

Sullivan County NH
Sullivan County Full Delegation
December 10, 2007 / 10:00 am
Newport County Complex

Type of Meeting:
Date / Time:
Place:

Participants:

Representatives: Peter Franklin (Chair), Ellen Nielsen (Clerk), John Cloutier, Larry Converse, Tom Donovan, Ray Gagnon, Sue Gottling, Matthew Houde, Arthur Jillette, and Jay Phinizy
Other Elected Officials and County Employees: Greg Chanis, Interim County Manager; Sharon King, Registrar of Deeds; Michael Prozzo, County Sherriff
Press: Aaron Aldridge from the *Eagle-Times*

The recessed meeting of October 29, 2007 was reconvened and called to order by the chair, Rep. Franklin, at 10:05 am.

Agenda Review: No agenda had been distributed in advance. Representatives agreed to hear a report from the interim county manager and talk about the county budget, the departure of County Manager Gil de Rubio, other old business, and other new business.

Minutes: Copies of minutes for the delegation meetings of December 13, 2006 and October 29, 2007 were made available. *Rep Converse moved that the minutes for 12/13/06 be approved. Rep Cloutier seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.* The minutes for October 29 required several corrections, and approval of these minutes will be postponed until the next delegation meeting.

Interim County Manager's Report: Mr. Chanis explained that his position had not yet been formally confirmed, and that he will be able to answer questions in more detail after the next commissioner's meeting on December 18. Rep. Converse asked some questions about the wells which serve the nursing home and the correctional center in Unity. Mr. Chanis said that one of the two deep wells which provide water for the Unity complex had required rehabilitation and that this work has been completed successfully and the well is producing three times as much water as before. He also described the back-up water system (surface water from Marshall Pond) which currently provides water for the laundry and for fire protection.

County Budget: Representatives asked how much money has been borrowed so far this fiscal year and whether the commissioners had developed a plan to deal with the budget deficit. The answer to the first question was provided when Mr. Chanis left briefly and returned with a spreadsheet prepared by Dodi Violette which indicated that \$6,900,000 had been borrowed so far. He added that about \$450,000 more would be needed to meet the next payroll. (Approximately \$10,370,000 in tax receipts will be received on December 17.) The answer to the second question is that the commissioners hope to present a plan at their December 18 meeting. The auditors will be present at this meeting and the meeting may include the exit interview which the auditors require before they can finalize their report for fiscal 2007. At the last EFC meeting several members of the EFC had received a list of budget cuts or freezes proposed to the commissioners by department heads. Rep. Converse asked the Registrar of Deeds and the County Sherriff if they would be able to make the proposed cuts. Sherriff Prozzo responded that although the commissioners had not yet confirmed the freezes, he was not going to spend the money. Ms. King, the Registrar of Deeds, pointed out that her revenues were lower this year because fewer deeds had been recorded due to the real estate slump. Both of these department heads are waiting for word from the commissioners to put proposed cuts or freezes into effect. Representatives talked about other strategies for reducing the budget deficit. Rep. Franklin said that closer monitoring of grant money administered by the county could save money—for example, employees whose salary is supposed to be paid by grants sometimes are on the county payroll and the

county is not fully reimbursed. (This was mentioned as a material weakness in the auditors' management letter.) Also, Rep. Franklin believes that Genesis was overpaid and that some of this money could be recovered. Rep. Franklin and Rep. Gottling will act as a committee to investigate these possible options to recover money for the county.

Representatives expressed support of the steps the commissioners appear to be taking to deal with the county financial deficit and wanted to know how to support these efforts.

Rep. Cloutier moved that the delegation pass "a non-binding resolution stating the delegation's full support of the commissioners' recent actions instituting budget freezes in the FY 2008 budget as well as taking over direct management responsibility for the nursing home and the house of corrections. Furthermore, the delegation urges the commissioners to continue doing everything possible to freeze expenses in the FY 2008 budget without negatively impacting essential services." This motion was seconded by Rep Gagnon.

Extensive discussion followed. Several representatives applauded the sentiment of the resolution but stated that they wanted to see the commissioners' plan before they passed the resolution.

Rep Cloutier moved that his motion be tabled and Rep. Converse seconded this motion. The motion to table passed by a voice vote, with one person voting "nay."

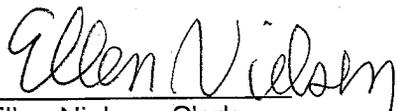
Resignation of the County Manager: Mr. Chanis, the interim county manager, had previously been introduced and had presented his report. Rep. Franklin asked if there were comments or questions about the resignation of Mr. Gil de Rubio. No one responded.

Old Business: Rep Gagnon presented a follow-up report on the issues raised by the public participant during the meeting of October 29, citing Federal case law which provides that a child may testify *in camera* in such a way that the child does not have to be in the presence of an alleged abuser. However, this does not appear to be the practice in New Hampshire. Rep. Gagnon mentioned that Senator Odell may be interested in sponsoring legislation. Rep. Phinizy suggested that Rep Gagnon speak with the House rules committee, since the deadline for sponsoring new legislation has passed. Several Sullivan County representatives may be interested in co-sponsoring legislation to protect children who must testify in criminal trials against their alleged abusers, if the missed deadline impediment can be overcome.

The delegation re-visited the idea of collaborating in some way with the Grafton County delegation, since both counties are considering building new correctional facilities. Several representatives stressed the need for a comprehensive corrections plan including alternatives to incarceration as well as a new building. Rep. Franklin was asked to write a letter to the chair of the Grafton County delegation expressing our interest in cooperating with Grafton County to develop a regional approach to corrections, and Rep. Gagnon was asked to report back on further activities of the county criminal justice committee.

Rep. Franklin asked if there were any more old or new business to be discussed, and hearing none, declared that the meeting was adjourned until the call of the chair, indicating that this call probably would be heard before mid-January.

Respectfully submitted,



Ellen Nielsen, Clerk