

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' BUDGET MEETING
3855 Dartmouth College Highway
North Haverhill, NH 03774
May 3rd 2018

PRESENT: Commissioners Lauer, Ahern and Piper, County Administrator Libby, Admin. Asst. Norcross.

OTHERS PRESENT: HR Director Clough

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

CA Libby requested to go into nonpublic session.

MOTION: * 9:00 AM – Commissioner Piper moved to enter into non-public session for the purposes of discussing the dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee according to RSA 91-A:3, II (a) Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. This motion requires a roll call vote, Commissioner Lauer called the roll. Commissioner Lauer “yes”; Commissioner Ahern “yes”; Commissioner Piper “yes” Commissioner Lauer stated that a majority of the board voted “yes” and would now go into non-public session.

* Commissioner Lauer declared the meeting back in public session.

MOTION: 9:49 AM Commissioner Piper 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 Ahern seconded the motion and all were in favor.

CA Libby handed out an updated spreadsheet of the budget and stated they are currently at a 5.4% increase in the amount to be raised by taxes.

The Commissioners reviewed the revenue accounts again and agreed to increase the interest revenue line item by \$10,000 to a total of \$60,000.

Attorney's Office

Commissioner Ahern stated that he feels the attorneys should pay their own dues. Commissioner Piper stated that she wanted a lower tax increase and thought long and hard about the COLA and agreed to the 1.5% but is still looking to trim the budget. The Commissioners agreed to hold off on this decision at this time.

Sheriff's Department & Dispatch

CA Libby stated that she updated the line items that Sheriff Dutile and Director Andross had reduced. In Dispatch these were salary & benefit related line items. She stated that the salary line is now \$622,350.00, the Social Security is now \$58,619.00 and the Retirement line is \$82,641.00

Grafton Regional Development Corp

Commissioner Ahern stated that the \$50,000 that they receive from Grafton County will not make or break them. Commissioner Piper stated that this is a situation where they do not have their fiscal information. She would like to know what other sources of income the GRDC has. She stated that NH's Congressional Delegation had been working to extend and increase the funding of the Northern Borders Regional Commission, which is a funding source for the GRDC. Commissioner Ahern stated that this corporation provides loans which they receive interest on; therefore, they should not need money from Grafton County. Commissioner Piper stated that if they are doing well as indicated in their request she does not know if they need the full \$50,000 from Grafton County. She asked if there are other sources of income. The Commissioners asked if they had always been funded at \$50,000. CA Libby stated that in 2013 they were funded \$40,000, 2014 they went to \$46,000 and then increased back to the \$50,000.

The Commissioners agreed to cut that line item back to \$45,000.

Department of Corrections

The Commissioners took out the \$100 for physicals as the HR Department supplies them.

Farm

CA Libby stated that the Commissioners are going to need to add money to the travel expense line if they plan to send Ben to Michigan to accept the Herd of Excellence award in July. She stated she feels they should increase that line to \$1,000.

Commissioner Ahern discussed the revenue opportunity with the dairy beef project as presented by Mike Lunak. He stated that the feed company will front all the food up front and not expect repayment until you start selling the cattle. Commissioner Lauer stated that she isn't sure how they would adjust the budget accordingly. CA Libby stated that she feels this is something that should be discussed with the Farm Manager prior to any decisions being made. The Commissioners agreed to discuss this with FM Kimball.

Social Services

MOTION: Commissioner Ahern moved to tell the agencies that after this year they will not be receiving county funding. Commissioner Lauer seconded the motion for discussion purposes.

Discussion: Commissioner Lauer stated that as Commissioners they do not have the authority to cut this budget because the Delegation could add it back. She stated that they cannot tell the agencies that their budgets will be cut when they do not know what will happen. Commissioner Piper stated that she will not be supporting this motion.

The Commissioners voted on the motion. Commissioner Ahern was in favor. Commissioner Lauer and Commissioner Piper were in opposition. With the vote being one (1) in favor and two (2) in opposition the motion fails.

Commissioner Piper stated that she advocated for level funding the agencies. Commissioner Ahern stated that some of these organizations can get money from other sources. Some of these agencies are also multimillion dollar agencies who do not need county money. Commissioner

Lauer stated that she does not know what agencies rely on the county and to what extent. She stated that she will support Commissioner Piper in level funding the social services budget but asked that if any of them are still on the board come November that they agree to discuss this funding with the Executive Committee.

Wellness Funding – Commissioner Piper stated that she wants to discuss this line item further. She noted that it is a tight year and a very big selling point on the part of the County Administrator Libby and HR Director Clough with the new insurance was the wellness aspect of it. CA Libby stated that with our claims way up, she feels that we should continue to do all that we can to encourage wellness in conjunction with the options that HealthTrust offers. Commissioner Lauer stated that she feels this is money well spent. Commissioner Piper stated that she thinks generally it is a very good idea but she is looking at taxpayers' dollars. She asked if there has been any measurable outcome to our participation in wellness programs so far and if this has impacted the insurance rates at all. CA Libby stated that they do not have any data on this. She stated that she wouldn't suggest anything for that line item right now.

