

**MINUTES**  
**Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting**  
**Wednesday, March 17, 2021**  
**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: Jack Wozmak, Robert Englund, and Terry Clark

**Staff:** County Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, Maplewood Nursing Home Administrator Kindopp, IT Director Hummel, and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard.

**Guest(s):**

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

**Commissioner Wozmak 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, 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 is 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.

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

Coates then outlined the rules of the meeting.

1. The 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 issues 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 to the meeting.
7. This meeting is utilizing a Zoom Platform so listeners can join us via audio or audio/visual.

At 8:33 AM, the Chair opened the meeting and recognized IT Director Hummel to discuss Master Agenda Item #739: IT Security Update. Hummel said that he is aware that the recent Microsoft Exchange Server hack had hit the town of Swanzey, and they have lost all email access.

Coates said that he was aware of other counties and towns that were still trying to recover from the attacks. Hummel explained that the County was not affected as the County email server is housed internally and is not an Exchange Server. He went on to say that there has been a very significant increase in junk email hack attempts.

The Commissioners asked a few questions and thanked Hummel for his report.

Coates then said that Master Agenda Item #866: System of Care (Connected Families NH) Semi-Annual Report had been rescheduled for a later date but that the Maplewood semi-annual report would be heard this morning as scheduled.

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Administrator Coates was then recognized for the Weekly Operations Report:

Commissioner Wozmak discussed the written Nursing Home report submitted and noted that only two residents and four employees have tested positive for COVID-19 in the last year. A discussion of the mitigating factors that have been put in place to prevent infections was covered. The efforts of the staff and management were noted and applauded for their diligence in preventing mass infections.

Coates said that the Executive Committee presentation of the County Energy plan had been well received, and it was approved to be recommended for passage to the Delegation meeting.

Coates noted that Keene Housing has temporarily removed its request for CDBG funding for this round and intends to be returning with a request for the July funding round. He said that Keene Housing withdrew the application due to the recent fire at 12 Castle Street that was the site to be funded. It was determined that the extensive damage needs to be fully understood before resubmitting the grant application.

Coates then discussed a meeting with an individual who runs a refugee placement and support program in NH. He said that the group is looking to begin in the Keene area and wanted to inform the County of their intentions and seek support. It was discussed that the labor market in the County is very low, and the additional increase in the labor force could be very beneficial.

Coates remarked that the Public Defender's office reached out to him to request assistance in obtaining needed COVID shots for their staff. Coates provided some information and will work with the office to help them get the shots as soon-as-practicable as they are front-line workers exposed to the virus daily.

Coates then said the Nation Grange Mutual (NGM) insurance company that is adjunct to the County buildings in Keene had donated a significant amount of office furniture and other items to the County. He stated that he learned that three satellite offices for NGM are being closed in a conversation with a staff member, and much of the furniture from those offices are being relocated to the Keene main office. The Commissioners noted the gifts and remarked that the County is very grateful for the donations and praised the NGM's willingness to help the local communities and municipalities.

Coates related that the System of Care and the Cooperative Extension departments have completed their respective moves and are starting to settle into their new spaces. The moves went smoothly and were without issue.

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Coates then asked Bouchard to provide an update on the website and specifically the addition of a new employee benefits program that will allow Dell computers to purchase at a substantial discount from the list.

Bouchard said that the program would roll out when the new website is ready to be turned up in the coming weeks.

Commissioner Wozmak inquired about the status of the Connected Families and the Integrated Delivery Network (IDN). Coates said that the grant funding for the IDN was closing out and that the Connected Families program continues to move forward and is doing well.

Coates discussed both programs' history, covered the IDN local joint projects that may not continue, and said they would go away after the available grant funds end unless the programs are self-sustaining. An extended discussion regarding the Connected Families and IDN funding and future funding concerns plaguing several programs continued.

Coates then discussed a letter about hiring an attorney to investigate how to use the anticipated \$14M targeted for the County from the American Recovery Act funding. He said that the first tranche of funding would be released within 60-90 days, when approximately \$7M will be received.

He said that the ability to audit these programs was essential to ensure that grant guidelines are met; however, he noted that some federal and state auditors' expectations seemed unrealistic and needed to be reviewed and further discussed.

Master Agenda Item #867: Maplewood Nursing Home Semi-Annual Report was then taken up for discussion and, Kindopp was recognized. She outlined the issues in the report that follows and answered questions from the Commissioners.

