

COÖS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING  
Coös County Administrative Offices  
34 County Farm Road, Stewartstown - NH  
March 19, 2025

Present: Commissioners Raymond Gorman, Robert Théberge; County Administrator Mark Brady; Superintendent of Corrections Ben Champagne; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger; HR Coordinator Morgan DeBlois; Sheriff Keith Roberge; Pam Urban-Morin (*remote*); County Treasurer Sue Collins; Register of Deeds Leon Rideout(*remote*); Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Bob Gargano, Selectman Gorham; and Maura Chappell.

Commissioner Tom Brady was excused due to illness. (*remote*)

1. Commissioner Gorman called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and welcomed everyone. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Selectman Bob Gargano.
2. Approval of the Agenda: A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to approve the agenda, as presented. The motion was approved 2-0.
3. Approval of the Minutes of the February 12, 2025, regular meeting, the February 21, 2025, special meeting and the February 21, 2025, joint meeting, as distributed. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to approve the minutes of the February 12, 2025, regular meeting, the February 21, 2025, special meeting and the February 21, 2025, joint meeting, as distributed. The motion was approved 2-0.
4. Approval of Payrolls & Disbursements for February and authorization during the month of March to meet all payroll obligations and pay all other obligations due during the month: A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to approve the Payrolls & Disbursements for February and authorization during the month of March to meet all payroll obligations and pay all other obligations due during the month. The motion was approved 2-0.
5. Correspondence: There was no correspondence.
6. Hearing of the public:
  - a. Register of Deeds Leon Rideout requested Board approval for single source bid for land records with Fidlar. The proposed contract shows an increase of \$1,800 since 2018. This will be an increase of \$130 per month in the 2026 budget. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to authorize the Register of Deeds to move forward with the single source contract with Fidlar. The motion was approved 2-0.
  - b. Eversource: Matt Koehler, Paul LaMoreaux, Allison McLean, Jessi Duston presented information to the Board relating to energy efficiency programs in New Hampshire.

- NH Saves is a collaboration of New Hampshire's electric and natural gas utilities working together to provide NH customers with information, incentives and support designed to save energy, reduce costs and protect the environment statewide.
- Commercial, Industrial and Municipal Programs: anything that will save electricity or gas cost effectively can be considered. For municipalities: electricity, gas, propane or oil)
- Residential and New Construction Programs.

Superintendent Champagne noted that some upgrades have already been done and he asked if these projects would qualify after the fact. Ms. Duston replied that projects must be preapproved to qualify.

County Administrator Brady inquired about the process for new construction. The response was the sooner that the utility company is involved the more potential of rebates.

- Sheriff Keith Roberge reported that the task force would be losing its two investigators assigned to Coös County in July. He had no further updates due to the NH budget changes.

7. Report of the County Administrator Mark A. Brady: The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows.

- Representative Davis and the Administrator appeared on WMUR's NH Business hosted by Fred Kocher to discuss the status of the Connecticut Lakes Headwater easement, Rep. Davis's HB 123 and respond to Aurora's most recent statements.
- The Commissioners [oped](#) in support of HB 123 was published in numerous media outlets throughout the state. The bill passed a major hurdle in the House 197 - 158.
- Commissioner Gorman and the Administrator met with Carol Miller of the Coös Economic Development Corporation to discuss their economic development efforts, participation of the commissioners and the boards intent to fund the CEDC an additional \$15,000 in 2025.
- The Administrator notified the NH Department of Health and Human Services of Administrator Mills resignation effective May 1, 2025.
- The Corrections Collective Bargaining Agreement with the SEA/SEIU for the years 2025-2027 has been signed by all parties and requires a motion by the Commissioners to be presented to the County Delegation for their approval.
- The County applied for four CDS grant (two for CCNH-Berlin and two for the Sheriff's Department) through Senator Shaheen's office.

