STRAFFORD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES – draft
THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2026
Zoom: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88076078990?pwd=XhfZv74QrC78qR5pDjpARV2GadmFJV.1
Meeting ID: 880 7607 8990 Passcode: 391058

A public meeting of the Strafford County Commissioners was held Thursday, August 20, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Conference Room, Justice and Administrator Bower Building, 259 County Farm Road, Suite 204, Dover, New Hampshire. It was noted that meeting notices and agendas had been sent to all interested parties, as well as posted on the County Website. Present were Commissioners Maglaras, Feliciano, and Leavitt. Also present were Administrator Raymond Bower, Assistant Administrator Deirdra Brown, Director of Nursing Jennifer Emerton, Assistant Director of Nursing Jennifer Cormier, Wound Care Specialist Jennifer Mantos, Dietitian Andrea Tran, HOC Superintendent Chris Brackett, Maintenance Director Doug Kane, IT Specialist Kelly Parker, Susan Rice, and Executive Assistant/Deputy Treasurer Janet Hilber. Karen Dandurant and Michael Miller joined via Zoom. By consensus, agenda items were addressed out of order due to staff availability.

1. Approve Minutes of August 13, 2026: Commissioner Feliciano motioned to approve the minutes of August 13, 2026 as written. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Leavitt, and approved unanimously (3 to 0) by a voice vote.

2. Affordable Housing Update: The Commissioners provided an update on efforts to identify County property that could potentially be used for an affordable housing project. A parcel adjacent to the jail was identified as a possible location because existing power and sewer infrastructure may be available to support development. The Commissioners noted that the infrastructure was originally extended in connection with the jail project and that the relocation of the Humane Society has created an opportunity to potentially use the existing infrastructure for another purpose. Commissioner Feliciano recommended a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) be issued based on the concept, with information anticipated for the Commissioners' review in the following weeks.

   The Commissioners discussed pursuing the project through a nonprofit organization with experience in affordable housing development. The use of a nonprofit could help control costs associated with land, taxes, and infrastructure while keeping the resulting housing affordable. The parcel's location adjacent to the jail was also viewed as advantageous because it is less likely to create neighborhood concerns typically associated with affordable housing development. Commissioners emphasized the importance of working with an experienced organization familiar with available state and federal housing programs and funding opportunities.

   The Board also discussed previous plans for housing development around a new nursing home project that was rejected by the Delegation and the possibility of incorporating a future nursing home or other public-private partnership into a broader development concept. Commissioners recalled that prior proposals contemplated using housing revenue to offset some County costs. The Board agreed that the RFQ process would provide an opportunity to identify qualified nonprofit or housing organizations that understand the available funding sources and regulatory requirements. No final development decision was made, and the project remains a work in progress.

3. Upcoming Events: Chairman Maglaras asked if there were any upcoming events to discuss. The following events were discussed:

   a. Public Hearing on CDBG Grant for St. Anselm College, Thursday, September 24, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.
   b. Executive Committee Second Quarter Report Meeting, Friday, September 25, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.

4. Old and New Business: Chairman Maglaras asked if there was any old or new business to discuss. The Commissioners discussed notification from Easterseals that its Strafford County homemaker services and adult day program are expected to close within approximately 30 days. Easterseals reportedly serves more than 200 individuals through its homemaker program and approximately 40 people through its adult day program, with an average daily census of about 15 participants in the adult day program. The organization cited financial difficulties, including approximately $1 million in statewide losses associated with homemaker services, insufficient reimbursement rates, workforce shortages, and changes affecting charitable donations. Easterseals will continue providing services that can be adequately reimbursed, including certain nursing services. The Commissioners expressed concern that the closure will place additional pressure on Riverside Rest Home, hospitals, families, and other healthcare providers. Many of the individuals receiving homemaker services are financially disadvantaged and may eventually require nursing home care if adequate support is no longer available in their homes. The Board noted that the County currently provides approximately $80,000 toward the homemaker program, with funds directed toward individuals based on income. Riverside staff have begun monitoring potential admissions and will track individuals who indicate that the loss of homemaker services contributed to their need for admission.

The Commissioners discussed the broader challenges affecting the healthcare delivery system, including Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement rates, workforce shortages, and the difficulty providers face in maintaining services when reimbursement does not cover staffing costs. It was noted that Easterseals had historically used revenue from other services to subsidize homemaker and adult day programs, but that this model is no longer financially sustainable. The Commissioners expressed concern that reductions in community-based services may ultimately shift costs and demand to counties, hospitals, nursing homes, and families.

