

COÖS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
Coös County Administrative Offices - Stewartstown, NH
July 12, 2023

Present: Commissioners Thomas Brady, Raymond Gorman, Robert Théberge; County Administrator Mark Brady; Superintendent Ben Champagne; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Nursing Hospital Administrator Laura Mills; Nursing Home Administrator Lynn Beede; County Treasurer Sue Collins; Sheriff Brian Valerino, Captain Keith Roberge; Henry Noël; Les Otten; and Administrative Assistant Linda Harris.

1. Commissioner Brady called the meeting to order at 9:03 am and welcomed everyone. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Sheriff Valerino.
2. Approval of the Agenda: A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to amend the agenda to include item 15a. Recommendation to the Coös County Delegation to move Arnold Davis from an alternate to a member of the Coös County Planning Board. The motion was approved 3-0. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to approve the agenda, as amended. The motion was approved 3-0.
3. Approval of the Minutes from the June 14, 2023, regular meeting, as distributed: A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge, to approve the minutes of the June 14, 2023, regular meeting. The motion was approved 3-0.
4. Approval of Payrolls and Disbursements: A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to approve the Payrolls and Disbursements for the month of June and to authorize the Treasurer, during the month July, to meet all payroll obligations and pay all other obligations due during the month. The motion was approved by roll call 3-0.
5. Correspondence: There was no correspondence.
6. Hearing of the Public:
 - a. Henry Noël, as a private citizen, asked the Board to consider Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire as an opportunity for Coös County to enter into a partnership to provide lower cost electrical energy to the county's businesses and residents.
 - b. Les Otten inquired if the Board had any updates on the negotiations with NextEra. Chairman Brady replied that negotiations are ongoing and nothing is final.

Mr. Otten asked that the Board request communication amongst parties. NextEra has been uncooperative to discuss the lease.
 - c. Sheriff Brian Valerino reported that members of the department had worked at the Rainbow Coalition in Kilkenny along with Berlin Police Department, State Police and Forest Service. Patrols were done day and night.
7. Report of the County Administrator Mark Brady: The written report that was submitted to the Board in advance of the meeting was as follows:

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- a. The Administrator met with Captain Adrian Reyes of the state's Division of Forest and Lands. They discussed the relationship of the two entities and the Commissioners' desire to have regular tracking and reporting of the Counties' appropriation. Captain Reyes reiterated the intention of F&L to provide the county with the data and said that this was a new process for F&L to set up. Captain Reyes inquired if a six-month report would be agreeable with the Board. The Board agreed to the six-month report.
- b. Commissioner Gorman and the Administrator met with Ray Berthiaume, the Forester from the UNH Cooperative Extension to discuss a timber strategy for County owned lands. Mr. Berthiaume indicated that he does have a strategy and will draft a plan that will be presented to the Commissioners at their August meeting.
- c. The Administrator met with Rick Alpers and Sally Tanner of Primex³. They had an in-depth discussion about how the County can more aggressively utilize Primex³ services, particularly their educational and training resources. Mr. Alpers mentioned that cybersecurity, sexual harassment, and workers compensation claims are priorities for Primex³ and noted that the county's worker compensation claims were above where they should be.
- d. W. Stewartstown Nursing Home Administrator Mills gave the Administrator a tour of the facility where he was able to greet employees and residents. They also met with EEI Services, the contractor installing the new HVAC units.
- e. The Administrator participated in a call with Attorney Frizzell, Commissioner Brady and NextEra Energy.
- f. Commissioner Gorman and the Administrator participated in a call with the Northern Borders Interoperability Consortium (NBIC). This was a follow up to the previous meeting held at the Pittsburg fire station which they both attended. This session included the Vermont Commissioner of Public Safety, Jennifer Morrison, Deputy Commissioner Dan Batsie, Vermont State Senator Russ Ingalls, and Scott Cooper, Selectman of Lemington. Commissioner Morrison mentioned that Act 185 (FY23 Appropriations Bill) directed the Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to convene a working group on a new regional dispatch model including addressing funding mechanisms. The urgency for a tower on Mt. Monadnock in Lemington was discussed.
- g. The Administrator was briefed about the Balsams project by Ben Oglesby and David Eisenthal of Unibank.
- h. The Administrator met with Chuck Henderson (Senator Shaheen) and Stephanie Weiner (Congresswoman Kuster) to explore areas of priority for the country and how the Congressional delegation can be of assistance. Workforce, economic development energy/climate and security issues were discussed with a priority to identify grant funding.
- i. The County has received requests for funding from five food pantries as follows: the Berlin Feeding Hope Food Pantry (\$3,500); Colebrook Area Food Pantry (\$5,000); Errol Community Food Pantry (\$2,500); Lancaster Food Pantry (\$1,500); and Whitefield Little Free Pantry (\$5,200). The county has budgeted \$5,000 for this fiscal year and not expended any funds to date. Last