- g. The County submitted a letter to Internet Service Providers to encourage them to pursue the remaining Broadband BEAD funding to service coverage gap areas in Coös County.
- h. At the meeting, the County Administrator added the following items:
  - He presented a Memorandum of Understanding between the Town of Gorham and the Coös County Commissioners for Housing Champion Assistance. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to authorize the County Administrator to sign the Memorandum of Understanding. The motion was approved 2-0.
  - The collective bargaining agreement with the SEA/Department of Corrections has been signed by all parties.
  - The County Administrator and Commissioner Gorman testified in the State Senate on March 18 in favor of HB127. The bill passed and was placed on the Senate consent calendar.
  - There is discussion of a possible reconfiguration of the rooms & meals tax which would keep more for Concord and less to the municipalities.

UNINCORPORATED PLACES

- a. MS-123s for all Unincorporated Places were submitted.
- b. A supplemental intent to cut in Odell was filed.
- c. The Governor and Executive Council approved the hazard mitigation grant for the Unincorporated Places and the contractor has been engaged. BRIC grants were submitted (specific to Magalloway riverbank issues).
- d. The next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for March 19, 2025.

8. Report of the Superintendent of Corrections Ben Champagne. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:

HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS	13
PRETRIAL	13
NH STATE PRISON INMATES	0
OTHER COUNTY INMATES	0
<b>TOTAL IN FACILITY</b>	<b>26</b>
ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAM	0
WORK RELEASE PROGRAM	0
FURLOUGH	0
HELD AT OTHER FACILITIES HOC= HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS PT= PRETRIAL	<b>GRAFTON DOC: 1 PT FEMALE, 2 PT MALE NHSP: 3 PT MALE HILLSBOROUGH DOC: 1 PT MALE CARROLL DOC: 1 PT MALE</b>
<b>TOTAL POPULATION</b>	<b>34</b>
AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION FEBRUARY	21
MALE DAYS SERVED IN FACILITY FEBRUARY	597
FEMALE DAYS SERVED FEBRUARY	63 5(FEMALES)
FEDERAL INMATE DAYS FEBRUARY	2
TOTAL INMATES BOOKED FEBRUARY	33
TOTAL INMATES RELEASED FEBRUARY	25

- a. The percentage of Opioid Use Disorders (OUD's) and Substance Use Disorders (SUD's) among new intakes continues to be very high: 77% of new inmates were identified as having an OUD/ SUD during the month of February.
  - b. The department held a stakeholder's presentation for the new S.U.M.M.I.T Program on March 5, 2025, at the administrative office meeting room. The presentation was well attended by various groups across justice systems, to include law enforcement, public defenders, treatment providers and court representatives. Superintendent Champagne received incredibly positive feedback on the program and is excited to get started. The department is currently accepting participants.
  - c. Superintendent Champagne entered into a housing agreement with the United States Border Patrol on February 13, 2025. This agreement will allow the department to house detainees arrested by the USBP for federal crimes that require they be held pending trial.
  - d. The Department of Environmental Services Annual Facility Reports were completed for the Coös County Recycling Center and Coös County Transfer Station.
9. Report of the West Stewartstown Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:

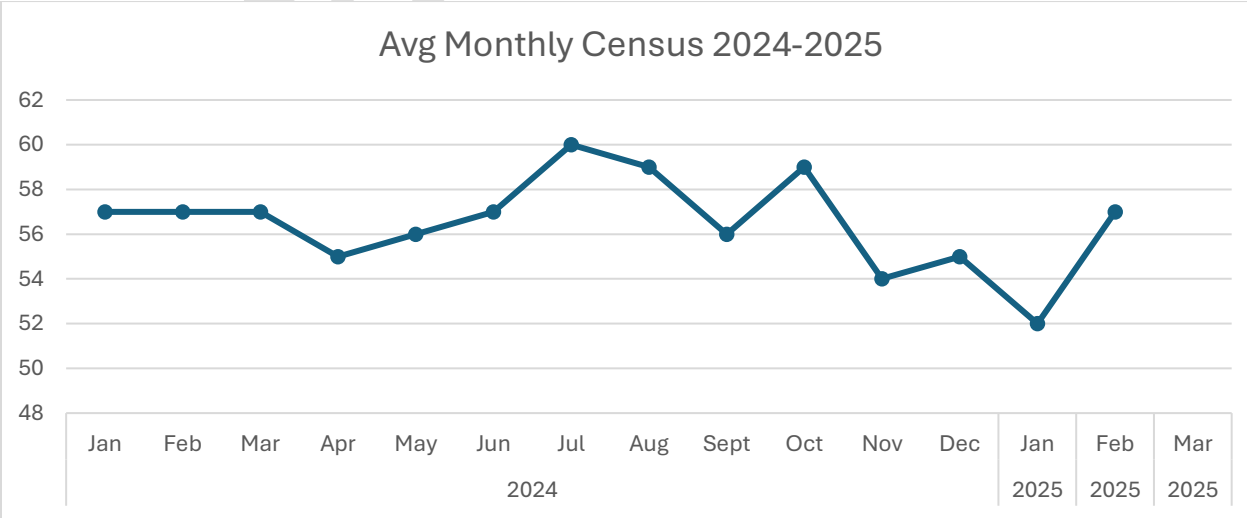
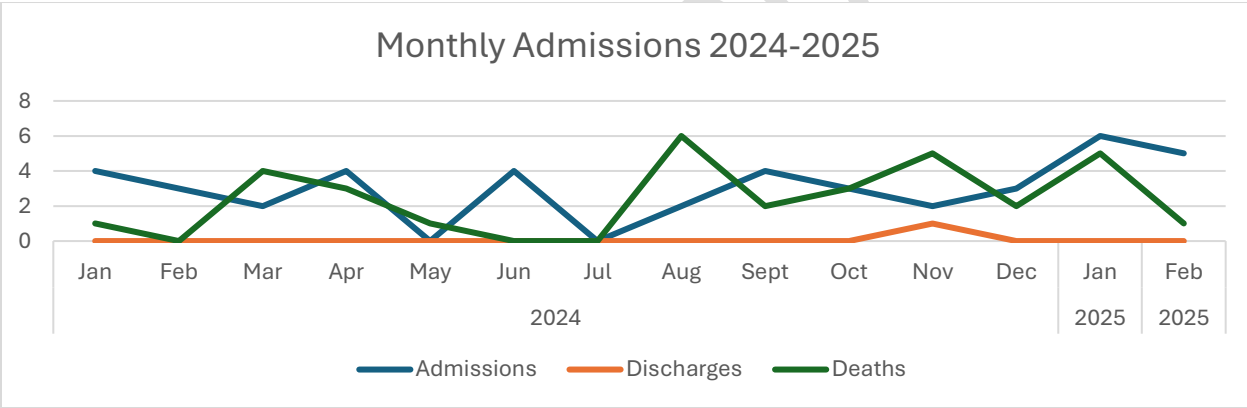
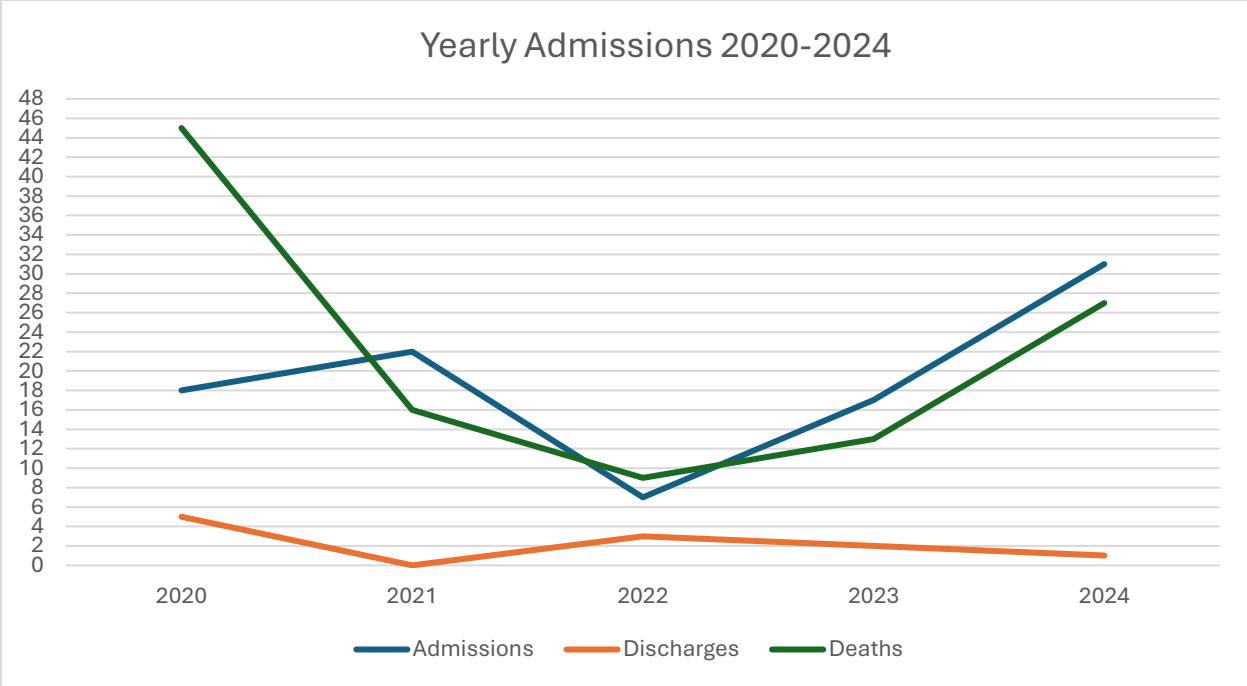
- a. CENSUS: The census was 59 for an occupancy rate of 60.8% based on a bed count of 97, 70.2% based on a bed count of 84, and 78.7% based on a bed count of 75. In February, there were five (5) admissions and one (1) death. There has been one (1) death so far in March.