*Maplewood Overview to County Commissioner's - Covering July-Dec FY 2020*

*Regulatory Requirements:*

*Requirements continued to fluctuate relative to the pandemic; increases in new mandatory reporting requirements with hefty fines associated if any are missed continue to be added.*

*QAPI and PIP's:*

*QAPI means Quality Assurance/Process Improvement (formerly known as CQI or Continuous Quality Improvement). PIP means Performance Improvement Practice and is intended that all staff at all levels of the organization be part of performance improvement and participate in PIP*

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*teams. Due to infection prevention measures, reductions in meetings and other non-essential tasks on resident floors remained on hold during this reporting period.*

*Corporate Compliance:*

*Review of compliance activities; Commissioner Englund participates in quarterly CQI/QAPI meetings – now done via phone as non-essential personnel should not come to MNH. Next review with Commissioners due October 2021.*

*Facility Assessment:*

*The Facility Assessment is an ongoing working binder that is updated as needed and reviewed/revised annually; next review due November 2021. Chairman of the Board of Commissioners reviews and cosigns this assessment with me.*

*Accomplishments:* (ongoing worldwide pandemic since March 2020)

- *The first half of the renovation was completed; the move started December 7<sup>th</sup>. Now all residents are in new or renovated areas. Most rooms have two residents per room with their own European shower/toilet/sink. Most rooms are single with their own Euro BR. This move was slower; it focused on infection prevention due to high COVID community rates (no vaccines yet).*
- *Held an LNA class; permitted because it was our staff, so we were tested as required.*
- *We managed a total of 4 positive COVID-19 staff cases and 2 positive resident cases. None of these resulted in any outbreaks; able to isolate each case each time.*
- *Ongoing COVID-19 testing for staff and residents happened per rules – could be up to twice per week testing based on county positivity rates or any positive tests.*
- *Daily reports seven days/week to Dr. Sherman, weekly reports to the state through Juvare, and mandatory daily reports to the Feds through NHSN and have huge fines at risk if we ever miss any. NHSN continues to add new required elements; one is now having to add any of the rapid COVID tests within 24 hours of administration.*
- *We worked with DHMC and TCMC to expand and secure the Telehealth options for residents.*
- *Ongoing work to keep up with ever-changing rules, updated/created policies accordingly.*
- *Staff stipend ended in August; was reinstated for the last few weeks of the year.*
- *Presented an update of LTC challenges to Congresswoman Kuster in November.*
- *Working with DHs, we focused on weekly staff appreciation moments.*
- *Held a parade where we brought residents outside along walkways or on the balconies appropriately spaced, and families and friends drove their decorated vehicles around us.*
- *Began limited indoor visitation; even more staff intense and time-consuming than the outdoor or window visits; all ongoing unless we have a positive case or >10% positive rate.*

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- *Ongoing weekly family letters; also have to update all residents/proxies by 5:00 pm the next day with any new positive COVID-19 results in residents or staff, or 3 or more staff or residents within 72 hours with significant respiratory illness.*
- *Got the replacement radiological kit from the state to support our contract with Rockingham County Nursing Home (if an evacuation of RCNH due to nuclear power plant)*
- *Purchased the Satellite phone, tested it, and conducted a disaster drill to introduce the DH's to this new emergency device now available to us.*
- *We had to get testing contracts for COVID testing instead of the state helping us. CMS required we be able to receive PCR COVID test results within 48 hours; contracted with 2 different labs to ensure we could meet rules/requirements*
- *New rapid tests deployed – got staff trained and now can augment testing, though CMS does not permit these to be used under certain circumstances.*
- *Two vaccines nearing emergency authorization; many meetings to learn/plan for distribution*
- *Glendale (food service contract) did a mock resident DR survey for us in the new space; we need to address the many physical space changes and different operations now.*
- *Upgraded all air filters to MERV 13 (vs. 8) due to pandemic (the system can handle 13 or 14's)*
- *We are still struggling to get both the N-95 masks and medical clearance before our fit-test.*
- *ALF had their annual life safety survey – no findings.*
- *QIP (quality incentive payments) program launched; Money can be earned for low av. Covid numbers in facility plus low deaths.*

Staff Turnover

- *40 staff hired for MNH second half of 2020*
- *39 staff left from MNH second half of 2020 (25 of which were within their first year)*
- *All of the involuntary terminations continue to be due to time and attendance issues.*
- *Did have voluntary departures due to moving out of the area, summer job only, going to beauty school, and at least three left for the armed services. Some staff didn't feel health care was the correct fit, and one was not happy working in our environment. There was an uptick in people not returning after a medical leave. Through 2020, a growing trend noted were staff who were within just a few days or weeks, calling and quitting indicating the job was too much or not suitable for them. Resignations of some staff employed over one year indicated that it was due to the pandemic, such as having an immunocompromised family member or a personal medical reason/concern. We lost some staff to higher-paying positions at other health care facilities. 2 major retirements in Env Svs leaving laundry sup and lead floor maintenance positions open (in addition to about 5 other ES positions still open)*