year the County expended \$5,000 as follows: Colebrook Food Pantry (\$2,000); Berlin Feeding Hope Food Pantry (\$2,000); and Errol Community Food Pantry (\$1,000).

The County Administrator asked what is the core of county government. These requests fall out of the function of county government. The County Treasurer noted that in the past if funding was provided by other local sources funding was not provided by the county. Chairman Brady noted that former Representative Richardson was a proponent of the food pantries. The Board opted to make a decision at their August meeting. One suggestion was to base funding on population.

- j. The County Administrator requested a non-public session under RSA 91-A:3 II(e).

UNINCORPORATED PLACES

- a. The Planning Board met on June 21, 2023, and elected new officers as follows: Scott Rineer as Chairman; Mike Waddell as Vice Chairman; and Mike Ouellet as Clerk.
- b. Linda Harris and the Administrator met with Phil Bodwell and Vicky Ayer of the NH Department of Revenue Administration and John Hatfield of Commerford Nieder Perkins to discuss the revaluation and assessment review of the unincorporated places. The revaluation will be concluding at the end of this year. The assessment review, which is required every five years, will be a work in progress over the next several months.
- c. The next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for July 19, 2023.

- 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	5
PRETRIAL	14
NH STATE PRISON INMATES	0
OTHER COUNTY INMATES	0
TOTAL IN FACILITY	19
ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAM	0
WORK RELEASE PROGRAM	0
FURLOUGH	0
HELD AT OTHER FACILITIES HOC= HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS PT= PRETRIAL	GRAFTON DOC: 1 PT FEMALE, 1 HOC FEMALE, 1 PT MALE, NHSP: 2 PT MALES, 1 HOC MALE, ROCKINGHAM DOC: 1 PT MALE
TOTAL POPULATION	26
AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION JUNE	17
MALE DAYS SERVED IN FACILITY JUNE	516
FEMALE DAYS SERVED JUNE	43 (8 females)
TOTAL INMATES BOOKED JUNE	27
TOTAL INMATES RELEASED JUNE	21

- a. Staffing levels continue to be critically low and recruitment has been extremely difficult.
- b. The department held a particularly challenging offender during the month of June. He was being held for protective custody due to incapacitation of illicit drugs. The offender presented with

extreme combativeness and self-harm. This was a very challenging situation for department of corrections staff.

- c. The Juvenile Justice Center conducted a compliance inspection of the department of corrections on June 19, 2023 as part of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The department was found to be in compliance and has not housed any juveniles.
 - d. The superintendent met with the representatives of the New Hampshire Association of Counties awards committee to work through the award recipients for the upcoming NHAC conference. The board of commissioners are highly encouraged to attend the conference.
 - e. Daniel Hebert Inc. notified that they will not be pursuing the HVAC upgrade at the DOC due to the amount of their staff resources available. The superintendent and Plant Manager Bouvier will be exploring other options for possible contractors.
 - f. The Rainbow Family gathering held from July 1, 2023 to July 7, 2023 in Randolph, NH did not impact the department of corrections. The superintendent did put contingency plans in place with the Grafton County Department of Corrections, in the event a mass influx of people needed housing. Special thank you to Grafton County for their unwavering assistance to Coös County.
 - g. The superintendent met with Will Hastings-Field Specialist, Food and Agriculture from the UNH Cooperative Extension to discuss future opportunities for a county vegetable garden. Will had some great information. The Superintendent reported that the garden project was not feasible at this time. The department has other priority items that needs attention.
 - h. At the meeting, the Superintendent reported that the current vendor providing jail management system will no longer offer services as of 2025. A new vendor has agreed to build a system for Coös. However, it is difficult to commit to a contract with no funding. The two parties are working on a proposed contract and want a signed contract as soon as possible. The County Treasurer suggested that the contract include the language that the contract is agreed upon contingent on budget approval. The Superintendent will keep the County Administrator up to date on the matter.
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 54 for an occupancy rate of 64.3% based on a bed count of 84. In June, there were two (2) admissions. There has been one (1) admission so far in July.

