

STRAFFORD COUNTY DELEGATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF MEETING OF FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 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: Administrator Bower requested Finance Director Diane Legere's mother who suddenly passed away also be remembered during the moment of silence which followed the Pledge of Allegiance.
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, County Treasurer Pam Arnold, Director of Resident Services and Covid-19 Coordinator Brianna Haskins-Belanger, Superintendent Chris Brackett, EMD Director Skip Christenbury, Motorola Rep. Scott, EMD Assistant Justin Bellen, and Administrative Assistant/Deputy Treasurer Janet Hilber. Present via Zoom were: Rep. Southworth, Rep. Rich, Rep. Kittredge, and EMD IT Specialist Ryan Christenbury <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86363611152?pwd=WmFpMkREZmNvWWZmTkzZam5TVlRzZz09>; Meeting ID: 863 6361 1152; Passcode: 574883; Dial by your location; +1 929 205 6099 US (New York).

6. Approve Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting of August 6, 2021: Rep. Newton requested the discussion regarding the future of Riverside Rest Home (RRH) be better detailed in the August 6, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes. Administrator Bower remembers the conversation and will draft a letter for Rep. Newton's review to be made an addendum to the minutes of the August 6, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting which were deferred until the next Executive Committee Meeting.
7. Update on COVID-19: Chairman Schmidt invited Director of Resident Services and Covid-19 Coordinator Brianna Haskins-Belanger to provide an update on the current status of the County with regards to the Covid-19 pandemic. Director Haskins-Belanger reported that New Hampshire is currently the highest in the nation, on the community wide positivity rates, and the facility wide statistics. The last positive resident at Riverside Rest Home (RRH) was September 24, 2021, however there are currently three positive employees. The trickle of Covid positive cases amongst the employees and their families continues to keep RRH in outbreak status. The Public Health Network (PHN) and Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) guidelines are being followed, including the removal of visitation restrictions. Screening upon entry will continue and masks will be encouraged. Families have been very respectful of the precautions taken to minimize the spread of the virus. She answered questions on the variants, incubation periods, vaccination statuses, severity of illness, and containment protocols. She is proud of our employee vigilance in remaining out of the facilities when exposed to illness, to include influenza or the common cold, reducing potentially devastating exposure to others. Rep. Salloway, who is also an epidemiologist, reported on the durability of the different vaccines and encouraged everyone to get their boosters. He noted the numbers are unlike any others, and congratulated Director Haskins-Belanger and staff for doing an incredible job.

Superintendent Brackett provided a report on Covid at the House of Corrections (HOC) which has been considered to be in outbreak status by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) since November 11, 2021. He reported that out of the 282 inmates currently in the facility, only eight are considered Covid positive. He also provided statistics on the positivity and vaccination rates for staff, inmates and detainees, and the continued efforts to educate everyone entering the facility. He described all the efforts used to contain the virus and steps implemented to minimize cross contamination, including a mask mandate, isolating individuals with symptoms, and having vaccines available on site. All staff are fully educated on DHHS approved processes. He answered questions from Rep. Pitre regarding the ICE detainee numbers, positivity rates and changes in procedures.

STRAFFORD COUNTY DELEGATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MEETING

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2021

Page 2

Administrator Bower answered Rep. Horrigan's question regarding staff resistance to the CMS vaccination mandate, noting the Commissioners issued and then stayed the implementation of the mandate and reported on the steps issued to apply for medical or religious exceptions which have also been halted. He then reported on the long-term care facility survey status which concluded last week with only three lowest level deficiencies after a nineteen-month hiatus. The surveys are very detailed and technical and noted how proud he was of the staff for a tremendous job. Congratulations were provided to Director Haskins-Belanger on her recent marriage.

8. Update on Possible Funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): Administrator Bower reported that very little has changed since the last update, but noted certain revenues captured in the current budget are revenue shortfalls from last year and this year's budgets which are allowable ARPA expenses. One proposed use will be to enhance and replace the air handling system roof units on the Justice & Administration Building which are near the end-of-life expectancy and would need to be brought before the Delegation as a necessary County expense in the very near future to maintain airflow standards changed by Covid. A second proposed expense in conjunction with the first would be the engineering for installing air conditioning/heating mini-split units at RRH, which would include replacement of windows that are over 20 years old. He noted the importance of keeping our current tenants satisfied and reported on the current status of union negotiations.

In response to Rep. Harrington's question about an increase in pay versus stipends, Superintendent Brackett reported on his efforts to maintain current employees by reducing mandatory overtime and increasing pay to be more competitive, resulting in higher quality applicants. The challenging schedule has been the biggest factor in enticing personnel, but the numbers of staff have increased.