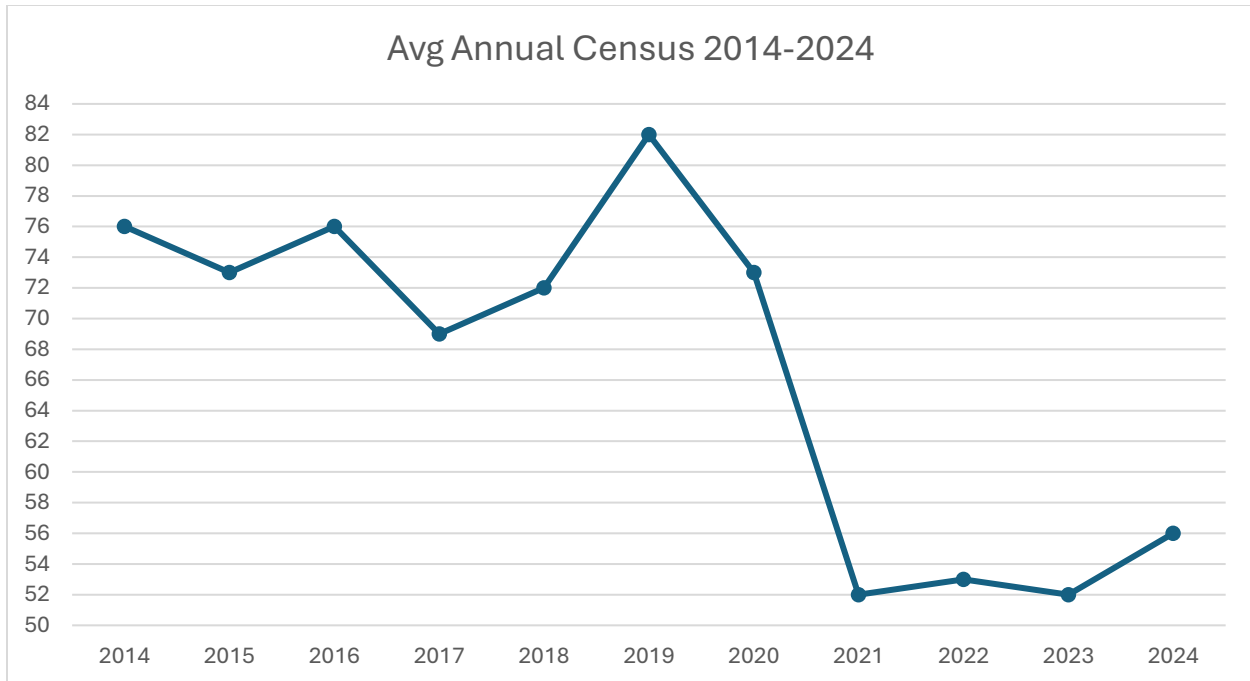
Of the 59 residents, twelve (12) are Private Pay, eight (8) residents are Vermont Medicaid, and seven (7) residents are Medicaid Pending for NH.

