

Grafton County Delegation Vote
Proposed Budget Fiscal Year 2009
Grafton County ~ UNH Conference Room
North Haverhill, NH
Monday June 30, 2008

PRESENT: Reps. Mulholland, Almy, William, Dingman, Gionet, Laliberte, Preston, Aguiar, Friedrich, Pierce, Cooney, Matheson, Ingbretson, Bleyler, Nordgren, Solomon, Andersen, Hammond, Harding, Sorg, Estes, Lovett and Bulis. Commissioners Cryans, Richards and Burton, Executive Director Julie Clough and Sec. Martino

OTHERS: Ed Ballam, M. Tyler, B. Patanovich, T. Robbins, Sheriff Dutile, R. Hull, P. Leavitt, T. Andross, K Jablonski, B. Paronto, D. Kimball, R. Lafond, D. Knott, L. Wheeler, N. Bishop, H. Brown, A. Farina and J. Mann

Chair Mulholland called the Meeting to order at 9:10 AM

The roll call was taken and a quorum declared.

Rep. Williams moved to appropriate \$32,914,095 for fiscal year 2009 of which \$18,801,280 is to be raised by taxes, which was seconded by Rep. Aguiar.

It was noted that there was an approximate \$26K increase in the Nursing Home budget as provided, due to underestimated propane increase.

Rep. Pierce arrived

There is a 1.5% increase in expenses over last year with 10.49% increase to be raised by taxes. This is due in large part to the fact that there is less surplus available for use to reduce taxes.

Rep. Bulis asked that if the plan was to keep the Farm: is it going to be studied for the future. Commissioner Richards responded by saying that she had her reservations about the Farm when she was elected but now sees the value in keeping it. She said that she is looking towards new ideas for the Farm and is working with Thad Gulbrandson of PSU to figure out new ideas. She said that there are intangibles on the Farm such as having the inmates work and that she will continue to do research on the possibilities of growth for the Farm.

Rep. Bulis motioned to cut \$750K from the budget, which was seconded by Rep. Gionet.

Discussion:

Rep. Bulis stated that the Capital Outlay portion of the budget had been reduced by some \$1.6M and that, if you considered that, then the real increase in expenses was some \$2.1M and that he thought some of this could be reduced.

Rep. Almy said that there were problems throughout the Nursing Home budget comparing it to last year as there was no cola added into the FY08 figures for bargaining unit employees as Union negotiations had not been completed before the budget was passed. The authorized budget of last year was legally increased so the differences may seem greater.

Rep. Andersen said that he didn't feel like a cut of \$750K is proper unless you know where the cut is, particularly if that cut is to the Farm, which he supports. He said he would like to know in advance what that is.

Rep. Bulis said that he proposed not to give the County as much money as they requested.

Rep. Gionet asked what the figure was that was added to the budget for the increase in the Jail construction. Executive Director Clough stated that it was \$1.15M and then pointed out that the motion to add these figures had been defeated.

Rep. Mulholland asked Rep. Gionet where the increases were in the Maintenance budget and he said that there was a 20% increase in utilities.

Rep. Bulis asked if they had tried to keep the proposed increases as reasonable as possible and Rep. Almy said that not everyone had time to get everything done and that she would have liked to have had his figures prior to this meeting so that she could understand what he was saying.

Rep. Friedrich asked if it was possible to get a chart in the room to write things down on.

Rep. Almy said that there was a difference of about \$540K from FY08 COLA's that did not get added into last year's budget.

9:40 Rep. Ingbretson arrived.

Commissioner Cryans said that there is a \$200K fuel increase this year and ½ a year's interest paid on the jail bond debt, or \$390K, \$400K increase to the state for HHS, and an \$800K salary increase.

Rep. Pierce asked what the rationale was for the \$1M decrease in the capital improvement and Commissioner Cryans said he would get that information.

Rep. Bulis asked if the jail payment was included in the capital outlay.

Commissioner Cryans said that the decrease in the capital improvement was that there were a lot of projects done last year and a big portion was the jail.

Rep. Pierce asked why the Courthouse fire alarm system was not funded and Director Clough said that it was something that the Maint. Supt. felt could wait.

