

Coös County Delegation
Quarterly Meeting
July 20, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.
North Country Resource Center
629 Main Street Lancaster, NH

Present: Representatives Arnold Davis, Chair; Mike Ouellet, Vice Chair; Lori Korzen, Clerk; Sean Durkin; Seth King; James Tierney and Marc Tremblay. Also Present: Commissioners Tom Brady, Raymond Gorman, and Robert Th  berge; County Administrator Mark Brady; Superintendent Ben Champagne; Director of Finance Carrie Klebe; Nursing Home Administrator Louise Belanger; Acting Nursing Hospital Supervisor Ashley Hodge; Assistant Finance Director Christine Labelle; HR Coordinator Morgan DeBlois; Sheriff Keith Roberge; Deputy Bert vonDohrmann; Ray Berthiaume & Andy Schafermeyer, UNH Cooperative Extension; Bob Gargano, Town of Gorham; Administrative Assistant Linda Harris & members of the public.

Chairman Davis called the meeting to order at 10:031a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

The roll was called by the Clerk, Representative Korzen. There were seven members present. Representative Morency was excused.

Review & Approval of the Minutes of the May 18, 2026, quarterly meeting: A motion was made by Representative Tierney, seconded by Representative Tremblay to approve the minutes of the May 18, 2026, quarterly meeting. The motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.

Hearing of the Public:

Dan Dagesse distributed the following talking points to the Delegation and Commissioners:

Here are some talking points for the Co  s County Nursing Home Project and some timelines:

1. *The original nursing home proposal by the Co  s County officials was completed by Barry Dunn on October 9th, 2025*
2. *The Co  s County Nursing Home proposal by Dunn identified Colebrook as the site for a Nursing home.*
3. *Governor and Executive Council contract to accept and expend \$204 million on March 4, 2026, meeting.*
4. *A special Governor and Council meeting was held on March 13th, 2026,
"THE CONTRACTOR IS AUTHORIZED TO ENTER INTO THE FOLLOWING SOLE SOURCE LETTER OF INTENT WITH CDFA TO CONTRACT WITH COOS COUNTY TO RENOVATE THE FORMER COLEBROOK ACADEMY BUILDING TO REPLACE THE WEST STEWARTSTOWN COOS COUNTY NURSING HOME."*
5. *Somewhere at the end of April or early May, negotiation with contractor stalled. NO FOLLOWUP BY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR WAS MADE WITH CONTRACTOR.*
6. *At the request of the County on May 8, 2026, CDFA approved the County's LOI Amendment on May 9, 2026.*
7. *The LOI Amendment stated the Coos County Nursing project would request an RFP for Different*

locations county wide. Funding for consultant for RFP would be released later.

8. *On June 24, 2026 Councilor Kenny asked Go-North Director Donnalee Lozeau in an Email if an RFP could be avoided for the Colebrook Project. A same day reply from Go-North Director revealed "I do know if it is the Colebrook Academy as proposed in Our approved CMS award- there is no need for any additional steps for approval. There is no reason negotiations with the owner of the Colebrook Academy cannot Proceed from the Go-North or CMS standpoint. (see below email)."*
9. *On June 25, Go-North Director further clarified "I have confirmed my response below And your summary is correct! Including your conclusion on what a new location means For approvals, at a minimum it will need to be APPROVED BY CMS. As you know the Council does want to approve sole-source, not certain if they would forgo this based on The County and the supported need. That is as you know, not my call!"*
10. *On June 26th, Councilor Kenny asked Go-North Director by email, whether the funding for a rehabilitated nursing home would be available for a five-year period? The answer is that CMS has approved the full Go-North budget for the first budget period award As OBLIGATED. This means NH has already met its September 2026 CMS deadline.*

To program the funding. The COÖS COUNTY NURSING HOME PROJECT BEING BUDGETED IN PERIOD 1 IS DUE TO THE EXPEDIENCY AND SOLE SOURCE OF THE PROJECT. Ideally, the total amount for nursing home needs to be spent by September 2027 or could possibly go into the Budget period 2 if the feds obligate the funding for That budget period. AN EXTENSION WOULD HAVE TO BE REQUESTED. IT ALSO COULD JEOPARDIZE FUNDING FOR THE NURSING HOME PROJECT IF THE MONEY IS NOT THERE FOR BUDGET PERIOD 2.

Mr. Dagesse questioned the purpose of the RFP since the project is already approved and taxpayer money is being spent.

