

MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, April 22, 2020
County Hall Pursuant to Emergency Order #12 Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04
This meeting will be conducted electronically.

Conference Call Information
Phone Call-in Number: +1 646 558 8656
Meeting ID: 409 748 8803
Building

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

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

Guests: Maplewood Owners Representative, Steve Horton, Keene City Counselor Randy Filiault and County Treasurer and Keene City Counselor Terry Clark.

At 8:31AM Commissioner Weed opened the meeting and a roll-call of the Commissioners attending the meeting was conducted by County Administrator Coates. Commissioners Weed, Englund, and Wozmak responded as "present".

Commissioner Weed then moved to conduct this meeting as an emergency meeting under the relevant provisions of NH RSA 91-A, and consistent with the recommendations contained in Executive Order 2020-04 Order 12 issued by Governor Sununu. Commissioner Englund seconded the motion and upon roll-call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Emergency Order #12 Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04
Temporary modification of public access to meetings under RSA 91-A
Pursuant to Section 18 of Executive Order 2020-04 it is hereby ordered, effective immediately, that:

1. Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, paragraph 8 provides: "State and local government bodies are permitted and encouraged to utilize the emergency meeting provisions of RSA 91-A to conduct meetings through electronic means while preserving, to the extent feasible, the public's right to notice of such meetings and ability to observe and listen contemporaneously."

2. Pursuant to Emergency Order #2 issued pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, gatherings of fifty people or more are prohibited.

3. To implement these orders and recommendations, the requirement in RSA 91-A:2, III(b), that a quorum of a public body be physically present unless immediate action is imperative, is waived for the duration of the State of Emergency declared in Executive Order 2020-04.

4. To further implement these orders and recommendations, the requirement in RSA 91-A:2, III(c), that each part of a meeting of a public body be audible or otherwise discernible to the public "at the location specified in the meeting notice as the location of the meeting," is waived for the duration of the State of Emergency declared in Executive Order 2020-04 so long as the public body:

- Provides public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by
- video or other electronic means;
- Provides public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting;
- Provides a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are
- problems with access; and

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- Adjourns the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting.

Coates then outlined the rules of the meeting;

1. Public has an opportunity at the beginning of the Commissioners Meeting under “Public Comment” to speak. Community input will not be allowed after that point, unless recognized and allowed by the Chair of the Commissioners.
2. All votes will be Roll Call and when recognized, we are asking that you re-state your name and yes or no
3. If you have a question or motion that you would like to ask to put forward, please state the following, “Mr. Chair, Commissioner (your name) has a question or motion”.
4. If you are having issue hearing the call, please text or call the County Administrator at 603-313-9002.
5. Please mute your phones so background noise won’t interfere with the meeting.
6. This meeting has been posted on our website so that the community, department heads and media can listen into the meeting.
7. This meeting is utilizing a Zoom Platform so listeners can join us via audio or audio/visual.

Sheriff Rivera was then recognized and provided an update on the impact of his department’s revenue recognition issues due to COVID-19. He said that a very significant revenue reduction is being experienced in the service of process delivery but he expects that when the stay-at-home orders are lifted the courts will most likely require a focused effort to then get the process papers delivered. In response to a question from Commissioner Wozmak he said that all the deputies are still working and are assisting with things like food delivery for schools.

A discussion of the potential impact of the lack of tax receipts from the towns was covered and the possible short fall of tax revenue to the County was covered in great depth.

Coates was then recognized for the Weekly Operations Report:

Coates said that he and a number of staff members attended a NACO conference call on COVID-19 funding options and the bills pending in the house and senate. He said that the counties are working very closely with NACO and the congressional and senatorial staffs to explain the many reasons to fund all counties especially those counties under 500,000 people who were not funded in the CARE’s funding that was just released.

A discussion is underway to understand how the funding from the state for economic development money will be distributed.

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Coates then discussed that the State of NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) conducted an outreach to the County and municipalities to canvas for potential shovel ready projects that could be funded by the federal stimulus monies potentially targeted to work that involves the state DES. Bouchard forwarded a list of water and waste water projects that the County may need to consider in the near future for inclusion in the survey.

Coates then addressed that the Mayor of the City of Keene has announced possible economic stimulus capital projects that may include a parking garage and the Arts Corridor and other joint projects with Keene State and private projects.

Steve Horton then joined the call to provide an update on the Maplewood reconstruction project. Horton said that work continues and the right side of the old building will undergo a rough-in inspection today for the fourth floor so that sheet rocking of the area may begin as early as tomorrow.

