

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Office of the Commissioners
3855 Dartmouth College Hwy.
N. Haverhill, NH 03774
Tuesday February 3, 2009

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

OTHERS: Harold Brown

Commissioner Cryans called the meeting to order at 9:12 AM

HR Director Mann arrived with her report.

Vacancies:

1- RN/LPN 3-11

1-LNA 3-11

Director Mann said that at the Joint Loss Management meeting, HealthTrust and Primex reported on their claims for last year.

There are quotes being received from other insurance companies, i.e. MVP Health and Harvard Pilgrim offered through Primex.

HRD Mann, Director Clough and HSA Bishop are meeting with Jefferson Solutions regarding the new Actuarial services.

HR Assistant Clough is attending an HR Academy for one year at Primex.

HRD Mann has put in the new application for the drug subsidy for 09 with this year's appeal still pending.

HRD Mann presented a report to the Commissioners on the number of employees and retirees. There are 441 employees with 337 on the health insurance. 101 of those are retirees.

Employees having 5-10 years of service(103 employees) are the largest group and over 50% (249 employees) are under 5 years and only 89 employees have over 10 years.

There was a discussion about what benefits retirees have and the various plans.

Commissioner Richards said that she would like the County to re-examine retirement benefits.

Commissioner Richards asked if vacancies need to be filled and HRD Mann said that she always checks with Dept. Heads to make sure of that. Director Clough said that the majority of vacancies come from the Nursing Home and NHA Bolander will tell you that a reduction in staff will result in a lower census and diminished care.

Commissioner Burton asked if there were any problems with LNA's or RN's meeting their licensing requirements and HRD Mann said not that she knew of.

Commissioner Burton moved to approve the minutes from January 27, 2009, which was seconded by Commissioner Richards. Edits were made. All were in favor.

The Commissioners signed the check registers.

Commissioner Cryans thanked Commissioner Richards for all the work that she did on the Energy Committee and for all the experts that she was able to gather for the presentation and for the community involvement. He said there were 52 people in attendance and 20 of those were Delegation members.

Commissioner Richards thanked Commissioners Cryans and Burton for all their support over the year and stated that she was very fortunate to have had all the people who contributed.

Commissioner Burton said that he would like to see something in the budget for Alternative Energy.

Commissioner Richards said that anyone reading the minutes who would like to get in touch with her regarding questions about the Alt. Energy presentation can either email her or call. maple@lr.net or 536-2279

Human Services Administrator Bishop arrived with her report. She said the \$18K in assessment fees were paid to HHS.

67% of the cap has been spent for this fiscal year. She said she expected to pay bills from February thru April and a small bill in May. There should be no bill in June.

HSA Bishop said that she has notified her staff member that there will be no guaranty of having a job in the upcoming budget.

HSA Bishop informed the Commissioners about two new house bills. HB468 which has to do with establishing caps and HB646 which she said changes the responsibility of long term care. She said that new legislation will likely mean more money from the County.

Commissioner Cryans asked how many Counties paid their assessment fees to HHS and HSA Bishop thought that everyone except Rockingham, Belknap and Cheshire.

Commissioner Burton requested that HSA Bishop and Director Clough take a look at the cost shifting areas in the state budget, which will be released on the 12th of February. He said that he would hope that the Counties could work with NHACo to eliminate cost shifting. Commissioner Cryans said that there has always been cost shifting to which the County has simply been powerless to change.

HSA Bishop attended a seminar in Lebanon on "Mapping the Again Maze" along with NHA Bolander and Social Service Director Tyler.

NHA Bolander arrived and reported that the Nursing Home census was at 133.

On February 24th there will be a panel of people who will be hosting a two hour regional meeting about the “Quality of Life” which will be used as a model for other nursing homes.

The Nursing Home is tracking the increase in OTC drug costs and trying to buy in bulk now as the anticipated new cost will be another thousand dollars a month as Medicaid no longer pays for the OTC drugs.

The Nursing Home has received a request from the County Attorney for medical records.

*10: 23 AM – Commissioner Richards 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.

*10:30 AM – Commissioner Richards moved to come out of Executive Session and to permanently seal the Minutes from the Session. Commissioner Burton seconded the motion. All were in favor. No motions were made and no actions were taken while in Executive Session.

