GRAFTON COUNTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE BUDGET MEETING
Administration Building
North Haverhill, NH 03774
June 5, 2026

PRESENT: Reps. Baldwin, Bolton, Franz, Oppel, Sellers, Sykes. Commissioner McLeod, Commissioner Hedberg, County Administrator Libby, Assistant County Administrator Elsholz, and Administrative Assistant Norcross.

OTHERS PRESENT: Extension County Office Administrator Bryant, Paul Chiarantona, Maldini Damas, IT Director Tetreault, Nursing Home Administrator Labore

Rep. Sykes called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Rep. Sellers stated that he wanted to recognize the passing of former Commissioner Ahern. Rep. Sellers noted that they know how much passion he had for the county, the county farm, and politics as well.

UNH Cooperative Extension – County Office Administrator Bryant, Paul Chiarantona & Maldini Damas

COA Bryant stated that the bulk of their budget is salaries for staff.

Salary – Support Staff – COA Bryant stated that the county pays 100% for their two (2) Administrative Assistants.

Salary - Professional Staff - COA Bryant explained that the County pays 25% of the average field specialist position and 75% of the average program manager position. There are four (4) field specialist positions and one (1) program manager.

New Equipment – COA Bryant stated that they eliminated this line in an effort to reduce their budget.

Rep. Sellers asked about the staff members and their salaries. He asked if this increase is the portion that the county pays or if this is the overall portion. COA Bryant stated that the salaries for the support staff went up 3.03% for the COLA, and their professional staff increased 2.6%. She explained that newer career people come in at a lower salary rate compared to people who have been there long term. When the MOU was first agreed upon between UNH Extension and the counties, they came up with an estimate of the average cost of a field specialist. That average cost was split, 75% is covered by UNH Extension and 25% is covered by the county. That number increases by the CPI every year. COA Bryant stated that this prevents wide swings in the budget when a long-term employee retires. CA Libby stated that this budget is the portion that the county pays.

Rep. Oppel stated that he has seen some very good things from UNH Extension, but he is also seeing a lack of appreciation or knowledge of what UNH Extension has to offer. He asked what kind of marketing is going on because there are a lot of people who do not know what is out there. COA Bryant stated that she has been here seventeen (17) years, and this is something they have struggled with, noting that former Commissioner/Executive Councilor Ray Burton used to call UNH Extension the best-kept secret in New Hampshire. COA Bryant explained that they send out newsletters and publications. P. Chiarantona added that this past spring, they engaged all of their advisory councils and state advisory councils to gather feedback. This message was heard, and they are working this summer to figure out ways to get the word out. He explained that every year it becomes more competitive because of how people receive information. They are not only getting it from the county bulletins or local newspaper, but they are also receiving it from many different entities online, trying to compete for their attention. He stated that for UNH Extension, it is not only about how everyone can find out about them, but also how the people who would benefit from their services learn more about them. P. Chiarantona noted that they are always looking for suggestions on ways to spread the information throughout Grafton County. Rep. Oppel recommended reaching out to every city council and selectboard in the county because he does not think they are aware of the opportunities that are available. He noted that he has also started an economic development committee in Canaan and recommended that UNH Extension reach out to all communities in the county to ask if they have a committee and see if they can make a presentation.

Commissioners' Office/Human Services/Misc. – CA Libby

Misc Revenue

Abandoned Property – CA Libby stated that the county receives a payment once a year in June. The payments vary from year to year, and there is no way to predict what they will be. She stated that she has increased this line.

Federal PILT – CA Libby stated this is level-funded at $130,000 based on past years' averages.

Interest – CA Libby stated that she spoke with Treasurer Cryans regarding next year's interest. She stated that they are on target to reach their FY26 projects, but given the current unknowns and the decrease in interest rates, they have decreased this line for FY27 to $250,000.

Rental Income – This revenue includes four (4) rental agreements, three (3) of which are with the State of New Hampshire.

Recoveries – CA Libby explained that recoveries are monies the county receives from the State of New Hampshire for any Medicaid expenses that they have paid out for Grafton County residents who the state has collected monies from various things, such as the sale of property. She decreased this line by $25,000 based on this year's figures.

