

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Alexandria ~ Town Hall

Alexandria, NH

Tuesday September 18, 2007

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

DEPT. HEADS: Register of Deeds Bill Sharp, Sheriff Doug Dutile, Nursing Home Administrator Eileen Bolander, Maintenance Superintendent Jim Oakes, Human Resource Director Joanne Mann, Human Services Administrator Nancy Bishop, Superintendent of Corrections Glenn Libby

Commissioner Cryans opened the meeting at 10:05 and turned the meeting over to the host Commissioner, Martha Richards, who began by thanking Kristy and Cat for all the wonderful food and for setting up the meeting. Commissioner Richards said that the meeting was suggested by Representative Preston and that she was pleased to be there and thanked everyone for attending.

Introductions were made of those who were in attendance: Alexandria Police Chief Frank Nichols, Bristol Police Chief John Clark, Bristol Selectman Paul Frazier, Alexandria Selectman Cindy Williams and Dan Ludwick from the Record Enterprise. Alexandria Selectman Dan Gangemi arrived later.

Commissioner Cryans introduced Grafton County Economic Development Executive Director Mark Scarano, who had brought the new GCEDC President Ray Gosney with him. M. Scarano introduced Mr. Gosney saying that GCEDC is a collaboration of both the private and public sector, and Mr. Gosney represents the private sector. Mr. Gosney, who is also the Executive Vice President of New Hampshire Electric Co-op, said that he looked forward to working with the board of directors.

M. Scarano noted that the GCEDC will hold their annual meeting on the 19th with guest speaker Sandy Blitz who will speak on project East/West Highway, which is a proposed plan to connect St. Johns, New Brunswick with Montreal which will better connect the states and Maritime Provinces. This project would be part of a \$1M grant.

GCEDC has hired a new loan officer, Bob Walker, who was unable to attend the meeting today. Some people who will be leaving the board and others taking their place.

The Grafton County business of the year award will be presented on Wednesday with the recipient being Canaan Hardware. M. Scarano went on to say that Canaan Hardware is a small store in the town of Canaan which has been owned by the Dow family for many years. The store was expanded a few years ago and moved. It is part of the downtown revitalization and has been very generous to local charities. The store is a commercial success, and prides itself on the care of its employees.

Commissioner Richards asked M. Scarano to talk a little bit about the possibility of an incubator for the Plymouth/Littleton area. M. Scarano said that the process has been slow going but they are close to a consensus for a business plan. At that point they can begin to create an organization. No site has been chosen at this point.

Commissioner Burton commended Mark Scarano for all the work he has done and for his follow through on things. The Commissioner asked M. Scarano to find out information on the grant for Beebee River, which he said he would.

Commissioner Cryans thanked Mark Scarano for coming to the meeting and then made mention of the predecessors of the GCEDC. Commissioner Cryans noted that he would hope that an important philosophy for grant recipients would be to first stay in Grafton County, or second to at least stay in the state.

Commissioner Cryans discussed the Grafton County Prescription Drug plan which is available to all Grafton County residents who do not have prescription coverage. He noted that it also covers pets. Last month there was a \$7,196 savings to the people and for the month of August, a savings of \$8,240. Since its inception last September, savings have amounted to \$57,214.47

Register of Deeds, Bill Sharp discussed the improvements made to the registry, which included calculations via computer as opposed to hand written, and going online. Alexandria resident Maggie LaVerge thanked B. Sharp for putting the registry online saying that it has saved her many long trips.

RD Sharp discussed the preservation of deeds dating back to the 1700's, and the process to do this. He brought one of the preserved books for everyone to see. RD Sharp said that he planned to pursue grants to do subsequent books.

Commissioner Cryans asked about foreclosures and whether or not there were many. RD Sharp said he didn't have a report but thought that there were about 7 so far this year, as opposed to 2 last year. Commissioner Cryans asked that RD Sharp keep him apprised of the number.

Commissioner Cryans then turned attention to Executive Director Julie Clough, who he said oversees the \$32M budget and approximately 400 employees. Commissioner Cryans said that they were very fortunate to have Director Clough. Director Clough has worked for the County for 17 years and has been Executive Director for 5.