Chairman Davis noted that it was an RFQ (request for qualifications) that had been published to secure an architectural/engineering firm to help the county evaluate potential sites. The RFQ would close on August 7, 2026. He said the Rural Healthcare Transformation Funding (RHTF) is secured and Coös will not be losing the monies.

Mr. Dagesse inquired if the Board would be willing to meet with CDFA.

Dan Hebert, Colebrook, reported that he had met with the County Administrator to discuss the possibility of the old academy becoming a nursing home. He agreed to front the architect with the understanding that he would put up the shell structure. The remainder of the project would go out to competitive bidders. He did not agree to a clause that if something happened to the federal grant, he would lose \$6 million.

The County Administrator said that he would not discuss publicly the negotiations between the County and Mr. Hebert. He distributed a copy of an email from CDFA and a copy of the RFQ. He added that mischaracterization does not help the situation at hand.

Vice Chair Ouellet read the email:

Hi Mark,

Thank you for your question. I am happy to clarify the status of the application and the GO-NORTH Rural Community Health Infrastructure Program (RCHIP) process.

CDFA understands that the County's project was identified in the State's application to CMS as a potential infrastructure investment aligned with the goals of the Rural Health Transformation Plan. However, that action did not constitute an award of GO-NORTH RCHIP funding the project. Funding awards will be made through a competitive application process administered by CDFA during Budget Period 1. Applications for Budget Period 1 are due on September 1, 2026.

Based on the information provided to date and our review of the program priorities, the County's project appears to be well-aligned with the objectives and eligibility requirements for Budget Period 1. Coos County submitted the Request for Eligibility Determination to get started in the CDFA system and we expect Coos to be invited to complete a full application during the Budget Period 1 application period shortly.

It is important to note that an eligibility determination is not a funding commitment. The full application process will evaluate project readiness, scope, budget, community impact, and alignment with the State's Rural Health Transformation goals before funding decisions are made. At this time, there is no awarded funding that the County would lose by not beginning construction immediately, although applicants are encouraged to continue advancing project planning and readiness activities, so they are prepared for the application and review process.

I hope this helps clarify the distinction between inclusion in the State's plan, eligibility for the program, and a future funding award. Please feel free to share this information with residents, and don't hesitate to reach out if additional questions arise.

Best regards, Rebecca Boisvert

And the RFQ:

REQUEST FOR ENGINEER/ARCHITECT/CONSTRUCTION MANAGER QUALIFICATIONS
Coös County, New Hampshire

Coös County, New Hampshire requests Engineer/Architect/Construction Manager Qualifications from qualified firms for a Rural Health Transformation Grant Project. Coös County, New Hampshire owns and operates a Nursing Hospital in West Stewartstown, NH. The County is applying for a Rural Health Transformation Grant to relocate their Nursing Hospital in that area or possibly renovate the existing building. The project is to look at up to 4 possible locations, existing buildings and the current location, to determine the feasibility of the sites, preliminary design and cost estimates for the nursing hospital project.

This is an equal opportunity/affirmative action agency. All qualified firms will receive consideration without regard to race, color, religion, creed, age, sex, or national origin. Consultant selection will

be qualifications based.

Information: Louise Belanger louise.belanger@cooscountynh.gov (603)344-7505

Please submit an electronic qualifications with project understanding, detailed scope of services and applicant experience by August 7, 2026.

The County Administrator provided the project timeline once again.

He said that the County had engaged Berry Dunn in 2024 and 2025 to analyze the county nursing home operations and footprint. Berry Dunn (BD) considered all options including maintaining the existing county footprint with a new facility in W. Stewartstown (on county property on Back Pond Road) and consolidating Berlin Nursing Home (CCNH) and W. Stewartstown Nursing Home (WSNH) to one facility in Groveton. The BerryDunn report found that demographically and financially Coös County can support two nursing homes. The cost of consolidation to Groveton would have been around \$60 million +/- for a 125-bed facility. The debt financing, however, was too costly and negated its viability. Instead, BD recommended an addition to the Berlin facility of \$5-6 million which would allow for the reconfiguration of 100 rooms to include ten private pay suites, which would help with the finances. Additionally, they analyzed constructing a new 75-bed facility on Back Pond Road at a cost of \$30+ million with 60% (\$18-19 million) financed by debt. Financially it would be viable, and they stressed that that condition of the WSNH was negatively impacting the census, efficiencies and profitability. He said that the consensus is that the current WSNH cannot be renovated while the residents reside in the building. Additionally, there was no appetite by the Board of Commissioners to bond \$18-19 million for a new WSNH facility.