The Board considered whether County facilities could potentially be used to help address the loss of adult day services or other community programs. However, Commissioners acknowledged that Riverside currently lacks sufficient physical space and that upcoming construction work could further limit available space. In addition, Medicaid reimbursement rules may restrict the County's ability to provide supplemental funding for services provided to Medicaid clients. The Chairman requested financial information from Easterseals regarding its losses and the operation of the programs so the County can better understand the situation and determine whether any potential options exist.

Administrator Bower provided an update on the County's application for a grant exceeding $2 million for improvements to the nursing home, including replacement of windows, roofing work, and boiler improvements. Staff have compiled information regarding the facility and its residents to strengthen the grant application, including the percentage of Riverside residents receiving Medicaid and statistics concerning residents from areas identified as financially disadvantaged. These statistics are among the factors considered in the grant scoring process. If awarded, the grant is expected to have a November 1, 2026 award date and would provide approximately 23 months to complete the three projects. The roofing project is considered relatively straightforward because detailed information is already available, and the boiler work is similarly well understood based on previous replacements. The window project will require more extensive planning because portions of the building may need to be vacated while work is performed. Staff will need to coordinate resident relocations, particularly for residents with dementia or behavioral challenges, while maintaining required alarms, security, and other safety systems. The method and timing of the window installation will therefore be incorporated into the bid specifications. The grant will require competitive bidding.

Andrea Tran, Riverside Rest Home's Dietitian, provided an update on a new facility-specific mini diet manual she developed. The manual supplements the required national dietary guidance and provides Riverside staff with a practical reference for residents' prescribed diets, food textures, and thickened-liquid requirements. Copies have been distributed to nursing units, Occupational Therapy, and Activities Departments. The manual will also be used to educate family members who bring food to residents when the food does not comply with the resident's prescribed dietary or texture requirements. Riverside allows families to bring food, but staff must provide and document appropriate education regarding dietary safety.

Ms. Tran also discussed Riverside's use of the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI), a worldwide system that establishes consistent terminology and preparation standards for food textures and thickened liquids. The system provides testing methods to ensure food is prepared consistently by different staff members and helps Riverside coordinate dietary requirements with hospitals and other facilities when residents are transferred. The Commissioners noted that the standardized approach reduces the risk of choking and aspiration and represents an important component of resident safety and quality of care.

Jen Mantos, RN, provided an update on the facility's pressure-ulcer prevention efforts. Staff work as a team to prevent pressure ulcers and follow up on skin tears, bruising, and other injuries to determine causes and identify preventative measures. Riverside also works with a nurse practitioner from Advantage Wound Care, who visits weekly to conduct wound rounds and assist staff with treatment and prevention of chronic wounds. The Commissioners discussed the challenges associated with preventing pressure ulcers among elderly and immobile residents and noted the importance of coordinating medical care, nutrition, dietary modifications, and supplements when necessary to support healing.

Staff also recently completed a facility-wide mattress audit. Several specialty mattresses were identified as needing replacement. Riverside currently has approximately $10,000 budgeted annually for mattresses and will review the list of replacements needed to determine whether the budget is sufficient. Staff will also review warranty coverage, particularly because a substantial mattress purchase was authorized the previous year. Riverside intends to continue using the same company where appropriate to maintain consistency and address any potential warranty issues.

Administrator Bower reported that Riverside's April survey has now been posted on the official Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) website and that Riverside has received a five-star rating, which is given to only 10% of all the nursing homes in the state. It was explained that the CMS rating system allows families to compare nursing homes when considering placement for a loved one. The Commissioners congratulated Riverside staff and recognized the work involved in maintaining the facility's standards during the inspection process, and expressed appreciation for their continued dedication to residents and for maintaining the facility's quality of care.

5. Questions and Comments from the Public Related to this Agenda: Chairman Maglaras asked if there were any questions from the members of the public or other. Mrs. Rice raised questions regarding whether the potential closure of Easterseals services could create an opportunity to use the former Hyder building or other County space for adult day care or related services. The Commissioners explained that the County's available physical space is limited and that the financial and Medicaid reimbursement requirements would need to be evaluated before considering such an arrangement. The Board will review the financial information requested from Easterseals before determining whether any potential role for the County exists.

   The Commissioners also discussed the potential impact of the closure when services end, noting that families may begin contacting Riverside and area hospitals for assistance. The Board expressed concern that the loss of home-based services could increase pressure on already strained healthcare systems and emphasized that the issue involves state-level funding and Medicaid policy decisions.

