

STRAFFORD COUNTY COMMISSIONERS PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES – DRAFT

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2026

Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88076078990?pwd=XhfZv74QrC78qR5pDjpARV2GadmFIV.1>

Meeting ID: 880 7607 8990 Passcode: 391058

A public meeting of the Strafford County Commissioners was held Thursday, August 13, 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, Sheriff Kathryn Mone, Chief Deputy Raymond Pardy, EMD Director Justin Bellen, Assistant Administrator Deirdra Brown, Director of Nursing Jennifer Emerton, Assistant Director of Nursing Jennifer Cormier, Activities Director Kristina Lapoint, Dietitian Andrea Tran, Director of Volunteer and Public Relations Maria Ayer, HOC Superintendent Chris Brackett, Maintenance Director Doug Kane, IT Specialist Kelly Parker, several members of the Sheriff's Office, Summer Exploration Program students, Susan Rice, and Executive Assistant/Deputy Treasurer Janet Hilber. By consensus, agenda items were addressed out of order due to staff availability.

1. Approve Minutes of August 6, 2026: Commissioner Feliciano motioned to approve the minutes of August 6, 2026 as written. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Leavitt, and approved unanimously (3 to 0) by a voice vote.
2. Presentation of Plaques for the Sheriff's Office Charles E. Smith 2026 Award Recipients: Sheriff Mone presented plaques to the Charles E. Smith Award recipients, who had previously been selected during Law Enforcement Memorial Week and were formally recognized and photographed with the Sheriff and Commissioners. Alexandra Pelletier was named Civilian Employee of the Year, an award selected through peer nominations and recognizing a non-sworn employee who consistently demonstrates exceptional public service and reflects the core values of the Strafford County Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff highlighted Pelletier's positive attitude and the fact that she is consistently known for greeting others with a smile. Deputy Taylor Griffin was recognized as the sworn recipient for outstanding public service and going above and beyond the call of duty. Griffin serves in numerous capacities, including firearms, Taser, fitness, and defensive tactics instructor; SWAT team member; drone pilot; and field training officer. The Sheriff also noted Griffin's strong interaction with the public and children during Rochester's National Night Out and commended him as an important asset to the Sheriff's Office.
3. Discuss Employee Appreciation Banquet: The committee discussed plans for the annual employee appreciation banquet. The event provides an opportunity for the Commissioners and Administrator Bower to recognize and thank County employees for their service and longevity. Commissioners and Administrator Bower are considering returning to the Governor's Inn, where the event has been held previously and where the County has had positive experiences. The tentative date discussed was Thursday, October 22, 2026 subject to final arrangements.
4. Summer Exploration Program Graduation and Awards Ceremony: The Commissioners held a graduation and recognition ceremony for participants in the Future Healthcare Professional Summer Exploration Program at Riverside Rest Home. The students described the program as an opportunity to gain firsthand exposure to healthcare careers and determine which areas of the field interested them. Several students already had specific career interests, including medicine, veterinary medicine, physical therapy, nursing, and licensed nursing assistant work. Students said the program provided valuable background and helped them better understand the different roles within healthcare. One student expressed a desire for more shadowing opportunities and a longer program, while others particularly enjoyed interacting with residents and participating in activities. The students also highlighted experiences involving wound care, recreation, physical activities, golf, and resident interaction. Overall, the participants said the program helped reinforce their interest in healthcare or, for those less certain about the field, provided useful information that would help them make informed career decisions. Department heads also provided positive feedback on the Future Healthcare Professional Summer Exploration Program at Riverside Rest Home. Staff appreciated the opportunity to show students that healthcare encompasses much more than nursing, including activities, nutrition, and other specialized areas that contribute to residents' quality of life. Dietitian Tran particularly valued the opportunity to introduce students to nutrition as an important part of long-term care and potentially encourage a student to consider nutrition as a career. Administrator Bower noted that the program's primary goal was to expose students to aspects of healthcare that are not typically portrayed on television or readily visible to the public. It was also emphasized that discovering healthcare is not the right career path can be just as valuable as confirming an interest because it allows students to make better-informed educational and career decisions. Administrator Bower credited Maria Ayer with developing and coordinating the program and obtaining cooperation from the various department heads. Staff also noted that the students brought new energy to the facility, interacted positively with residents, asked questions that encouraged staff to consider new approaches, and contributed to the overall atmosphere at Riverside. Commissioners encouraged the students to provide additional suggestions for strengthening the program in future years.

The students were formally recognized for their participation in the summer exploration program and received certificates during the meeting. Commissioners and staff congratulated the participants and expressed appreciation for their willingness to spend time at Riverside and learn about healthcare careers. The students were also reminded that the residents they interacted with had once been young themselves and that their life experiences and stories could provide valuable lessons.

