

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Office of the Commissioners
3855 Dartmouth College Hwy.
N. Haverhill, NH 03774
Tuesday March 27, 2007

PRESENT: Commissioners Michael Cryans and Ray Burton, Executive Director Julie Clough and Secretary Jeri Martino.

EXCUSED: Commissioner Martha Richards

PUBLIC PRESENT: Harold Brown

Commissioner Cryans opened the meeting at 9:02 after arriving from a breakfast in the Activity Room at the Nursing Home, in appreciation of Doctors. Grafton County's own Dr. Linda DeFrahn was there along with Dr. Fay Homan, Dr. Stephen Genereaux and ARPN Marlene Bristol.

Farm Manager Kimball arrived to give his report; he is currently milking 81 shipping 11,000lbs and the price of milk is \$15.49. The farm has received its first wood order, wood is currently being sold for \$180/cord and they will be working on getting that wood order filled. The farm crew is working on cleaning up around the barns as the snow melts. The electricians are done in the barn and Farm Manager Kimball is pleased with the work that has been completed. Pigs will begin to litter around the 1st of April.

Farm Manager Kimball mentioned that he spoke with Peter Trapp regarding another animal that could bring some revenue to the farm. He suggested that FM Kimball speak with Russell Hanley who is running a deer farm. FM Kimball will be following up. Commissioner Cryans asked FM Kimball if it might make some sense to look at increasing the number of milking cows rather than diversifying into another area. FM Kimball will look into that also. Commissioner Burton stated that if we do diversify it has to bring in a profit.

Commissioner Burton asked FM Kimball about vet bills, he commented that the vet hasn't been around since December, the herd is very healthy. Commissioner Burton also asked FM Kimball about inmate labor. He answered they have plenty of it and they are starting to clean up from winter.

The Commissioners' met with the Employee Council to discuss on-going negotiations. The Council presented the Commissioners with a counter-proposal to what had been discussed a couple weeks ago. The first item discussed was the employee Christmas party. The Employee Council remembers the Commissioners saying it would create a scandal. Commissioner Cryans didn't recall that word being used and had no intention of stating that. His concern was for liability if there was a County sponsored event and alcohol was involved.

Next the group discussed longevity and the value of long term employees and recognizing them for their years. The Council continues to request that this payment be increased.

On the subject of Community Service, Commissioner Burton commented that he hoped there would be some kind of documentation produced when employees use this. Richard Thompson, chairman of the Employee Council stated that the Department Heads should come up with something for their employees and then that information can be forwarded to the Executive Director for tracking.

Donna Wallis of the Council mentioned that the Council is looking at alternative health insurance options and that the Wages in lieu of health insurance could encourage employees to find less expensive insurance else where and therefore save the County money.

The Council requested the reasoning for the Commissioners denial of adding July 4th, Memorial Day and Labor Day to the time and a half holidays. Commissioner Cryans explained that it is the feeling of the Board that Thanksgiving and Christmas are the two (2) biggest family holidays of the year and that it is standard for those holidays to be paid a time and a half for someone who has to work. The Board did not feel it was necessary to expand the holidays paid at time and a half.

The Commissioners and the Council then discussed the requested COLA and agreed that this is the toughest issue. Richard Thompson stated that the Social Security COLA for the last two years has been 4.1% and 3.3% and that Grafton County employees have not received COLAs that large and the Council feels as though the employees are falling behind.

Commissioner Cryans then commented that the Council must remember that for employees who are not maxed out there is also the annual step increase which is a 3% increase, Social Security recipients do not get such an increase.

Commissioner Cryans stated at this time of year it always becomes an "us vs. them" that is certainly not the Commissioners intention. He explained that it is a balancing act. It is important to keep wages competitive so Grafton County remains a good place to work but it is also important to not break the back of the taxpayers. He then told the Council that the Commissioners do value the employees and told the Council that the employees do a fantastic job.

Since Commissioner Richards was not present today, the Commissioners will prepare a response and meet with the Council again on Tuesday, April 10th.

Supt. Libby arrived to give his report saying that there are currently 101 inmates in-house, which is the lowest number they've had in quite some time.

Supt. Libby provided a letter from Coos County which stated that they did not budget enough money to pay the daily stipend to house their female inmates at the Grafton

facility and noted that Carroll County was willing to accept female inmates at no cost to them. There was a discussion as to how to proceed. Commissioner Cryans didn't see how Grafton could lower the rates to compete with Carroll County's zero cost.

Commissioner Burton suggested waiting until the Delegation approved the final budget and see how much money was available to work with. Supt. Libby didn't see any harm in that but suggested that the recommended cost be reduced to \$25 a day and then to enter into a contractual agreement with Coos County.

Commissioner Burton said that he is not in favor of reducing the current revenue of the budget right now but would like to continue with the good neighbor policy, and would consider negotiating after the budget is passed.

Supt. Libby stressed the fact that though it was more cost efficient for Coos to go to Carroll County, the females who are moved to Grafton have far better services offered to them.

The decision was to hold off for a while on any decisions, while continuing to accept females from Coos at the \$40 rate.

A new Thresholds program begins on Monday with a graduation date set for May 9th at 6:30 PM.

A letter was received from an inmate who had voiced a complaint a while back, suggesting that things are now going well.

*10:04AM – Commissioner Cryans moved to enter into Executive Session as per RSA 91-A:3, Paragraph II, Section a). Commissioner Burton seconded the motion. All were in favor.