Then in August and September of 2025 the County learned of the Rural Healthcare Transformation Funds (RHTF). Councilors Kenney and Stephen held an informational roundtable in Berlin in August, and the Governor and her Administration held another in Littleton in September. It was from those meetings that the county decided to submit a proposal for CCNH based on an understanding of what the funds could be used for. The county had concluded that they could not be used for the W. Stewartstown situation. Thus, the county submitted a proposal for \$7.8 million for CCNH on October 1, 2025. The County was then contacted by the New Hampshire Association of Counties and asked if the county would be interested in submitting a proposal for WSNH if it could find a facility to modify/renovate. And the proposal had to be submitted within 7 days. The County Administrator contacted Commissioner Gorman since he is the Commissioner for that district and inquired if he knew of any buildings. Commissioner Gorman said he had the perfect building -- The Colebrook Academy. That is how the Country got to the Colebrook Academy and subsequently submitted a proposal on October 8, 2025. He said that proposal was for a transaction of \$23 million where the County would buy the property for \$600,000 and the Rural Healthcare Transformation Funds were to pay for the rest. The state decided to include the WSNH proposal in its submission to the federal government instead of Berlin. He said that based on discussions with the NH Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA), the transaction was changed whereby the County would buy a new shell structure at the Colebrook Academy for the 70-bed facility. That was done because the RHTF could not be used to pay for an addition – they can only be used on the existing footprint. Therefore, once the shell was complete, the federal funds would be used to build out the structure. Subsequently, the executive council approved the project on March 16, 2026.

The Administrator said that West Stewartstown residents attended the April 15, 2026, commissioners meeting and expressed concerns about the project – they did not want to lose the nursing home and questioned the viability of the academy site because of its age and historical significance. The Administrator said that the Colebrook Chronicle article did a good job in explaining the culmination of events that led to the Board reassessing the process.

The County, in consultation with the CDFA, decided to pursue a new process. That was the purpose in filing the Amendment to the Letter of Intent in May. The County would apply for a technical assistance grant from the CDFA for up to \$50,000 for engineering, architectural and construction management assistance. There would then be an assessment of potential sites to determine their viability. He said that the Colebrook Academy and the WSNH would be reviewed and the county hoped to identify a few other possible sites in the Groveton – Colebrook area.

The RFQ was posted on Tuesday, July 14, 2026, and closes August 7, 2026. The site must be identified by October 30, 2026. An RFP for construction will be issued after that (TBD) so that construction can begin in the spring of 2027. The County's application for the RHTF program must be submitted by September 1, 2026, even though a site will not be identified by then.

Once the sites have been assessed, the Board of Commissioners will have a review process of those sites that is transparent and provides for public input.

Representative Tierney noted that an architect is a requirement from the federal government.

Representative Ouellet noted that Mr. Dagesse is always ready to assist the North Country and not looking to get rich. Mr. Dagesse reported that he had set up a meeting with CDFA in Concord and two of the Commissioners had agreed to attend.

Commissioner Gorman stated that the Board has to meet with the CDFA. He had made that clear at the Commissioners meeting of July 17, 2026.

Chairman Brady noted that he was confused about the proposed meeting as he knew nothing of a meeting with the Governor's legal counsel and the CDFA and questioned other Commissioners working behind the back of the Chair. He noted that at Friday's Commissioners' meeting (July 17, 2026) he stated that the CDFA meeting should be a public meeting. He was perplexed by the ongoing process to set up a meeting in Concord. The Chair said that he would not attend a meeting in Concord and the public needs to be included so that the residents who are being affected by this decision can hear about it directly. He said the public asked the Board of Commissioners for options and that is what the Board is doing. Chairman Davis agreed that any meeting with CDFA must be held in Stewartstown or Colebrook.

Lynn Dorman, representing the West Stewartstown residents, presented the Chair with a petition signed by local residents. The petition reads as follows:

We, the undersigned residents of Coös County, respectfully urge local and state decision-makers to keep the existing nursing home in West Stewartstown open and operating at its current location rather than pursuing the costly, disruptive, and uncertain process of acquiring and rehabilitating a different building elsewhere.

