Coös County Commissioners
Coös County Delegation
Joint Meeting
Coös County Nursing Home – Berlin, NH
Friday, February 21, 2025

Present: Commissioners Thomas Brady, Raymond Gorman; Representatives Arnold Davis, Sean Durkin, Seth King, Lori Korzen, Peter Morency, Michael Murphy Mike Ouellet and Brian Valerino; County Administrator Mark Brady, Director of Finance Carrie Klebe, Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills, Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger, Finance Operations Manager Christine Labelle, Captain Jason Rella, Sheriff Keith Roberge, Register of Deeds Leon Rideout; Lisa Trundy-Whitten & Olga Gross-Balzano, BerryDunn; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; and members of the press and public.

Chairman Brady opened the Joint Meeting at 9:07 a.m. Representative Davis led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The roll was called by the Representative Korzen. There were eight Delegation members present.

Approval of the agenda: A motion was made by Representative Davis, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was approved in the affirmative.

Hearing of the public: There was no hearing of the public.

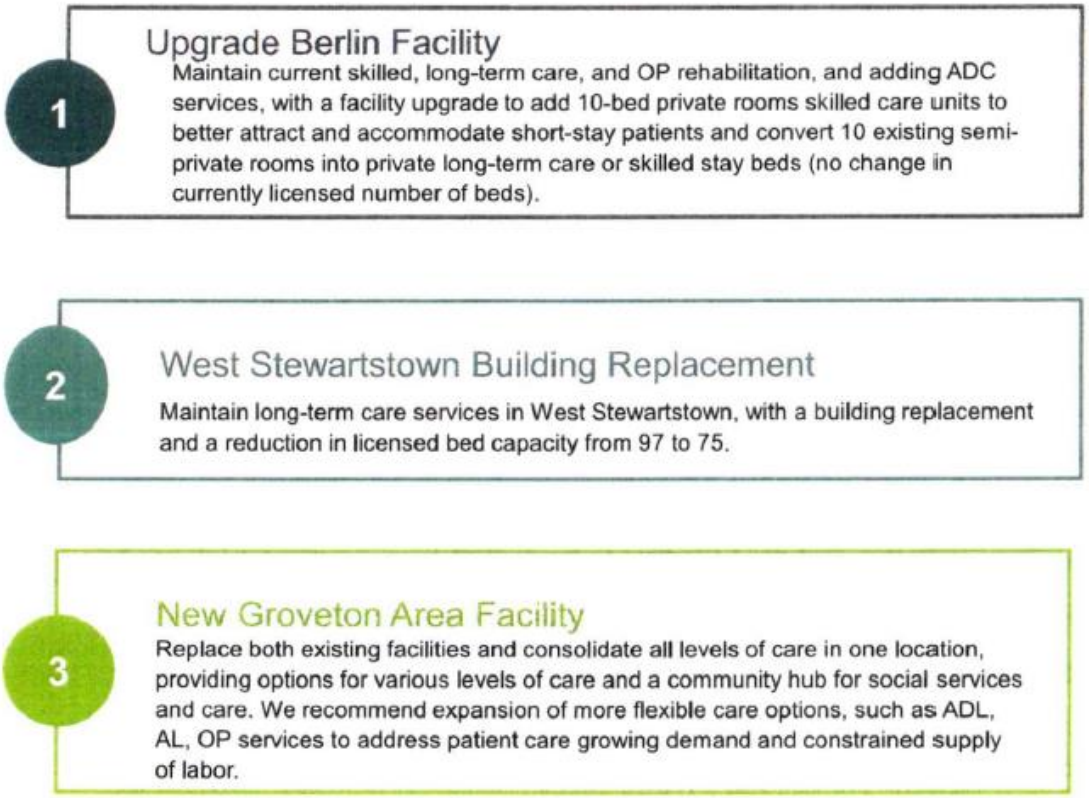
Other Business:

a. Discussion – request for a lot line adjustment to County Land in Stewartstown: The County Administrator reported that he had been approached by a local individual about purchasing a 10-acre lot of Coös County land that borders his property. This lot would be used as a driveway to access this individual's property from Route 3. It would be sold at fair-market value but first must be advertised. Members of the Delegation viewed a paper map provided by the County Administrator. Commissioner Gorman added that the land is ledge and whatever value is in access to Route 3.