Capital Outlay

Maintenance – Commissioner Piper stated that she would like to see the paving reduced. Commissioner Ahern agreed. He stated that he is having second thoughts on taking the LED exterior lighting out and he feels that they can wait longer on the paving. Commissioner Lauer noted that she drove around the back side of the complex and does not think it looks horrible. Commissioner Ahern stated that something needs to be cut out of it.

CA Libby stated that she thinks it would benefit them to ask Supt. Oakes about the impact of that cut. Commissioner Lauer agreed. Commissioner Ahern stated that he would like to put the LED Lighting back in as it would save money in the long run. Commissioner Piper stated that she is going to wait until she talks to Supt. Oakes to make any decisions on the LED lighting. Commissioner Ahern stated that he will only agree to put the LED lighting in if there is a significant decrease to the paving.

Commissioner Ahern stated that he does not feel the Farm needs another truck. He considers it a luxury item that is not needed as they have three (3) trucks.

Commissioner Piper discussed the Employee Recognition dinner. She stated that this is a relatively new expense and there are other benefits that the county employees receive that are allocated for in the department head's budgets. She stated that if this is a morale issue, it doesn't appear to help the morale in the nursing home which is what she's heard of since coming on the Board. She stated this is a nice thing to do but there are a lot of things that are nice to do. Commissioner Lauer stated that she has had employees thank her. Commissioner Ahern stated that he feels guilty when the employees thank him for putting on the dinner when it is taxpayers' money. Commissioner Piper stated that in a tough year is this something that the taxpayers should be paying for, especially since it is a fairly new added expense to the budget. CA Libby stated that she feels that she needs to advocate for this. The County spends a lot of money on Social Service agencies that do not benefit employees in any way and hearing that the Commissioners do not want to spend \$5,000 to say thank you to the employees is troubling to her. Commissioner Piper stated that she appreciates the County Administrators passion. She stated that she wishes that Social Service funding would not be repeatedly compared to employee

items in the budget discussion. It is a tough year and everyone has to get their due, employees and residents, generally. Commissioner Lauer stated that in a year when the employees are being asked to pay more in their health insurance and giving them a COLA that is less than the CPI, to take away an event that says thank you is not in the best interest for employee morale and retention. She stated that based on the feedback she has received from that dinner, employees look forward to that dinner, they would take it as a slap in the face if the Commissioners took it away. After further discussion the Commissioners agreed to revisit this item.

Nursing Home

Commissioner Ahern noted that he feels that the nursing home is spending a lot on office supplies.

Commissioner Piper asked if the county is getting its money's worth with the loan forgiveness program. CA Libby stated that they are currently committed to two (2) employees through this program.

In-service Physician – Commissioner Piper stated that she is not sure if this is the year to start this. Commissioner Ahern asked if this training that is being provided to nursing is something they should already be obtaining in their ongoing trainings. The Commissioners asked to have NHA Labore come in and answer some questions.

Health Information Management

Commissioner Ahern stated that this department must be a CMS regulation. CA Libby stated that this is one of the most critical departments in the nursing home. They handle all of the MDS assessments and are critical to the reimbursement the Nursing Home receives from Medicaid and Medicare.

Contract Physician – Commissioner Piper stated that they have been raising this salary \$5,000 per year to get this salary to be competitive once the current physician retires. She stated that she wonders if this can be put off another year. Commissioner Lauer then stated that she wonders if they will need to double this next year if they put it off this year. The Commissioners agreed they will discuss this with NHA Labore.

Beautician Services – Commissioner Piper asked the other Commissioners if their neighbors would want to pay for this service if they were asked. Grafton County taxpayers are paying for it and Medicaid taxpayers are paying for it as well. She stated that she thinks that this is an example of a previous Board of Commissioners making a decision that treats taxpayers money as if it is discretionary income. This is a very kind thing to do but it is charity in the sense that it is an expense that does not benefit county taxpayers, generally, and they should not be treating taxpayer money like discretionary money

MOTION: Commissioner Piper moved to delete the funding for the Beautician services from the Nursing Home budget. Commissioner Ahern seconded the motion. The Commissioners voted on the motion. Commissioner Ahern and Commissioner Piper were in favor. Commissioner Lauer was opposed. With the vote being two (2) in favor and one (1) in opposition the motion passes.

Commissioner Lauer stated that she talked to Tom Andross and as tempting as it is to not fund the Dispatch Capital Reserve fully this year, Director Andross is very concerned about the significant purchases down the road and if the reserve account is not fully funded this year they are going to have a major issue in a year or two. She stated that both Sheriff Datile and Director Andross felt that the Commissioners will be doing the county a disservice by not fully funding it. CA Libby noted that the Commissioners will need to add that money back in the budget as they already cut \$35,000. Commissioner Lauer stated that they need to keep in mind that the Executive Committee can increase or decrease the amount to be contributed. The Commissioners agreed that rather than fully funding it at the level requested, they would recommend that \$30,000 be contributed in fiscal year 2019.

Commissioner Piper stated that she is in favor of level funding the employee recognition dinner and the bar dues in the County Attorney's office.

The Commissioners discussed dates for the public hearing for the FY19 budget. They were all in agreement to set the date for May 23rd at 6pm.

12:45 PM with no further business the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy A. Piper,
Clerk