

COÖS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
Coös County Administrative Offices
34 County Farm Road Stewartstown, NH
May 8, 2024

Present: Commissioners Thomas Brady, 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 Brian Valerino; Captain Keith Roberge; County Treasurer Sue Collins; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris; Cheshire County Commissioner Terry Clark; a member of the press; and a member of the public.

1. Commissioner Brady called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and welcomed everyone. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Théberge.
2. Approval of the Agenda: A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to approve the agenda, with the addition of a request for non-public per RSA 91-A:3, II(a). The motion was approved 3-0.
3. Approval of the Minutes of the April 10, 2024, regular meeting and April 29, 2024, special meeting, as distributed. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to approve the minutes of the April 10, 2024, regular meeting and April 29, 2024, special meeting, as distributed. The motion was approved 3-0.
4. Approval of Payrolls & Disbursements for April and authorization during the month of May 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 April and authorization during the month of May to meet all payroll obligations and pay all other obligations due during the month. The motion was approved 3-0.
5. Correspondence: There was no correspondence.
6. Hearing of the public:
 - a. Cheshire County Commissioner Terry Clark spoke about Cheshire County's participation in the Community Power Coalition of New Hampshire. Cheshire County joined the coalition in 2017. RSA 53e allows the Board of Selectmen to opt-in its residents. The County would go to each town, present all the facts and offer the towns to join.

Commissioner Gorman noted that he was under the impression that if the county were to join people may opt in. However, if a community joins people may opt out. Commissioner Clark replied that was correct. County Administrator Brady noted that the Town of Lancaster voted not to participate, the only place in the state where that has occurred. He asked if Cheshire had had to deal with political issues at the town level. Commissioner Clark replied that it was up to the individuals at the town level to decide.

Commissioner Théberge asked who administers the program for Cheshire County. Commissioner Clark replied that each member town has a representative on the Board of Directors. The County has no administrative functions. The work is taken care of by the coalition. He encouraged the Board to consider this county function. The Board thanked him for his input.

- b. Captain Keith Roberge presented a certificate of authority for the Sheriff's Department to accept funds and enter into an agreement with the NH Department of Justice. A motion was made by Commissioner Théberge, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to authorize the Chairman Thomas Brady to sign the certificate of authority. The motion was approved 3-0.

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.

COÖS COUNTY

- a. Weekly meetings continue with the New Hampshire Association of Counties regarding the county conference in November. A great deal of progress has been made on the itinerary. The schedule is filling out and the two keynotes (lunch on November 11 and 12, 2024) are locked in. Veterans Day keynote will be Tony Eafrazi, former Navy Seal and Bronze and Silver star recipient. He is a graduate of Gorham High School. Tuesday's keynote will be a "Ted Talk" session with Santa's Village, the Mount Washington Cog Railway and Mount Washington Auto Road.
- b. Pam Urban-Morin, Grants & Contracts Compliance Administrator, is making great progress in a short amount time as we update County policies and procedures and create an efficient and thorough reporting apparatus.
- c. The Commissioners submitted a letter to Robert Scott, Commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, expressing their concerns about the Granite State Landfill project in Bethlehem.
- d. The Commissioners submitted a letter to the New Hampshire House Finance Committee in opposition to SB553 (the anti PDIP legislation) highlighting the hard dollar costs (more than \$500,000) to the county and most of the towns in the North Country. Finance Director Klebe testified. A work session has been scheduled by the Committee for May 7, 2024, and the County Treasurer may attend, schedule permitting.

At the meeting, the County Administrator reported on the status of SB 553 (NH PDIP). County Treasurer Sue Collins was in Concord to testify. She reported that she was not allowed to speak. The bill passed the Senate unanimously but did not pass in the House. There was lots of testimony from different parts of the state in opposition of the bill. Several Coös County towns as well as other towns in the southern part of the state stand to lose money. There was an additional meeting schedule for Wednesday afternoon.

- e. Chuck Morse, former New Hampshire State Senate President, and gubernatorial candidate visited the County offices for a wide-ranging discussion on the Northern Borders Dispatch grant request, BlueSource/Aurora Lands carbon first forest management, nursing homes and corrections. Commissioner Gorman, Administrator Brady, and Superintendent Champagne participated.
- f. The Administrator had discussions with New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services regarding submission of a new application to continue the previous work that was done under an expired permit on the banks of the Magalloway River in Wentworth's Location.
- g. The County Administrator reported that Attorney Jon Frizzell was confirmed by the Executive Council as a Superior Court Judge. He will be exiting his practice on May 31, 2024. He has recommended another attorney. Commissioner Théberge recommended to follow through with the proposal. Chairman Brady asked the County Administrator to draft a letter on the Board's behalf congratulating Attorney Frizzell.

