

MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, September 22, 2021
County Hall
12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431

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, Superintendent Iosue, Maplewood Facilities Director Harrison, Grants Manager Bansley, and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard.

Guest(s): Mia Summerson, Keene Sentinel. Ellen Avery, Exec Dir for CTCV, Renee Sangermano, Development Assistant, Chuck Weed, a volunteer driver for CTCV, Mayor George Hansel, MEDC

At 8:30 AM, Commissioner Wozmak opened the meeting, and Administrator Coates conducted a roll-call with the Commissioners, and Wozmak, Englund, and Clark responding as "present."

At 8:32 AM, the Commissioners opened the floor for public comment and Department Head updates. No public comment.

Superintendent Iosue provided an update on COVID-19 cases at the Department of Corrections. He said there had been ten total cases at the facility since the pandemic, with the most recent positive case reported on Tuesday (9/21). He stated that periodic and random testing of inmates continues, and the second round of staff testing was completed yesterday with no reported infections on staff. A brief discussion ensued about the location of cases at the facility and potential relation to the presence or introduction of any federal inmates. Discussion included questions about procedures for new inmates. Iosue explained that new inmates are tested, and if not positive, are introduced into the general population after an initial 14-day quarantine.

At 8:47 AM, Coates addressed Master Agenda Item #916: Inquiry from Community Volunteer Transportation Company (CVTC) on the County Outside Agency funding program and recognized CVTC Executive Director Ellen Avery.

Avery introduced CVTC staff member Renee Sangermano and volunteer driver Chuck Weed. John MacLean, former Keene city manager who has joined the CVTC board of directors, joined the presentation at 8:52.

Avery said that she wanted to thank Coates and the Commissioners for the opportunity to tell them about CVTC and its services, along with exploring possible funding opportunities through the County.

She then provided an overview of CVTC's mission, objectives, staffing, budget, and funding, saying that CVTC currently operates with a staff of two FTEs (three employees), including herself and two transportation coordinators and part-time staffer Sangermano.

Avery detailed the organization's ties to Cheshire County, with 73 percent of rides provided in Cheshire County and 37 of 53 volunteer drivers living in Cheshire County.

Weed then told commissioners of his driving schedule and related a personal anecdote of an elderly customer of CVTC. He was able to help receive needed services, emphasizing the program's value.

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Commissioner Wozmak asked about services for customers who used wheelchairs. Avery said that CVTC does not own a wheelchair-capable vehicle but sub-contracts with other agencies in the area that have the proper equipment to provide the service.

In response to a funding question from the Commissioners, Avery said that CVTC received approximately \$16,000 in funding last year from towns. Not all towns are contributing, but they continue to ask for financial support, especially in towns where their services are provided.

Avery noted that CVTC operates on a no-fee basis but does accept individual donations if offered from customers amounting to about \$7,500 last FY.

McLean stressed the program's value in helping an underserved population in the County and its financial benefits of a small budget and being "a good deal" for the County. Commissioner Womack asked Avery if she could provide, for planning purposes, a record of a customer who used a wheelchair ride in the last twelve months.

At 9:15 AM, Coates addressed Master Agenda Item #917: The Status of the Monadnock Economic Development Corporation (MEDC).

Coates recognized City of Keene Mayor George Hansel, noting the city's work in the recovery of MEDC and preparation for relaunching the Corporation as a vital factor in the County.

Hansel provided Commissioners with a comprehensive overview of MEDC history, its current status, and future goals. Hansel said Keene conducted a strategic overview over the past year, interviewing stakeholders locally and statewide, along with other regional development corporations, and created an advisory board that was updated during this research.

Their conclusions drawn from the review validated the direction on which MEDC now needs to focus.

Historically, MEDC has helped create over 70 years of economic development in the County, with over 80 organizations (profit, non-profit, municipal) and 3,000 employees impacted by MEDC in the Monadnock region, over one million square feet of new construction, and over \$100 million in grants.

MEDC has historically helped small businesses through gap loans to fill funding needs these businesses cannot meet via banks. MEDC currently has two revolving loan funds totaling approximately \$2 million, with 50% of that total presently allocated.

Hansel said that many MEDC projects have historically been centered in Keene, but that is because most projects are naturally generated from the larger metro area. He is sensitive to that concern in the County's outlying areas.

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Hansel said that, historically, MEDC has focused on larger, "brick and mortar" construction projects, but this needs to change. The Corporation also needs to focus on small business projects in the future.

MEDC will need two areas of focus: a) small business lending, including support for projects to get them to a bankable state and connect these projects to potential funders, and b) continued focus on larger brick and mortar type projects that still need to happen. To accomplish this, MEDC has appointed a Board of Directors, added two new staff members, and Citizen Committees to help get business projects to fundable status, from one-person shops to more significant organizational buildings.