USAC Subsidy – CA Libby stated that this subsidy is the money the county receives for a rural healthcare subsidy for IT services in the Nursing Home. The county has applied for this for the last four (4) years and received it three (3) of those years. The subsidy for this current year was rejected. CA Libby explained that the county works with New England Telehealth Consortium (NETC) as a third party to do the administration for this subsidy, and they believe the denial of this subsidy is an error and have filed an appeal. That process can take up to a year, so they will not know the results of that appeal for a while. Her recommendation would be to remove this revenue from the upcoming budget, as she is not sure that they will receive it. Rep. Oppel asked if they could engage the federal delegation on the appeal. CA Libby stated that they have not done that, but NETC has discussed doing so. She stated that she does not know the percentage of the impact in the upcoming year, but it will increase the amount to be raised by taxes because it is lost revenue. Rep. Sellers stated that it might not go away, but it may decrease. CA Libby stated that it was true, but for budgeting purposes, she feels they should not plan for this revenue.

Surplus – CA Libby stated that she recommended that they decrease the surplus from the \$1.7 million they used last year to \$1.5 million for FY27. She explained that in February, she starts projecting out the surplus, and she updates it every time they close out the month. This number is through April 30th, as they have not closed out May. CA Libby stated that using the \$1.5 million will leave them with a \$1.9 million of undesignated fund balance, which is 3.3%. Their fund balance policy expects them to have between 8%-16%. They continue to be well below that, and the Commissioners decided to put the \$1.5 million in this year because there was a significant tax increase, but noted that she anticipates seeing a decrease in their overall fund balance this year. Rep. Franz stated that, in regard to this reduction in fund balance, they previously discussed taking this money and putting it in a reserve for the courthouse. She asked if CA Libby would be able to put together the spreadsheet that shows the impact on each town. CA Libby stated that she could do that based on old, equalized valuation rates. The new rates have not been set yet, but CA Libby noted that she expects those new rates anytime now. She can put those requested figures together using the old rates, but needs the committee to understand that the numbers will change once they receive the updated rates.

<u>Commissioners' Office Budget</u>

CA Libby reviewed the following handout on the Commissioners' Office budget:

Increase of \$48,393 or 7.88%

Line item 01-4100-001 – County Administrator
We are going to do a detailed review of this line. There is a significant change that has sparked the spreading of a great deal of misinformation. I am going to provide factual data to you to explain the composition of this line and to support the salary in this line. I am continuously hearing that I, as the County Administrator, am overpaid. I am going to provide data to you that supports that it is, in fact, not true, and that the County Administrator position may actually be underpaid.

Let's begin with the composition of the amount that is budgeted for FY 2027.

The Commissioners' Proposed budget contains a salary of \$198,217.00

As you may be aware, I will be retiring from Grafton County in January. The Commissioners requested that the budget include salary for the new County Administrator to begin in October 2026 so that there is a three (3) month overlap with me before my retirement. That is what is included in that salary line. I will not be receiving a \$200,000 salary from July to January, as some have assumed.

- Current County Administrator - July - January $99,373.60 based on current salary (maximum step of the chart, so no step increase) and a proposed 3.03% COLA
- New County Administrator - beginning October - June - $98,843.40. This is estimated as the starting rate of pay for the new County Administrator is unknown at this time.

Next, I want to provide you with some data:

County	**County Administrator Salary**	**County Administrator Range**
Belknap	$155,000.00	
Carroll	N/A	
Cheshire	$150,155.00	$110,988 - $156,499
Coos	$225,596.80	$188,947-$246,521
Grafton	$161,782.00	$116,833 - $161,782
Hillsborough	$189,772.18	$104,410 - $194,620
Merrimack	$163,322.00	$131,102 - $190,112
Rockingham	N/A	
Sullivan	$156,076.00	$127,468-$172,073
Strafford	$221,191.00	

Carroll County	No County Administrator
Coos County	County Adminstrator is also responsible for management of 23 Unincorporated Places
Rockingham County	No County Administrator
Strafford County	County Administrator is also the Nursing Home Administrator

You are looking at salary information from all ten (10) NH counties for their County Administrators. You will note that Carroll and Rockingham counties do not have County Administrator positions. Of the eight (8) counties that do, I am the 2nd longest serving County Administrator with 24 years of service as the Grafton County Administrator.