UNINCORPORATED PLACES

- a. Tax Collector Harris met with Casey Gordon of NH911, Deputy Bert vonDohrmann, and Deputy John Acardi to review road names and possible changes in the Unincorporated Places. Mr. Gordon was extremely thankful for the work that was done by Deputies vonDohrmann and Acardi.
- b. The National Forest Reserve Funds notification was received from the Department of Education on April 17, 2024. The proposed allocations to the school districts were approved by the Commissioners and the Delegation on April 29, 2024. Letters to the individual school districts were prepared and mailed on April 30, 2024.
- c. Impending tax lien notices were prepared and mailed on May 1, 2024.
- d. The MS-123s were completed for all 23 Unincorporated Places and submitted to the New Hampshire Department of Revenue Administration (DRA).
- e. The 2023 Total Equalized Valuations were received from DRA on April 29, 2024.
- f. Planning Board meeting was held on April 17, 2024. There were presentations by James Oehler of New Hampshire Fish and Game on the development potential of the proposed habitat overlay and Dianne Timmins of NHF&G on the uniqueness of the brook trout habitat in Coös County. The Board held a work session to discuss PD3 and PD4 zoning amendments.
- g. Dixville Capital LLC submitted three requests to amend conditions of approval regarding The Balsams Planned Unit Development. Public notices were submitted to the newspapers and abutter notices have been mailed.

- h. The Axis GIS maps are ready to go live. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to authorize the release of the GIS maps. The motion was approved 3-0.
- i. Intents to Cut for the 2024-2025 are slowly being submitted.
- j. The next Planning Board meeting is scheduled for May 15, 2024.
- k. At the meeting, the County Administrator reported of a complaint received relating to the lighting at the Signal Mountain Storage Units in Millsfield. A discussion was held with Tara Bamford regarding the site plan application which she reviewed. Her reply was as follows:

The only lighting that was approved as part of the site plan was downward LED wallpacks on the buildings.

Pursuant to the Site Plan Review Regulations, these need to be fully shielded, but can be pretty bright, with lumens equal to a 250-watt high intensity discharge bulb.

Any additional lighting would be a violation of the site plan approval unless the owners come in for an amendment to the plan. There aren't any separate lighting provisions in the Zoning Ordinance.

The County Administrator will research further and report at the next meeting. Captain Roberge will also meet with the property owners.

- 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	2
PRETRIAL	9
NH STATE PRISON INMATES	0
OTHER COUNTY INMATES	1
TOTAL IN FACILITY	12
ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAM	0
WORK RELEASE PROGRAM	0
FURLOUGH	0
HELD AT OTHER FACILITIES HOC= HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS PT= PRETRIAL	GRAFTON DOC: 1 HOC FEMALE, 4 PT FEMALES, 1 PT MALE NHSP: 2 PT MALE, HILLSBOROUGH DOC: 1 PT MALE ROCKINGHAM DOC: 1 PT MALE
TOTAL POPULATION	22
AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION APRIL	11
MALE DAYS SERVED IN FACILITY APRIL	342
FEMALE DAYS SERVED APRIL	157 (10 FEMALES)
FEDERAL INMATE DAYS APRIL	0
TOTAL INMATES BOOKED APRIL	15
TOTAL INMATES RELEASED APRIL	26

- a. The department has been busy with staff promotional processes. Congratulations to Jason Rella for his promotion to Captain. Congratulations to Scott Covey for his

promotion to Sergeant. Congratulations to Brandon Marsh for his promotion to Corporal. These gentlemen are exemplary employees and will undoubtedly represent the department well in their respective duties.