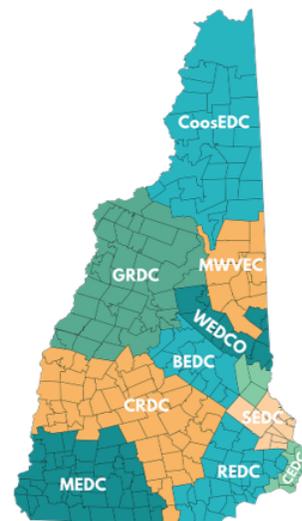
The Commissioners expressed positive reactions to Hansel's data and MEDC's overall recovery. Hansel added that now, more than ever, we (The City of Keene and the County) have to work together to regionalize these projects. Commissioner Womack addressed the potential for MEDC to assist with education and hiring of medical workers in the region and the value of that support, and Coates discussed the potential for MEDC to address the crisis status of workforce issues in the region.

Coates concluded by saying he would meet further with Hansel about MEDC and report back to the Commissioners.

Selected Slides From Presentation:

What is MEDC?

- 1 of 10 Region Development Corporations (EDCs) in the state
- MEDC represents 70 years of organized economic development activities in the Monadnock region
 - 1951: Keene Regional Industrial Foundation
 - 1985: Keene Industrial Development Corp
 - 1995: Monadnock Economic Development Corp
- MEDC has helped organizations and businesses increase in size, scope and impact
- We provide a helping hand—sometimes large, sometimes small—that otherwise would not be there
- MEDC doesn't play in the safe zone—that's why we exist.



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Economic Impacts



- 80+ organizations supported
- For-profit, non-profit, and municipal
- Clients represent over 3,000 employees in the Monadnock region (12% of the labor force)



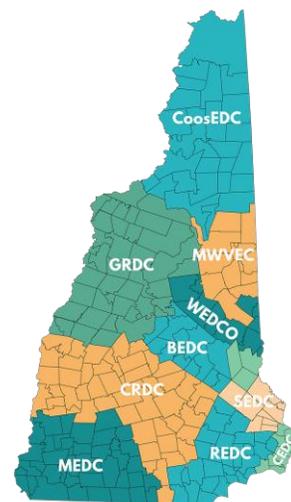
- Involved in the creation of nearly 1M square feet of new construction.
- Over \$100M of grant and tax credits leveraged
- City of Keene properties total about 10% of property tax payments



- Over \$13M in gap financing for start up and expansion efforts
- 2 revolving loan funds totaling \$2M (about 50% deployed)

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MEDC Organization

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



STAFF



Executive Director



Program Manager

CITIZEN COMMITTEES



Project Development Committee



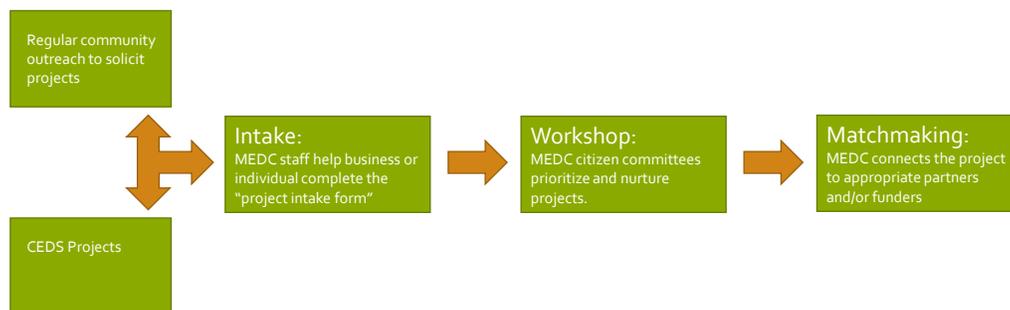
Business Growth and Investment (BGI) Committee

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MEDC Development Process

from idea to bank-able project



2022 Focus Areas

- Regional Workforce Development
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- Ecovation Hub, EDA Grant opportunities
- Development of regional partnerships

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At 9:50 AM, the Commissioners addressed Master Agenda Item #918: State of NH Department of Revenue Administration 2021 County Apportionment.

Trombly reviewed the document received from the State Department of Revenue, and it shows how the County taxes to be raised are allocated to the towns. It does not affect the amount of taxes, only the allocation. She said the document shows the increase or decrease in each town's property valuation and that the information will be sent to the towns shortly.

A discussion on how these complicated system works was had. It was agreed that another training session for new town Select Board members might be scheduled if there is enough interest as many of the towns think that it is the County that sets the tax rates when it is the State.

Trombly presented the following document received from the State DRA.