Rep. Friedrich said that the committee went through the budget carefully and reduced it considerably from what it would have been. She said she still had questions about the jail and noted that there was \$330K out of the operating budget and thought that the jail cost was supposed to cost \$38M and asked the Commissioners why.

Commissioner Cryans said that bond vote was \$38M and they had already spent \$1M. The \$330K is because of the delay and that they wanted to have some money in there for the cost of inflation and goods. The money will help keep the project moving.

Rep. Gionet said he felt the delegation authorized \$38M for the jail and if there are overruns, then the delegation should be notified and they should have to come back for approvals.

Rep. Mulholland called for a vote on Representative Bulis' motion to cut \$750K from the budget. A roll call vote was taken by Clerk Almy, 7 were in favor (Reps. Gionet, Aguiar, Friedrich, Matheson, Ingbretson, Sorg and Bulis), 16 were opposed (Reps. Mulholland, Almy, Williams, Dingman, Laliberte, Preston, Pierce, Cooney, Bleyler, Nordgren, Solomon, Andersen, Hammond, Harding, Estes, and Lovett). The motion failed

Rep. Andersen asked if the Commissioners can move the budget around and Rep. Williams responded that they can't move monies from one account to another without coming to the Executive Committee for approval.

Rep. Aguiar said they need to look at continuing the Farm adding that there should be support to farmers but should not be competing. He said that barns are virtually empty and that the new maintenance building was going to cost \$750K adding that the insurance from the one that burned was \$250K and that the building of the new building was not brought to the delegation nor was there any discussion about how it was to be heated. He said that at a later time, there needs to be several items that need to be discussed by the delegation, such as longevity.

Rep. Pierce asked if there were other alternatives to working on the Farm and Supt. Libby said that right now there are five inmates who help with milking and others cut wood, help with the crops and haying and if they're out working, they're not causing trouble in the jail so it's a way of inmate management.

Rep. Pierce asked if there were other alternatives to having the inmates working on the Farm. Supt. Libby said there could be but he didn't have anything specific.

Rep. Pierce asked if the Farm was cut how much money could the County get for the land and the barns and Commissioner Richards said that she, along with others would be very reluctant to see any of the land sold.

Rep. Gionet said that the vegetables from the farm help the Nursing Home and area seniors. He also wanted the room to know that there were certain Dept. heads that were not available for budget questions at the time that he wanted them to be there.

Rep. Harding said that it would be good to take a look at the Farm and report back.

Rep. Bulis read the statute which spoke to the authority given to the delegation and to the Commissioners. Rep. Almy said that she had learned many years ago that the delegation does have line item power.

Commissioner Richards spoke up and asked for \$40K to be added to the budget for a consultant to take a look at the farm and Rep. Andersen said there is no need for a consultant. Rep. Williams said the Farm issue is not new and they have to bring the Farm up to date and make decisions and that questions have to be answered.

Commissioner Cryans said that they are not competing with the local farmers and that milk is the main revenue.

The question was moved on the original motion of appropriating \$32,914,095 for fiscal year 2009 of which \$18,801,280 would be raised through taxes. A roll call vote was taken by Clerk Almy, 19 were in favor (Reps. Mulholland, Almy, Williams, Dingman, Laliberte, Preston, Aguiar, Friedrich, Pierce, Cooney, Matheson, Bleyler, Nordgren, Solomon, Andersen, Hammond, Harding, Estes, and Lovett), 4 were opposed (Reps. Gionet, Ingretson, Sorg, and Bulis). The motion passed.

Rep. Friedrich moved to authorize borrowing up to \$8,000,000 in anticipation of taxes, which was seconded by Rep. Preston.

Treasurer Elliott spoke saying that she invested \$11M from the collection of taxes last year and \$9M has been spent this past year and there is \$1M left for the bond payment. Since they had to borrow last year, she's sure they will have to borrow again.

Rep. Williams said this is just giving them the authority to borrow money. Rep. Harding asked what happens to the money if they borrow more than needed and Treasurer Elliott said that it's a line of credit and they only borrow what is needed.

Rep. Dingman asked to call the question.

