

STRAFFORD COUNTY DELEGATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF FRIDAY, AUGUST 6, 2021

1. Call Meeting to Order: Chairman Schmidt called the Public Meeting of the Strafford County Delegation's Executive Committee to order at 9:03 a.m. in Cafeteria Conference Room, Lower Level of the Justice and Administration Building and thanked everyone for coming.
2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag: Chairman Schmidt asked Director Haskins-Belanger to lead the Executive Committee in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.
3. Moment of Silence: The pledge was followed by a moment of silence.
4. Read Notice of Meeting: Clerk Frost read the Notice of the Public Meeting.
5. Roll Call: Clerk Frost called the roll, which showed the following members present:

PRESENT: Fargo, Fontneau, Frost, Grassie, Harrington, Horrigan, Newton, Pitre, Salloway, Sandler, Schmidt, Wall, and Wuelper (13 of 15)

EXCUSED: Ankarberg, and Oxaal

Also, present were: Commissioners Maglaras, Watson, and Rollo, County Administrator Ray Bower, County Attorney Tom Velardi, Register of Deeds Cathy Berube, Sheriff Mark Brave, Director of Resident Services and Covid-19 Coordinator Brianna Haskins-Belanger, and Administrative Assistant/Deputy Treasurer Janet Hilber.

6. Approve Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting of May 21, 2021: Representative Wall motioned to approve the minutes of the May 21, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting, as written. The motion was seconded by Representative Pitre and approved unanimously via voice vote as follows:

YEAS: Fargo, Fontneau, Frost, Grassie, Harrington, Horrigan, Newton, Pitre, Salloway, Sandler, Schmidt, Wall, Wuelper (13 of 13)

NAYS: None

7. Update on COVID-19: Chairman Schmidt invited Director of Resident Services and Covid-19 Coordinator Brianna Haskins-Belanger to provide a brief update on the current status of the County with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic. Director Haskins-Belanger reported that there are currently no positive cases of Covid-19 and that Riverside Rest Home (RRH) and the House of Corrections (HOC) are at the tail end of surveillance testing after one fully vaccinated individual with mild symptoms tested positive last month. The mask implementation is credited with preventing any spread of the virus to other individuals, including household members. Ninety-two percent (92%) of RRH residents and over 100 courthouse employees have been fully vaccinated. Due to the ebb and flow of employees and admissions, the vaccination percentages fluctuate between 79% to 80% of RRH employees, 71% to 75% of HOC employees. Testing is performed on all new arrivals along with any symptomatic individuals and a portion of the population. The BinaxNOW cards are being utilized for rapid tests which is a significant savings to the County. Fully vaccinated individuals can now be admitted straight into RRH, relieving quarantine restrictions and allowing Hyder House to be utilized as a hospice house. She noted the State of NH reported the general population of Strafford County has just reached substantial transmission status with a test positivity rate of over 5% and a new case rate of 107.2 per 100,000 of population.

Administrator Bower reported that the County is working at an average of 75% herd immunity, but fluctuates with new hires. Strafford County was the first County to offer vaccines to inmates and he is proud to still be working with the Public Health Network to offer vaccinations to all individuals housed at the HOC and to continue to educate in English and in Spanish. He was pleased to report every inmate but five volunteered for the last round of testing and credited the correctional administration for educating and encouraging the inmates to participate. Director Haskins-Belanger was credited with the relationships she created, the amazing cost savings for Covid testing she negotiated with the University of New Hampshire, which has consistently provided quick results, reducing quarantine times along with the stress individuals feel while awaiting the results and with all she has done to keep the individuals in the County complex safe. He believes transparency is key and will continue to provide Covid-19 updates to the Commissioners weekly and will forward those updates to the Delegation members.

Chairman Schmidt is grateful to Director Haskins-Belanger for her thorough development of this program along with all the shifting and changing necessary which must be constantly reevaluated as the virus continues to mutate.

