

GRAFTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

Budget Reviews

Board of Commissioners' Office

North Haverhill, NH

Thursday, March 26, 2009

PRESENT: Commissioners Michael Cryans, Ray Burton and Martha Richards, Financial Coordinator Susan Cunningham, Executive Director Julie Clough and Secretary Jeri Martino.

Commissioner Cryans called the Meeting to order at 9:06 AM.

CORRECTIONS:

Supt. Libby, B. Paronto and T. Elliott presented the budget for Corrections. Before presenting, Supt. Libby gave the Commissioners a printout of a salary/benefit survey that he took from different towns in the County to see what they would be giving their employees. List is as follows:

Plymouth	3% Cola	
Haverhill	up to 3% Merit	100% single plan ins. coverage
Hanover	2% Merit & 1% Cola	
Littleton	3% & 2.5% Step on last day of the year	
Holderness	3% Merit	
Lincoln	2.5% Cola & 2.5% Merit	100% single plan ins. coverage
Lyme	5.8% Cola	
State	5% Raise	\$780 a year for insurance 100% dental

Supt. Libby said that he's aware that this is a rough climate but the biggest resource is the employees. He said that the economy has been tough on everyone and speaking of his staff, they are hard working and he is very proud of them. He said that he would of course support the Commissioners in what they had to do but would be remiss in not standing up for the employees.

Supt. Libby said he knew that the Commissioners had a tough decision to make but he hoped that they would do a lot of soul searching before making any decisions, saying again that the employees are the biggest asset of the County.

Commissioner Cryans stated that he felt that they had always been fair to the employees and noted that Lebanon was not on the list because they were in fact having a very difficult time. He said that the Commissioners are looking at everything but have some difficult decisions to make. Supt. Libby said that he hoped the Board does take a good look and continue to do what is best for employees.

Commissioner Cryans said the goal is not to have to lay anyone off and admitted that raises and merit increases were important but it is more important to not lose a job. He said no specific decisions have been made at this time.

Commissioner Burton said that he has always been pro employee and that he has not

heard at any of the Selectboard meetings that he has attended, that the County should cut the budget.

Supt. Libby said that he has come away with a better understanding of the towns after personally speaking with them regarding this issue.

In going over the budget, Supt. Libby said that he would forgo his increase or even take a reduction to his salary in order to give the employees their due.

The rest of the budget was reviewed. The CO's line appears larger than last year due to an error that was made in last year's budget of \$40K, which has since been included.

There is a decrease in the meals line which has been adjusted down to \$3 per meal. A washer and dryer will be purchased so that the female inmates can do some of their own laundry. The women will be trained and become certified.

Supt. Libby said that due to the medical professionalism of A. Achilles, they are able to reduce the medical line and they hope to have more control over the pharmacy portion.

Supt. Libby said that he was concerned over what he considered; "budget compression" or an extreme tightening of the budget which he believes will create difficulties when things finally do catch up.

#### COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS:

Supt. Libby went over the budget noting that the supply line had increased which has a lot to do with Drug Court, as does the telephone.

The travel line had been increased due to the need for home visits within the County. Overall, the budget has increased less than \$1K.

Director Clough said that oil was locked in at \$2.17 which will decrease plant operation costs.

#### GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION GRANT:

The Governor reduced the fund 9.6% for treatment. The bottom line of this budget includes money from the County in the amount of \$11,871.

Commissioner Burton said that Governor & Council are listening to testimony from K. Ayotte who is seeking another term and he has heard nothing from her in regards to being highly in support of the County and substance abuse or the Gov. Commission Grant.

Supt. Libby said that he hopes that the House reinstates the full amount for the fund and if not would like to keep the level of service as it has been, adding that spending money on treatment saves money in the long run.

#### NIGHT WATCHMEN:

This budget remains close to the same.

Commissioner Cryans asked T. Elliott how Community Corrections was working and he said that it was running fine and thanked the Commissioners for supporting it. Commissioner Burton said that it is one of the positive programs.

There was a discussion about how the electronic monitoring works.

T. Elliott said that it was important to note that Drug Court is very time consuming and if it continues to grow, more staffing will be needed. He said it is very report/paper intensive.

Commissioner Cryans asked if T. Elliott saw it as beneficial and he replied that he had some concerns about the way it is run and said that he thought that more should be expected of the participants and they should have to earn their rewards rather than having everything given to them. He said he didn't feel the program was strict enough. Supt. Libby said that the consistency is not the same as it is in Community Corrections and there are far more "gray areas".

#### FARM:

FM Kimball, Supt. Libby and B. Paronto were present for the Farm budget. There were some reductions due to fact that FM Kimball wants to sell around 15 of the animals, which should happen by the end of FY10. FM Kimball also wants to sell some of the equipment since it's not needed any longer due to having the new bunkers.