The vote was called a roll call vote was taken by Clerk Almy, 21 were in favor (Reps. Mulholland, Almy, Williams, Dingman, Laliberte, Preston, Aguiar, Friedrich, Pierce, Cooney, Matheson, Bleyler, Nordgren, Solomon, Andersen, Hammond, Harding, Sorg, Estes, Lovett and Bulis), 2 opposed (Reps. Gionet and Ingretson), motion passed.

Rep. Dingman moved to expend \$6,870 from the Register of Deeds Surcharge account to purchase equipment for the Registry, which was seconded by Rep. Laliberte.

RD Sharp spoke to this matter saying that the current machine is old and broken and is expensive to fix. Rep. Ingbretson asked why this request is separate from the budget and Rep. Almy said that it comes from the surcharge account.

The vote was called a roll call vote was taken by Clerk Almy, and 23 were in favor (Reps. Mulholland, Almy, Williams, Dingman, Laliberte, Preston, Aguiar, Friedrich, Pierce, Cooney, Matheson, Bleyler, Nordgren, Solomon, Andersen, Hammond, Harding, Sorg, Estes, Lovett, Bulis, Gionet and Ingbretson), 0 opposed. Motion passed.

Rep. Almy moved to contribute \$63,390 from the Dispatch Fees for fiscal year 2009 to the Dispatch Capital Reserve Fund, which was seconded by Rep. Gionet.

Communications Director Andross said the fund was created years ago and constitutes roughly 10% of the dispatch fees each year.

Rep. Andersen asked what the purpose was for the fund and Dir. Andross said this year it was used for the mobile unit and a few years back it was used to help purchase the new tower at dispatch. It is used for capital expenses needed in Dispatch Rep. Williams asked who authorized expenditures and Dir. Andross said that the delegation does.

Rep. Andersen said that he thought the fund was pigeon holing money. Rep. Williams said capital reserve funds have pros and cons depending on the financial market you could either put it into a fund or borrow it when you need it.

The vote was called a roll call vote was taken by Clerk Almy, 22 were in favor (Reps. Mulholland, Almy, Williams, Dingman, Laliberte, Gionet, Preston, Aguiar, Friedrich, Pierce, Cooney, Matheson, Bleyler, Nordgren, Solomon, Hammond, Harding, Sorg, Estes, Lovett, Gionet and Ingbretson), 1 opposed (Rep. Andersen). Motion passed.

Rep. Aguiar moved to authorize the County Commissioners to finance up to one million (\$1,000,000) to complete the "Water Tank Project". The first payment for this project is included in FY 2009 budget, which was seconded by Rep. Laliberte.

Commissioner Cryans said that two years ago the fire created cause for concern so the County wanted to take matters under control and create the water tank to handle the water issues.

Rep. Andersen asked about using water from the river and Commissioner Cryans said they weren't able to take water from the river.

Director Clough said it's a 350K gallon tank and will be supplied with water from Woodsville Water and Light who may take over management of the tank, which will supply protection for the County complex.

Rep. Williams said that the County is at the end of the fire protection and this will stabilize the whole system here and in the future this may affect the insurance rates.

Rep. Dingman asked about the structure whether it will be concrete or steel and Director Clough said it will bid out with both options. Rep. Aguiar questioned it being built on County property but being owned by the WWL and Director Clough said they may have an easement on the property. Rep. Aguiar asked if the County will be charged and Director Clough said there already are charges but the discussion is going on.

Rep. Andersen said that maybe this should be looked at in a year from now and see what is really needed. Director Clough said that this tank is to handle the County's needs and that fires may be few but we need the protection here with 300 full time residents to consider. She said that the tank is a benefit to WWL, but it is not to address their needs it is to address the County's needs.

Rep. Harding asked if this was recommended by the fire department and Director Clough said yes. Rep. Almy said the fire showed the existing pipes are inadequate.

The vote was called a roll call vote was taken by Clerk Almy, 22 were in favor (Reps. Mulholland, Almy, Williams, Dingman, Laliberte, Gionet, Preston, Aguiar, Friedrich, Pierce, Cooney, Matheson, Bleyler, Nordgren, Solomon, Hammond, Harding, Sorg, Estes, Lovett, Gionet and Ingbretson) and 1 opposed (Rep. Andersen). Motion passed.

