

MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, September 16, 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

Pin #: 6031233

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

Staff: County Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, Sheriff Rivera and Superintendent Iosue

Guests: Terry Clark, County of Cheshire, Treasurer

At 8:34AM Commissioner Weed opened the meeting and a roll-call of the Commissioners attending the meeting was conducted by County Administrator Coates. Commissioners Weed, Wozmak and Englund 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 Wozmak 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, II 1 (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, II 1 (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.

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- Provides a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are
- problems with access; and
- 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.

At 9:35AM the Chair recognized Sheriff Rivera for his request to consider paying stipends to the Dispatchers and Bailiffs.

Commissioner Wozmak spoke to the purpose of the stipend money that was provided to the County to pay certain staff that worked in settings with individuals that pose a high risk of contracting COVID -19. Further these were funds provided to the County by the State to pay to the impacted positions and have since stopped. These were not County tax payer funds. Wozmak mentioned that from the beginning he has always had an issue with the stipends as he knew they would have to end even when COVID-19 had not. Although the Dispatchers and Bailiff’s continue to work through this pandemic (as well as many other County staff), these positions are not as high risk. Commissioner Weed supported Wozmak’s comments.

Rivera indicated that his argument is that other agencies provided the stipend not due to the risk but because they felt that these individuals had to be there through this and could not work from home. Rivera feels that some recognition should be made.

Weed indicated that the December 17, 2020 is a very critical turning point as we do not financially know where we will be. December 17, 2020 is when the Towns and City must pay their county tax bill and if the Cheshire County municipalities have issues with tax collection then we could have financial

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struggles if they are not able to pay the County tax bill. The Commissioners have put plans in place in order to insulate financial strains in the event tax payments are late which included freezing certain expenses that could be held off. Weed feels the board should wait until Dec 17th before anything is considered for this request. Weed asked if other counties have provided the stipends. Coates has an email out to his counterparts and will follow up on his county administrator call this afternoon. Commissioner Englund agreed that this request should be on hold until after December 17th.

After much discussion, the decision will be tabled until further research and additional information is available.

Weed then recognized Superintendent Iosue. He informed the Commissioners that there has been a slight increase in census that he believes may be impacted by the courts starting to open again. The Federal census is up slightly as well. Iosue and Federal Liaison Officer McLaughlin recently reached out to Vermont and New Hampshire to make sure they are keeping Cheshire County in mind. Iosue indicated that he and McLaughlin will be visiting both soon in person so that Iosue is able to have a formal introduction.

Iosue then informed the Commissioners that Captain Morey will be retiring at the end of the month with the last day being September 30th. There will be a low key event with social distancing at 2:30 at the Department of Corrections to celebrate his retirement. The Commissioners are invited to attend.

Iosue indicated that last week there was a minor incident with the geothermal system with the Multistack system shutting down. This had to be manually overridden which fixed the problem. Iosue just wants to keep it on everyone's radar that something will need to be done with the system in the near future.

Wozmak asked about the multiple experts that have suggested solutions that never seem to fix the system. Wozmak wondered if shutting down the system permanently and go to just using propane would be a better alternative. Weed suggested reaching out to Merrimack to see how their geothermal system has been working.

Coates will reach out to Merrimack but also indicated that he will be coming back to the Commissioners in a few weeks with more information specific to our system so suggests waiting with any considerations to permanently shut the system until that time.

Englund asked about the MAT program and if they are having any issues getting inmates connected to ongoing programs when they are discharged.

Iosue indicated there is a bit of an uptick with inmates coming in on MAT and thinks perhaps it might be being offered a bit too liberally.

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As for working to get released inmates connected with programs, this has been a bit more challenging to ensure continuity as they don't always have much lead time for knowing when an inmate will be released in order to get things in place.

Commissioner Weed then recognized Maplewood Facilities Director Harrison to discuss Master Agenda Item #798: Elevator Failure/Hydraulic Jack Replacement at Maplewood Nursing Home. On September 6th the elevator failed. The failure is due to a hole or crack in the piston that is allowing oil to leak out. The only way to repair the jack shaft is to remove it from the hole. It is about a six week lead time for parts and a one month time frame to repair. The cost for the part and labor is \$83,000. The work will be done by our elevator service provider, Stanley Elevator. There is an additional cost for waste removal that we are currently waiting for a quote. The additional cost could be as low as \$5,000 to as high as \$20,000. Overall, the potential cost is upwards to \$103,000.

Commissioner Weed asked when it was last inspected. Harrison said annually last December but as part of the inspection, they would not have looked in the shaft.

Administrator Coates and Finance Director Trombly will work to identify contingency funds and other unused budgeted funds to offset the cost of this unforeseen expense. They will report back with the financial offsets at a future meeting.

Harrison was then recognized to update the Commissioners on Master Agenda Item #799: Control System Work external buildings of Maplewood Nursing Home. Harrison reminded the Commissioners that the recent Proshare fund amendment provided funding to transition the old remaining Honeywell controls for the external buildings on the Maplewood campus. Currently the Nursing Home and ALF have been converted and this will get the remaining buildings tied in as well. The new system allows Harrison to log in from home where as the old system required being on site.

Wozmak asked if the dial-in is protected with proper firewalls. Harrison indicated that IT Director Hummel was involved with the connection to make sure everything is secure.

The total for the remaining transition is \$65,844.00 to do this work.

Weed asked if there is an energy payback for these controls. Harrison was not certain there is an actual payback but this system will allow EEI to monitor the energy and it has allowed for the temperature of the building to stay more consistent which overall will have a positive impact on our energy usage.

