

Grafton County Commissioners
PUBLIC HEARING on Proposed Correctional Facility
UNH Cooperative Extension Conference Room
3855 Dartmouth College Hwy.
N. Haverhill, NH 03774
Thursday February 7, 2008

PRESENT: Commissioner's Michael Cryans, Martha Richards, Ray Burton, Supt. Glenn Libby, Executive Director Julie Clough, HP Cummings Dan Smith & Ben Harrington, SMRT Arthur Thompson, SMRT Curtis Pulitzer, Gorham Bank Richard Ranaghan, Secretary Jeri Martino

PUBLIC PRESENT: Ron Michaud, Rep. Vern Dingman, John Bishop, Lebanon Police Chief Jim Alexander, Tom Elliott, Sheriff Dutile, Jim Oakes, Brenda Paronto, Chris Kendall, Anthony Kretowicz, Chris Cadreact, Matt Devine, Chad Burt, Melody Emerson, Athony Torin, Roland Lafond, Dustin Rhodes, Adam Ciwk, Jason Stanton, Kevin Locke, Richard Boutin, Shannon Gaetz, Joanne Mann, Harold Brown, Jeanne Foltan, Roy Foltan, Tom Andross, Paul Dalton, Rep. Jim Aguiar, Rep. Stephanie Eaton, Rep. Carol Friedrich and Rep. Catherine Mulholland.

Commissioner Cryans opened the meeting at 7:00 PM, greeted everyone and then asked Correctional Officer Shannon Gaetz to lead the room in the pledge of allegiance.

Commissioner Cryans noted that this would be the last meeting prior to the bond vote on February 11, 2008.

Commissioner Cryans introduced the two other Commissioners and said that each of them represented 1/3 of the population of Grafton County.

Commissioner Cryans then introduced Arthur Thompson of SMRT, Superintendent Libby, Project Manager from HP Cummings, Dan Smith, Financial Advisor from Gorham Savings Bank, ME, Richard Ranaghan and Executive Director Julie Clough. The Commissioner then turned the meeting over to Supt. Libby, who gave a very brief overview of the project and its process over the last several years and who noted that the project was coming in just under \$40M.

Director Julie Clough spoke next and reviewed a breakdown of impact the amount to be raised by taxes based on a \$40M bond with a 20 year repayment schedule. In addition there was attached a spreadsheet which detailed the individual taxpayer from each community based on the equalized valuation & town tax rates and based on a \$200K property.

Director Clough said that the amounts do not include interest proceeds from the bond. She also noted that the intent is to minimize the financial impact as much as possible.

Financial Advisor Richard Ranaghan discussed the different possible financial routes and that the choices will be made with the best interest of the County in mind.

Q & A

Paul Dalton asked Supt. Libby about the similar penal facility in Strafford that was proposed at a lesser cost.

Supt. Libby said that it's hard to compare facilities though their statistics were similar. Strafford wanted to "overbuild" and their size is much larger than Grafton County, with beds rented out. Staffing is similar for housing though their housing is larger so there are more inmates being watched by less staff.

P. Dalton asked why, if it was overbuilt, was the investment lower.

Supt. Libby said that they built in 2002 and the construction costs were far less.

Supt. Libby said that there is really no comparison of other jails to the Grafton County jail because the Grafton County jail will have a mental health facility and that's an investment in the future.

Ron Michaud said that he was on the Jail Steering Committee and questioned whether or not there will be a true savings of \$500K from the new facility having its own kitchen and laundry.

Supt. Libby said that he did not want to speak on behalf of the Nursing Home Administrator who handles that budget, but there should be a cost savings as the current cost of meals is quite high right now. The savings should be great. There will also be a savings from not having to do transports as the building will be attached to the Courthouse.

Harold Brown said that he was disappointed this evening because he had hoped to be able to speak to the full Delegation and there were only a few Reps there. He said that he was in favor of the jail but not in favor of the size though he did not want to cut out the mental health area. He also noted that he didn't like that the Sheriff's Dept was cut out of the plan and did not agree that there should be a sally port on the building.

Rep. Mulholland asked about what she called, the "absurdity" of having a flat roof in the Northeast.

A. Thompson said that the building is just far too big to have a pitched roof it and if it did, the roof would be enormous. He said that there are just as many problems with a pitched roof as with a flat one. D. Smith concurred.