   Chairman Davis stated that this would be an additional revenue and would place the land back on the Stewartstown tax roll. Representative Ouellet stated that there is no value to the land because of the ledge. He suggested that at the appropriate time to proceed with a purchase and sales agreement that places the burden on the buyer to pay for the costs. Chairman Davis asked if anyone was opposed to the proposal. Representative King stated that he did not oppose to the sale; but would like a month for the public to have a comment period. A motion was made by Representative Ouellet seconded by Representative Murphy to allow the County Commissioners and the County Administrator to proceed with the potential sale of property with a final decision to be made at the March 24th meeting. The motion was approved by roll call 8-0.

b. BerryDunn Presentation by Lisa Trundy-Whitten and Olga Gross-Balzano. Informational packets were distributed to the Board and Delegation members. Ms. Trundy-Whitten began by noting that demographics show that the projected population of 85+ individuals in Coös County will be estimated at 1,000 +/- and by 2050 those figures will increase to 2,250 +/-. The greatest barrier is the labor market.

The following scenarios were presented for consideration:



Summary of Presented Models

Location	Berlin	West Stewartstown	Groveton
Approach	10 private rooms skilled care, ADC and OP space / storage area addition	75-bed replacement facility (new construction)	125-bed new construction in a developing county "hub"
Nursing facility beds	100 (no change)	75 (reduction from 97)	125
Adult Day Care services	Yes	No	Yes
Outpatient rehabilitation	Yes	No	Yes
Billing support	Centralized, location TBD		On site
Other recommendations	Evaluation of staffing ratios and process efficiency gains for nursing, support, and administrative staff		

Ms. Gross-Balzano noted that higher occupancy with private rooms will increase income.

Berlin Nursing Home's cost per day is $502.76. NH Medicaid pays $282.22 which leaves a gap of $220.54. The state median is based on the nursing home's cost report.

There are opportunities to align staffing and eliminate contract staffing. BerryDunn has proposed to centralize certain positions: accounts payable, billing, collections, community liaison, admissions coordinator.

Berlin Facility Upgrade

Results

	Actual		Projected with efficiencies	Projected with facility upgrade				
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Revenue ppd	$ 428.79	$ 435.89	$ 467.91	$ 523.18	$ 542.62	$ 561.54	$ 581.15	$ 601.49
Total cost ppd	$ 608.56	$ 484.00	$ 457.46	505.38	519.37	531.29	543.53	556.11
Net income ppd	$ (179.77)	$ (48.11)	$ 10.45	$ 17.80	$ 23.25	$ 30.25	$ 37.62	$ 45.39

Positive net income can be achieved with operational efficiencies.

Upgrade of Berlin facility positions the county to serve more private and Medicare residents which are reimbursed at a higher rate.

New Facility Groveton

Results

	Projected new facility				
	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Revenue ppd	$ 463.30	$ 474.51	$ 486.53	$ 498.85	$ 511.48
Total cost ppd	530.83	540.81	551.13	561.83	572.70
Net income ppd	$ (67.53)	$ (66.30)	$ (64.60)	$ (62.98)	$ (61.22)

A new facility with 75 beds in Groveton could not achieve financial sustainability in the first five years with the debt service needed to construct the facility.

The estimated cost of a new facility in Groveton was estimated at $54 million. This option would not be feasible as the county would begin at a -$67.53 per person per day at 125 residents.

New Facility West Stewartstown

Results

	Actual	Projected with efficiencies	Projected new facility				
	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Revenue ppd	$ 430.53	$ 446.63	$ 492.99	$ 524.86	$ 546.12	$ 568.23	$ 591.25
Total cost ppd	$ 614.22	$ 405.37	$ 492.73	$ 504.61	$ 513.95	$ 523.66	$ 533.54
Net income ppd	$ (183.69)	$ 41.26	$ 0.25	$ 20.25	$ 32.17	$ 44.57	$ 57.71

West Stewartstown can achieve a positive net income with operational efficiencies

The debt service on a new facility will reduce overall profit, but a new facility will position the county to serve Medicaid and private residents in the future.