This facility has served our community since its establishment in 1932, first as a general hospital and nursing home, and since the early 1970s as a dedicated nursing home.

Using available federal funds to renovate and improve the current facility would be a more practical, fiscally responsible, and less disruptive investment than spending public resources to acquire and rehabilitate a new building elsewhere.

We therefore call on the appropriate officials, administrators, and community leaders to take immediate action to preserve the existing nursing home, maintain services in the current building, and support any improvements necessary to update the facility to reflect current state statutes and regulations.

She also noted that the Colebrook site has 2 +/- acres whereas Stewartstown has several lots totaling over 900 acres.

Wayne Dorman, Pittsburg, stated that he hopes that the petitions are used as a tool to make the right decision. He is happy that the West Stewartstown facility is being re-evaluated. It could be too expensive to renovate. The report will provide the information needed. He, too, provided petitions from 285 individuals, which included 28 Vermont residents. He added that Vermont Medicaid residents pay double what is received by the NH Medicaid residents.

Rick Samson, Stewartstown, stated that the Delegation represents the Coös County residents. The current footprint of the West Stewartstown facility does not match the academy's footprint. Colebrook stands to lose \$1 million in taxes if the nursing home moves there. He also stated that Colebrook representatives should recuse themselves from voting. Groveton is a central location, and Lancaster is the county seat. He asked both of the boards (Delegation and Commissioners) to consider building a new facility in Lancaster or Groveton and consolidate staff to one facility. He said the division in the county needs to stop.

Representative King asked if Mr. Samson had read the BerryDunn (BD) report as the numbers showed that two nursing homes work in Coös County.

Chairman Davis stated that Coös County is geographically spread out – 20% of the land area of the state and 2% of the population. He noted that the BD report is an independent analysis. The RFQ will help determine the best place and the RHTF do not allow us to build a new facility. He said it is important to keep the facility in the northern part of Coös County.

Representative Durkin stated that the numbers do not make sense. How is a \$23 million facility viable when it did not make sense to build a \$60-65 million facility. Chairman Davis replied that the \$65 million was an estimated cost for consolidating both nursing homes into one larger facility in Groveton.

The County Administrator stated that the BD report showed that a new W. Stewartstown facility could support itself. He said they modeled a scenario for a new 75 bed facility on Back Pond Road in W. Stewartstown. Dan Hebert had estimated a cost of \$32+ million, and the projection assumed a scenario of 60/40 split whereby the County would bond \$19 million and \$13 million would come from grants. He said that if bonding \$19 million worked then bonding \$6 million should work.

Toby Owen, Pittsburg, provided the Delegation with signed petitions from the Town of Pittsburg.

Allen Coats, Stewartstown, stated that the Delegation were representatives of its constituents. They are elected to speak for them; not make decisions for them. He asked that they consider what the people want. Now, the county wants to send its inmates to Grafton. Grafton is very fortunate. Several people want West Stewartstown to run the county farm and the academy building to go back to being the Colebrook Academy.

Review & Approval of the Financial Statements of Coös County and of the Unincorporated Places for the period ended June 30, 2026.

Director of Finance Carrie Klebe began the review of the Coös County Financials. The total expenditures for the period ending June 30, 2026, was \$20,472,338 or 28% expended. Total revenues for the period ending June 30, 2026, were \$17,610,583 or 24% received. There were no questions. A motion was made by Representative Durkin, seconded by Representative Tierney to approve the second quarter Coös County Financials for the period ended June 30, 2026. The motion was approved by roll call 7-0.

The Director of Finance continued with the review of Unincorporated Places' second quarter financials. The total expenditures for the period ending June 30, 2026, was \$374,927 or 25% expended. Total revenues for the period ending June 30, 2026, were \$586,468 or 38% received. There were no questions.

A motion was made by Representative Tremblay, seconded by Representative Durkin to approve the second quarter Unincorporated Places Financials for the period ended June 30, 2026. The motion was approved by roll call 7-0.

Old Business. There was no old business to discuss.

New Business. There was no new business.

Subcommittee Reports. There were no reports.

Any other business. None.

Dates of upcoming meetings:

- Monday, October 19, 2026 @ 10:00 a.m. in Lancaster
- Monday, December 7, 2026 @ 10:00 a.m. in West Stewartstown (Reorganizational Meeting)

A motion was made by Representative Tierney, seconded by Representative Durkin to adjourn the meeting at 11:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Lori Korzen, Clerk