	2024	2025	2025
	Dec	Jan	Feb
Admissions	3	6	5
Discharges	0	0	0
Deaths	2	5	1

*Totals for 2025: Eleven (11) admissions and six (6) deaths.*

*Totals for 2024: Thirty-one (31) admissions, one (1) discharge, and twenty-seven (27) deaths.*





- b. **INQUIRIES FOR ADMISSION:** Coös County Nursing Hospital received seven (7) inquiries for admission in February. Four (4) residents were admitted from the list in February. The facility is working on the others.
- c. **STAFFING: Nursing:** There are 144 hours open for RN/LPN (3.6 FTE). There is currently one (1) contract nurse and several temps filling the open hours. There are 760 open LNA hours (19 FTE). There are currently six (6) contract LNAs and several temps and high school students helping to cover open shifts. Recruitment efforts continue.
- d. **LNA CLASS:** The last day of class is March 27 with state testing at the nursing hospital on March 28. The graduation will be held at the nursing hospital on March 31. Several students are looking for positions.
- e. **MQIP and PROSHARE:** There is a concern that the State of NH will be changing how they determine the Proshare payout. The issue is that customary charges (private rates) for counties are lower than costs. This will impact the MQIP and ProShare calculations.

Counties whose customary charges are 60% or less than costs may not be impacted. If Charges are < 60% or > 100% of costs, then ProShare calculation will be the difference between Medicaid Payments and Calculated Costs. If the Private Pay Rate is > 60% and < 100% of costs, then the ProShare calculation will be the difference between Medicaid Payments and the Private Rate.

Both homes are currently below the 60% threshold, however the Private Pay Rate has been increased to \$365. If the costs for both homes do not increase in 2025 or if they decrease, both homes will see a decrease in Proshare payments.

		7/1/2022	1/1/2023	7/1/2023	1/1/2024	7/1/2024	1/1/2025
Coös County Nursing Home	Proshare Allocated Medicaid Cost (PAMC)	590.38	590.38	595.03	595.03		
	Private Pay Rate	300.00	300.00	300.00	325.00	325.00	350.00
	Private Pay % of PAMC	51%	51%	50%	55%		
Coös County Nursing Hospital	Proshare Allocated Medicaid Cost (PAMC)	589.44	589.44	550.22	550.22		
	Private Pay Rate	300.00	300.00	300.00	325.00	325.00	350.00
	Private Pay % of PAMC	51%	51%	55%	59%		

- f. RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES (Covid, Influenza, RSV): Covid and Influenza continue to be active in the community however no residents or staff tested positive for either in February.
- g. GRANTS: The crew continues to work on the upgrade to the HVAC system. This upgrade will allow the individual units to communicate and maintain more consistency with our existing heating system. This is part of the “contingency funds” left over after the project was complete.

The Nursing Hospital Administrator and Plant Manager continue to work with Pam Urban-Morin and Ericka Canales on the application and reporting requirements for this grant and on the CDBG for the elevators.

- h. QAPI: Progress on the QAPI Plan continues including tasks from the most recent Survey Plan of Correction. Current Performance Improvement Projects (PIPs), Documentation, Shift Change Report.
- i. Committees:
- NHAC Executive Committee - The Nursing Hospital Administrator attends meetings remotely.
  - NHAC Nursing Home Affiliate - The Nursing Home Affiliate meets every month via Zoom.
  - Workforce Development - Meets monthly.
  - UCVH Board of Directors - The Nursing Hospital Administrator attends monthly.
- j. Nursing Hours at the Department of Corrections: No nursing hours for February.
- k. At the meeting, the NHA added the following:
- Travel authorization for the Dietary Manager and Assistant Dietary Manager to travel to Burlington, Vermont for the annual food show. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to authorize out of state travel for the specified dietary employees from both nursing homes to attend the food show in Burlington, Vermont on April 29. The motion was approved 2-0.
  - The NHA presented a request for the tuition repayment program for an employee. The County Administrator stated that he had not reviewed the request. He asked that it be presented and discussed at the next meeting.

10. Report of the Berlin Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:

- a. Current Census: 80 as of 3/11/25. Occupancy Rate: 80%. SNF 7. Private Pay 15. Medicaid Pending 7. Hospice 1.

