

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Office of the Commissioners
3855 Dartmouth College Hwy.
N. Haverhill, NH 03774
Tuesday March 17, 2009

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

Commissioner Cryans called the meeting to order at 9:13 AM

HR Director Mann arrived and reported first on vacancies.

3- LNA's

1- Laundry Machine Operator

1- Housekeeping Aid

- Davis & Towle was here last week for life insurance information.
- HR Mann is working with the JAG program in Manchester.
- HR Mann was a judge for a 4H event.
- HR Mann will be a speaker at the Lion's club.
- Primex will be coming to discuss Harvard Pilgrim.
- MVP quote is expected to be forthcoming.

There will be a workplace harassment in-service on April 1st.

There will be all day workshops on April 2nd.

March of Dimes Walk is April 26th at 9:00 (registration at 8:00).

Commissioner Burton discussed the extreme cuts that the Executive Committee suggested doing to the budget and talked about the need for legal opinions stating what the actual authority of the Delegation is. Belknap County is currently going through an issue like this.

Commissioner Cryans just asked that HR Mann be prudent and careful as she can be with her budget this year.

Commissioner Richards asked if early retirement had been discussed and Director Clough said that it had been at a Dept. Head meeting but that this probably wouldn't be a good year for it for financial reasons.

Steve Whitney, Ruth Maffei and Donna Wallis arrived as representatives of the Employee Council.

They requested a 2.5% COLA and said that Rockingham was giving their employees 2%, Belknap was giving their employees 5.4% and Merrimack (non-union) was 1%.

A second request was for the County to extend health insurance for ex-spouses as an alternative to COBRA.

Director Clough didn't see why the County should have to pay for an ex-spouse.

S. Whitney suggested that they should be kept on for a period of time.

Commissioner Cryans asked if the Employee Council had discussed what they would consider if it came to a point between a percentage raise or eliminating jobs. D. Wallis said it could be brought up and asked if the County is looking at a flat budget, would the Jail still go through. Commissioner Cryans said that hadn't been determined yet as they were still waiting on a legal decision.

S. Whitney said that he understood what the Commissioners were going through but this was the beginning of their negotiations. The next meeting with the Employee Council will be on March 24th at 9:00 AM.

NHA Bolander arrived and said that their census was 135.

- There may be a mold problem on Meadow which Supt. Oakes is investigating along with the Scott Lawson Group.
- The NH is completing a new malpractice application which has better coverage and may save the County about \$7K.
- The Norovirus has abated.

NHA Bolander attended the NACo Conference in Washington DC and attended an informational meeting regarding long-term healthcare issues, along with Commissioner Richards, and found it to be very disheartening. She said that the impact on providers is significant and that everything has to be in place by 2010. She added that the 5-star rating system is slighted toward the staffing of RN's and survey results.

Commissioner Cryans asked about an increase in Medicaid reimbursements and NHA Bolander said that the increase will go to the state to repair its budget.

Commissioner Cryans asked how the NH compares in the field of technology and NHA Bolander said that within a County level it is up to speed but interoperability is lacking and that is due in part because of what's needed on the physician's end. She added that software/hardware needs some updating but overall the NH is in pretty good shape. She said that they expect to be paperless and compliant by 2010.

Commissioner Cryans said that it should be conveyed to HHS Commissioner Toumpas that the County is also dealing with budget issues and that having additional Medicaid money that should be coming in, going to the state, is troublesome.

Commissioner Cryans said that it was impressive that the Nursing Home is at 135 residents.

Commissioner Burton moved to approve the minutes from March 3, 2009, which was seconded by Commissioner Richards. All were in favor.

Commissioner Richards moved to approve the budget meeting minutes from March 5, 2009, which was seconded by Commissioner Burton. All were in favor.

The Commissioners signed the check registers.

The Commissioner reviewed the Grafton County DoC Superior Court Report.

HSA Bishop arrived with her report. Commissioner Richards asked if she knew how much money would be cut out of incentive funds and HSA Bishop said it was hard to say but probably half.

HSA Bishop handed out a report of payments to towns.

A change in billing will mean that recovery money coming in will not be used toward meeting the cap but rather will remain with the County. 79% of the cap has been expended and there should be payment in March and April, then a small one (\$1500.) in May and nothing in the month of June.

There was a discussion about a letter from the VNA which disputed Cindy Swart's and HSA Bishop's assessment of one of their program in which the County has decided to reduce payments to because of reduced services. The Commissioners have requested to have a meeting with Cindy Swart and a representative of the VNA to sort this out.

Commissioner Cryans asked if HSA Bishop knew where things were going next year and she said that it is likely that expenses will be higher but there are two less staff members. There was a discussion about how HSA Bishop's time was being spent and she said that she was splitting some of her time with the Commissioners' office doing some work for the Executive Director and HS.