- b. The superintendent has been working on Opioid Programming with the medical department. The current project is to review other correctional clinical substance abuse programs. This end goal is to start a more robust in-house program. Funding through the Opioid Abatement settlement is available for this program.
 - c. Congratulations to Corrections Officer Keegan Covill for his completion of the 122nd New Hampshire Association of Counties Corrections Academy on April 26, 2024.
 - d. Superintendent Champagne has been working with the superintendents' affiliate and the Dupont Group on several bills: HB 318, SB 563 and CACR 313. Superintendent Champagne reported that SB563 was dead.
 - e. Request action on the 2024-2027 Coös County Recycling Agreements from the Board of Commissioners. If approved, Superintendent Champagne will mail out the agreements to the member towns for their approval. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to enter into agreement with the member towns. The motion was approved 3-0.
 - f. Superintendent Champagne to provide an update on the HVAC project. At the meeting, the superintendent reported that the department would be expanding to an additional ERV unit. Also, the room dedicated to the IT equipment must be airconditioned. The current unit is at end of life and unable to be added on to. The Superintendent requested authorization to place a request for bids for the replacement of the facility air conditioning unit, with the addition of the IT room, using ARPA funds. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to authorize the upgrade of the entire air conditioning unit and place out to bid. The motion was approved 3-0.
 - g. Superintendent Champagne has been working with the conference planning group for the fall 2024 New Hampshire Association of Counties annual conference.
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 56 for an occupancy rate of 57.7% based on a bed count of 97, 66.7% based on a bed count of 84, and 74.7% based on a bed count of 75. In April, there were four (4) admissions and three (3) deaths.

Of the 56 residents, nine (9) are Private Pay, six (6) residents are Vermont Medicaid. Three (3) residents are Medicaid Pending, one for New Hampshire and two for Vermont. There continue to be several applicants on the waiting list, but we are waiting for completed applications.

Totals for 2024: Thirteen (13) admissions and eight (8) deaths.

b. STAFFING:

Nursing: There are 168 hours open for RN/LPN (4.2 FTE). There are currently four (4) contract nurses and several temps filling the open hours. There are 960 open LNA hours (24 FTE). There are 36 open MNA hours (.9 FTE). There are currently four (4) contract LNAs and several temps and high school students helping to cover open shifts. Recruitment efforts continue.

c. COVID-19: Coös County Nursing Hospital continues to have occasional employees who test positive for Covid but were exposed outside the facility so do not count against us. These employees are not allowed to work until they have two negative tests 48 hours apart.

d. FACILITY ISSUES: Maintenance has been dealing with a hot water leak in a water line that feeds two resident bathrooms above the leak. Maintenance is working hard to restore hot water to these bathrooms as quickly as possible.

e. HVAC Grant: The electricians have finished this stage of the work. The replacement windows have been delayed but work is expected to resume on July 8, 2024. A representative from GOFERR will be doing a walk-through on May 10, 2024.

f. The Nursing Hospital Administrator has been working with Pam Urban-Morin on the reporting requirements for the grant.

g. PHARMACY SERVICES: Issues continue. The facility is on track to change pharmacy providers on July 1, 2024.

h. OUT OF STATE TRAVEL: The Director of Nursing and Assistant Director of Nursing have requested to attend the 2024 National Association of Directors of Nursing Administration in Long Term Care (NADONA) National Conference. The conference is in Saint Louis, Missouri this year. The Nursing Hospital Administrator requested out of state travel. A motion was made by Commissioner Théberge, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to authorize travel for

i. 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, MDS Accuracy, and Nursing Hours Posting.

j. VT Medicaid: No news yet on the requested rate change.

k. Committees:

- NHAC Executive Committee- The Nursing Hospital Administrator attends meetings remotely when possible.
- 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.
1. Nursing Hours at the Department of Corrections: None for April.
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: 82. Occupancy Rate: 82%. SNF 5. Private Pay 16. Medicaid Pending 11. Hospice 3.
 - b. April 2024 Census Data: Admissions 6. Deaths 2. Discharges 1. Transfer out 5. Transfer in 4. Average daily census 80.1
 - c. Year to Date Totals: Admissions 18. Deaths 8. Discharges 3.
 - d. Open Positions: RN/LPN: 555 hours, 13.6 FTEs. LNAs: 1580 hours, 39.5 FTEs.
 - e. On April 29, five employees started an LNA class with White Mountains Community College. The nursing home will probably have another LNA class in June, there are several more interested applicants looking to become LNAs.
 - f. Agency/Travel Staff: RN: 2 (96 hours/week), LPN: 4 (192 hours/week), LNA: 11 (528 hours/week). Utilizing NHES, Indeed.com, County Website, and Local News Papers for advertising of open positions.
 - g. COVID-19- No current positive cases for residents or staff.
 - h. Five students from Salve Regina Academy in Gorham, NH, visited on April 18. The students enjoyed playing cards with the residents and attending activities. All of the clinical education will be held at the

