

MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, March 18, 2020
County Hall Building
Stillman Rogers Conference Room
12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431

Present: Commissioners: Jack Wozmak and Robert Englund (Charles Weed absent w/notice)
Staff: County Administrator Coates, Director of Finance Trombly, IT Director Hummel, Sheriff Rivera, HR Director May, Safety Officer Kroupa, County Treasurer, Terry Clark and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard.
Guests:

At 8:34AM Commissioner Wozmak opened the meeting.

Consent Agenda Items which include the Weekly Manifests and the minutes of March 11, 2020 were then taken-up. Commissioner Wozmak to accept the Consent Agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

Trombly was then recognized and discussed Master Agenda Item #756: Alternative TAN Borrowing for 2020. Trombly reviewed the Tax Anticipated Note (TAN) process and discussed the possible alternate sources for operating finances that will be needed in early May. A discussion of options for completing the borrowing was reviewed and discussed at length.

Sheriff Rivera was then recognized and discussed the Sheriff's department's operations under the State and Federal emergency COVID-19 declarations. He said that there are many issues that have not been addressed by the State as of yet but will be dealt with in the coming weeks. A discussion of social separation at the office and the restrictions of personnel into the dispatch center was covered. He also discussed that the Emergency Communications Trailer has been put into stand-by mode and is available for use by authorized municipal and state agencies should the need arise. Also discussed was the Phase 1 shutdown of the County Hall building and the cancellation of the public meetings at the building for the foreseeable future.

Trombly was again recognized to discuss Master Agenda Item #755: Receipt of Hemenway Annual Trust Funds. She said that a check in the amount of \$24,635.92 has been received from the trust fund for 2020. She reviewed the purpose of the trust and said that Cheshire County is one of three recipients the other two being the town of Marlborough and the Cheshire Medical Center. The trust was established by Fred Hemenway many years ago to offer support to provide services for the sick and indigent of the County. The Commissioners asked a number of questions about the use of the funds in the past and learned that the current balance with the addition of the receipt of the 2020 funds will be over \$200,000.00. It was discussed that the need for the funds by County residents could be realized with the current COVID-19 pandemic. Following discussion, the documentation acknowledging receipt of the funds was signed by Commissioner Wozmak.

Master Agenda Item #757: Telework Memo and Cybersecurity Update was then taken-up for discussion and Administrator Coates spoke to the topic and presented the following document:

MEMO: TEMPORARY TELECOMMUTING ARRANGEMENTS

Due to the current COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, many employees are inquiring about the ability to work from home. Cheshire County is implementing temporary telecommuting

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arrangements for employees whose job duties are conducive to working from home but who do not regularly telecommute. However, there are some positions at the County that require the employee to be physically present in the workplace. These employees are defined as essential personnel.

Essential Departments include the following positions:

- Maplewood Nursing Home
- Cheshire County Department of Corrections
- Sheriff's Department and Dispatch
- Information Technologies Department
- Register of Deeds
- Campus Facilities Departments

Essential personnel are expected to report to work as scheduled unless otherwise notified.

Regular leave policies and procedures should be followed for employees who are unable to report to work.

Positions approved to work from home temporarily include the following:

- Finance Department
- Human Resource Department
- County Safety Director
- Behavioral Health Court
- Drug Court
- County Attorney's Department
- System of Care
- Grants

Additional positions may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

These arrangements are expected to be short term, and Cheshire County will continue to monitor guidance from health officials and the need for remote work arrangements. Employees should not assume any specified period of time for telework, and the County may require employees to return to regular, in-office work at any time.

Should the current health crisis warrant, Cheshire County may require all employees, with the exception of essential personnel, to work from home. Employees should be proactive with department managers in preparing for these circumstances to ensure employees have the resources necessary to work remotely.

An extended discussion of the telework policy was covered and how the county can function with some remote workers was reviewed. A discussion of the partial suspension of state RSA 91-

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a and RSA 92-a Right-To-Know laws for public meetings was reviewed and there are a number of questions and issues that will need further details from the state.

Trombly then discussed payroll issues including the implementation of telework for finance and the need to improve inter-staff communications to potentially enable options like split shifts and other workarounds to enable everyone to stay as healthy as possible.

The policies of other counties were reviewed and discussed. It was also discussed that some County policies are still being worked out as the situation is very fluid and changing daily if not hourly.

HR Director May spoke to the personnel questions that have arisen because of the COVID-19 pandemic and reviewed the steps that are being taken to continue to hire new personnel and to put into place policies and procedures to ensure the safety of staff during this difficult time.

County Administrator Coates was then recognized for the Weekly Operations Report.

Coates said that the Department of Corrections (DOC) mental health clinician has extended his retirement decision for at least six weeks. He also said that the Director of Facilities at the jail will retire in June.

Coates said that a Phase 1 shutdown of the County Hall building is underway for the Finance department, the Sheriff's department, the County Attorney's office, Drug Court, and the Registry of Deeds. A conversation concerning the rest of the Keene campus began.

Maplewood was then discussed and the facility has implemented a facility lockdown. The impact on the nursing home was discussed and the issue of how to deal with the concerns of resident's families and other issues was covered. He said that the Assisted Living Facility residents are also under the same procedures as the employees in that they are being screened and assessed as they return to the facility after completing shopping and doctors' appointments.

Coates then spoke to a meeting that was held with the Nursing Home contractors to discuss their current on-site sub-contractor work safety requirements and the potential that all work could be stopped if a total site shutdown is needed. Coates discussed the installation of equipment that creates a negative air compartment in the work area that keeps containments from entering into the nursing home and the installation of sealed compartments that separate the old wing from the new wing.

He then said that the Department of Corrections has also implemented a full infection control policy and video visitation is continuing. The normal practice of having all incoming individuals held in quarantine as has been in the past is continuing with heightened oversight for health issues.

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Coates then said that the Handyman program has two new projects that can be started after the pandemic passes.

He stated that the Keene facilities staff is doing a daily deep cleaning of all surfaces and public areas in the all of the buildings including carpet cleaning and temporary storage of upholstered chairs to limit infection possibilities.

The County Fire Chiefs meeting that was scheduled for later this month has been postponed and all other public meetings scheduled for the County Hall building have been cancelled.

Hummel then briefed the Commissioners on the latest cybersecurity issues saying that since the on-set of the pandemic a huge increase in network attacks is being closely monitored.

He then described in great detail how IT was responding to need of providing a number of computers to staff who may be required to work remotely and outlined the work of the IT staff to go above and beyond to ensure that everyone who is required to work off-site has the needed equipment and tools to so with the needed security. The Commissioners and staff discussed the breakout of the staff members who are labeled as Essential Staff and those who may have the option of working remotely.

Old Business: Commissioner Wozmak then discussed the lack of support that was received from the NH Association of Counties for the cost shifting letter created by the County Commissioners and stated that the Cheshire County Commissioners will continue the discussion and look for ways to influence and reverse the continuing cost-shifting by the State.

New Business: None

At 11:33AM 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