   Mrs. Rice asked about the status of probate services and the anticipated vacancy of the Family and Probate Courts that will move to the new Rochester District Court building since the City of Rochester is expected to take ownership of the District Court building in December. The Commissioners reported that they are still awaiting a response regarding probate and that no immediate decision has been made regarding the office's future use. The County will monitor the court system's needs because the Superior Court system is still operated in the building and the County has previously invested in renovations to multiple courtrooms in the building. The Board will evaluate the situation as it develops.

6. Non-Public Session for the Purpose of Discussing Personnel Issue(s) and Contract Negotiations Pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II: Commissioner Feliciano motioned to go into non-public session at 9:54 a.m. for the purpose of discussing a personnel issue(s) and contract negotiations pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II. Commissioner Leavitt seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously (3 to 0) by a roll call vote.

7. Return to Public Session: Commissioner Leavitt motioned to return to public session at 10:15 a.m. Commissioner Feliciano seconded the motions, and it was approved unanimously (3 to 0) by a voice vote.

8. Motion to Seal Non-Public Session Minutes: Commissioner Leavitt motioned to seal the minutes of the non-public session. Commissioner Feliciano seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously (3 to 0) by a voice vote.

9. Adjournment: The Commissioners signed paperwork as appropriate. Commissioner Leavitt motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:44 a.m. Commissioner Feliciano seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously (3 to 0) by a voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

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George Maglaras, Chairman

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Leslie A. Feliciano, Vice Chair

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Sean M. Leavitt, Clerk

Strafford County Board of Commissioners
Non-Public Session

Date: AUGUST 20, 2026

Members Present: George Maglaras, Chairman, Leslie Feliciano, Vice Chair, and Sean M. Leavitt, Clerk.
Motion to enter Nonpublic Session: Commissioner Feliciano seconded by Commissioner Leavitt for both non-public sessions.
Specific Statutory Reason cited as foundation for the nonpublic session:

_X_ RSA 91-A:3, II (a), **Discussing Personnel Matters.** *The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her,* ***unless*** *the employee affected (1) has a right to a public meeting, and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted.*

___ RSA 91-A:3, II (e), **Discussing Contract Negotiations**. *Consideration or negotiation of pending claims or litigation which has been threatened in writing or filed by or against the public body or any subdivision thereof, or by or against any member thereof because of his or her membership in such public body, until the claim or litigation has been fully adjudicated or otherwise settled. Any application filed for tax abatement, pursuant to law, with any body or board shall not constitute a threatened or filed litigation against any public body for the purposes of this subparagraph.*

Roll Call Vote to enter nonpublic session: YEAS: Maglaras, Feliciano, and Leavitt NAYS: None

Entered non-public session at 9:54 a.m.

Other persons present during nonpublic session: Administrator Ray Bower, Superintendent Chris Brackett, Assistant Administrator Deirdra Brown, and Maintenance Director Doug Kane. Description of matters discussed, and final decisions made. Note: Any votes taken must be recorded "in such a manner that the vote of each member is ascertained and recorded": No votes were taken; Personnel issues at Riverside and HOC were discussed.

Note: Under RSA 91-A:3, III. *Minutes of proceedings in nonpublic sessions shall be kept and the record of all actions shall be promptly made available for public inspection, except as provided in this section. Minutes and decisions reached in nonpublic session shall be publicly disclosed within 72 hours of the meeting, unless, by recorded vote of 2/3 of the members present,* ***taken in public session,*** *it is determined that divulgence of the information likely would affect adversely the reputation of any person* ***other than a member of this board****, or render the proposed action of the board ineffective, or pertain to terrorism. In the event of such circumstances, information may be withheld until, in the opinion of a majority of members, the aforesaid circumstances no longer apply.*

Motion to leave nonpublic session and return to public session by: Commissioner Leavitt; seconded by Commissioner Feliciano.

Motion: $\boxed{\text{PASSED}}$ / DID NOT PASS (circle one)
Nonpublic meeting tape removed; public meeting tape replaced (if applicable). Not Applicable.

Public session reconvened at 10:15 a.m.

Motion to seal non-public minutes: Commissioner Leavitt motioned to seal the minutes of the non-public session; seconded by Commissioner Feliciano, because it is determined that divulgence of this information likely would:

_X_____ Affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this board

Roll Call Vote to seal minutes: YEAS: Maglaras, Feliciano, and Leavitt NAYS: None

Motion: $\boxed{\text{PASSED}}$/DID NOT PASS (circle one)

These minutes recorded by: Janet Hilber, Executive Assistant Commissioners' Initials