If you look at the salary ranges for the six (6) counties that have ranges, Grafton County has the 2nd LOWEST maximum step for this position. If you rank the order of the current County Administrator's salaries, Grafton County ranks 5th out of 8, with the 2nd-longest serving Administrator. The average County Administrator's current salary is $177,861.87.

This data provides evidence that the Grafton County Administrator's salary is not out of line with similar positions throughout the State of NH.

I also want to provide a brief history as to how the current salary range for the Grafton County Administrator was determined. In FY 2022, an independent Wage Analysis was performed by PayPoint HR from Davidsonville, MD, which was hired (through an RFP process). PayPoint HR determined which comparators were appropriate to use to compare Grafton County government positions. The following counties were used: Belknap, Carroll, Coos, Cheshire, Merrimack, and Sullivan. There were 28 other public employer respondents from NH, VT, and ME with similar economic conditions, populations, and demographics to Grafton County. That survey found the County Administrator position to be "substantially below market." This was addressed when the new wage chart was implemented that year.

I hope that this provides you with useful information and helps dispel much of the misinformation that has been spread about this subject.

Rep. Oppel stated that there is a 3-month overlap, and the new county administrator has not been chosen. It could be someone from within, or someone external. He stated that, given the potential complexity, he asked if the three (3) month overlap would be enough time, and a $5,000 transition consultant line would be sufficient. Commissioner McLeod stated that they felt three (3) months was adequate. They will start with posting the position in-house, noting that there has been succession planning and they have an Assistant County Administrator, but they will go through the internal process first. She stated that the three-month overlap may be challenging if an external candidate were to fill the position, but they feel the three (3) months is sufficient for an internal candidate.

Rep. Oppel asked if they have considered doing another wage study that may help with the recruitment of a new County Administrator. Commissioner McLeod stated that this has not been discussed. Commissioner Hedberg noted that the Belknap County Administrator is new this year and came from a town, not from another county. She wants them to keep an eye on that salary, which is not significantly lower than that of their very experienced administrator who has been in this position for twenty – four (24) years.

Commissioner McLeod stated that another piece of misinformation out there is that someone can be hired to replace CA Libby and pay them anywhere from $35,000 - $50,000. She stated that they would not consider hiring someone at a low level for the importance of this position. They are looking for someone who has the ability to work with bond markets, the ability to do high-level complex financing, working with area banks. This is a very complex job that includes both administration and oversight of many high-level departments and over 400 employees. Their local taxpayers need to know that there is someone in charge who is capable of doing this work. Rep. Oppel stated as a point of information that they pay their town administrator a 6-figure salary, and it is a far less complex job than the county administrator. They are now trying to recruit their 4th town administrator in three (3) years.

CA Libby continued to review the handout on the Commissioners' Office Budget.

There are 5 staff members in the Commissioners' Office - 3 are at the maximum step and will receive no other increase next year than the COLA.

All benefit lines increased with the 3-month overlap for the new CA.

Education & Conference – Grafton County is the host county for the NHAC conference, and there will be more staff attending.

Consultants – funding included in case there are any services needed during CA transition

Audit Services – an RFP for the next three (3) years was issued in January, and there was an increase in prices

Travel Expense – Staff – County Conference expenses included

Rep. Sellers asked about the increase in the allocations to the nursing home. CA Libby explained that they allocate 75% of payroll, 50% of accounts payable, as well as a portion of the finance staff. She noted that as wages and benefits increase, so does this allocation. This line item is a wash as it goes out of her budget and into the nursing home budget for their Medicaid Cost Reporting purposes.

Rep. Sellers asked why the Assistant County Administrator Line is increasing 6% and if the Assistant County Administrator could do the job of the County Administrator. CA Libby stated that the Assistant County Administrator is one (1) of the employees in their department that not at the maximum step, so there is a step increase included as well as the COLA. As to whether the current Assistant County Administrator can do the job, she absolutely believes she can, but there is a process that needs to be followed, and it is not her decision to make.

Rep. Oppel stated that Rep. Stringham had left questions for him to ask. He asked which positions are currently funded through ARPA. CA Libby stated that there is one (1) position funded through ARPA, and that is the Investigator in the County Attorney's Office. This is being absorbed in the FY27 as funds need to be spent by the end of December. She noted that there is roughly $25,000 of that salary coming out of ARPA for the first half of the fiscal year, and then in 2028, the full amount will be in the budget.

