

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING

Administration Building
3855 Dartmouth College Highway
North Haverhill, NH
June 16, 2020

PRESENT: Representatives Sykes, Stringham, Hennessey, Abel, Maes, Campion, French and Diggs, Commissioner Lauer, Commissioner Piper, Commissioner Morris, County Administrator Libby and Admin. Assistant Norcross,

Rep. Sykes called the meeting to order at 1:00PM

Rep. Sykes read the following statement:

Rep. Stringham called the attendance roll call. Rep. Abel “here” and there is no one in the room with him during this meeting, Rep. Campion “here” and there is no one in the room with her during this meeting, Rep. Diggs “here” and there is no one in the room with her during this meeting, Rep. French “here” and she is at the physical meeting location at the County Complex, Rep. Hennessey “here” and her minor children are with her, Rep. Maes “here” and he is at the physical meeting location at the County Complex, Rep. Stringham “here” and there is no one in the room with him during this meeting, Rep. Sykes “here” and he is at the physical meeting location at the County Complex. Seven (7) members were present and a quorum was declared.

Commissioner Lauer stated that Board of Commissioners voted this morning to increase the amount of surplus to be used to offset taxes from \$2 million to \$3 million. The budget went from a 3.47% increase to a -.49% overall decrease in the amount to be raised by taxes. CA Libby stated that originally in April when she did the surplus projection it was right at the beginning of the COVID 19 pandemic. When she did the estimates at the Nursing Home she took into consideration all the lost revenue they thought they were going to have. She has since increased the Nursing Home projections nearly \$1 million. They have received to date \$706,626 in CARES money that has come directly to the Nursing Home from the federal government. That has currently offset any revenue losses to date. When she estimates expenses three (3) months out she estimates high and her new estimates for projected they are \$750,000 under. That has netted out a \$1.7 million increase in the undesignated fund balance. By doing what they have done that would leave the County with an undesignated fund balance at yearend of \$5.2 million. The Commissioners policy for fund balance is 7%-14% and this puts at 10.7%. This gives the County 2% growth this year which is excellent and gives them room to use the \$3 million to offset taxes which gives them an overall tax decrease for FY21. They have an allocation of \$537,000 from the GOFERR committee for overall county expenditures associated with COVID 19. A new program that was just announced also has \$30 million for long term care facilities for lost revenue and expenses. She stated that they are in a much better position than she thought they would be back in April.

Revenue

Alternative Sentencing – CA Libby stated that they have added the Juvenile Grant of \$30,000 to make a total of \$76,000.

Farm – Sale of Live Stock – CA Libby stated that this line has been increased \$10,000.

Expense

Commissioners' Office

Rep. Stringham stated that he would like to discuss the COLA and the appropriateness of it this year given the circumstances as well as the step increase. He stated that what they see with the step program is that nearly all eligible employees do get a 3% increase annually. He would suggest that the continuous step program and the COLA becomes a built in high inflationary drive in the county budget that they shouldn't have. This system needs to be looked at and suggest some adjustments. He suggested breaking it into tiers for those who make over \$50,000 and those who make under. CA Libby stated that they currently have 407 employees who are on the grade and step system. They have 97 employees maxed out which is roughly 25%. She stated that for all union members at the nursing home, steps are in their contract and cannot be taken away from them. 194 employees are bargaining unit employees and only 22 are maxed out. Rep. Campion stated that given the number of times they have discussed the challenge of recruiting and retaining employees, any message from this group stating they will not continue to give step increases will undermine their ability to retain and hire new employees. She would not support that even if that was something they were able to do.

Rep. Hennessey stated that she did not hear that they would save money by implementing the Kronos software and asked if there were any positions that would not be needed as a result of the increased efficiencies of the program. CA Libby stated that there are no reductions in this budget. This is something they will see the efficiencies as they move forward with the software.

Rep. Stringham stated that they voted down any pay increase for elected officials. He asked what the difference would be if they eliminated the COLA. CA Libby stated that the COLA costs around \$440,000. Rep. Stringham asked what the non-bargaining unit step increase totals are. CA Libby stated that they are just under \$184,000.

Register of Deeds

Rep. Stringham stated that this budget includes bringing in a new employee this summer to train and replace someone retiring at the end of the year. He asked if it is allowed to offer the retiring employee an incentive to retire early. CA Libby stated that they do not have a program like this in place. Rep. Hennessey asked why there is six (6) months of training needed. RD Monahan was present for the meeting and answered the question. RD Monahan stated that she cannot guarantee that someone will be available to fill this job come July 1st and it is not unreasonable to ask from a department who has been maxed out to have another body available during the busiest months which would allow her staff to have their vacations. RD Monahan stated that she wanted

to note for the record that not all workforce is eligible for COLA, she stated that elected officials do not get a COLA.

Information Technology

Rep. Stringham stated that ITM Ruggles had suggested buying software on annual vs 3-year to keep the yearly cost down, there is 15% savings if he were to purchase a 3-year contract.