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8. Update on Possible Funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): Administrator Bower reported that we have received half of the \$25,373,929 slated for Strafford County which must be committed for use by December 31, 2024 and projects must be completed by December 31, 2026. The overriding principals are first, that all proposals will not add to the County Tax dollars after the ARPA funds are spent; second, not to spend any ARPA funds on things funded by other parts of the legislation and/or the possibility of the Infrastructure Plan; and third, create lasting opportunities for after the money is gone, such as installing a solar farm on County property to help provide savings into the future. Some examples of fully fundable ARPA projects which are under consideration are; upgrading the air handling system roof units on the Justice & Administration Building as they are near the end-of-life expectancy and to preserve the health and safety of all tenants; installing air conditioning/heating mini-split units for RRH, which would include new windows to meet current code requirements; and rebuilding much needed staff, by reinstating a weekly stipend to RRH employees. He is expecting to address a budget transfer at the next Executive Committee meeting and to request a meeting of the RRH Subcommittee in September to provide additional updates to include Hyder House. Administrator Bower will continuously update the Executive Committee as the ARPA rules are finalized and projects are scheduled for approval.

Sheriff Brave provided an update on the Infrastructure Plan grants for the County-Wide P25 VHF Simulcast Police/Fire/EMS Communications System upgrade. He is expecting to receive \$750,000 through Representative Chris Pappas' office and the remainder from Senator Jeanne Shaheen's office. Sheriff Brave presented the project to each entity, emphasizing how the benefits would be for the entire county, creating a centralized place for public safety by connecting all the towns and cities. It would provide improved connections and expedited response times, and would also serve as a back-up system to the cities not enrolled in the county dispatch program. He is very grateful the County will receive these grants and making it to the top ten of the two lists out of over 240 projects presented.

Chairman Schmidt asked if there were any further questions or comments; there being none, he moved to the next item on the agenda.

9. Review and Approve Second Quarter 2021 Budget Report: Chairman Schmidt asked if there were any questions regarding the second quarter budget report which was sent via e-mail, as well as USPS, and posted on the County Website. Administrator Bower reported the HOC revenue decrease is directly related to the loss of immigration inmates, although Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has expressed an interest in increasing the rates. The source of revenue from the US Marshal continues to remain strong. RRH admissions are a little less than projected due to the decrease in employees which limits the number of residents admitted safely to receive appropriate care, but is hopeful things are turning around. He is pleased to report on the new Licensed Nursing Assistants (LNA) Training Program instituted at RRH in collaboration with community colleges. There are currently more than 20 enrollees in this hybrid program of classwork and on the job training with volunteer nurses at RRH. The continued encouragement of cost sharing for enhanced education and cooperation from the Board of Nursing has allowed one RRH LNA to become a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) and one LPN will soon be a Registered Nurse (RN).

There was a lengthy discussion on the reasons for the increase in overtime throughout HOC, Jail Industries, and the Sheriff's Office with explanations and constructive ideas to entice more qualified staff at regular wages, to include upgrades to the facilities and utilizing technological improvements. **Representative Newton was recognized and suggested the County review its financial position now that the House of Corrections is going to be paid off after 2023. This could be an ideal time to combine this capital payoff with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to consider capital plan items for the future, like an enhancement or construction of a new nursing home.** * Any possible upgrades or new facilities would require updating and/or extending the six-year Capital Improvements Plan, which has been under consideration by the Commissioners for a while knowing the jail will be paid in full in about two years. This plan will be readdressed with the Executive Committee when the final rules and regulations to the ARPA funds are publicized and those projects are decided appropriately.

Representative Wall motioned to approve the Second Quarter 2021 Budget. The motion was seconded by Representative Salloway and was approved unanimously on a roll call vote, as follows:

YEAS: Fargo, Fontneau, Frost, Grassie, Harrington, Horrigan, Newton, Pitre, Salloway, Sandler, Schmidt, Wall, Wuelper
(13 of 13)

NAYS: None

* Addendum added per the request of Representative Newton at the December 3, 2021 meeting.

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10. Any Other Business Which May Legally Come Before the Committee: After a robust discussion regarding remote access to Delegation meetings, it was decided that the County will include Zoom links for all future meetings, however at this time a quorum of members must attend the physical location. Registrar Berube presented a brief report on the status of the Registry of Deeds, noting the income is up over \$207,000 and the document count is up over 3,300 from the same time last year. She applauded her staff for their efforts through great increases in production and these trying Covid times. There were no further comments or questions.
11. Adjournment: Chairman Schmidt noted that with no further business. There being no further business or questions the meeting was adjourned by the Chairman by unanimous consensus of the Delegation members present without objection at 10:34 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Frost

Sherry Frost, Clerk
Strafford County Executive Committee