February 2025 Census Data: Admissions 1. Deaths 2. Discharges 0. Transfers out 4. Transfers in 4. Average daily census 81.9%.

Year to Date Totals: Admissions 5. Deaths 3. Discharges 2. Transfers out 8. Transfers in 14. Average daily census 80.4%.

- b. Open Positions: RN/LPN: 580 hours, 14.5 FTEs. LNAs: 1626 hours, 40.65 FTEs. I am looking into an LNA course with LNA Health Careers. We have unit aides interested in participating in an LNA course. We are also exploring LNA reinstatements for LNAs who have not renewed their license in the past 2 years. We have 2 interested employees looking to reinstate their LNA licenses.

Agency/Travel Staff: RN: 3 (136 hours/week), LPN: 4 (192 hours/week), LNA: 10 (456 hours/week). Utilizing NHES, Indeed.com, County Website, and Local News Papers for advertising of open positions.

- c. COVID-19- No current cases for residents or staff.

Norovirus- Started March 6, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, with residents and staff.

- d. Nursing Home Administrator- Has been working at the Nursing Hospital several days per week with the Nursing Hospital Administrator. The process has been going well.

- e. Dietary Manager- is requesting permission from the commissioners to travel out of state for a food show in Burlington Vermont on Tuesday, April 29. *Authorized under item 11k.*

- f. CPR Training- at the nursing home has always been outsourced. Our Staff Development and IP nurses will both be attending a certification class, and we will be purchasing the equipment needed, which is a onetime fee. The initial expense is less than the cost of classes for the year. Going forward the nursing home will be saving several thousand dollars per year.

- g. QAPI Meeting February 18: The following were reviewed: Pressure Injury Prevention; Abuse Prevention; Medication Storage; MDS; Nursing/Provider Documentation; resident weight loss/gain issues; Therapy Services; Pharmacy Consultant Report; Resident/Family Satisfaction; Resident Psychosocial Support; Employee Retention; Licensing/Credentialing; Employee Recruitment; Billing Accuracy; Resident Account Audits; Generator Maintenance; Fire Alarm/Sprinklers; Mandatory Staff Trainings/Competencies based on Survey Plan of Correction; Infection Prevention. Updates to Facility Assessment Reviewed regarding required Acuity Assessments. State Required Reporting - 1 incident was reported.

h. GOFERR/CNHIP

Project Status Update: No work has been started on the North Entrance. We continue to work with Pamela Urban-Morin regarding the 2 remaining projects (Windows and North Entrance). Nursing Home Administrator is also working with Pamela Urban-Morin on 2 Departmental Grant Proposals which have been submitted and awaiting response.

i. Meetings/Committee Reports:

- NHAC Nursing Home Affiliate – Monthly via zoom.
- NHAC Executive Committee – Monthly via zoom.
- Medicaid meeting with DHHS – Monthly via zoom.
- Finance/Business office meeting monthly via zoom- currently on hold.
- PharMerica quarterly review – February 3.

11. Report of the Director of Finance Carrie Klebe. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:

a. In September, it was announced that Northway Bank will merge with Camden National Bank. The Coös County General Fund and several smaller accounts are held at Northway Bank. The final conversion will take place the weekend of March 14 -17. The finance team and Treasurer have met virtually with the current Northway Bank representative & the new Camden National Bank team.

b. 2025 Tax Anticipation Note bids and analysis to be reviewed and action to be taken by Commissioners. The Director of Finance reported that the bids were opened on Monday, March 17 with the County Treasurer Sue Collins and a member of the finance department. Bids were received from:

- Passumpsic Bank: Fixed Rate 3.74% will include a minimum \$1.1 M to be held at Passumpsic Bank or fixed rate of 3.95% with continued maintenance of current deposit relationship.
- Northway Bank: 4.632% Rate. The borrowing rate is slightly higher in 2025 due to the increase in the County's sweep account deposit rate (from 1.5% to 3.25%) on April 2, 2024.
- Bangor Savings Bank: Rate 5.45% - Coös responsible for the bond council loan documentation fee of \$2,000.
- Bank of NH: 5.2% fixed for the term – the bid was late and not accepted.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to accept the Passumpsic Bank fixed rate of 3.95% with continued maintenance of current deposit relationship. The motion was approved 2-0.

c. The 2023 Financial Audit is now complete. The 2024 Financial Audit has begun and much of the work on the 2 nursing facilities is now complete and in the hands of Berry Dunn to complete the 2024 Medicaid Cost Reports.