Commissioner Richards said that the email from NHA Bolander about using vegetables in the Nursing Home was disappointing and asked her to explain a little better about the impediments she referenced in the email. NHA Bolander replied that there needs to be an area to clean the vegetables before they enter the kitchen. Other items were discussed.

Commissioner Richards said that she wasn’t really concerned about the loss of Farm revenue if they sold to the Nursing Home but cared more that the residents have fresh vegetables to eat. She said that fresh is best and that there is a huge value to having them. She asked NHA Bolander if particular crops were discussed and NHA Bolander said there was. Commissioner Richards said that she did not intend to give up. NHA Bolander said that they may be able to use more vegetables now than in the past.

Commissioner Burton said that he supports the use of inmate labor in the Nursing Home whenever possible.

Commissioner Cryans said that he *is* concerned about the Farm revenue and asked NHA Bolander what percentage of the population can actually eat fresh vegetables, to which she replied perhaps 5% or maybe 10 people at best, which seemed a very small amount.

Commissioner Cryans said that he did not want to try to micromanage and that whatever worked best for the Nursing Home, he would be supportive of.

Commissioner Burton asked if there were programs for Veterans and NHA Bolander said that there are many.

Commissioner Burton’s Ilead class will be visiting the Complex on the 5th of February and will be having lunch at the Nursing Home and visiting other buildings.

Commissioner Richards asked if there was a waiting list to get into the Nursing Home and NHA Bolander said that there was and there were about 8 people on it.

After hearing that the Nursing Home was upset by the fact it was not listed on the front page of the Annual Report with other Departments, Commissioner Cryans stated that the omission was a mistake and that unfortunately sometimes that happens, although he said they had been very pleased with the reports have been put out.

Commissioner Cryans discussed the budget and the need to keep it as level as possible. NHA Bolander asked about staffing and the Commissioner said they may not be able to replace those who leave. NHA Bolander then asked about equipment and the Commissioners replied that they may not be able to bring in new equipment. NHA Bolander said that she would bring in any kind of budget the Commissioners wanted her to but voiced her concern about the level of care. Commissioner Richards said that they may have to make do with less like everyone else will have to. NHA Bolander stated that the Quality of Care and their reputation in general will suffer and brought up Sullivan County.

Commissioner Cryans said that it was not fair to make that comparison. NHA Bolander said that she would cut the budget and see what happens. Commissioner Cryans said that he never told her to cut her budget. She asked about how step increases would be handled as they were already written into the Union Contract. Commissioner Cryans said that the same issue came up with the state and perhaps then that there will be an elimination of jobs in that case. He said that the County is not an island and that you can't expect the state and the municipalities to cut and County do what it wants to.

IT Manager Ruggles brought his assistant Barry Page in to meet the Commissioners and presented a status report of what the Department has been doing on the Complex.

Commissioner Cryans asked about backups and ITM Ruggles said that there is backup for everyone except the Sheriff right now and that the tapes come back here to a fire proof safe. Another copy is then taken home with him. He stated that they are working towards a disaster recovery program.

Commissioner Cryans asked whether or not the new email system has a blitz mail-like system and ITM Ruggles said that it did but there needs to be more training. Commissioner Cryans asked what percentage of employees had County email addresses, to which he replied about 75%.

Charles Leaf from the Hartland Group arrived to update the Commissioners about the Gile Housing Project in Lebanon. The County is an applicant for the CDBG grant and there have been a couple of letters sent that state there are issues with the project. Mr. Leaf said that unfortunately it was not a great time to be investing in real estate. The project is a 120 unit housing project with 50% each sale and rental. 46 are complete with 15 due in about 5 weeks. 50% are leased and will be full by spring. Of the 61 total, 46 are low income (60% of County median income or \$24-36K) and 15 are market rate units. There are 6 market rate units rented.

Commissioner Cryans asked why they look at the County median income in an area where the overall income is higher and Mr. Leaf said that it's done that way because of the tax regulations.

Mr. Leaf said that future funding is contingent upon sales. Right now there are 16 units done and 5 (almost 6) have closed. 10 units remain. There needed to be 8 sales in order to continue with the financing which is the reason that the County received letters from the bank. He said that there are ongoing negotiations with the bank and they believe that there will be continued funding.