The current West Stewartstown facility has a license of 97 beds. Seven are for emergency use only per DHHS. The rooms do not meet the requirement of minimum square footage per resident. A new 75-bed facility would only be for long-term care only. The estimated cost would be $33 million to replace. 60% debt service/40% county funds.

West Stewartstown's gap per day is $250 per resident. Vermont Medicaid residents pay the full cost. Commissioner Brady noted that if West Stewartstown had a new facility, individuals on the Berlin waiting list might be willing to come to West Stewartstown temporarily. 90% of a 75-bed facility is 68 residents and West Stewartstown is currently at 60.

Representative Davis asked what to do with the current facility. The County Administrator replied that the County is exploring options. Representative King asked if it would be too much to do both projects. Representative Korzen asked what BerryDunn's recommendation was. Ms. Trundy-Whitten replied that Groveton is clearly not feasible because debt costs is too high, and it is a political decision as to what the County wants to do in Berlin and W. Stewartstown. Commissioner Brady asked that if both projects were done would it stop the losses that the facilities are experiencing? She replied the analysis shows that Berlin would be profitable with the $6 million expansion and a new 75 bed facility in W. Stewartstown would breakeven. Those numbers are based on their financing assumptions, which could change.

The County Administrator noted that the renovations to the Berlin facility is the easy part to the discussion and asked what about just making the W. Stewartstown facility work for as long as possible. Ms. Trundy-Whitten replied that at some point soon it will be increasingly difficult to do. A new facility is instrumental in keeping the occupancy rate at 90%, which their plan calls for. A new facility would also increase operational efficiencies and cost savings. She reiterated that a new facility would provide for a higher Medicaid reimbursement rate for capital expense which the county is currently not receiving.

Representative Ouellet noted that kicking the can down the road is not smart in this instance. Maintenance costs will continue to rise, and new costs will increase in five years. Representative Durkin added that Berlin operating in the black will help subsidize W. Stewartstown costs along with an increase in the reimbursement rate due to capital expenses.

Discussion 2025 Budget:
The County Administrator noted that BerryDunn will return in a few months after the in-depth report has been distributed. Benchmarks advised by BerryDunn were used in the 2025 budget.

The County Administrator announced that Laura Mills had submitted her letter of resignation effective 4/30/2025. She was thanked for her 31 years of service.

The most significant changes since the December Public Hearing were:

- HCBC (a 2.1% increase) of $348,000.
- 53rd payroll costs of $22,143.
- Additional payout to a DOC employee of $77,000.
- Collective Bargaining Agreement/DOC /3% COLA costing $24,000.
- Funding CEDC by an additional $15,000.
- Economic Development position will not be funded as an employee thereby saving $27,000.
- The county will pay the Conservation District $50,000 thereby saving $17,000 savings from December and $37,866 from 2024.
- $223,000 of the surplus was used to offset some of the changes.
- Generated an additional $200,000 in savings in WSNH Wages & Benefits.
- Berlin Nursing Home increased revenues due to rate increase by $159,220.
- Increase interest on TAN $22,500.
- Increased Opioid Reserve Revenue $25,000.

Any Other Business:
Representative Morency reported that the state was eliminating the NH Drug Task Force and would be funding those efforts in a different way. He noted that $1 million was to be distributed to four counties but that one had declined to participate and therefore, Coös would be receiving more funding. Sheriff Roberge requested the Delegation and Commissioners' support a letter to Governor Kelly Ayotte requesting a loan for equipment to the Sheriff's Department. A motion was made by Representative Ouellet, seconded by Representative Durkin to authorize Chairman Davis to sign the letter. The motion was approved unanimously.

Register of Deeds Leon Rideout announced to the Board and Delegation that the tech contract for equipment in his department is set to expire in 2025. He has been researching vendors with varied costs. The registrar was asked to contact the County Administrator for further guidance.

A motion was made by Representative Morency, seconded Representative Murphy to adjourn the meeting at 12:15 p.m. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Harris
Administrative Assistant