- d. Software Update: The Time and Attendance software training began on February 20 for the finance team. The weekly trainings will continue through May.
12. Report of the HR Coordinator Morgan DeBlois. The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:
- a. The month of February staffing report is as follows.
    - Hires 10
    - Separations 7
    - Change in status 4
  - b. The HR Coordinator has received the final proposals for health insurance alternative plans. The cost comparison analysis has been completed and presented to the County Administrator. Final changes and implementations will be decided in the coming weeks.
  - c. Joint Loss Committee meetings continue to address and satisfy the requirements of the Coös County Safety Plan. Meetings consist of understanding the safety manual, reviewing county wide claims and injury trends, and reviewing facility safety checklists. The next meeting is scheduled for March 19.
  - d. The HR Coordinator is currently in edits and legal review of the Coös County handbook. A complete policy and procedure review is taking place to ensure the handbook is reviewed in its entirety and that Coos County is consistent with other counties in NH. The HR Team has met with SNS, Grants and Contracts Manager, Pam Urban-Morin, and legal to ensure all aspects of the handbook are accounted for. Special attention on evaluations and performance are being considered as we are experiencing issues in these areas that need to be addressed. The HR Coordinator is confident fixing the evaluation issues will address performance deficiencies, payroll processes, and set clear performance standards and expectations that align with Coös County values.
  - e. The HR Team met with the Finance Team to address process deficiencies as the transition of payroll systems has been implemented. As we continue to consolidate systems between the Berlin Nursing Home and the County, reviews will be conducted on a weekly basis to ensure success and significantly reduce error.
13. Commissioners' Committee Reports: Commissioner Gorman updated the Board on the committees that he represented.
14. Other Business:
- a. Budget Transfers: There were no budget transfers.
15. Unincorporated Places:
- a. Ratification of Zoning Permit: A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to ratify the zoning permit. The motion was approved 2-0.  
591 Ferron, Andrea & Gary Wentworth Location 2/27/25 24'x34' Garage with slab

- b. Discussion/ Action: Planning Board Reappointment – Scott Rineer, member (3 year-term). A motion was made Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to recommend the Planning Board reappointment of Scott Rineer to the Delegation for approval. The motion was approved 2-0.
- c. Discussion/ Action: Accept Leon Rideout’s resignation from the Planning Board effective immediately. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to accept Leon Rideout’s resignation from the Planning Board effective immediately. The motion was approved 2-0.
- d. Discussion/ Action: Recommendation of Leon Rideout, as a ZBA alternate (1-year term). A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to recommend the Zoning Board of Adjustment Alternate appointment of Leon Rideout to the Delegation for approval. The motion was approved 2-0.
- e. Request for 2024 property tax abatement in Wentworth Location – Estate of Ralph Griggs. Tax Collector Linda Harris presented a request for abatement of property taxes for a mobile home in Wentworth Location in the amount of \$158.16 (\$155.00 property taxes and 3.16 interest). It was explained that the land was owned by the US Fish & Wildlife Service and were planning on dismantling the mobile home over the next few months. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to approve the abatement as presented. The motion was approved 2-0.

16. *Any other public input:* There was none.

17. *Non-public sessions:* A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to enter non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II(c) at 11:20 a.m. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to exit non-public session at 11:22 a.m. The motion was approved 2-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to seal the minutes for a period of one year (3/19/2026). The motion was approved 2-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to enter non-public session per RSA 91-A:3, II(a) at 11:30 a.m. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to exit non-public session at 12:00 p.m. The motion was approved 2-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to seal the minutes for a period of one year (3/19/2026). The motion was approved 2-0.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 14, 2025, at the Coös County Administrative Offices in Stewartstown, NH beginning at 9:00 a.m.

A motion was made by Commissioner Théberge, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to adjourn the meeting at 12:02 p.m. The motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Commissioner Robert Théberge, Clerk

Pending Approval