CA Libby then reviewed the rest of the handout with miscellaneous accounts with the committee.

<u>Treasurer's Budget</u>

Increased $1,808 or 12.25% - only significant increase is Travel Expense – reflects the current treasurer's mileage and weekly trips to sign checks.

<u>Human Service – County Cap</u>

Decreased $223,067 or 2.86% - Paid to the State of NH – Grafton's share of the Medicaid costs for Grafton County residents. Set by State Statute (which states it will increase 2% annually) will increase 3% in FY 2027. Grafton pays a percentage of the cap as determined by the past three years' total actual expenses. Over the past 2 years, our percentage has been decreasing. As a result, the estimate for Grafton County's cap this year is decreasing.

<u>Conservation District</u>

Decrease of $14,702 or 13.59% - Long-term Office Administrator retired last June. A new Office Administrator was hired in September. The decrease is a result of budgeting for a family plan and the new Administrator only needing a Single plan.

<u>Wage & Benefit</u>

Increased $136,029 or 26.53%

Health Insurance Reimbursement – County pays the first 50% of the deductible for any employee who elects the lower cost health insurance plan. The increase is due to an increase in the number of employees taking the lower cost plan.

Retiree Health Insurance (non-nursing home) – increase due to increase in rates

FSA – decreased the FSA employer contribution from $500 to $250

Employee Assistance Program Fee – This was included in our rates from HealthTrust, with the change in health insurance providers, this will now be billed separately.

Earned Time Buy-Back – an increase in the number of employees participating in the program

Employee Benefit Payout (non-nursing home) – several long-term retirements anticipated for FY 2027.

TAN Interest

Increased $25,000 or 50%

Reflects actuals from FY 2026 and the anticipation of a similar borrowing schedule in FY27 and a slightly higher interest rate.

Bonded Debt

Decreased $67,950 or 3.35% - The decrease is due to the bond repayment schedule. The interest payments decrease each year.

Contingency

Decreased $10,500 or 12.50%

Outside Counsel – decrease based on current usage

County Government Promo – increased based on needs for the NHAC Annual Conference with Grafton as the host. Grafton last hosted in 2013.

Unemployment Insurance

Decreased $2,500 – 50% - Grafton County is a reimbursable employer – we pay the State of NH for any unemployment claims paid for employees for whom we are a chargeable employer.

Delegation Expense

No Change

Rep. Sellers asked if they would end up spending the full $10,000 in Delegation expenses. CA Libby stated that they typically do not spend all of the funding, and they likely will not be this year, with them cancelling one of the meetings. She noted that the mileage rate is set annually.

Grafton Regional Development Corporation & Social Services – Commissioner McLeod & Commissioner Hedberg

Grafton Regional Development Corporation

Commissioner McLeod noted that this is level-funded at $40,000. GRDC does a lot of work throughout the county, and one (1) of the areas they are focusing on is childcare. She noted that they also work with small businesses and provide equipment grants. This is a small amount of funding that is provided to them, but the county gets a lot in return from GRDC. Commissioner Hedberg noted that they do many microloans under $5,000 as well. The Commissioners further discussed the various items that GRDC offers. Rep. Oppel stated that the county receives a large return on investment from GRDC, as they do with UNH Extension, and they need to promote these agencies, so the taxpayers know what they are receiving for their tax dollars. Rep. Sykes noted that, on a broader aspect, it is his opinion that county government is completely underappreciated for the level of services it provides for the taxpayers of Grafton County. They need to promote what Grafton County does for the public as well, because many do not understand the amount of services the county provides.

Social Services

Commissioner McLeod stated that Grafton County is a very rural county, and there are some larger areas in the southwestern part of the county, but they do not have the big social services available that the southern counties do. She added that the Commissioners find it critically important to support these services in Grafton County that help to keep people out of the Department of Corrections and the Nursing Home. She explained that last year the Commissioners tried to provide some sort of consistency in the types of funding they did so that similar organizations that provide a benefit to similar-sized populations would receive a similar amount of funding. There is an application process for this funding where these agencies are asked for information, such as how many people the agency serves in each town, so the Commissioners can evaluate those. Commissioner McLeod noted, for example, that the home care organizations have consistent funding amounts and further reviewed other similar types of agencies that are being funded. She stated that the Commissioners have also removed a number of organizations that met the requirements for Opioid Abatement Funding and funded them through that.