5. Meet with Riverside Department Heads Director of Nursing, Assistant Director of Nursing, and Wound and Skilled Care Coordinator at 10:30 a.m.: Jennifer Emerton, Director of Nursing, and Jennifer Cormier, Assistant Director of Nursing, provided an update on nursing operations at Riverside Rest Home. They reported that resident care is going well, although staffing remains a challenge, particularly during vacation periods. Administrator Bower explained that the facility has been relying somewhat more heavily on temporary staffing pools during these periods. Although pool employees have a higher hourly cost, using them temporarily can be more economical than employing additional full-time staff when the staffing need is short-term, particularly when the cost of benefits and other employment expenses are considered. The department is also actively recruiting staff and was reviewing two applications. Administrator Bower emphasized that maintaining a small amount of additional nursing capacity can be beneficial, particularly for covering vacations, illnesses, surgeries, and other extended absences. The preference is to rely on Riverside's own nurses whenever possible because they are familiar with the residents and their individual needs, which supports continuity of care and reduces potential risks associated with unfamiliar temporary staff. The nursing department staff described the communication system used to address resident-care concerns. Supervisors are instructed to contact nursing leadership whenever something unusual occurs, including falls that appear suspicious for injury or require additional follow-up. Nursing leadership maintains 24-hour coverage through an on-call rotation, with the directors communicating regularly with one another regarding issues occurring during evenings and weekends. When staff are uncertain about how a situation should be handled, they may contact the County Administrator for guidance and final decision-making. The Commissioners expressed appreciation for the nursing staff and emphasized the importance of providing the public with a better understanding of the work performed at Riverside, particularly as discussions continue regarding the potential construction of a new nursing home.

The nursing leadership and Commissioners discussed the significant physical and environmental challenges facing Riverside Rest Home, particularly for residents with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Nursing staff noted that the current building provides very limited natural light and few appropriate common areas, which can be especially difficult for residents on the Alzheimer's unit. Residents may have difficulty distinguishing between day and night, and staff expressed concern that limited access to light and suitable gathering spaces can contribute to declining cognition and quality of life. Climate control was also identified as a continuing concern. Commissioners noted that the County is pursuing grant opportunities, including congressional directed funding, to address some of these building and environmental issues. The discussion emphasized that dementia care has become increasingly complex, with a significant majority of Riverside residents having dementia as either a primary or secondary diagnosis. The population requiring these services is also becoming younger and more physically active while experiencing cognitive impairment, creating additional challenges for staff. Commissioners noted that County nursing homes serve as a safety net and often accept residents who are difficult for other facilities to accommodate. Riverside has recently managed several challenging residents who required additional staffing, including one-on-one supervision, and has received support from a geriatric psychiatric unit in Nashua. The Commissioners praised the quality of care provided at Riverside while acknowledging that the existing building and environmental limitations are substantial. They reiterated their commitment to exploring construction of a new nursing home while finding a financially responsible way to accomplish the project.

6. Upcoming Events: Chairman Maglaras asked if there were any upcoming events to discuss. There were no upcoming events to discuss.
7. Old and New Business: Chairman Maglaras asked if there was any old or new business to discuss. Riverside Rest Home hosted its first visit involving therapy horses. The activity was arranged through a connection with Cornerstone Hospice and involved four residents who had previously been involved with horses and expressed an interest in seeing them again. The initial visit was intended as a trial program, with the possibility of expanding the activity to additional residents in the future. The organization providing the horses also operates a handicap-accessible facility and has offered to have Riverside residents visit its location. Staff indicated that transporting residents there could provide another opportunity for meaningful recreation and therapeutic interaction. The initial visit generated significant interest among residents and staff, with much of the parking lot reportedly filled despite the effort to keep the visit small and informal.

The Commissioners discussed an energy audit of the entire County complex being conducted by Siemens. The company approached the County and will perform the assessment at no cost to the County, other than staff time. The audit will examine electricity and natural gas consumption and identify potential equipment upgrades or other improvements that could reduce long-term operating costs. Administrator Bower explained that Eversource may provide significant financial incentives, potentially covering approximately 40% to 60% of eligible projects, as part of efforts to improve energy efficiency and manage peak demand. The County has previously used such incentives for insulation improvements, reportedly generating approximately \$31,000 in savings or returns, along with an additional \$5,000 related to boiler improvements. The Siemens assessment is expected to take a broader look at the complex, including heating systems, pumps, controls, and other equipment, as well as potential alternative energy sources. Any major projects identified would be subject to the County's procurement requirements and, depending on the recommendations, could require inclusion in the capital plan and discussion with the County delegation. Commissioners and Administrator Bower expressed support for addressing lower-cost, easily achievable improvements first so the County can demonstrate measurable savings before undertaking larger, more expensive projects with longer payback periods.