Of the 54 residents, eight (8) are Private Pay, seven (7) residents are Vermont Medicaid, and three (3) residents are Medicaid Pending for NH.

There continues to be several applicants on the waiting list, but some do not quality for ICF level of care, a few are very behavioral, and a few are waiting for fall.

Totals for 2023: Ten (10) admissions, five (5) deaths, and two (2) discharges. The facility has already had more admissions this year than all of last year.

b. STAFFING:

The Nursing Department has 420 hours open for RN/LPN (10.5 FTE). There are currently five (5) contract nurses and several temps filling the open hours. There are 812 open LNA hours (20.3 FTE). There are currently eight (8) contract LNAs and several temps and high school students helping to cover shifts.

The Director of Nursing position remains open.

On a more positive note, a full time LNA, a full time Assistant Dietary Manager, and a temp LPN have been hired this month. A full time RN, a temp RN, a full time Unit Aide, and a temp LNA are in the works to be hired in the next few weeks. A few of these are returning employees who left during COVID.

A new LNA Class will be starting on July 10 with six (6) students.

Other Departments: There are two (2) full time openings (40 hours each) in Housekeeping/Laundry, 144 open Dietary hours, and 40 hours open in Activities.

Recruitment efforts continue.

Chairman Brady asked if it would be possible to obtain the information on the change of open hours in the nursing department over the last 8-10 years. He needs to know what the new base level may be and how to make county operations acceptable. He also asked for resident census numbers for the same period of time.

The County Administrator understood what the Board was requesting and will work with the nursing home administrators.

Chairman Brady noted that he is questioned about deficits and wants to be able to answer these questions. Financially the county does not have a bottomless pit and must be able to address the budget. The County Administrator noted that the nursing home administrators operate in their surroundings each day but the Board does not.

The Nursing Hospital Administrator reported that one contract LNA costs three regular employees. Chairman Brady also asked for a report on future retirements.

c. FINAL NH MEDICAID RATE: The Final NH Medicaid Rate of \$230.83, an increase of \$13.22, went into effect on July 1, 2023. The Vermont Medicaid Rate will be calculated this week.

At the meeting, the Nursing Hospital Administrator noted that the calculated Vermont Medicaid Rate was close to the private pay rate. She questioned if an increase of the private rate should be discussed. The last time the rate was increased was in 2018. The County Administrator will work with the Nursing Home Administrators and discuss with the Board at the next meeting.

d. COVID-19: There have been no positive cases this month although a few employees and residents were tested due to symptoms. Thankfully all have been negative.

At the meeting, the Nursing Hospital Administrator announced that the facility was now in outbreak.

- e. FACILITY ISSUES:
 - SNS continues with upgrades and updates of equipment and servers.
 - Maintenance has almost completed the wainscoting project on the resident floors and has begun work on one of the nurses' bathrooms.
- f. HVAC Grant: EEI Services and Banwell continue working on the HVAC plans. Matt Smith and crew had a site visit on June 22. A window was pulled out and replaced. Two options are being explored, placing the ptac unit on the bottom or installing it at the top. Both options will be installed around September to determine which option works best in the building.
- g. PHARMACY SERVICES: This has been paused while both homes consider options. There should be an update at next month's meeting.
- h. TUITION/LOAN APPLICANT: As discussed at the last meeting, the Nursing Hospital Administrator and the County Administrator discussed the proposal and came to an agreement on the candidate. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to waive the two-year employment requirement, and pay tuition for an LNA employee to LPN. The motion was approved 3-0.
- i. QAPI: Progress on the QAPI Plan continues including tasks from the most recent Survey Plan of Correction. Current Performance Improvement Projects (PIPs) include Medication Errors and Cook to Order Breakfast. An Employee Satisfaction Survey is in progress.
- j. OTHER: The nursing hospital entered a float in the Colebrook 4th of July Parade using the facility's golf cart and with the Activity Department staff walking dressed as "Looney Tunes" characters. The group won first place for walking entries and received a trophy!
- k. Committee Reports:
 - NHAC Executive Committee - The Nursing Home Administrator attends meetings remotely when possible.
 - NHAC Nursing Home Affiliate - The Nursing Home Affiliate meets every other week via Zoom.
 - Workforce Development - The next Zoom meeting is scheduled for July 18.
 - UCVH Board of Directors: The next meeting is August 31.
- l. Nursing Hours at the Department of Corrections: None for June.