Sheriff Dutile was next on the agenda and he has been with the County for a little over 17 years and is in his second term as Sheriff.

The Sheriff thanked the town of Alexandria and then went on to give an overview of what the Sheriff Department's duties are, which include: security at the Superior Court level and custody at the district level. Having statewide jurisdiction, the department handles all the civil processes. They also do prisoner transports, juveniles and mentally ill as well as give assistance to local towns and police departments.

Fees are received from dispatch, civil process, transports and from the US Forest Service. Last year fees amounted to \$650K

Chief Nichols noted that the Grafton County dispatch has been very professional and service oriented, and Chief Clark added how fortunate it is to have Sheriff Dutile and the department.

Commissioner Burton said that during a tour of Enfield recently, the town officials touted the professionalism of the Grafton County Sheriff's Dept.

The renovated dispatch center was discussed noting that it is now called a 911 pod. Sheriff Dutile welcomed anyone interested, to visit at any time.

Commissioner Burton noted the importance of having a local dispatch center for rural areas mentioning that there is a push to have a state dispatch center in Concord and that he is not in favor of that.

Both Chief Nichols and Chief Clark, as well as the Sheriff, echoed that sentiment noting the importance of keeping things local for the simple fact that rural areas are more familiar to those who live in them and far more difficult for those who don't.

Chief Clark added that quite often, the northern areas in NH get forgotten altogether and given the fact that local dispatchers are far more knowledgeable about their area, having dispatch out of Concord could be disastrous.

Nursing Home Administrator Eileen Bolander was next on the agenda and spoke briefly about the nursing home, saying that it is a 135 bed skilled care nursing facility with a \$11M budget. The home employs 225 people. At present the census is at 130 with the oldest resident being 101.

NHA Bolander said that there were other things that go on in the Nursing Home such as the recent Family Day celebration which was attended by about 625 people. At present they are working on a grant to be able to increase connectivity to other providers so that residents' health can be monitored more readily. Right now they are connected to Cottage Hospital which is a huge plus.

Commissioner Cryans asked about the recent state survey and how the Nursing Home did and NHA Bolander said that there was really only one deficiency and no fines as it was minor. Last year's survey was deficiency free.

Commissioner Cryans mentioned that he attended Family Day and was approached by many who commented on how terrific the grounds were, in particular the gazebo area and flowers that have been planted and maintained by the Master Gardeners and the Maintenance Dept.

Maintenance Superintendent Jim Oakes gave his report next and said first that he led a staff of ten, four who were custodians and is responsible for the maintenance of the entire complex.

Projects that are going on right now are the repair of the Courthouse roof, the replacement of the Dairy Barn roof (which is standing seam) and a Drainage project.

Commissioner Richards noted that Supt. Oakes is part of the jail core committee and has been a wealth of knowledge.

Commissioner Cryans said that there have been a lot of projects that have needed serious attention and are currently being addressed, which added a lot to the recent budget, but these capital projects need to be done.

Human Resource Director Joanne Mann spoke next and began by saying that she had been with the County for 31 years in various departments, until the HR Dept. was created.

HR is responsible for the over 100 job descriptions within the County which are very diverse. HR is also responsible for personnel policies, union negotiations, compliance with labor laws, workman's comp, unemployment and benefits.

HRD Mann also chairs the health insurance task force which looks into alternatives to the current health care provider, which may be more financially feasible. HRD Mann also takes care of the Medicare D subsidy and handles community outreach in the way of instructing people on resumes and interviews. She noted that the other department heads and the board of Commissioners are good to work with.

Human Services Director Nancy Bishop has worked for the County for 21 years. She is responsible for County reimbursement of certain Medicaid programs and operates a budget of \$6.6M, 93% (I think Nancy said 93% - please double check with her) of which is reimbursed back to the state.

She also oversees the grants by the County to outside agencies and receives incentive funds from the state which again, go to outside agencies.

HSD Bishop is the representative on a committee regarding HB2, which is looking to reconfiguring the services and payments that the state and County pay.