He then spoke to the great effort in separating the work site from the new inhabited wing and said that the project is on schedule with the third floor about a week behind the fourth floor and with the second floor two weeks behind the fourth floor so that everything is flowing smoothly. He then said that overall, financially the project is trending well and the phase 2 furniture will be ordered shortly, with the entire phase 2 project being completed in August of this year. He then said that the 3rd and final phase will be completed in January of 2021.

He explained that the resident room heating units originally scheduled for use in the walls of the old building will be placed under the windows instead of being mounted in vertical position as units in the new wing. He said that this choice was made to improve the structural integrity of the existing brick walls in the old section of the building and also to open some additional space in the rooms.

The Commissioners thanked Horton for his update and at 9:11am Horton left the call.

Coates then said that the HR Director has been working with him on the search for the new Department of Corrections (DOC) superintendent and some applications have already been received. A review committee will sort through the initial pass and then a second round will occur in early mid-May with the final rounds in late-May. The plan would be to bring a recommended candidate for Commissioners approval in early June.

Coates asked the Commissioners what involvement the Commissioners wished to have in the selection process. Commissioner Wozmak suggested that because the Commissioners actually appoint the superintendent that they should be involved from the beginning. Following a short discussion, it was decided that the Commissioners will be involved from this point forward and will review all resumes received and participate in the winnowing and selection process.

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Coates said that he is working with staff with NH Department of Employment Security to run a virtual job fair. HR Director May will work with the State and Coates and Bouchard will provide technical support to ensure that the job fair a success.

Coates then related that the healthcare workers payment application has been submitted and will be effective this past Sunday that will pay healthcare workers an extra \$300.00 per week for at least a two-month period. He said that over 177 healthcare facilities in NH have submitted applications.

A discussion of how the program will be implemented was covered and what staff was included in the plan under the rules was also reviewed. How the monies are passed onto the contracted staff was also discussed.

Coates then reviewed the financial impact that could happen to the County if the towns are not able to pay their full amount of taxes this year. He said that he was working with the Director of Finance and senior staff to identify areas where funds can be conserved or held in abeyance until a clearer picture can be determined on cash flow from tax receipts.

Commissioner Wozmak said that he is suggesting that we think of this as a spending freeze and not as a cutting of funds until we see how the economy rebounds and how tax receipts are flowing again. A revisit of the items can be held later in the year to understand how to proceed at that time.

At 10:02AM Finance Director Trombly said that the County financial advisor was joining the meeting to provide the following information on the funding of the County Tax Anticipated Note (TAN) was released for bids this morning.

He said that they had received three bids, two that would fund the full \$18M requested and bids for \$9M. He then said that Webster Bank in Connecticut had bid for the full\$ 18M and was offering a rate of 1.264%. He then related that JP Morgan had bid for \$9M of the funding and their offer was at 1.29%. The final bidder was TD Bank who bid for all \$18M at 1.39%.

It was then explained that the Webster Bank bid included language that said that the bid was an “Indicative” rate and was agreed that the bank would need to agree to a rate lock at the bid rate to be able to move forward. An in-depth discussion began on the current state of the bond market and the rates availability and volatility.

A motion by the County Treasurer to award the \$18M bonding to Webster Bank contingent upon the bank locking in the indicative rate at 1.264%, and if Webster cannot lock the rate at 1.264, the bond amount will be split between JP Morgan for \$9M at a rate

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of 1.29% and TD Bank for \$9M at a rate of 1.39%. Upon roll-call vote of the Commissioners the motion passed unanimously.

At 10:27AM the Commissioner returned to the business under discussion concerning capital projects at the county. Following extended review of a number of line items and further discussion of capital reserves now held by the County. **A motion was then made by Commissioner Wozmak to freeze all county capital reserve expenditures until further review by the Commissioners to be reviewed just prior to the August Delegation meeting. Following discussion, a roll-call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.**

10:29AM Trombly said that she just learned through the receipt of an email that Webster Bank had agreed to locked in the \$18M bond rate at 1.29% and therefore the bid was awarded to Webster Bank of Connecticut.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Commissioner Wozmak then moved to accept the accept Consent Agenda for the approval of the Weekly Manifest and the Minutes from the April 8, 2020 Commissioners meeting and Commissioner Englund seconded the motion. Upon roll-call vote the motion passed unanimously.

General discussion of upcoming meetings and event took place and it was agreed that the Commissioners will come into the building to sign the County Weekly Manifests as their schedules allow.

At 11:03AM there being no further public business to discuss, Commissioner Englund moved to adjourn until noon and was seconded by Commissioner Weed and upon roll-call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by:
R. Bouchard, Assistant County Administrator

Reviewed and submitted by:
R. Englund, Clerk