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

- a. Current Census: 73. June 2023 Census Data: SNF 5. Private Pay 10. Medicaid Pending 11. Hospice 0. Admissions 5. Readmissions 0. Deaths 2. Discharges 2. Transfer out 2. Transfer in 2. Annual average daily census 70.

- b. Medicaid Rate: effective July 1, 2023 new daily rate of \$232.89.
- c. Building Repairs: dumbwaiter cable failed inspection. Estimated \$5,325.00 to repair. Chairman Brady asked if this was discussed with the County Administrator for approval. He added that the County Administrator is the day-to-day representative of the Commissioners between meetings. Moving forward all departments should contact the County Administrator for direction.
- d. Nursing Shortage: Ongoing. Chairman Brady asked that the nursing shortages be included as they have been in the past. He wants to continue to see what is going on in the departments.

Chairman Brady noted that he has spoken with the Superintendent regarding staffing shortage at his facility and that the Superintendent covers shifts. The Chair asked the Nursing Home Administrators what their current roles include. Ms. Beede is the Nursing Home Administrator, covers nursing shifts and physician assistant (PA). Ms. Mills is the Nursing Hospital Administrator, covers nursing shifts and currently has Director of Nursing (DON) duties along with others, until the position is filled. How much time is the Superintendent and the Nursing Home Administrators spending on covering shifts.

- e. GOFERR/CNHIP:
 - North Entrance, do you wish selective demolition/opening of areas of the building, at increased cost, for assurance that the existing conditions are as assumed, or do we move forward as proposed by Alba Architects.
 - Windows bidding procurement documents pending
 - Furnishings ordered 5/11/23
 - Window Treatments cost tripled from original quote; requested new quotes
 - Equipment
 - Washing Machines complete
 - Dryers running new electrical lines
 - Bathing Units complete
 - Fire Panel Replacement, 50% paid on 4/10/23
 - Nurse Call System installation began 6/5/23
 - Hot Water System Replacement, 50% paid; in process
 - Flooring, 50% paid 4/10/23; pending installer
 - In-Room Patient Transfer Ceiling Device installation to begin 7/10/23
 - Propane Tank complete
 - Oil Tank complete
- f. QAPI: Presentation to Board. The Nursing Home Administrator postponed to August meeting.
- g. Meetings/Committee Reports:
 - NHAC Nursing Home Affiliate - monthly/remote
 - NHAC Executive Committee - monthly, unable to attend, proxy delegated
 - North Country Health Care Workforce - monthly/remote
 - AVH Board - monthly/remote; AVH Medical Executive Committee - monthly/remote; and NCH Quality Oversight Committee - monthly/remote

- h. The Nursing Home Administrator reported on arrears accounts.
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. The Federal PILT from the Department of Treasury arrived on 6/15/23. Coös County received \$460,523, which is \$30,718 more than the 2022 PILT.
 - b. The US Department of the Interior for the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act funds in the amount of \$6,878 arrived on 6/14/2023. Cambridge received \$4,707 and Wentworth Location received \$2,171.
 - c. The 2023/2024 Primex³ Property & Liability Insurance premium has increased 9.0% over the 2022/2023 premium. The budget included a 10% estimated increase.
 - d. The annual Pro-Share payment arrived on 6/21/23. Coös County received \$1,970,824 for the Berlin Facility & \$1,725,190 for the West Stewartstown Facility. Overall, Coös County received \$366,667 less than in 2022.
 - e. As of 6/8/2023 \$1,800,000 has been drawn from the Tax Anticipation Note Line of Credit.
 - f. The old generator is no longer being used and should be sold. The Finance Department is looking to the Commissioners to clarify the procedure that should be followed to sell equipment.
 - g. The NH Retirement System Employer Contribution Rates for 2023/2024 are now in effect. The employer contribution rates have decreased: The 2022/2023 rate for Group I was 14.06% and the 2023/2024 rate is now 13.53%. The 2022/2023 rate for Group II was 33.88% and the 2023/2024 rate is now 31.28%.
 - h. Fibercast Internet is now at the County Administration Building and Secured Network Services, Inc. is working on the migration of Fibercast internet to the system. This process began in February of 2022.
 - i. Software Update: The Deployment of Munis is now complete and implementation is in process. Currently, the chart of accounts is being worked on and updated and is slated to be complete by August 1st. Whole and half day work sessions with Munis are in process to set up Coös County's structure on Munis and to work on how to integrate our current and past data to the new system.
 - j. The 16th installment (8th year) invoices for the County farmland lease have been distributed to Blue Mountain Dairy and CJJ Farm.
 - k. The Provider Relieve Fund (PRF) portal is now open for reporting Period 5 (Payments received from January 1, 2022 to June 30, 2022) and will remain open through September 30, 2023. The Director of Finance will soon begin collecting the data needed from both Nursing Facilities and compile it into the portal criteria. Items needed include revenues & expenditures through June 2022, costs incurred for Covid relating expenses, statistics for staffing, contract staffing, resident census, etc.