Rep. Bolton stated that he is the Executive Director of Transport Central, an agency that receives funding from Grafton County. He stated that they will be expanding to a full bus service for the Town of Plymouth starting September 1st.

Rep. Oppel asked, after looking at the nine (9) month figures for these agencies, if there are agencies who are not being funded or if later payments are sent out, noting that there are some agencies with zero expenditures at the nine (9) month mark. CA Libby explained that these agencies are eligible to submit the requests for funding quarterly, and some do not submit their requests each quarter. She stated that these agencies have started receiving reminders that there is funding available for them once they submit reports and their funding request. She noted that typically, the agencies always get their requests in by the end of the fiscal year.

Rep. Oppel stated that he suggested, to the extent possible, that they can make public the numbers of what these agencies are doing by town. He explained that this would add to the discussion of county services and what the county is providing.

Rep. Oppel relayed a question from Rep. Stringham, who asked if funding certain agencies through Opioid Abatement funds is sustainable going forward or if it masks a structural general fund obligation at some point in the future. He asked if there are any current social services being funded through the general fund that may be shifted to Opioid Abatement funds. Commissioner McLeod explained that the Commissioners reviewed the requirements of the opioid funds and what they could be used for. They moved anything they could do that funding source and noted that on this year's application, they had a section for agencies to check off if they did any opioid related work. Commissioner McLeod asked if the question about sustainability was referring to the Opioid Abatement funds. Rep. Oppel stated that at some point, the Opioid Abatement funds will eventually run out. Commissioner McLeod stated that they have heard from Atty. Bofetti from the Attorney General's Office, who is one of the main people supporting this fund. He is on the state advisory commission for the opioid funds and reported that they expect these funds to come in for 10-12 more years. Commissioner McLeod explained the breakdown of the funds that are received. She stated that 15% of the funds received at the state level go to the towns, cities, and counties that were involved in that lawsuit, and the state keeps the rest, which then goes out through an RFP process.

Rep. Sellers stated that he is looking at the other counties in the state. Grafton County has roughly thirty-two (32) agencies, and other counties are only funding a handful. Grafton County is spending $500,000, and Rockingham County, which is much larger than Grafton County, is funding thirteen (13) agencies at $300,000. He feels they are spending a lot of money and should be more focused and do a better job of funding a few agencies, rather than trying to fund them all. Rep. Sykes stated that when this list has been developed over the twelve (12) years he's been involved in the Executive Committee, they look at how these agencies can help keep people in their homes and not in the nursing home or keep them out of the DoC. This is Grafton County, and many of the counties Rep. Sellers referred to further south have a much more robust nonprofit agency picture than they do in Grafton County. In his mind, this is not comparing apples to apples. Commissioner McLeod stated that, in regard to the high number of agencies, Grafton County is a very rural county and does not have the large human service organizations that they do in southern counties, which are supplemented with a lot of outside donations or fundraising. She would encourage the Executive Committee to go to these agencies, such as GCSCC, and the public meetings they hold. It is overwhelming the number of services that are provided to their towns. She stated that they have a lot of need, and these are small amounts of money that make the county a partner and give these agencies something to leverage in receiving funding from other sources.

Rep. Oppel stated that to build on those two (2) points, comparing Grafton County to Hillsborough, Strafford, or Rockingham, there is one (1) city in Grafton County, Lebanon. The cities of Manchester and Nashua have their own Human Services Department that provides many of these same services that they are only able to provide through the county. The southern cities in larger counties have a lot of resources that Grafton County does not, and he does not feel it is fair to compare.

Rep. Sellers stated that it is not comparing; it is how much they are spending and how many agencies they sponsor. Coos County spends $150,000 on twelve (12) agencies. Grafton County is serving twenty – eight (28), and the next closest county serves seventeen (17). He added that these same nonprofits are going to most of their towns requesting funding, and they will go to the state or federal government as well. He stated that they are asking the people in Grafton County to spend $300,000 more than other counties, and he is not sure if they are doing a great job. He wonders if they could do more if they fund fewer agencies. Rep. Oppel stated that the organizations that serve his areas, everyone shows up on town warrants every year. For the last 5-6 years, voters have supported those contributions, and that shows their constituents want to support these services as they believe they are getting value from them. Rep. Sellers noted that he believes they are getting value from these agencies, but he feels they are getting so spread out that they are not getting fantastic value.

