serving the county as a whole in what they do at the Sheriff’s Department and they can

do it in a much more cost efficient way the individual community. Commissioner Piper stated that she agrees it is extremely valuable service but believes there should fees required.

The Commissioners scheduled another budget meeting next Thursday the 15th and stated that they will have Sheriff Stiegler in to discuss these issues with him along with other department heads that they may have questions for.

2. Education and Conference – Commissioner Piper stated that the leadership training is not a state mandate. Sheriff Stiegler has instituted this to allow members of his department to excel individually within the department and help them professionally. She does not think that this year she can support this cost.
3. Capital Outlay

Commissioner Piper stated that she does not support the less lethal equipment purchase in this budget and does not feel it is a need this year. Commissioner Ahern agreed.

D. Human Resources

Contract Svc and Pay Structure – Commissioner Piper discussed the \$40,000 for a wage study that is included in this line. She stated that she is going to question the part of the wage study that analyzes current pay practices, pay guidelines, policies and compensation structure. She feels that this is not necessary this year and feels the overwhelming bulk of this study is to remain competitive and she feels that is a want this year and not necessarily a need. FD Libby stated if the County is looking to possibly reevaluate its pay structure, the County needs to know that they are competitive and have done all of their research before potentially changing employees' pay structure, rather than using five (5) year old information. It makes sense to wrap it all up into one (1) comprehensive study and say to their employees these are the outcomes and this is what we are going to implement these changes in FY23. Commissioner Lauer agreed stating that if they revise the whole grade and step system they cannot use existing pay and grade systems. The Commissioners agreed to have HR Director Clough come to their meeting next week to further discuss.

11:57 AM with no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Omer C. Ahern, Jr
Clerk