Rep. Gionet, on behalf of the Register of Deeds, motioned that the Grafton County delegation authorize its executive committee to review and approve expenditure requests which may be initiated by the Register of Deeds from time to time during the budget year 2008-2009, which was seconded by Rep. Aguiar.

Rep. Mulholland said that the legality of this motion is in question and the only way around this would be a change in the law. Rep. Aguiar said that several laws had been broken. Rep. Almy said that the delegation doesn't seem to be breaking the statutes.

Rep. Williams said that the law says that the delegation must approve the use of the Deeds surcharge account.

RD Sharp pled his case.

Rep. Aguiar asked about the way the Deeds office can spend and RD Sharp said that money from the surcharge account need to be approved by the delegation.

Rep. Pierce said that unless there is authority for the delegation to give away their authority it can't be done.

Rep. Cooney said that she agreed that there couldn't be anything done right now but she would be willing to put in a bill in Concord and a vote for support could be taken here.

Rep. Pierce said that as far as he understood, the specific statute, which this is, would control the issue over the general statute, which suggests that this can not be done.

There were discussions as to how this motion could be reworded without going against the statute.

Rep. Mulholland asked the maker of the motion if he wanted to amend his motion and then asked he wanted to withdraw his motion and he said yes, then the second withdrew his second.

Rep. Bulis said that he thought this could be a dangerous route and ceding the authority of the delegation would not be a good idea. Rep. Sorg agreed with that.

Rep. Almy asked how emergency capital purchases been done in the past and Director Clough said that past registers have looked forward to what their needs would be and put that into the budget.

Rep. Almy asked what they do if something is needed after the budget and Director Clough said there are ways of paying for things and each case is different.

Rep. Estes said that it didn't seem to her like they needed to make a change in the law as things seem to get done if they need to get done.

There were various discussions as to how to work the motion.

Rep. Harding moved to add "to the extent allowable by law..." to precede the original motion, which was seconded by Rep. Gionet.

Rep. Preston said that he didn't see the point of this whole issue since the motion says 2008-2009 and if a law was enacted it wouldn't even take effect until 2010. Rep. Harding said you could strike the years in the motion.

Rep. Bleyler had left prior to this vote.

The vote was called a roll call vote was taken by Clerk Almy, 2 were in favor (Reps. Gionet and Hammond), 19 opposed (Reps. Mulholland, Almy, Williams, Dingman, Laliberte, Preston, Aguiar, Friedrich, Pierce, Cooney, Matheson, Nordgren, Solomon, Andersen, Harding, Sorg, Estes, Lovett, and Ingbretson) and 1 abstained (Rep. Solomon). Motion failed.

Rep. Andersen moved to adjourn, which was seconded by Rep. Laliberte

Rep. Harding wanted to make a recommendation prior to adjournment that a committee be established to look at the viability of the Farm, and would consist of members from the legislature and a Commissioner and that committee would present a report back to the legislature by the January first. Director Clough said that there is a Farm Advisory Committee established years ago that has been doing just that. Rep. Harding said the Farm issue is one that has come up repeatedly and it needs to be looked at with some fiscal responsibility. Commissioner Richards said that she would suggest that the FAC be included when establishing a committee.

Rep. Andersen spoke against this recommendation saying that January 1st is an unreasonable date because of it being an election year and suggested waiting until the

election is over to see who is even in office and then establish a reasonable committee with a proper board and proper time to think about it.

Rep. Aguiar asked if it was within the authority of the legislature to create a committee and Director Clough said that the executive committee has never established a committee, but rather the Board of Commissioners. Rep. Bulis suggested using the existing committee.

Rep. Harding retracted her recommendation.

Commissioner Cryans said that if you look at the difference between the Farm's revenues and expenses, you're only looking at about a \$47K difference.

Rep. Aguiar said that a lot of what the Farm does for the jail may cease as this \$40M jail is supposed to offer rehabilitation and training within and at the point inmates working on the Farm is an antiquated idea.

11:40 AM The vote was taken to adjourn, all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Almy, Clerk