Sheriff's Department

Rep. Hennessey asked why the Special Deputies line has more than doubled. CA Libby stated that a grant they receive has been broken out differently this year.

Grafton County Economic Development Corporation – Rep. Stringham asked how everyone felt about this program. Rep. Sykes stated that one of the challenges in Grafton County is geography and having an entity devoted to trying to build the economic activity is an important consideration. The expense is low considering the amount of economic activity they bring into the County.

Department of Corrections – Rep. Stringham stated that the incarcerated population in the state has been going down in the last ten (10) years. A new major prison facility for women was made in Concord. He was concerned last year about the County's Department of Corrections. The response to efforts was that there is very little they can do. It takes a certain amount of money to run a facility. Rep. Stringham stated that if he had a motion it would be to ask the Commissioners to look at eliminating the correctional facility and sending inmates elsewhere within the next year. He was disappointed that there wasn't a proposal to close part of the facility. He would highly suggest to the Commissioners if they can't downsize that they consider moving and contracting out all inmates elsewhere in the state and run a program to coordinate and make sure they are taken care of. Rep Sykes stated that they really need to do something different about this and how do they in fact define what the county's need are. The needs are different than a strict dollars and cents accounting. The prisoner count may be a low based on the court system not being open but this is an obligation of county government. This is not a business decision. Rep. Sykes asked how they would in fact monitor inmates if they were sent to other facilities. They cannot guarantee that where they end up is appropriate. He stated that they have an obligation to the families of inmates as well. If they go far away how can families help those who are incarcerated. He thinks it is premature to have this kind of conversation. Commissioner Piper stated that he thinks this conversation about eliminating the DoC is already occurring in the sense that their decisions about their facility are occurring in a larger context within the state. There is a movement to repurpose the facilities to meet the greater need of behavioral health problems. The Alternative Sentencing Director has mentioned the shift and expressed interest in it. It was very controversial when this facility was built and one of the decisions was made have this facility be built to be able to administer programs to rehabilitate inmates as well as reduce recidivism. Commissioner Morris stated that additionally, mental health care is going to be a focal point in looking at law enforcement and correctional staff and

how they deal with inmates. She stated that it is a policy issue, not a budget issue and they will be working on that within strategic planning over the next year or so.

Rep. Hennessey stated that she thought they were going to have a group that would look into the future of the farm and asked what the status of that group was. Commissioner Lauer stated that they did have a committee set up and met several times but stopped meeting once COVID 19 hit. Rep. Hennessey stated that she has a hard time supporting a budget with a loss of \$150,000. She wants to hear about what the committee was working on. Commissioner Lauer stated that those discussions are ongoing and they meet on a regular basis with the Farm Manager. Some of the things the committee discussed were alternative crops and some of those suggestions will be implemented this summer. The Food Safety and Modernization Act has required some changes to the farm stand which have been made as well. Commissioner Lauer stated that the discussions continue. The Farm Manager is concentrating on farm to table as well and is working with local restaurants. She is changing livestock handling procedures. Commissioner Lauer stated that there are positive changes taking place and anticipates more changes to take place in the future. Commissioner Piper stated that the Farm Manager is suggesting the dairy farm is what causes the labor intensive piece. This model is responsible for the high labor. She's going to be advocating for the model to change.

Rep. Hennessey asked about the Employee Recognition Dinner. She stated that no one has an employee dinner anymore or the budget for it. CA Libby stated that there are a lot of companies who do it. This is their 5th year doing it and the implementation of this dinner has been very well received and it helps with morale. Commissioner Morris stated that in speaking to the employees there is a tremendous amount of gratitude. It is one of the few times they can all get together in the room. She stated that at first she wasn't fully on board with it but after experiencing the dinner last year she was sold on it.

Capital Outlay

Architectural/Engineering Assessment – Rep. Sykes stated that they need to protect employees first and take care of facilities. For him this is not a priority and that no one demonstrated that damage is being done because they didn't have this assessment. Commissioner Lauer stated that her concerns are for maintaining the integrity of the building. The building is 50 years old. The departments were much smaller when it was built and there is not enough room for existing staff. She stated that Supt. Oakes has explained that the elevator is concerning. The elevator had a failure in the last couple of weeks. The electrical panel is dangerous. In the Sheriff's Department they have put up walls and there is not enough air conditioning to keep the computers from overheating so they have to run air conditioners 24/7 which is very inefficient. They have a bond for the nursing home that would be paid off in 2022 and that would be the time to look to bond the repairs in the Courthouse. If they are looking to do that in 2022 they need to have this study done in 2021. Rep. Abel stated that he agrees with what they just heard. Rep. French stated that she agrees with Rep. Abel and the Commissioners. Commissioner Piper noted they also don't need current fire safety regulations; they were grandfathered in. Rep. Stringham stated that he supports the county taking it seriously.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to reduce the cruiser purchase from three (3) cruisers to one (1). Rep. Hennessey seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rep. Campion stated that she would want to know that the useful life of the existing cruisers is and if they can they extend the life. Rep. Sykes stated that he cannot support this motion. He worked in public safety for nearly 40 years and has driven every piece of emergency equipment. He stated that he can tell everyone the amount of money they spent to try and keep used police cruisers on the road. The amount of miles these cruisers have and the hard use they get; it is short sighted to do this. They have a program in place, they will not save money in terms of maintenance costs and the primary concern should be the Deputies who are using these cruisers as their office as they do this work on the road. Rep. Maes stated that they have had this conversation before and asked how they have settled on this rotation. Commissioner Lauer stated that her first year as a Commissioner they purchased two (2) cruisers instead of three (3). Their repair costs went up very high and they went back purchasing three (3) the following year. She stated that if they were to keep two (2) cars she doesn't think anyone in this room would want to get into a cruiser with 150,000 miles and drive a prisoner to Concord.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to amend the motion and purchase two (2) cruisers instead of one (1). Rep. Hennessey seconded the amendment.