*10:19 AM – Commissioner Burton moved to come out of Executive Session and to permanently seal the Minutes from the Session. Commissioner Cryans seconded the motion. All were in favor. No motions were made and no actions were taken while in Executive Session

Commissioner Burton motioned to support the recommendation of Supt. Libby of a seven day unpaid suspension with out pay for one of his Correctional Officers, and the action taken in regards to discipline for another. Commissioner Cryans seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Theresa Young, Finance Officer from Rockingham County arrived to review the suggestions made by a working group to present to planning committee regarding the NH Retirement System. Supt. Oakes, Sheriff Dutile, Capt. Leavitt, Dir. Andross, HRD Mann, NHA Bolander, Supt. Libby and FM Kimball were also present.

FO Young stated that the Ret. System is having a decline in funding, so a group was gathered to discuss the different options available, prior to having to go to the legislature.

Throughout the last legislative session, a great deal of attention was focused on the NHRS System. Health care subsidies for some of the participating groups will expire as early as 2011 and long-term prospects for other groups are less than encouraging. This reality, coupled with increasing employer contribution rates has sparked a debate at a number of levels. Rising employer costs present considerable challenges at the state level. Employees both active and retired are on alert watching closely for any action that might diminish future benefits. At present, they are now at 60% funding, which is down from 85% coupled with a reality factor that the medical funding will be gone in 2011.

Working Group members included representatives from:

AFSCME Council 93	NH Municipal Association
American Federation of Teachers	National Education Association
NHAFL-CIO	NH Association of Counties
NH School Boards Association	NH School Administrators Association
State Employees Association	

There were twelve recommendations made by the working group and FO Young discussed those with all present. It was also noted that the Counties do not have a lobbyist working on this problem as our lobbyist has a conflict of interest in that he is representing the Firefighters. It was also shared that the Counties do not have a seat on the planning committee; therefore there is no representation of the Counties, which have over 4000 employees.

There was continued discussion about the funding and it was noted that due to the fact that the medical funding will be ending, there may be a huge influx of people retiring in order to get those three years of medical benefits.

The Commissioners were adamant about the fact that the Counties must have a seat on the planning committee and will be contacting the three state senators to express their point of view. They also voiced their concern about not having a lobbyist for this situation and it was recommended that the lobbyist for the Sheriff's be contacted for consideration. Commissioner Burton also noted that there should be a representative on the NH Retirement Board of Trustees as well. Another problem is that there has not been an Executive Director for the NH Association of Counties for quite some time.

FO Young asked if Grafton County was okay with the recommendations of the working group. No one had any objections to the recommendations at this time, though there was a lot of information to process.

The Commissioners thanked FO Young for coming here from Rockingham and said they appreciated her efforts.

Maintenance Superintendent Oakes gave his report* See Attached

Panic alarms have been programmed and are in working order.

Supt. Oakes said that he plans to use some of the granite that is on the property to put around the signs to mirror the look of the one at the entrance to the Courthouse. Other rock and granite will also be used in the garden area.

The Commissioners broke for lunch
The Commissioners resumed their meeting at the Nursing Home with Administrator Bolander.

The Nursing Home census is currently 132.

The letter that was sent to Commissioner Stephen, appealing the rates, is in the hands of the Commissioner and he is thinking about it.

NHA Bolander presented an out of state travel request for two people from Health Management to attend a conference in Maine. Money is in the budget for the travel.

Commissioner Burton moved to approve the out of state travel request, which was seconded by Commissioner Cryans. All were in favor.

The Nursing Home Affiliate has submitted their concerns to the Association that there is no current Executive Director.

Commissioner Cryans commented to NHA Bolander that he had spoken to four or five people who have commented to him on what a positive experience their relatives have had at the Nursing Home.

NHA Bolander wanted the Commissioners to be aware that due to the fact that some nurses will be out on FMLA, there will be a need to hire some traveling nurses.

There will be a selected group going to Belknap to do a mock survey as they have come into their window for a state survey.

Commissioner Cryans asked NHA Bolander if she had received any complaints about inmates working at the Nursing Home, to which she said that she had not heard anything and that's due in part to the fact that inmates only work in the dish area and no where else inside the facility.

The Commissioners left to go back to the conference room in the Admin building.

Commissioner Burton moved to approve the minutes of March 20, 2007, which was seconded by Commissioner Cryans. All were in favor.

The Commissioners signed the check registers.

Executive Director Clough gave the Commissioners a breakdown of the years of service of employees as follows:

Years of Service	Number of Employees	Percentage
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30-43	7	1.72
25-29	9	2.21
20-24	9	2.21
15-19	32	7.86
10-14	35	8.60
5-9	90	22.11
0-4	225	55.28

There was a request from a staff member at the Nursing Home for educational assistance for an anatomy and physiology class.

Commissioner Burton moved to approve the educational assistance, which was seconded by Commissioner Cryans. All were in favor.

Director Clough gave the Commissioners a copy of the IT position profile and said that once a pay scale is determined the job will be posted first in house then out and that the hope would be to have someone in the position in late spring.

The RFP for the audit will be going out soon.

Director Clough said that there were three grants requests for homeland security from the Sheriff's Dept. The grant request for the reverse 911 system was denied. The grant request for an information sharing systems was denied. The grant request for a mobile communications vehicle was approved in the amount of \$250K with conditions.

There will be no meeting on the 3rd of April.

COMMISSIONER ISSUES:

Commissioner Cryans attended the UNH Advisory board meeting and informed the board that D. Knott will be joining the advisory board.

Commissioner Cryans wanted it noted that due to an illness, Father John Mullen has been forced to retire from DHMC after 25 years of dedicated service. Commissioner Cryans praised Father Mullen for all his work and wished him well. Anyone wishing to send Father Mullen a card can do so at the following address:

Father John Mullen
 Jesuit Community
 Boston College
 St. Mary's Hall
 Chestnut Hill, MA 02467

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:10 PM

Raymond S. Burton, Clerk