- l. 2022 Financial Audit – In January and February, the Finance Department worked with Vachon Clukay on the audit work for the 2 nursing facilities in order to have the documentation to complete the DHHS Cost Reports. The Finance Department has begun to work with Vachon Clukay again this week to complete the remainder of the Financial Audit and Single Audit.
- m. Researching credit card payment systems and bi-weekly payroll is still on the list to do and it may be best to incorporate with our new financial system.
- n. Director of Finance attended the following:
 - NHAC Finance Affiliate on 6/15/2023
 - NHAC Administrators Affiliate on 6/9/2023 and 6/23/2023
 - Secure Rural Schools Act History & Election Form Training on 6/21/2023

12. Report of the HR Coordinator Morgan DeBlois. There was no report.

13. Commissioners' Committee Reports: There were no reports.

14. Other Business:

- a. Budget Transfers - There were no budget transfers.
- b. July 31 Delegation Meeting Update: Commissioner Gorman reported that a meeting was held with staff in regard to the Delegation Meeting on July 31. The meeting will be held at 10 a.m., luncheon will be served at 11:30 a.m. and a tour of the Department of Corrections will continue into the Nursing Hospital beginning at 12:45 p.m.
- c. Sheriff's Department Per Diem Request: Captain Keith Roberge reported to the Board that an increase was approved in the State's budget for court security and requested the Board's approval of the rate change. The request was in two parts. The first as of July 1, 2023, the full day rate will be \$151.46 and half-day rate will be \$75.70. A second rate change on July 14, 2023, due to a COLA. The full date rate will be \$166.54 and half day \$83.27. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to approve the rates approved as of July 14, 2023. The motion was approved 3-0.

The County Administrator noted that the state is inflating municipal budgets. He added that budgets will be looked at line by line during the upcoming budget season. There are no succession plans in place throughout the county government departments and several FTE issues.

Captain Roberge also noted that the department has two cruisers that he would like to put out to bid. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to put the following items out to bid: two cruisers from the Sheriff's Department, one van from the Nursing Hospital and one generator from the County Administrative Offices. The motion was approved 3-0.

- d. Food Pantry Requests: Reviewed and discussed under the County Administrator's report.

- e. NHAC Conference Attendance: The County Administrator stated that more individuals should attend this year's conference. Coös County's attendance has been minimal, and he would like to see that change.

A conference call was held with The Dupont Group between Coös, Grafton and Hillsborough Counties to inquire about their interest in hosting the conference at the Mt. Washington over the next few years. Coös County is hosting in 2024, Grafton County in 2025 and Hillsborough in 2026. All County Administrators will discuss with their Boards and respond back to the Dupont Group.

15. Unincorporated Places:

- a. Ratification of Zoning Permits - None to ratify.
- b. Recommendation to the Coös County Delegation to move Arnold Davis from alternate to member of the Coös County Planning Board. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to recommend to the Delegation to move Arnold Davis from alternate to member of the Coös County Planning Board. The motion was approved 3-0.

16. Any Other Business: There was no other business to discuss.

17. A motion was made Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to to enter non-public at 11:29 a.m. per RSA 91-A:3 II(e). The motion was approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to come out of nonpublic at 12:19 p.m. The motion as approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to seal the minutes indefinitely. The motion was approved 3-0.

The next regular meeting is scheduled August 16, 2023, at the Coös County Administrative Offices in Stewartstown, NH beginning at 9:00 a.m.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to adjourn the meeting at 12:43 p.m. The motion was approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Commissioner Robert Théberge, Clerk