Maintenance Superintendent Oakes, Engineer Shannon Larocque and Geologist Jeff Hoffer arrived to go over the geological survey that was done near the water tank to see if the area was viable to drill wells.

J. Hoffer summarized what his findings were.

S. Larocque discussed existing and future water expenses and presented a chart to the Commissioners.

After reviewing all the information about whether or not drilling wells with the prospect of having enough water to supply the County, which would include the new Jail and perhaps Hatchland Farm, Commissioner Richards asked S. Larocque what his "gut" feeling was.

S. Larocque said there will be a payback but exact information won't be known until they know how many wells to drill and what specific water treatment might be needed. Once the cost of that is paid back then financially the County could eventually start paying for the water tank as well.

Commissioner Cryans asked if any of this would be worth looking at if WW&L suddenly changed their minds about taking over the tank. S. Larocque said that it would still be worth looking at because the County would eventually be able to sustain its own water source and thrive alone. It has been rumored he said, that WW&L may have to start looking for another source in the future anyway.

S. Larocque said this project would likely take 18 months to put together. Director Clough said there may be grant and or stimulus money available. S. Larocque said that money would probably be prioritized for those who may need a source of water as they don't have one already. He said there are a lot of variables with this project which are unknown at this point.

Commissioner Cryans asked about the liability of owning a water source when things go wrong and S. Larocque said that he didn't think it would be any different but that he would look into it.

Commissioner Richards asked about the open water source from WW&L and if anyone had done any testing for pharmaceutical run off, which

Commissioner Burton asked J. Hoffer if he were a douser and he replied that he was a "scientific" version of a douser.

Commissioner Cryans reviewed and signed the close out agreement and monitoring report for the Littleton Area Learning Center CDBG grant.

K. Jablonski brought new Agriculture Educator Heather Bryant in to meet the Commissioners. Commissioner Cryans asked her to tell them a little bit about herself. H. Bryant said that she is from Maine and got her undergraduate degree in natural resources. She was in the Peace Corps in Madagascar and then went to graduate school. She said that the rural county attracted her and she is looking at an agricultural resource base.

Commissioner Burton said that he would like to see the greenhouse filled and that there is an open house for people to view. Commissioner Richards said that she would like to see some seed trials done and asked Heather to try to think of some new revenues sources for the Farm.

Commissioner Cryans suggested that Heather get out and visit the vast areas of the county and that it is important to let people know about UNH Cooperative Extension and what they have to offer people.

The Commissioners wished Heather luck in her stay here.

Commissioner Cryans reviewed and signed the close-out and monitoring report for the AdiMab CDBG grant.

The Commissioners signed a proclamation for the Silver Star program for injured veterans.

A request for out of state travel was presented on behalf of Kathy Jablonski to travel to Baltimore, MD for a youth development 4H after school program. Money is available in the UNH Cooperative Extension budget for this.

Commissioner Richards moved approval of the out of state travel which was seconded by Commissioner Burton. All were in favor.

Director Clough read two emails from county residents in regard to postponing the Jail project.

Senator Houde will be here next Thursday at 1:00 for a tour of the County.

Director Clough brought up County Day and said that at a recent department head meeting there was a discussion regarding the fact that people are worn out from doing all the work required for County Day and that the Sheriff said that Kid ID numbers have decreased over the years and perhaps it would be better to handle that part of it every other year.

Cost of County Day and number of staff required to man the day were discussed. It was thought that it might be better to put it off this year and the Commissioners tabled the issue for another time while they gave it further consideration.

Supt. Libby and Director Clough went to Portland Maine recently to visit SMRT and discuss the redesign of the Jail. SMRT will be working on an hourly basis and will get back to the County with the estimated fees. Once completed that information will be passed on to the Commissioners and then it will need to go to HP Cummings so that they can put together an estimated price for the new design based on square footage.

Director Clough said that at the meeting with SMRT there was a discussion about the geothermal and biomass for the project. It was clear that the engineer for SMRT and Dr. Phetteplace, who was on the Alternative Energy Committee need to be talking to one another because there are differences of opinion.

The Commissioners received Director Clough's job description for review and signature.

COMMISSIONER ISSUES:

Commissioner Burton attended a hearing for HB2 in Whitefield and said that 39 people spoke in opposition to the bill. He spoke and said that RSA 28:A (unfunded mandates) needed to be observed and obeyed, that he was opposed to the Colebrook District Court closing, was opposed to the retirement system asking that more money be paid by retirees.

Director Clough said that Supt. Libby was also in attendance at that meeting and that he spoke in opposition to the reduction in the Governor's Commission Funding.

Commissioner Cryans attended one of the hearings in Claremont and got the same impression that many of the social services would be cut throughout the state. He said that towns were as well represented as was anyone.

There will be a GED graduation tomorrow morning at 10:00 AM

11:30 AM ~ Being no further business the meeting was adjourned

Raymond S. Burton, Clerk