Rep. Oppel stated that Rep. Stringham asked about the broadband project and, given the progress of the project, if some of those funds could be released to a reserve for the courthouse project. CA Libby stated that there will not be money left in the broadband project to go towards the courthouse.

Information Technology – Director Tetreault

Expense

1. Education & Conference - Director Tetreault stated that he has added $2,000 to this line. He explained that it is best practice for all IT professionals to attend at least one (1) offsite security awareness class.

2. Software Maintenance & Renewal – Director Tetreault explained that the reason for this large increase is due to one (1) of the major software vendors that they utilize being sold out to another company, and that company has changed their licensing. They are now paying much more in licensing for that product. He noted that he will be looking into alternatives for the FY28 budget.

Rep. Oppel stated that Rep. Stringham has asked if there are systems across the county that are close to the end of life and if there is an estimate of replacement costs over the next 1-3 years. Director Tetreault stated that most of the equipment that needs to be replaced is in his new equipment line, which has decreased. He explained that this figure is mainly to replace computers that are still on Windows 10, which is no longer supported by Microsoft. Every year after this, they will be adding additional computers in the budget to lower the age of their computers. Director Tetreault explained that some computers are currently five (5) years old, which is not preferable. He would prefer a three (3) year replacement cycle, but he has discussed this with CA Libby and agreed on four (4). Director Tetreault noted that each year this line will fluctuate depending on how many computers need to be replaced, but FY27 is based mainly on replacing the Windows 10 systems.

Rep. Oppel asked what cybersecurity programs are in place, if they have had any independent security assessments conducted recently, and if they have had any attempted attacks. Director Tetreault stated that all of their cybersecurity is handled by Thrive, and they have a dedicated team that only handles cybersecurity. He added that they are always trying to be attacked but have not been infiltrated, noting that he does receive calls occasionally because a user asks about something they received and wants to make sure that it is ok, which shows that the line of command is working. Rep. Oppel asked what kind of internet hygiene employees are receiving to ensure that they are not responding to the wrong email. Director Tetreault explained that every year, a phishing simulation is done. An email is sent out to all users, and it tracks who clicks on the link in the email. This year, they also sent out a set of video courses for users to watch and learn about the newest attacks that are out there.

Rep. Sellers asked about telephones and asked why this line has increased by $1,000. Director Tetreault stated that in general, if they are not electronic, telephones are increasing in price. He explained that it has always been the practice, and he would always recommend that each site has at least one (1) analog phone. These phones cost more to maintain, and therefore, they are charged more for them. CA Libby noted that if you look at the nine (9) month rates, those rates are more reflective of what they will likely spend this year, and that is reflected going forward in the FY27 budget.

Rep. Sellers asked about the internet access going up 10% and if they are adding more devices. Director Tetreault stated that they are adding the barn to the Wi-Fi, and in the process of doing that, they have redone all of their contracts. They are going from analog cable internet access to digital internet access, which is more stable and reliable.

Equipment Repair and Maintenance – Director Tetreault stated that this is a standard percentage increase based on the increased costs of equipment each year. He explained that he wants to make sure to include an increase in this line to ensure that he has funds available to cover unanticipated costs.

Rep. Oppel asked in terms of the public being able to hear these meetings, if Director Tetreault has looked into a different system that may be easier for the public to hear. Director Tetreault explained that they are currently working on this, but as of today, they do not have a plan in place.

<u>Nursing Home – Administrator Labore</u>

A. Revenue

NHA Labore stated that they are projecting a census of 124 residents. Based on how the current fiscal year is operating, where they have been able to maintain a higher census for the first six (6) months, he feels a census of 124 is reasonable. They are budgeting for one (1) additional private-pay resident for a total of twenty-two (2) residents. NHA Labore added that they will also be increasing their private pay rates by $15.00 per day to $370.00 per day for a private room, and their semi-private room rate will be $350 per day in the upcoming fiscal year as well.
NHA Labore stated that in regard to the Medicaid Rate for New Hampshire, they are budgeting for sixty eight (68) New Hampshire Medicaid residents. He explained that the rate that was factored into the budget was a decrease from what they are currently receiving due to what they experienced with the dramatic rate cuts that they were potentially going to receive at the beginning of this calendar year. Not understanding what the possibility of what another rate cut was going to look like come July 1st, they lowered the projected Medicaid rate. NHA Labore reported that he just received confirmation that their New Hampshire Medicaid rate will be $247.51 starting July 1st, which is $1.46 more than they have budgeted for in their proposed budget. Commissioner Hedberg noted that this is still a decrease compared to what they are currently receiving.