Prices have been adjusted downward and they have hired a full time Director of Sales.

Commissioner Cryans asked how much the reduction has been and Mr. Leaf said they went from \$269K to \$249K and \$360K to \$340K, so only slight decreases.

Commissioner Richards asked the sale ranges and Mr. Leaf said that the market rates were \$249K to \$414K and affordable rates are \$185K

Mr. Leaf said that it is the biggest LEED certified project in the state.

There were further discussions about the project.

Commissioner Burton asked how many jobs will be provided through this project and Mr. Leaf said that it would likely be 6.

Commissioner Cryans asked if the residents were happy and the reply was yes, very.

Commissioner Cryans said that he would like to be able to look at one of the units and Mr. Leaf said that could be arranged.

Mr. Leaf concluded by saying that there was no doubt that sales will continue and that as of right now there is currently no money past due and no default on the loan.

Director Clough informed the Commissioners that the federal government has lowered the mileage rate to .55, adding that the County has always followed the recommendations of the feds in the past.

Commissioner Burton moved to reduce the County rate to .55, which was seconded by Commissioner Richards. All were in favor.

Sheriff Dutile sent Director Clough a letter of recommendation for the cruisers he would like to purchase via the bids received.

2 - Crown Victoria's from Hillsboro Ford @ \$22,415
1 - Dodge Durango from Roberts (Hillsboro Ford) @ \$21,265
Total for three vehicles is \$66,095.

Commissioner Richards moved to accept the bids as stated, which was seconded by Commissioner Burton. All were in favor.

A letter was received from the town of Woodstock regarding the postponement of the Jail project.

A request from the Sugar Hill Police Dept. was presented to Sheriff Dutile, for the use of a spare cruiser for one week while their vehicle was being repaired. Sheriff Dutile was agreeable to this request and the insurance policy on the vehicle follows the vehicle.

Commissioner Richards moved to approve granting the request with proper documentation of the agreement, which was seconded by Commissioner Burton. All were in favor.

A new invoice was received from Sheehan Phinney Bass & Green in the amount of \$17K for work on the Attorney fee issue.

COMMISSIONER ISSUES:

Commissioner Burton said that Scott Merrick was hired by Senator Shaheen's office and that he would recommend that Mr. Merrick be offered an office here at the County should he have a need.

Commissioner Cryans said that he had been in contact with Senator Matt Houde who said that he would be interested in visiting the County on some Thursday afternoon and the Commissioner suggested perhaps inviting both Senator Reynolds and Gallus at the same time.

Commissioner Cryans met with Judge McLeod, Sue Ellen Griffin and Diane Carroll at the Lebanon district court regarding a mental health court.

11:58 AM the Commissioners recessed for lunch
1:06 PM the Commissioners resumed their meeting.

Commissioner Cryans said that after lunch they all stopped at the IT Manager's office to see some of the things that were now going on.

Supt. Libby, Arthur Thompson and David Maines of SMRT, Ben Harrington and Dan Smith of HP Cummings all gathered to meet with the Commissioners.

Commissioner Cryans said that it has been almost one year since the vote to build the new jail was approved and there have been many obstacles since that time, including the lawsuit, and changes in the economy. There have since been many letters received from towns regarding postponing the project.

A. Thompson discussed the need to build the new facility stating the urgency due to the fact that the current facility is not safe. He said that he was ready to discuss a range of options.

He discussed the bidding climate going forward and suggested that bids may come in lower however, they are creeping up. He said that competition and lack of work is what's driving companies and that there's a benefit to bidding the work. He suggested the possibility of a 3% reduction but added that there was a need to move on that because once stimulus money got into the economy, it may mean higher costs.

Commissioner Richards asked about the litigation factor and Director Clough said that no money can be bonded until the litigation is complete.

Commissioner Cryans asked if there should come a point to where the bidding doesn't become worth it because of how long the litigation could continue on for.

B. Harrington said that if that happened there would be a third bid and if there's a nine month wait down the road it might be best to wait it out.

Commissioner Richards asked if a redesign lowered costs and the Delegation okayed it, would the County still be in a legal bind? Director Clough said she would need to get a legal opinion on that.

Commissioner Richards suggested that maybe there needed to be some revisions or cuts made to the project's size.