Superintendent of Corrections Glenn Libby spoke last, saying that he had been with Grafton County for eight years. In his report Supt. Libby said that today's inmate census in the jail is 107, 22 of which are females, the largest growing population.

The current jail's oldest section was built in the 1800's and is outdated for the needs of today. The newer part of the jail was built in the 1980's.

Community Corrections is housed in the old Commissioners building and they handle the electronic monitoring, daily release, work program and Drug Court. The work program is a service to the communities wherein supervised inmates work in the towns of Grafton County and for non-profit agencies.

Commissioner Cryans noted all the good that the community work program does and particularly for those communities that can't afford to get certain work done.

Alexandria Selectman Cindy Williams voiced her appreciation for the work that has been done by the inmate work program.

Supt. Libby said that the more self esteem you can give an inmate, the less likely they are to come back and that is the goal. The normal recidivism rate is 40-45%, for those on day work programs it's reduced to 25%. Of those who have worked at the Farmstand, only 1 in 12 has returned to jail.

In regard to the newly proposed Correctional Facility, Supt. Libby gave an overview of the progression that led to determining the need for a new correctional facility, which began in 2005 with the National Institute of Correction coming to Grafton County to review the facility.

NIC determined that the current facility could not be upgraded and that a new facility should be built.

Next, a core group traveled to Colorado for training and instructions as to how to go about building a new jail.

This was followed by a Needs Assessment which projected needs into 2027.

At present the proposed facility will have 246 beds with an initial occupancy of around 140. Operational costs will be high as the design will be spread out. The current projected cost is \$46M.

Bristol Selectman Paul Frasier questioned the philosophy of a correctional facility versus a jail, as stated by Representative Burt Williams. Supt. Libby said that good community supervision and incentives help to integrate inmates back into the community and Rep. Williams supports those efforts and programs.

Chief Clark asked Supt. Libby to explain the Drug Court to which Supt. Libby said that it is incarceration with treatment and gives participants reasons to be successful. Those who qualify for the program undergo intensive treatment and counseling along with weekly visits to the court and have frequent home visits from Drug Court supervisors. Participants must follow very stringent rules and are tested weekly. In other Drug Court statistics, the recidivism rate can be as low as 15%.

Commissioner Cryans noted that Realtor Bill Sahlman was the main push behind the Drug Court idea and the DC was lucky enough to hire on Bob Gasser who ran a Drug Court in New Jersey.

Commissioner Burton said that he is pushing "Grafton County Department of Corrections" as the name of the new facility and asked that the old building be torn down when everyone has moved out.

Commissioner Burton also asked Supt. Libby to look into the wood that was blown down in the last storm in the Enfield area to see what can be done about it.

Alexandria Selectman Don Gangemi said that he was concerned about the impact of the tax increases on the small towns if the new facility is built and asked Supt. Libby if the project could be spread out over time.

Supt. Libby said that the particular structure of the building does not lend itself to done that way.

Selectman Gangemi said that he felt like the communication between the County and the public broke down and that the new proposed facility came as a surprise to many people who didn't know about it until the budget was presented.

Commissioner Cryans said that meetings were held that were advertised as open to the public as far back as 2005, but perhaps they were remiss and getting the information out more thoroughly.

Selectman Gangemi said that the thought the Drug Court is a positive thing and is doing a good job. He also noted a juvenile program that is also doing well.

Commissioner Burton moved to approve the minutes from Sept. 11, 2007, which was seconded by Commissioner Richards. All were in favor.

The Commissioners signed the check registers.

Selectwoman Cindy Williams thanked everyone for coming and said that she very much appreciated the information, particularly from the department heads and that it was nice to hear from those at the County.

M. LaVerge voiced her appreciation for having the meeting in Alexandria and suggested that it be done more often.

The Commissioner signed a drawdown request regarding the CDBG Gile Project.

The Commissioners signed an MS-1 for the unincorporated Town of Livermore.

The Commissioners signed an MS-45 for 2007.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:45 PM

Raymond S. Burton, Clerk