Berlin High School, Health Occupations students participated in a job shadow here at the home. The students were assigned several days with our LNA staff. This was a great opportunity for the home to recruit staff and promote/sponsor further education in a nursing program.
 - i. Beginning in March, CMS introduced a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) 5-Claim Probe and Education Review. All SNFs and Hospital swing bed providers will have 5 claims reviewed, some of the claims to be reviewed will be new SNF claims that have not been billed to Medicare, this will result in payment delays to the facility. The SNF 5-Claim Probe and Education strategy is intended to educate providers on correct billing practices under the Patient Driven Payment Model (PDPM). Based on the findings, a claim may be adjusted or denied, and education will be provided for future claims. We currently have 5 claims in review. For March we have a \$77,003.30 payment that is being withheld pending claim reviews. Update: 2 claims have been reviewed and accepted; no issues were noted. One claim is being questioned, more information was

provided to CMS, we are awaiting a decision on the claim. At the meeting, it was reported that four claims have been reviewed and accepted.

- j. Server for Sheriff's Department is on site. SNS working on setting up connections, this process will take several weeks per SNS Field Technical Engineer.
- k. Maintenance: Garbage disposal in the dietary department is no longer functioning and can no longer be repaired. Replacement disposal has been ordered \$2,600.
- l. QAPI Meeting April 16: Medicare/Medicaid recertification survey results reviewed with current facility audits related to survey results. The following was also reviewed; Pressure Injury Prevention; Abuse Prevention; Medication Storage; MDS; Nursing/Provider Documentation; Resident Food Preferences; Therapy Services; Pharmacy Consultant Report; Resident/Family Satisfaction; Resident Psychosocial Support; Employee Retention; Licensing/Credentialing; Employee Injuries; Employee Recruitment; Billing Accuracy; Resident Account Audits; Generator Maintenance; Fire Alarm/Sprinklers; Mandatory Staff Trainings/Competencies; Infection Prevention; Cyber Security; State Required Reporting – 2 incidents were reported.
- m. GOFERR/CNHIP: Project Status Update: Stuart Anderson, from Alba Architects has received 2 bids, one for the window installation and one for the north entrance. Mike Holt, Environmental Services Manager for Coös County Nursing Home states that he received one bid for the window installation; the bid was forwarded to Stuart Anderson, Alba Architects for review. At the meeting, it was reported that the contractor had pulled his bid.
- n. Estimated date of completion for the entire capital expenditure project is prior to September 30, 2024.
- o. Meetings/Committee Reports:
 - County Administrator – staff meetings bimonthly.
 - NHAC Nursing Home Affiliate – Monthly via zoom.
 - NHAC Executive Committee- Did not attend in Concord.
 - HR meetings with Morgan - Bi-monthly.
 - A/V Covid-19 Workgroup – No further meetings scheduled; we will resume when Covid-19 positive cases increase in the community.
 - Medicaid meeting with DHHS – monthly via zoom.
 - NHA webinar with HealthPro Heritage, our rehab provider.
 - SNS meeting 4/3/24.
 - Compliance and Ethic committee meeting 4/10/24.
 - Androscoggin Valley Healthcare Services 4/17/2024, meeting held with local healthcare providers to discuss issues relating to lack of LNA staff in the north country.
 - Delegation Meeting 4/29/2024.

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 Annual State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA) reporting was completed on April 27, 2024, for the covered period of April 1, 2023, to March 31, 2024.
- b. The data needed for the CCNH Medicare Cost Report has been compiled and is now in hands of Baker Newman Noyes and will be submitted before May 31, 2024.
- c. The Governor and Executive Council met on Wednesday, May 1, 2024 in Concord to approve unanimously to authorize the Bureau of Court Facilities to enter into a Use of Premises Agreement with the County of Coos, Stewartstown, NH, in the amount of \$205,392, for leasing of state-owned property located in the Coos County Superior Courthouse located at 55 School Street, Lancaster, NH, from June 1, 2024 through May 31, 2027.
- d. As of 5/1/2023 \$1,800,000 has been drawn from the Tax Anticipation Note Line of Credit.
- e. The 2023 OPEB Actuary Report is complete.
- f. The Finance Department and Sheriff's office are working with PayGov.US LLC to implement credit card payments at the Sheriff's office. If all works well, the Finance Department will add the ability to accept credit cards to other county departments.
- g. Software Update:
 - General Accounting and modules: The new live date should be no later than July 1.
 - Human Resources & Payroll modules. The Munis Project Manager has given a first training date of May 15. The Go-Live date must be January 1, 2025.

4/11/2024 - The Finance Director attended Contracts: Understanding and Transferring Your Risk at Primex³ Training Facility in Concord

4/17/2024 - The Finance Director gave testimony at the Finance Committee Public Hearing for SB553 in Concord

5/2/2024 & 5/3/2024 - The Finance Director attended the NHGFOA Annual Conference virtually.

