

MINUTES
Cheshire County Delegation
Monday, March 21, 2011 7 PM
12 Court St., Keene, NH

PRESENT: Representatives Butynski; Byrnes; Carr; Cartwright, Chase, Dwinell, Emerson; (Hawkes was absent); Hunt; Johnsen, Johnson; Lerandau; Lindsey; Meader; Moore (Charles), Moore (Robert, Jr.); Parkhurst; Roberts; Sad; Smith; Sterling; Tatro; Weber; Weed; Commissioners Pratt, Zerba and Patt; Administrator Wozmak; Finance Director Trombly.

Chair Weber called the meeting to order at 7 PM.

Chair Weber recognized Rep. Meader for a motion:

To cease the operation of the current dairy farm facilities as soon as practicable, but no later than June 30, 2011, and to authorize the Commissioners to undertake such actions to arrange for the sale of the various farm assets, pursuant to RSA 28:8a, excepting land, buildings and fixtures and, further, to authorize the Commissioners to solicit bids for the lease of the farmland and buildings in Westmoreland and to execute all documents and undertake all acts necessary to lease the property, pursuant to RSA 28:8-c and subject to ratification by the county convention. Rep. Hunt seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed 19 in favor and 4 opposed.

The Chair recognized Rep. Hunt for a motion:

To accept the Executive Committee proposed budget for 2011 in the amount of \$41,232,995. Rep. Meader seconded the motion. Discussion followed. (*The MAIN MOTION*)

The Chair recognized Rep. Roberts for a motion:

To amend the budget by reducing the Dept. of Correction budget by \$160,000 and increasing the outside agencies by \$95,000 and increasing the alternative sentencing budget by \$65,000, which would be a budget neutral change to the budget. Seconded by Rep. Weed. Rep. Roberts spoke to his motion saying that he would rather put the jail out of business and increase programs that keep people out of jail. He made several comments regarding our obligation to programs that keep people from going to jail.

Rep. Hunt responded that the cut to alternative sentencing did not eliminate the program but merely reduced the outside services line to the 2008 level. He also was against reducing the jail budget now that it is becoming a profit center. Michael Potter, the director of the alternative sentencing/mental health program said that the program had been in existence for the past ten years and he discussed in some detail the scope of the program. Rep. Weed said he visited the Academy program and the ASP program as well and was impressed with the impact that the programs have on repeat offenders.

County Commissioner Patt spoke to the revenue that the jail is building and how the staff resources are more important than ever. Rep. Lindsey was concerned that a cut, such as proposed by Rep. Roberts would adversely affect the correctional officers.

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Rep. Roberts spoke to his position before the jail bond was voted and how he did not want us to build a jail to hold federal inmates. Rep. Gladys Johnsen said that the solution is as simple as raising taxes, which would add only a small amount.

Commissioner Zerba commented that one reason why the jail budget was up for 2011 over 2010 was that the jail was only open for part of the year last year.

Rep. Sterling asked the impact on taxes and was told that on a \$200,000 house, the tax impact of this budget would be \$40.22.

Rep. Johnsen wants to add the \$65,000 to alternative sentencing. Rep. Hunt reminded the delegation that the outside service line of the program still has \$100,000 in it. Commissioner Patt gave a brief cost history of the outside service lines. Commissioner Jack Pratt commented that these cuts are very difficult and that the county is caught between valuable programs that are useful and taxpayers that say that they cannot continue to pay as much in taxes.

Rep. Weed reminded people that the primary reason for government is to serve the community and these cuts work against that purpose. Rep. Weber said that she was very conflicted about the cuts but they were necessary across the board.

Upon a roll call vote on Rep. Roberts the amendment of the main motion to **amend the budget by reducing the Dept. of Correction budget by \$160,000 and increasing the outside agencies by \$95,000 and increasing the alternative sentencing budget by \$65,000, which would be a budget neutral change to the budget, the motion failed on a vote of 6 in favor and 17 opposed.**

Rep. Gladys Johnsen moved to restore the \$65,000 to the Alternative Sentencing budget, seconded by Rep Chase. Rep. Hunt reminded the Delegation that there is still \$100,000 in the outside service line. Commissioner Patt recounted the history of the increase in the outside service line. On a roll call vote of 3 in favor and 20 opposed, the motion to amend the main motion failed.

Rep. Gladys Johnsen made a motion to add \$144,726 to the Outside Agencies, seconded by Rep. Weed. After brief discussion, upon the roll call vote of 7 in favor and 15 opposed with one abstention, the amendment failed.

Rep. Tatro made a motion to amend the main motion by adding \$37,000 to restore the Mutual Aid budget, seconded by Rep. Roberts. Rep. Sad asked what would be lost with this budget cut. Rep. Roberts addressed the merits of mutual aid the economic benefit to the City of Keene. Rep. Hunt suggested that the Delegation might revisit this in August. Upon a roll call vote, there were 6 in favor and 16 opposed with one abstention and the amendment failed.

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Returning to the main motion (above) to accept the Executive Committee proposed budget for 2011 in the amount of \$41,232,995, upon a roll call vote of 17 in favor and 6 opposed with one abstention, the motion passed.

Rep. Hunt made a motion to approve taxes to be raised from cities and towns for the operating and capital budget of the county for 2011 in the amount of \$17,111,022, which represents 40% of the total county budget. Seconded by Rep. Sad. Upon a roll call vote of 19 in favor and 4 opposed with one abstention, the motion passed.

Rep. Hunt made a motion to approve taxes to be raised from the cities and towns for the obligations mandated by RSA 167:18-a in the amount of \$6,803,846 which represents 16% of the total county budget, seconded by Rep. Lerandean, upon a roll call vote of 23 in favor and 1 abstaining, the motion passed.

Rep. Sad made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Farm Committee and fully endorse the Cheshire County Farm and Infrastructure Project feasibility study and approve that county staff may participate, as necessary, provided that there be no requirement of any direct financial contribution by the county; that the study shall be completed on or before January 10, 2012; and finally, that periodic reports regarding the feasibility study will be provided to the Farm Committee, seconded by Rep. Tatro. Upon a roll call vote of 23 in favor and 1 abstention, the motion passed.

Rep. Tatro moved that the Delegation vote to authorize the Commissioners to undertake all legal research and communications necessary to dissolve the current funding structure and allow Mutual Aid to raise their operating funds directly from all of the towns they serve, seconded by Rep. Sad. There was discussion about the implication of this motion and whether there would be time to study the impact. Commissioner Pratt said that the plan would be for the Commissioners to work with mutual aid to visit the towns for discussion and fact-finding. After more discussion, a motion was made and seconded to table the motion. Upon a roll call vote of 19 in favor and 4 opposed with one abstention, the motion was tabled.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned.

Minutes approved on _____

Jane Johnson, Clerk