Someone had brought up the fact that the building was going to be built to LEED standards and Commissioner Richards asked A. Thompson to please explain to the attendees what that meant. A. Thompson said that it is a process established by the Green Building Council which is away of getting a building registered by certain efficiency standards with a focus on sustainability. This building will meet many LEED standards but not be trying to achieve certification due to the nature of the building.

Rep. Friedrich asked why in this day and age with the climate change was there no plan

to use any alternative energy in this project, particularly in the area it is in.

Commissioner Richards said that the discussion of alternative energy simply did not come up in the planning and most of the time the committee was focused on the design. Right now, the Commissioners plan to investigate some grants, adding that the Board of Commissioners decided to appoint a diverse group of people to look into alternative energy for the whole complex, tying in all areas. She said that they may have “missed the boat” at the time but she is comfortable with the direction things are going now. A. Thompson said that there actually was a discussion in the beginning about alternative energy but that is a difficult discussion when you don’t know what the building will end up being, and now they’re come back around full circle.

Rep. Friedrich said that she appreciated the work that has been done so far and wanted to thank all those who worked on the project.

H. Brown said that he was thankful for those who had opposing ideas and then dug their heels in about them.

H. Brown then asked Commissioner Burton if he felt there was any conflict of interest about SMRT and awarding them the bid and Commissioner Burton said that it was gone over with lawyers and there was no conflict at all.

Jeanne Foltan read a personal dissertation which outlined her feelings about building the new facility saying that as a school teacher, she urged people to support the project and the programs. Having volunteered in the in Thresholds program she said that as much as she wanted to continue, she had to quit because of the terrible conditions of the building. She said that in a conversation with her husband he had said that when you live in scum, you feel like scum, which summed up the feelings of low self esteem and lack of self respect that the inmates have. She went on to say that it is important to provide a respectable building that will give these people more respect for themselves and their property.

Paul Dalton said that he had not heard much in the way of any alternative options.

Supt. Libby said that the philosophy is one of alternatives and there needs to be more aggressive programs.

Jim Alexander praised the philosophy of the treatment and care of the people who come to the Grafton County jail and that many of them are supervised out in the community and in society. He said that the new facility will likely keep more people out and those that are in will be made better.

P. Glenshaw noted that he understood the need for a new jail but that added that people are beginning to feel a real pain when it comes to financing.

Commissioner Cryans said that there have been some reductions and it just come time to do something as there is part of that building that is 100 years old. He echoed that words

of others who have said, “if not now, when”? He said that as of this evening, the role of the Commissioners is done.

Commissioner Burton said that this is the right thing to do now and commended SMRT for their part in the process, as well as both Director Clough and Supt. Libby, who he said have done an incredible job. He said the roots of government run very deep and that the County structure works well. He didn't see any chance at this time that the County would be taken over by the state and he said that he would urge the Delegation to vote yes on the project as a yes vote would be very easy to substantiate. Commissioner Burton said that he has previously recommended at a Commissioners meeting that a \$500K feasibility study grant from Congressman's Hodes Office be applied for and to have put alternative energy into the current plan would have been much more expensive. He said that he strongly supports the plan.

Commissioner Richards said that if inmates can be rehabilitated, then we should do it. She then went on to plead the case for a yes vote.

Rep. Mulholland said that she is voting in favor of the new jail and that it was important for the long term. She also said that she they will get through the economic tough times.

Rep. Dingman said that he's a man on a fixed income and you have to weigh the pluses and minus and right now the pluses outweigh the minuses, saying that the need is there.

Rep. Friedrich said that she is not against the jail but she is against a building that is too large. She then pointed to two areas on the plan that were not housing areas that she said were too large. She said that she was also concerned with the number of staff which will be 79 on day one and \$7M for operating costs which will only increase. She said that a change in the building can reduce the staff. Rep. Friedrich talked about Strafford having 415 inmates and 92 staff members. She discussed the lack of alternative energy and then suggested that perhaps money from the state would be available if there were plans for alternative energy, quoting perhaps \$1M. She said she was not in support of the project.

Rep. Eaton asked how many employees were there now at the jail and Supt. Libby said that were 35. There was a discussion about doubling the staff.

C. Pulitzer said that Strafford is not a good comparison to Grafton County as the number of staff per inmate is proportional. Some staff here will be needed for new things such as the medical/mental health area.

Commissioner Cryans reviewed how the bond vote meeting would be structured; saying that 2/3 of the members present would need to vote in favor in order to pass the vote.

Commissioner Cryans thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting at 8:32 PM