NHA Labore stated that they budgeted a census of twenty-two (22) residents for Vermont Medicaid. He explained that he had requested a rate increase last month for Vermont Medicaid residents, which was granted, and they will now be receiving $575.26 per day. He stated that this is not included in the current budget figures and will be an increase of roughly $43,000 in additional revenue. The State of Vermont made that effective retroactive to January 1st, and therefore, they are anticipating another $18,000 in revenue from Vermont in the current fiscal year.

Veterans Administration – NHA Labore stated that they are budgeting a census of eight (8) residents. The current census is nine (9), and they have signed a new agreement with the VA, and in doing so, the rates have changed. $545.17 per day is what they are estimating for an average, noting that these rates are individually based on the needs of each resident.

Medicare –NHA Labore stated that they are budgeting an average census of four (4) residents at a rate of $655.00 per day. Throughout the course of the year, he feels this is a realistic goal

Medicaid Proshare Payment – NHA Labore stated that they are budgeting for a $1.9 million payment. They received notice that later this month, in the current fiscal year, they will be receiving $2.1 million. CA Libby noted that the original estimate for the current year's ProShare payment was $1.9 million, and that is why they chose that as their estimate for FY27.

Expense

NH Admin

NHA Labore noted that increases in this line are due to salary and benefits.

Dietary

NHA Labore noted an increase in the food supply line due to the increased census.

Nursing

NHA Labore noted a reduction in the education and conference line and explained that they partner with White Mountain Community College for the LNA program, and that they have reduced the price per student, close to 50%.

Rep. Oppel stated that Rep. Stringham had noted that the contract nursing is budgeted for $1.7 million and the nine (9) month actuals are $1.7 million. Rep. Stringham has asked what is driving that and if that is enough in the upcoming budget. NHA Labore explained that what is driving the nine (9) month figures is an issue with the invoicing from one of their vendors. They received many late invoices from the prior fiscal year that had to be paid out in this current fiscal year. NHA Labore noted that they will be having six (6) new LNAs joining them from their LNA program. There will be two (2) FTEs open in LNAs, and he has never seen that few open positions. He noted that evenings and nights are the challenge. The $1.7 million is a realistic target, but he hopes he can come in under that. He noted that they currently have five (5) contract staff; three (3) LNAs and two (2) nurses, and they are mainly working the evening/overnight shifts. The shift differentials they offer, based on research they've done, are very competitive with other area facilities, and he does not feel increasing them would help.

LPN Program – NHA Labore reported that they are having a lot of interest in this program. This allows nursing assistants to go to school and obtain their LPN license. The point of the program is to help reduce the contract nursing line. There are currently two (2) in the program. After they graduate, there is a 3-year commitment to Grafton County, and they will be placed on a shift that has a shortage. In their agreement, if one doesn't fulfill the commitment, they will pay back a portion of the program based on how much time is still remaining in the contract.

Restorative Nursing

Coordinator – NHA Labore explained that this increase includes the hiring of a new coordinator. The previous coordinator worked Monday through Friday, and the current coordinator is doing a varied shift with weekend coverage as well. They have included shift and weekend differentials.

Activities

NHA Labore noted a $2,000 increase in the supply line in part due to an increase in helium.

Housekeeping

1. Wages Housekeeping Staff –NHA Labore stated that they are proposing a new temp position to replace their Assistant Environmental Services Director, starting June 1st, 2027. NHA Labore explained that in 2027, the Environmental Services Department Director is planning to retire after 41 years, as well as their most senior laundry operator, who has 32 years at the County. When both of those employees retire, they are looking at losing roughly 70 years' worth of experience in that department. NHA Labore explained that this position will allow the Assistant

Director to work hands-on with their soon-to-be-retiring Environmental Services Director so she can better understand the overall operation. She is currently very focused on the housekeeping side, but this will allow her to work directly with the director to understand the whole process of the department. This position will help them maintain the overall operations of this department smoothly during the retirement transitions.