Discussion: Rep. Sykes stated that mileage is not the only indicator of the use these cars get; the amount of time these engines are running is an important thing to remember as well.

Rep. Stringham called the role. Rep. Abel "no", Rep. Campion "no", Rep. Diggs "no", Rep. French "no", Rep. Hennessey "yes", Rep. Maes "no", Rep. Sykes "no", Rep. Stringham "yes". With the vote being two (2) in favor and six (6) in opposition the motion fails.

CA Libby stated that ITM Ruggles stated that he misspoke during his presentation and the Bit Defender software was in the budget for three (3) years. For the Barracuda software they would need to add \$18,900 to the current budget for a three (3) year contract and that would need to be paid up front. It is a \$5,322 savings.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to put \$18,900 into the IT budget for the purchase of a 3-year contract for Barracuda software. Rep. Hennessey seconded the motion. Rep. Stringham called the role. Rep. Abel "yes", Rep. Campion "yes", Rep. Diggs "yes", Rep. French "yes", Rep. Hennessey "yes" Rep. Maes "yes", Rep. Stringham "yes", Rep. Sykes "no". With the vote being seven (7) in favor and one (1) in opposition the motion passes.

Rep. Stringham stated that he had proposal of the COLA.

MOTION: Rep. Stringham moved to adjust the budget so the COLA increases apply to those union workers who negotiated it, for those employees making \$50,000 a year or

less and those who will not get a step increase for this year. Rep. Hennessey seconded the motion.

Discussion: Rep. Sykes stated that he needs some information from CA Libby. He stated wants to know how many employees are affected and what the dollar amount would be. CA Libby stated that getting that information it will take her time; she won't be able to get them the dollar amount right now but could possibly find out how many employees would be affected. Rep. Sykes stated that they will take a ten (10) minute break to allow time to figure it out.

CA Libby stated that out of 407 positions, 194 union members would get the COLA, there are 75 maxed out nonunion members and she does not have how many employees under \$50k.

Rep. Sykes asked if based on the limited information that they do have if people feel comfortable voting. Rep. Sykes stated that he can't vote for this motion. Rep. Maes stated that he sees where this is coming from but is afraid of what message this is sending. They are asking employees to work harder than ever before but they aren't giving them the COLA. Rep. Hennessey stated that she doesn't have enough information to vote on this at this time. She does appreciate Rep. Stringham making it known to all his tax payers that people are receiving a COLA every year and the vast majority are receiving a step and or longevity as well. She feels they need to look at this going forward. CA Libby stated that she received the final numbers and there would only be twenty-eight (28) people that would not be eligible for the COLA. Rep. Sykes stated that the financial impact isn't enough to justify the morale and discontent it would create and he would advise that the committee vote against this motion.

Rep. Stringham called the roll. Rep. Abel "no", Rep. Champion "no", Rep. Diggs "no", Rep. Maes "no", Rep. French "no", Rep. Hennessey "no", Rep. Stringham "no", Rep. Sykes "no". With the vote being none in favor and seven (7) in opposition the motion fails.

MOTION: Rep. moved to appropriate \$48,527,310 with the amount to be raised by taxes \$26,972,548 which is an overall decrease of \$114,366 from FY20 or -.42%.

Discussion: Rep. Hennessey stated that she is very excited to see they won't be increasing taxes but does feel they could have reduced the budget in places. She loves the idea of a county farm but can't support it when it loses money. She stated that what is going to happen next year since they have not cut anything, they'll have colas and step increases and they could see a 7% increase in the budget. She stated that the grants are wonderful but they mask the fact the budget is going up.


Rep. Stringham called the roll. Rep. Abel "yes", Rep. Champion "yes", Rep. Diggs "yes", Rep. Maes "yes", Rep. French "yes", Rep. Hennessey "no", Rep. Stringham "no", Rep.

Sykes "yes". With the vote being six (6) in favor and two (2) in opposition the motion passes.

Rep. Sykes stated that the Delegation Vote on the FY21 budget will be June 22nd. The meeting will be both in person or via zoom.

4:00PM with no further business the meeting adjourned.

Sincerely,


Jerry Stringham, Clerk