Grievances/concerns

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- *There were no grievances for the Administrator's level review during this time period.*
- *There were no suggestions to review during this time period.*
- *One of the two original elevators broke down; the County found the funds for repair, but the covid viral rates at the time were escalating, and it became unsafe to repair at this time.*
- *Ongoing shortage in our nurses and LNA's: traveling nurses and LNA's help us to achieve minimum staffing levels. Increased difficulty in finding entry-level staff for dietary, housekeeping, and laundry. During this time period, due to insufficient staff in housekeeping, DH's have had to help with high touch surface disinfecting on the ground and 1<sup>st</sup>, while LNA's and nurses on the resident units. We needed to boost laundry hours by placing therapists or social workers in the laundry for some hours/week when staffing could not manage the facility's production needs. Few if any local temps are available.*

Admissions/discharges

- *Admission/discharges during these six months:*
- *Eight admissions (due in part to keeping a COVID wing on the ready, low staff levels)*
- *0 Discharges (home or lesser care level facility)*
- *15 Deaths (none due to COVID)*
- *Ongoing difficulties with staffing levels (LNA, nurses, environmental services mainly); CMS expected facilities to be able to set up COVID-19 wings, so we decreased by 5-6 beds to allow a wing that could be stood up quickly; have zip walls and necessary items to deploy.*

Medicaid

- *Rate during Q3+4 FY2020= \$186.62*

Revenue/Census goals (revenues are rounded off – see finance statements for actual figures)

- *2020 set a goal of 125 census due to construction/renovation. Due to COVID-19, have reduced census to max 119-120 max; however, due to further staffing challenges, not being able to 'share staff' (per diem staff who work in other health care settings are not permitted to work at two places due to cross-contamination risks) have had to adjust and halt admissions. Census for this time frame = 113 average*
- *2020 overall part A goal set at six residents; actual period ending = 4*
- *part A gross revenue goal set for \$395K; actual = over \$335K*
- *Medicaid revenues set \$2.8M for 6-month reporting; actual = \$2.9M*
- *Private pay goal set at \$739K for 6-month reporting; actual = \$971K*
- *Atypical pay goal set \$847K for 6 month reporting; actual = \$614K*

Construction

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- *Renovation of half of the old building continued with fire-walls erected and negative pressures maintained to ensure no air from construction entered occupied spaces. Almost no corrections of warrantee items were permitted, with some life safety exceptions. MNH staff had to perform most modifications, and many have been left until restrictions are lessened to get construction crews into any occupied spaces. The kitchen reno was completed, and most of the laundry area as well. Our staff main entrance has been off-line the last quarter of the year and will be completed within the first quarter of 2021.*
- *Bi-weekly updates were sent out to all staff, frequent family updates about construction in the weekly family letters*

Meetings Review

- *QAPI meetings; mandatory quarterlies completed including Corporate Compliance, additional monthly meetings continue for Infection Control and CQI*
- *Ongoing meetings: Initiated weekly DH meetings due to pandemic and frequency with directives/policies/rules change. Weekly Medicare meetings, Resident care plan meetings have all moved to as large a room as we can offer to ensure the 6-foot spacing*
- *Medical Staff meetings every 2 – 3 months completed*
- *KK's meetings primarily have changed to Zoom platforms; no travel permitted.*
- *Weekly NHAC NHA meetings; participated in some monthly NHAC Executive meetings*
- *Only one OLTCO meeting was held this time period*
- *Monthly Monadnock Regional Healthcare Workforce Group about the ongoing worker shortage*
- *Weekly meetings with DHHS, Public Health, Licensing and Certification*
- *Weekly ECHO cohorts with the Medical Director, DON, Admin to earn some money*
- *Completed the Corporate Compliance annual training with the Commissioners*
- *Met with DHHS due to sudden changes in NEMT – needed new transport contracts, but new companies were not working with us; many state-wide c/o's over res transport.*

The Commissioners asked questions of Kindopp, including the number and types of transports to and from the nursing home and Cheshire Medical Center by local ambulance services. It was discussed that the number of emergency trips is low, but the non-emergency trips run about 30 per week.

Coates then discussed the possible outsourcing of cleaning and laundry services for the nursing home in response to the labor shortages in the area. A lengthy conversation about the expense and the potential use of outside labor to supplement the in-house staff to supplement infection control efforts.

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Old Business: None

New Business: None

**Consent Agenda: Minutes of 03/10/2021 and Manifests for the week. Commissioner Clark moved the consent agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. The motion passed with unanimous consent upon roll call vote.**

General Discussion: None

**At 11:52 AM, there being no further public business to conduct, Commissioner Wozmak moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

Minutes recorded by:  
Assistant County Administrator Bouchard

Reviewed and submitted by:  
T. Clark, Clerk