

MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, November 20, 2019
County Hall Building
Stillman Rogers Conference Room
12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431

Present: Commissioners: Charles Weed, Robert Englund and John Wozmak

Staff: County Administrator Coates, Assistant Director of Finance Hall, and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard.

Guests: Linda Mangones, Keene Housing and James Weatherby SWRPC CDBG Specialist

At 8:38AM Commissioner Weed opened the meeting and recognized Linda Mangones who described the history of the Bennett Block and reason for coming before the Commissioners to seek funding for housing rehabilitation. She described an issue with the land under part of the building is not owned by Keene Housing but an easement from the property owner is underway. Once this is complete then the CDBG funding will be available for the project. The total project is set at \$1M dollars. She spoke to potential temporary displacement of some tenants but said that Keene Housing has a number of apartments that the residents could be moved to during construction that is anticipated to start in the summer of 2021.

A discussion of other applicants arose and it was learned that no other project is currently ready to proceed due to legal and procedural and project readiness issues.

Following discussion Commissioner Englund moved to authorize the acceptance of the Keene Housing CDBG grant application for the County to be the CDBG grantee and subgrant \$500,000 in housing funds to use for administration and construction costs to renovate 14 apartments at Bennet Block in Keene and was seconded by Commissioner Wozmak. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

Coates was then recognized to discuss Master Agenda Item #733: Specialty Mattress Quotes. He said that the quotes received were reviewed and that the Nursing Home Administrator is recommending the bid received from Medline be accepted.

Specialty Mattress Quotes

Goal of this project is to replace low air loss mattresses meeting Medicare Code E0277 low air loss mattress specifications:

Company	Mattress name	Price per mattress	S&H	Total (5)
Medline	MDT24MEDAIRMX	\$2,400.00	included	\$12,000.00
Hill-Rom	300 Wound Surface	\$3,591	included	\$17,955.00
Hill-Rom	Synergy Air Elite	\$10,584.00	included	\$52,920.00

Commissioner Wozmak moved to accept the bid and was seconded by Commissioner Weed. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

Master Agenda Item #732: Cooperative Extension - Semi-Annual Report was then taken-up and Roberge outlined the programs being supported. He said that 20 new volunteers have recently joined the COOP to bring the total count up to approximately 220. He outlined education programs in Walpole and the maker program being run in Jefferey. A youth leadership club is being run in Keene and on March 14th 4H day will be held in Walpole at the Middle School.

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He said that a bulk of the programs are still farm oriented but many of the new programs are Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) oriented, especially the after-school-programs.

Roberge pointed out that the 4H is actually a structure for various programs for youth and is not just farm oriented and has included a target shooting club Swanzey.

He said that the Emerald Ash Borer has been found in trees in Rindge and this is the first time that the infection has been found in the County.

The way that the Ash Borer is treated was covered and he spoke to the overall impact to the forests in New Hampshire. He also reviewed the how firewood is tracked with the intention of preventing infested firewood being brought into the state that would spread the ash borer.

He then said that a large education event was recently held at Keene State and he described a project that targeted large land owners in Alstead and Walpole to assist them with the management of their properties.

The Silvio Conte federal project was brought-up and Roberge reviewed the program. He said that the timber harvest in Westmoreland is completed with approximately \$40K received. A general discussion of timber harvesting in and around the County was covered and the advantage of managing timber forests instead of letting them go unmanaged was discussed.

Administrator Coates was then recognized for Weekly Operations Report:

At 9:40AM Commissioner Weed moved to enter non-meeting status to discuss a legal matter.

Commissioner Wozmak seconded the motion and upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

As a result of deliberations, a decision was made and vote was taken to authorize the acceptance of a letter of termination and the signing of a separation document that

9:47AM the Commissioner voted to return to public session.

Coates said that rooms for the Commissioners and staff who will attend the Primex Summit scheduled for May 18th – 20th 2020 have been reserved at the hotel where the event is taking place.

Coates then said that a contract from new labor and employment attorneys has been received and he discussed that the hourly rate will increase from the present firm.

He said tomorrow the Benefits program will be rolled for the year and he recognized the finance staff and especially Melanie Des Chenes who is the Benefits Specialist, for all their hard work in preparing for the annual event.

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Coates reminded the Commissioners that the Southwest Regional Planning Commission will be holding an Intermodal Transportation Feasibility Study event on November 25th. A discussion of transportation options in the area was discussed and options for the use of the airport was reviewed.

He then said that Congresswoman's Kuster clean energy listening tour will run from 11:00 – 12:00 on November 25th on Castle Street at Harper Acre's farm.

Coates then discussed the budget letter that was modified by Commissioner Wozmak concerning the funding of outside agencies and a review of the content was completed.

He then informed the Commissioners that a number of concerning electrical issues have surfaced during the replacement of the main breaker panels in the 33 West Street building. Some of the most serious problems that involve life safety issues have been addressed but more electrical issues remain to be sorted out and repaired. Funds to complete the work have been identified and the work will be scheduled to be completed in the coming weeks.

The Commissioners were then reminded that the meeting on December 11th will be held at the Maplewood Nursing Home and that employee longevity awards will be presented at the conclusion of the meeting.

Coates then said that the new CMS regulations that are about to be released will be reviewed by NACO who will be preparing talking points for distribution to Counties. He said that the impact on existing programs will need to be reviewed. A discussion of assisted living and nursing homes began and the impact on current facilities was examined.

Coates and Hall then handed out a revised budget worksheet and reviewed and discussed the 2020 budget options. A lengthy and in-depth discussion ensued about numerous elements of the Commissioners budget.

Following discussions concerning the 2020 resident payment rates for the Maplewood Nursing Home, Commissioner Wozmak moved to increase the Nursing Home Private Pay rate by 1.6 % (\$5.00 per day), to increase the Maplewood Therapeutic Center for Living rate by 1.6% or \$5.00 per day, and to increase the Assisted Living Facility rate by 1.67% or \$50.00 per month. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Englund and upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Wozmak moved to set the Commissioners budget to be recommend to the Delegation Executive Committee for review and consideration at \$29,133,412.00 or 2.86% for taxes to be raised with the total budget to be set at \$58,049,762.00. Commissioner Englund seconded the motion and upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

Coates then raised the issue of the Opiate letters received from the two attorney firms on opting-in or opting out. An extended discussion concerning the structure of the lawsuit and the benefit and

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detriments to the Counties was examined in-depth. Following the discussion of weather, the County should opt-in or out of the current

Commissioner Weed moved to authorize the County Administrator to sign the opt-out documentation for leaving the Class Action suit. Commissioner Wozmak seconded the motion and upon vote the motion passed unanimously

New Business: None

Old Business: None

Consent Agenda Items:

1. Manifest
2. Minutes of November 13, 2019

Following review and discussion, Commissioner Weed moved to accept the Consent Agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

The Commissioner Holiday Calendar for 2020 was discussed and it was agreed to maintain the same schedule as the previous year. The new 2020 calendar will be published this week,

At 12:11PM there being no further public business to discuss, Commissioner Englund moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Wozmak, and upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by:
R. Bouchard, Assistant County Administrator

Reviewed and submitted by:
R. Englund, Clerk