9. Approve Tax Anticipation Note Borrowing of up to \$20 Million for First Six Months of 2022: Chairman Schmidt recognized County Treasurer Arnold. Treasurer Arnold reported that the funds in the County's Treasury would be insufficient to meet the County's obligations for the first six months of 2022 and recommended that the Executive Committee authorize the Commissioners to borrow up to \$20,000,00 in Tax Anticipation Notes. It was noted that arbitrage laws state that the County may borrow only enough money at one time to meet its obligations for a six-month period in anticipation of taxes to be paid on December 17<sup>th</sup>. Based on estimates provided by Finance Director Diane Legere, Treasurer Arnold recommended that the Commissioners borrow up to \$20 million in anticipation of taxes for the period January 1, 2022 through June 30, 2022, to be repaid at the end of 2022. Rep. Pitre motioned to authorize the Commissioners to borrow Tax Anticipation Notes in an amount up to \$20 million to pay the County's obligations for the first six months of 2022. The motion was seconded by Rep. Wuelper and was accepted unanimously on a roll call vote 13 to 0, as follows:

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

NAYS: None

10. Motion to Allow the County Commissioners to Pay Those County Expenditures Statutorily Required to be Paid Until Delegation Approval of the 2022 Budget: After noting this is standard procedure, Rep. Grassie motioned to authorize the County Commissioners to pay those County expenditures statutorily required to be paid until the Delegation approval of the 2022 Budget. The motion was seconded by Rep. Fontneau and was accepted unanimously on a roll call vote 13 to 0, as follows:

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

NAYS: None

11. Motion to Approve Increase in the 2021 Budget for Unanticipated Revenues and Expenditures: Administrator Bower reported on the incentives at RRH and increased salaries resulting in the hiring of eleven Registered Nurses and the sponsoring of a Licensed Nursing Assistant (LNA) school. We have hired 24 LNAs and four more will be joining soon. These are allowable ARPA expenditures, and the Commissioners have approved the transfer funds from the ARPA account, but is contingent on Executive Committee agreement. We are requesting authority to remove \$1,800,000 from ARPA funding for money spent this year and the recovery of funds spent last year. The transfer of revenue to expenditure lines for the budget to equal at year end will not affect the tax rate in any way. Rep. Pitre motioned to approve an increase in the 2021 budget by \$1,800,000 for unanticipated revenues and expenditures. The motion was

STRAFFORD COUNTY DELEGATION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MEETING

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2021

Page 3

seconded by Rep. Fontneau and was accepted unanimously on a roll call vote 13 to 0, as follows:

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

NAYS: None

12. Motion to Authorize Bond for Radio System for up to \$3,500,000: Sheriff Brave provided an update on the Infrastructure Plan Grant for the County-Wide P25 VHF Simulcast Police/Fire/EMS Communications System upgrade. On October 19, 2021, Senator Shaheen's office awarded Strafford County \$750,000 for this project. Director Christenbury provided the history and highlighted all the deficiencies of the current system created in 2000 and well past its lifespan, creating safety issues and increased overtime. He reported on the benefits and explained the updates of the system that went out to bid last year and was won by Motorola who has been waiting for final signatures required by December 31, 2021 before prices will increase by \$400,000. Director Christenbury answered questions on funding options, grants, future grants once the project is started, Chiefs funds, the coverage with six towers around tall buildings, and the current system's functionality noting the importance of the upgrades to maintain safety of all personnel throughout the entire county. Administrator Bower reported on the approved grants, possible grants in process, and the support of the police and fire chiefs. Answering questions regarding current bonds, Administrator Bower described plans for possible Bond Anticipation Notes and clarified the first bond payment will not be due until the current bond is paid in full. He noted the delays in promised funds and the patience of Motorola regarding the start of this project. It was verified that the \$750,000 can be repaid for money spent before receiving the grant. We are requesting the support of the Executive Committee before presenting to the full Delegation. Rep. Newton acknowledged the importance of not passing unnecessary expenses on to his constituents who are already suffering by spending money on a duplication of services. After hearing the reports on the debt ratio and the necessity of improved coverage, he has decided to change his mind and vote in favor of the authorization to bond for this radio system upgrade. Rep. Pitre motioned to authorize to bring to the Delegation a vote on a bond of up to \$3,500,000 to enhance the radio system. The motion was seconded by Rep. Salloway and was accepted unanimously on a roll call vote 13 to 0, as follows:

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

NAYS: None

13. Review and Approve Third Quarter 2021 Budget Report: Chairman Schmidt asked if there were any questions regarding the Third Quarter Budget report which was sent via e-mail, as well as USPS, and posted on the County Website. Administrator Bower reported the on the significant increase in the retirement payments of the Sheriff's Office which is based on the increase in salary from overtime spent with inmates in the hospital, but will be reimbursed with the negotiations of the United States Marshal Service. Rep. Fontneau motioned to approve the Second Quarter 2021 Budget. The motion was seconded by Rep. Grassie and was approved unanimously on a voice vote.
14. Any Other Business Which May Legally Come Before the Committee: Chairman Schmidt asked if there were any further questions or comments; there being none, he moved to the next item on the agenda.
15. Adjournment: Chairman Schmidt noted that with no further business, a motion to adjourn was in order. Rep. Grassie motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:43 a.m. The motion was seconded by Rep. Harrington and was accepted by unanimous consent and without objection.

Respectfully submitted,

*Sherry Frost*

Sherry Frost, Clerk  
Strafford County Executive Committee