2021 CHESHIRE COUNTY	% Proportion to County Tax*	Apportionment of County Budget
ALSTEAD	2.2528%	\$ 646,975
CHESTERFIELD	7.2171%	\$ 2,072,623
DUBLIN	3.1639%	\$ 908,618
FITZWILLIAM	4.1864%	\$ 1,202,279
GILSUM	0.8899%	\$ 255,561
HARRISVILLE	2.8386%	\$ 815,195
HINSDALE	4.6345%	\$ 1,330,959
JAFFREY	6.7639%	\$ 1,942,478
KEENE	25.1664%	\$ 7,227,370
MARLBOROUGH	2.1445%	\$ 615,865
MARLOW	0.8863%	\$ 254,539
NELSON	1.6326%	\$ 468,843
RICHMOND	1.4394%	\$ 413,385
RINDGE	8.8420%	\$ 2,539,279
ROXBURY	0.3198%	\$ 91,846
STODDARD	3.6927%	\$ 1,060,489
SULLIVAN	0.7494%	\$ 215,207
SURRY	1.1347%	\$ 325,858
SWANZEY	7.9208%	\$ 2,274,728

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TROY	1.8952%	\$	544,259
WALPOLE	5.9666%	\$	1,713,518
WESTMORELAND	2.2588%	\$	648,688
WINCHESTER	4.0037%	\$	1,149,809
* Rounded for display. Actual apportionment based on detailed figures.			
TOTALS	100.0000%	\$	28,718,371

Coates was then recognized for the Weekly Operations Report.

Coates said that the Keene campus has been running at Level 1 COVID response, but two new positives were reported in the building this week. Coates said he is moving the building to level 2 (masks on continually) this week based on those cases. According to Cheshire Medical Center, the local COVID surge peak is expected in late October, but their positives were down 2.9% last week, with most new positives are unvaccinated patients.

Coates thanked Superintendent Iosue and Captain Blood at the Department of Corrections for their help getting some of the downtown campus staff tested.

Coates said that a tour of the Registry of Deeds will be at 8:00 AM next Wednesday and with the Commissioners meeting beginning immediately following the tour.

Coates said that the County ARPA grants program funded at \$1M by the Commissioners and Delegation for non-profits and small business grants has thus far received twenty-eight applications, with most of the applications from smaller non-profits.

He then said that only five towns thus far have submitted the required paperwork to receive their distribution of ARPA allocated municipal funding. A reminder will be sent to accelerate the submissions.

The Commissioners thanked the CVTV staff for their presentation.

Coates responded to a question from Commissioner Englund concerning Will Pearson, and he said that Pearson has moved to a per diem status and is anticipating his starting his new job soon. He noted that Davis Bernstein has taken on Pearson's role and will continue the outreach program and focus on understanding the administrative and operational aspects of the ARPA program for the County and towns.

Coates then said that on November 1, the Hundred Nights bus would return to the Latchis parking lot for the winter season.

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Coates informed the Commissioners that the US Treasury announced that an additional \$128 million would be made available for New Hampshire capital projects. This program will be closely followed to ascertain which county projects may qualify for funding, if any.

Coates discussed that Radically Rural is in the building today and tomorrow for three events. This is the third year the County has hosted the event in the building. Coates thanked Bouchard for getting additional internet bandwidth installed for the event in a few days.

Coates then said that Union negotiations begin next week and that he will report to Commissioners next week on the status of those negotiations.

Old Business: Commissioner Wozmak asked about the Sheriff's radio infrastructure study. The Sheriff said that he thought the final report would be received in about a month, but he hoped to get it sooner.

New Business: None

Consent Agenda: Minutes of 09/15/2021 and Manifests for the week. Commissioner Englund moved the consent agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Clark. The motion passed with unanimous consent upon roll call vote.

General Discussion: None

At 10:15 AM, Commissioner Englund moved to enter a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(d) Consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community.

Commissioner Clark seconded the motion, and upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

As a result of deliberations in a non-public session, a unanimous vote was taken to hire a per-diem consultant to expedite the creation of the County of Cheshire Enterprise project at the rate of \$36.00 per hour based on education, training, and direct operational experience.

At 10:32 AM, Commissioner Wozmak excused himself from the meeting due to a possible conflict of interest for the second item under consideration.

The Administrator recommended a contract with a business consulting firm to expedite the creation and implementation of a County Enterprise project. Following discussions, Commissioner Englund presented a motion to engage the services of a business consulting firm to advise, consultant and supply staff, and to create an enterprise business plan for the County of

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Cheshire Enterprise project based on their many years of relevant and current experience in starting and operating similar successful and profitable organizations. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion, and upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously 2-0.

At 10:57 AM, Commissioner Wozmak rejoined the meeting.

As a result of deliberations in a non-public session, the Commissioners moved to authorize the County Administrator to sign a performance contract with a real estate broker to assist in reviewing and transacting an acquisition or sale of real property.

At 10:47 AM, the Commissioners voted unanimously to return to the public session.

At 10:49 AM, there being no further public business to conduct, Commissioner Clark moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by:
J. Minahan, Transcriptionist

Reviewed and edited by:
R. Bouchard, Assistant County Administrator

Reviewed and submitted by:
Terry Clark, Clerk