A. Thompson said that they would have to look at options to reduce and that would put the project into a fall bid. He said it's the labor and the market that is affecting the economy, not the materials.

B. Harrington said that it's possible to get down to \$36M with some cuts or you can cut a lot and bring it down more, but delays may very well increase costs.

A. Thompson said that he can't give any figures without knowing what parts may be changed.

Commissioner Richards said that she wants a new facility soon and that they need a new area for CO's and inmates along with mental health.

Commissioner Cryans said he would like to see a reduction and said that from what he has heard, on all accounts there will be an appeal from the litigants.

B. Harrington said that before the economy played a role, they would be looking at a 7% a year increase for waiting. He didn't think that material prices would be going down and suggested that it is a buyer's market.

Commissioner Cryans asked what wisdom there would be in bidding now if there was no legal decision as of yet and B. Harrington said that there would be a missed opportunity of taking advantage of having the reduced costs. Commissioner Cryans said that a lower bid only has credence if you can award it, which right now, the County can not do.

B. Harrington said that you could probably get a bid locked in for 90 days and that maybe this is a good time to get the best bang for your buck. Commissioner Cryans said that he was more concerned about the validity of the bid at this point.

D. Smith said there are two tracks to take, one that is that you go with the project you have or throw out a number and do a re-design. B. Harrington said that there has probably been some goodwill lost in the community since the project has already been put off once. Commissioner Cryans said that was not by choice.

Commissioner Richards asked to hear from Supt. Libby who began by saying that this was the plan that the Executive Committee wanted designed and now the scope, size and operation have to be changed. He said that he would like to redefine the scope and go from there. He said he had some distinct reductions that he would consider but that would be up to the board.

Supt. Libby said that in all honesty, the medical/mental health is an area that is up to the state and is not mandated. He said that the state should come through with that action. He said that he would take a hard look at the operational cost. He said that he was very frustrated but that they should not be in the current building. He said that he would like some direction in order to get to work on the project.

Commissioner Burton said that the \$38M plan has won approval three times and he thinks the project should proceed. He also suggested that alternative energy should be looked at. He also said that the votes for reduction are with the Board 2 to 1 however.

Commissioner Richards said that she was reluctant to give up the mental health area of the project. Supt. Libby said that he understood and that personally he thought it was the right thing to do but staffing that area is expensive and it is the state's responsibility to take of mental health.

Supt. Libby said operational costs include adding community corrections and it has been hard to even get one person over the last couple of years with the programs they have.

Commissioner Burton said that he wouldn't expect the state to come through with anything.

Commissioner Cryans said that operational costs were a huge issue.

A. Thompson said that maybe it would be best to come back with a number and which parts of the plan are *not* on the table and then they can re-do some figures. B. Harrington said that he would be involved with the project once a figure was decided upon.

Commissioner Cryans said that the Commissioners will need to come up with a number and then go from there.

Commissioner Burton asked A. Thompson about getting information about the heating load as he had heard that there was some obstruction there with providing information to the Alternative Energy Committee. A. Thompson said they really need to get the engineers together for a discussion though he couldn't understand why Dr. Phetteplace couldn't get the information he needed from the loads given.

The connector was discussed along with heating/cooling, geothermal and the elimination of the Sheriff's area.

Commissioner Cryans recognized H. Brown who said that he didn't think that the Sheriff should have anything to do with the project. He said operational costs were in question and that he had spoken to a Delegate who told him that none of his constituents want this jail. Commissioner Cryans said that no one had ever said that to him and he covers a large district.

H. Brown blamed the three Commissioners for the stalling of the project saying that they should have taken a re-vote and let the chips fall where they may, with the people having their voice. He said they should pay the plaintiff off and take a re-vote. He also said that they shouldn't look toward the future 20 years but build the facility for today. He added that there was no crime problem in Grafton County but rather a drug problem.

Supt. Libby suggested to the Commissioners that he, the Executive Director and members of the core committee re-group and bring a recommendation back to the Commissioners. Commissioner Richards said that she would be pleased to continue with the group.

When asked about the Alternative Energy meeting, H. Brown said that it was good but he would have liked to see what the cost would be if bonded.

2:43 PM being no further business the meeting was adjourned.

Raymond S. Burton, Clerk