Contract Services

1. Contracted Dietitian – NHA Labore stated that in the current fiscal year, they agreed with a new Dietitian. Her rate was higher than anticipated, and therefore, they are increasing this line in FY27 to cover those costs.

Capital Reserve

1. NHA Labore stated that they are looking to add a new managed care billing component to their existing Inovalon software. He stated that they are looking to purchase Inovalon Managed Care Billing. This platform allows Managed Care insurance claims to be sent electronically rather than through the mail, and secondary insurance claims will automatically bill out. Currently, VA claims are reimbursed three (3) months out, and these will be reimbursed in two (2) weeks at a higher Medicare PDPM rate.

2. Installation of Additional Panic Alarms – NHA Labore stated that they are looking to install three (3) additional panic alarms for staff to be able to alert the Sheriff's Dept. to security concerns taking place in the nursing home.

3. Grout replacement for Granite Neighborhood – NHA Labore stated that this was a request from Supt. Oakes. There is missing grout in the tile floor of the shower area on Granite, which is causing water damage to the shower room on Meadow, due to leaking from the floor above.

4. Hobart Conveyor Type Dishwasher – NHA Labore reported that this is the replacement of a 23+ year old machine. Upon replacement of this item, all of their kitchen equipment will have been updated within the last 7-8 years. He noted that this piece of equipment breaks down roughly six (6) times a year.

5. Vitamix 5205 XL 4.2hp Variable Speed Blender – This is a high-capacity blender to mechanicalize meals for residents requiring altered meal textures.

6. Hatco GRAH 48" Glo-Ray High Wattage Infrared Food Warmer – NHA Labore stated that they are looking to purchase food warmers to be installed on Maple and Profile neighborhoods to ensure plated food remains warm before being served to residents. There have been several concerns about cold food at Granite Unit, and we made this purchase in the current fiscal year, and it has been very successful.

7. Maxwell Thomas Essential Series Laminate Tabletop 36" Square – NHA Labore stated that this is the replacement of ten (10) tabletops to a smaller size to help with crowding in resident

dining rooms that results from the number of larger Broda wheelchairs that many residents use on the floors.

8. Renovation of Staff Development Office – NHA Labore stated that they are looking to renovate the current Staff Development office to create a dedicated nursing education simulation lab. Staff will have the opportunity to do more hands-on education, and they will be able to assess the competency and skill set of the nursing staff as well. This would also allow them to prepare for more complex residents before admission.

9. Advanced TERi Geriatric Patient Skills Trainer with Auscultation – This is an advanced training dummy for nursing staff to practice skills/demonstrate competency. This would be based in the nursing simulation lab.

10. Resident Mattresses – NHA Labore stated that this is the continuous yearly replacement of mattresses.

11. Activities Courtyard Furniture – NHA Labore explained that they have begun the courtyard renovation project that was funded through Congressional Directed Spending. They are looking to purchase various pieces of furniture for the Activities Courtyard. He noted that furniture/décor could not be included in federal funding for the Courtyard renovation.

12. Aztec Guzzler Solution Retrieval Machine – NHA Labore stated that this is a piece of housekeeping equipment. This would help maintain the condition of the floors throughout the nursing home and create a much more efficient process.

Rep. Sykes stated that an item that was taken out of the capital reserve was recliners for the common areas. He asked if the residents can be out in the common area more and raise their feet. Isn't that better for their care? NHA Labore stated that it is, and they have recliners available. The purpose of this request was to create uniformity across all floors and have more appropriate sizing of recliners.

Public Comment:

Rep. Sykes stated that at their last meeting, he forgot to ask for public comment. He explained that he is having trouble with his legislative email and has tried to respond to an email he received from someone upset about not being asked for public comment. Rep. Sykes wanted to offer a public apology for forgetting to ask. He asked if there were any members of the public online who wanted to give any comments. There were no public comments.

Rep. Sykes stated that their next meeting is on June 8th at 9:00 am

11:40 AM With no further business, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Heather P. Baldwin

Heather Baldwin, Clerk