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 March staffing report is as follows.
 - Hires 4
 - Separations 2
 - Change in status 3
- b. HR Generalist Dawn Day organized and conducted two successful benefit fairs this year at the Nursing Home and Nursing Hospital. These benefit fairs were the first in person event held in the last 5 years due to COVID restrictions. Employees gave positive feedback, and the vendors will be back throughout the year for additional offerings and trainings.

- c. HR Coordinator conducted interviews for the captain’s position alongside of Superintendent Lethbridge of Grafton County DOC and Lieutenant Luc Perreault of Coös County Sheriff’s Department. Congratulations to Sergeant Jason Rella.
- d. Christine Labelle will now serve as Coös County’s Finance Operations Manager. Christine will serve the Berlin Nursing Home while assisting Finance Director Klebe with County financial operations. This transition is part of a restructure for the Berlin Nursing Home along with enhancing operations to the County finance department. The HR Coordinator has worked with NHA Louise Belanger to align Nursing Home employees to best serve the needs of the County. The HR Coordinator is confident in the success of this restructure and congratulates Christine Labelle on her hard work.
- e. Coös County HR department will be seeing a much-needed expansion. Two HR Generalist positions will be posted for the Berlin Nursing Home as well as the administrative office in the month of May.
- f. Meetings & Affiliations
 - HR Affiliate Group
 - Statewide Healthcare SPI
 - HEALTH TRUST Wellness Coordinator meeting
 - Coös County Child Care Crisis Coalition
 - Biweekly National Association of Counties conference planning meetings

13. Commissioners’ Committee Reports:

- a. Commissioner Gorman reported that an internal employee will be the interim director at the 45th Parallel until a replacement is hired.

Aurora has placed a gag order on individuals who are involved in the Pittsburg/Clarksville issue. A meeting is scheduled for May 10.

- b. Commissioner Théberge reported on the opening of a daycare center in Gorham. The CEDC is finalizing its search for a treasurer.

14. Other Business:

- a. Budget Transfers - The Board reviewed and signed the following budget transfers:

Coös County Nursing Home:

To:	02-05640-2300 Contract Nursing	\$250,000.00	
From:	02-05640-0200 RN Salaries		\$125,000.00
From:	02-05640-0400 Nursing Assistants’ Salaries		125,000.00
To:	02-05641-0100 HIM Manager’s Salary	16,000.00	
From:	02-05641-0200 Health Information Clerk		16,000.00

- b. Commissioner Gorman inquired about the possibility of placing a sign alongside Route 3 to direct people to the county offices. It was mentioned that DOT approval may be

needed for the placement of the sign. Chairman Brady requested that the County Administrator research the cost of signs to include: a sign alongside Route 3, a sign on the front lawn of the Administrative Offices and signing indicating parking for the lower level once the project is completed.

- c. Discussion/ Action: Renewal of Recycling Center Agreements with the member towns: See Item 8e.

15. Unincorporated Places:

- a. Approval of 2024 First Issue Property Tax Warrants for Cambridge, Dixville, Green's Grant, Martin's Location, Odell, Pinkham's Grant, Success, Thompson & Meserve Purchase and Wentworth Location. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to approve the first issue tax warrants as presented. The motion was approved 3-0. The Board signed the warrants.
- b. A yield tax warrant for the Unincorporated Place of Success was presented to the Board for approval. A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to approve the yield tax warrant as presented. The motion was approved 3-0.
- c. Ratification of approved zoning/building permits:

576 Guerin Rev Trust, John & Dawn Success 5/3/24 Replace existing boathouse; 20'x6'x7' high walls

A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to ratify the permit as presented. The motion was approved 3-0.

16. Any other public input: there was none.

17. Non-public session: A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to enter non-public session under RSA 91-A:3, II (a) at 10:48 a.m. The motion was approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Théberge, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to come out of non-public session at 11:39 a.m. The motion was approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Théberge, seconded by Commissioner Gorman to seal the minutes for a period of two years. The motion was approved 3-0.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to end the stipends for the Director of Finance and the Administrative Assistant week ending May 11, 2024. The motion was approved 3-0.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 12, 2024, at the Coös County Administrative Offices in Stewartstown, NH beginning at 9:30 a.m.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gorman, seconded by Commissioner Théberge to adjourn the meeting at 11:49 a.m. The motion was approved 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Commissioner Robert Théberge, Clerk