The warming center project was reported to be on schedule. In addition, the Commissioners discussed a proposal involving the extension of a water line from an existing hydrant near the Alms House to the fire training center. The City of Dover has indicated that it is willing to pay for the extension. The existing hydrant is believed to be approximately 100 years old and may need to be replaced. County and city officials will work together to determine the configuration of the existing water lines, identify the appropriate shutoff gates, and establish which buildings are currently served by the line. The city is considering installation of a six- or eight-inch line and will investigate whether existing fire suppression systems and water pressure can be incorporated into the plan. The city will also evaluate the possibility of accessing water from the Cochecho River. The Commissioners discussed whether electrical service should also be extended while excavation is underway, with nearby transformers identified as potential sources. Officials intend to document the water-line configuration through the city's GPS system for future reference. The Commissioners briefly discussed the old chlorination buildings located on the county property. The buildings are currently locked and are not being used for storage, and their condition was described as poor despite being located on a solid slab. The Commissioners considered whether the area could potentially be useful if a water-draw or river-access system is developed for the fire training center. The location could provide a convenient site for installing a spigot or other equipment if the county and city determine that such an arrangement would be useful. Chief Brendan Driscoll will continue working with former Chief Perry Plummer and the other local fire chiefs regarding the decision to open the warming center.

8. 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. In response to several questions from Mrs. Rice, Administrator Bower provided an update on the Go North grant application and clarified that the County's recent notification represented only preliminary approval and that the final grant application is due September 1, 2026. A meeting was held with potential grant-writing assistance, and the County has access to an automatic \$4,000 allocation for grant-writing expenses. Administrator Bower also contacted the Association of Counties to seek clarification regarding several aspects of the grant program and requested a meeting involving the counties that applied for funding. Particular attention was given to the \$20 million that was earmarked for County nursing homes, with the stated purpose of enhancing County nursing home capacity and helping hospitals discharge patients. Administrator Bower intends to clarify how that dedicated funding will be distributed and how competitive the County portion of the program will actually be. The Finance Director has consolidated the County's questions, with another meeting planned to finalize responses before they are provided to the grant writers. The County has already secured commitments for letters of support and believes it is in a strong position because much of the preliminary grant work had already been completed in connection with congressional directed funding. Administrator Bower expressed some concern that the preliminary approval was delayed approximately three weeks while the September 1st final deadline remained unchanged, leaving a shortened timeframe for completing the application. The County nevertheless expects to submit the final application by the deadline.

Administrator Bower confirmed that the County has been able to hold the line on the budget item for incontinence products at Riverside Rest Home and that costs have not increased. The prior procurement process involved inviting five or six companies to participate and requiring vendors to provide approximately two weeks of products in the sizes needed so that staff could evaluate the products based on both resident comfort and ease of use by staff. Purchasing Assistant Jodi Brown was credited with organizing the process and helping achieve the savings, and it was noted that her work contributed to her recognition as Employee of the Year.

An update was provided on the former Hyder Hospice House and the ongoing due diligence discussions concerning a potential transition or affiliation. The primary issue at this time is a technology and systems-integration matter involving Mass General's mainframe systems. The systems are important for billing, staffing, and other operations, and the parties are working to determine how Hyder can be integrated into the larger system. Administrator Bower reported that Mass General was still moving forward but expected the process to take additional time, with an anticipated update within approximately 30 days. The County already has read-only access to the system for purposes of monitoring its residents and is able to update information regarding residents while they are hospitalized.

The Commissioners discussed the status of County probate records and the anticipated relocation of records involving Rochester and Concord. Administrator Bower indicated that a response had not yet been received regarding a previous communication, even though the request was sent within a day or two of the prior discussion. The Commissioners agreed to allow another week for a response before considering a follow-up call or other next step.

9. Non-Public Session for the Purpose of Discussing Personnel Issue(s) and Contract Negotiations Pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II: After a five-minute recess, Commissioner Feliciano motioned to go into non-public session at 9:15 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. Commissioner Feliciano motioned to go into non-public session again at 10:47 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.
10. Return to Public Session: Commissioner Leavitt motioned to return to public session at 9:46 and again at 11:23 a.m. Commissioner Feliciano seconded the motions, and it was approved unanimously (3 to 0) by a voice vote.
11. 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.
12. Adjournment: The Commissioners signed paperwork as appropriate. Commissioner Leavitt motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:53 a.m. Commissioner Feliciano seconded the motion, and it was approved unanimously (3 to 0) by a voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

George Maglaras, Chairman

Leslie A. Feliciano, Vice Chair

Sean M. Leavitt, Clerk

Strafford County Board of Commissioners
Non-Public Session

Date: AUGUST 13, 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.*

X 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 9:15 a.m. and again at 10:47 a.m.

Other persons present during nonpublic session: Administrator Ray Bower, Superintendent Chris Brackett, Sheriff Kathryn Mone, Chief Deputy Raymond Pardy, EMD Director Justin Bellen, Assistant Administrator Deirdra Brown, 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. Personnel issues and contract options for Dispatch Capital Fund were discussed with the Sheriff.

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: ☒ **PASSED** / ☐ **DID NOT PASS** (circle one)

Nonpublic meeting tape removed; public meeting tape replaced (if applicable). Not Applicable.

Public session reconvened at 9:46 a.m. and again at 11:23 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: ☒ **PASSED** / ☐ **DID NOT PASS** (circle one)

These minutes recorded by: Janet Hilber, Executive Assistant

Commissioners' Initials

August 13, 2026 Commissioners Meeting Awards and Graduation Ceremony Pictures