There was a discussion about bedding/sawdust which is a considerable expense.

FM Kimball brought up the subject of the employee discount at the Farm and said that he thinks it should be discontinued and intimated that he had loss in revenue because of that. Commissioner Richards said that she has wanted to do away with it for a while and motioned to do so. Commissioner Burton said he would be in favor of it as well. Sec. Martino asked to speak as a member of the employee council who originally proposed the employee discount back in July of 2005.

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Executive Director Clough presented a request from Jeri Martino for employee discounts on items that the County produces. No action was taken at this time  
The Commissioners reviewed the possibility of having an employee discount. After some discussion Commissioner Burton moved to offer a 20% discount on items from the Farm Stand, Livestock, Firewood and Hay. Commissioner Gabler seconded the motion. All were in favor. Policy will go into effect.

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She suggested that the Commissioners reconsider their motion to eliminate the discount saying that they shouldn't start chipping away at all the things that employees have. She said that with the consideration of no raises or COLA and even the possibility of removing our water coolers that it appears that it is always the employees who are losing out.

She said the County finds it okay to give away produce all around the County then a

discount shouldn't be a problem. Commissioner Richards said that those go to the needy. Martino said that not everyone here at the County makes a high salary and there are people here too that may need help. She said it was unfortunate that all the cuts that are being considered are employee related and felt that Commissioner Cryans repeatedly saying that the County may have to forgo raises so that they wouldn't have to lay anyone off, came out sounding like a scare tactic.

Commissioner Cryans said that it was not a scare tactic but a reality and that it was clear that a good portion of the County budget is employee related. He said that the Board could look at the possibility of eliminating the employee discount when the Commissioners make their recommendation. The motion was tabled.

FM Kimball said that he would need a new vehicle and put in a request to capital expense for \$25K, a request for stall repair was \$10K. The Commissioners asked if he could look at a used vehicle for around \$20K.

#### COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE:

Director Clough presented the budget for the Commissioners' Office. Commissioners travel and expense line has been increased which is actual mileage for travel. Education and Conference was reduced to \$1K. Other lines were down and the total budget came in \$44 under.

There was a discussion about insurance and the possibility of changing to Primex.

Commissioner Richards asked exactly what it was that Cindy Swart did for the County and Director Clough explained that she reviews all the social service agencies that request money from the County and then reports back to the Commissioners. Commissioner Richards asked what her qualifications were and Director Clough said that she would have to get that information.

Under MISC Accounts, the Nursing Home will be carrying all the retiree benefits now so they will be showing up in that budget.

#### COUNTY ATTORNEY:

Attorney St. Hilaire and A. Farina presented the Attorney's Office budget. Commissioner Burton asked Atty. St. Hilaire about the nomination of K. Ayotte and he replied that working with the Atty. General was outstanding, but as you got further down the chain things became less amiable. He said that they don't look at the serious cases in the County and the Election division is still being worked on though it is getting better. Overall he said that working with the AG is positive.

There was a discussion about a new program for cold case files and Commissioner Burton said that he was in favor of reopening cases and that new technologies will produce new information.

The Commissioners signed an appointment of a new assistant Deputy Attorney, Paul Fitzgerald, who will be starting tomorrow.

Atty. St. Hilaire passed out a chart which showed New Hampshire as the safest state in the country for the second year in a row.

Atty. St. Hilaire said that there were 588 new felony cases taken in by the County Atty's Office this year and they began to increase when the economy began to decline. Lebanon is the highest area for crime in the County. Overall this is a 25% increase over last year for court cases. (1875 to 2334)

Atty. St. Hilaire said that he presented a flat line budget as requested but may have to cut certain services because of that. He said that they expect to be handling fewer cases and as prosecutor has the right to decide what the limits are. He said that without limits they would have to take every case that came across their desk and that is just not feasible, so discretion is used. Commissioner Burton asked if that were all legal and followed state and local laws and Atty. St. Hilaire said that it did and that cases are passed on all the time.

Investigative services have been cut by 5 hours and they will be lending out their vehicle when possible to help out the County. He said that he is intentionally building up money in the Contracted Services line because eventually they will have a trial that will require an expert witness and that will be costly. He said that it is a very important component in the budget and he needs that safety net.

Atty. St. Hilaire said that he is on a very thin line with this budget and said that in order to be sure that his staff is taken care of, he has offered to flat line his salary. Commissioner Cryans said that would need clarification since the delegation sets the salaries for elected officials. Commissioner Burton said that he is opposed to Atty. St. Hilaire doing that.

There will be no capital expenses this year. The Medical Referee is leveled at \$50K and there is \$55K in grant money expected for revenue.

Atty. St. Hilaire said that he would be looking at stimulus money for another coordinator for Drug Court and some additional administrative help with the Victim Witness program.

12:00 PM Meeting adjourned

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Raymond S. Burton, Clerk