Commissioner Wozmak made a motion to move forward with the work. Weed seconded and upon roll-call vote the motion passed unanimously.

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Weed then recognized the Keene Facilities Director Hart and County Administrator Coates to discuss Master Agenda Item # 800: Condenser Failure Old Courthouse wing of County Hall. Hart informed the Commissioners that the condenser in the Old Court House wing of County Hall has failed. Fortunately as we are at the end of the cooling season the system will be shut down for the remainder of the year. However there will be a request in the 2021 budget as this system will need to be fixed prior to the start of cooling season next year. Hart gave an overview of the situation in that there were holes in the system that caused refrigerant to leak out and damage the compressor. Coates indicated there is no action needed and this was just an update so they are aware.

Weed then recognized Finance Director Trombly for Master Agenda Item #801: GOFERR Funding Update: Trombly mentioned that the third draw down was made on September 15, 2020. The County was awarded \$459,426 and to date has drawn down \$363,721.07. This leaves a balance of \$95,704.93. There will be one final drawdown for eligible expenses for the period of September 1, 2020 to October 15, 2020. It appears there will be sufficient funds to provide a portion of the funding to Diluzio's in order to get portable ventilators and IV pumps for their ambulances.

Englund asked if it appropriate to provide funding to Diluzio's. Coates indicated that Grants Manager Bansley has reviewed and has indicated this is an appropriate use of the funds as they are helping the county. The amount that would go to Diluzio's to purchase ventilators and IV pumps total \$65,480.61. Further as Diluzio's provides services whether directly or as a backup to all of the County towns and City the equipment purchased in order to aid in the COVID-19 pandemic will benefit the entire County.

Commissioner Wozmak made a motion to move forward with funding to Diluzio's to purchase ventilators and IV pumps subject to approval from GOFERR for funding. Englund seconded and upon roll-call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Trombly was then recognized for Master Agenda #802 – Health Plan Administration Determination. Trombly explained that she was presented with a request from HPI to pay claims for treatment for autism therapy. Currently our plan does not cover this treatment and a member has made an appeal asking for this to be covered. Trombly reached out to HPI to get input and was informed this was a coverage that can go either way with plans but has confirmed with our stop loss carrier that if we decided to provide coverage that it would not impact the premium for our stop loss coverage.

Commissioner Wozmak made a motion to approve the payment for the autism services for this request and to evaluate the underlying plan coverage for this going forward and to come back with further information for discussion to determine if a permanent plan change will be made. Englund seconded and upon roll-call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Trombly was then recognized for Master Agenda #803: Tax Apportionment and Equalization Information. Trombly informed the Commissioners that the County recently received the DRA certified

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Tax Apportionment for 2020. An analysis was provided in comparison to 2019 by town/city to show the increases or decreases that each will receive. Although the overall County taxes only went up \$394,153 the formula for apportioning the county taxes, which is based on the property valuation, is what determines how the taxes are allocated. Trombly will be creating the invoices for the Towns soon and will let Treasurer Clark know when they are ready to be signed.

Coates was then recognized for the Weekly Operations report.

Coates mentioned that the Keene campus will continue to be locked down until November 15, 2020 and that the prescreening for staff and visitor will likely continue at least until the end of the year.

Coates then brought up the NHAC dues structure. Weed mentioned there has been a decision made by the dues committee to present one of the many proposals reviewed to the Commissioners Council to vote on. There were a few that voted against but the majority agreed on the plan that would have a flat fee assessed to all 10 counties for the value of 50% of the dues with the remaining 50% being allocated based on assessed valuation. If adopted, the impact on Cheshire County is an annual increase of approximately \$350.

There is still great concern as Rockingham has not paid their 2020 dues and two of the three Commissioners have stated that if their proposal is not addressed and responded to that they will not pay their 2020 dues. There is concern with how Rockingham is responding to the process with many feeling that their approach is holding the NHAC hostage. This vote on the new dues structure is not likely until January 2021.

Coates then wanted to make sure the Commissioners were aware that one of Maplewood Nursing Home's LNA's was recognized as one of the 12 state wide Health Care Hero's. Laurie Driscoll who has been with Cheshire County Maplewood for nearly 8 years was honored for taking the lead in uplifting the spirit of residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commissioners congratulated Laurie on this honorable recognition.

Coates informed the Commissioner that Consolidated Communications has partnered with the towns of Dublin, Harrisville, Rindge, Walpole and Westmoreland to expand and enhance broadband access to every home and business in each town. This is a significant upgrade to the 8,000 resident of these towns.

Old Business: Commissioner Wozmak brought up the Restorative Justice opening and the resumes that were passed along from the County Attorney. Wozmak asked whether the Commissioners should at least pass along their recommendation(s) for resumes they feel should be considered. Weed had not had a chance to read the resumes but did read the job description and was disappointed that the Job Description did not include a lot of responsibilities towards restorative justice other than in title. The

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Commissioners were supportive to pass along their recommendations however it appears that this is likely too late as interviews were already in progress.

New Business: None

Commissioner Weed moved to accept the Consent agenda for the Weekly Manifest and the Minutes from the week of September 09, 2020, as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wozmak and upon roll-call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Weed wanted to point out that he was pleased to see Grafton County has supported the cost shifting discussion by writing their own letter to the editor.

At 11:18 there being no further public business to discuss, Commissioner Weed moved to adjourn and was seconded by Commissioner Wozmak. Upon roll-call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by:

S. Trombly, Director of Finance

Reviewed and submitted by:

R. Englund, Clerk