

**Cheshire County Delegation
Maplewood Sub-Committee
County Conversations
Jaffrey, NH
June 27, 2016**

Present: Representatives Michael Abbott, Richard Ames, Paul Berch, Daniel Eaton, Susan Emerson, Gladys Johnsen, Douglas Ley, John Mann, Jim McConnell, Timothy Robertson, Marjorie Shepardson, Franklin Sterling, Ben Tilton, Lucy Weber

Commissioners and Staff: Commissioners Stillman Rogers and Charles Weed, County Administrator County Administrator Chris Coates, Finance Director Sheryl Trombly and Maplewood Nursing Administrator Kathryn Kindopp.

The Maplewood Nursing Home Subcommittee of the County Delegation held the Jaffrey Public Hearing at 6:30PM in Jaffrey Town Hall on June 27, 2016. It was well-attended by delegation members and the county's public. The gathering was welcomed by Representative John Mann, (D., Alstead) who is the chairperson of subcommittee.

Rep. Mann explained the work that has been taking place, the visits to Green House Nursing facilities in NY and in MA and to Carrol County and Merrimac County, NH, as well as the extensive study and discussion in subcommittee meetings. All of this led to the engagement of the architectural/construction firm, EGA, and the resulting details of options that have been set out for the County's decision on how to address the problems of needed updates or reconstruction of the County nursing facility. The drawings from EGA were presented on easels at the front of the room as well as in handout materials. Also in the handouts available was the explanation of the problems, the process that has taken place, and the financial estimates for each of the options.

After Representative Mann's welcome and introduction, Representative Daniel Eaton was introduced to lead the public's question and answer period.

At the meeting in Jaffrey many of the same questions that were evidenced in previous hearings were discussed again. The questions focus on why has the nursing home come to the experiencing of such dire needs. There are various factors that contribute. The age and continuous use of the facility, the changing regulations from the Federal Government, and the expectations of the public are factors.

Questions also were addressed in relation to changing the location of the facility with some citizens of Westmoreland in particular, who prefer it stay at the current location. A change in the Center of Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) has posed new regulations that will become effective within three (3) years that require Assisted Living and Nursing facilities to be on separate campuses. The Cheshire County facilities are together in Westmoreland.

Rep. Eaton mentioned that the County has applied for a waiver from this regulation. He also noted that should the waiver be granted, the time period of the waiver is not currently known, or whether or not it would be renewed is an unknown. He mentioned also that various ideas are

being explored and that perhaps it would be possible to subdivide the property, giving nursing and assisted living separate addresses.

He said that in a meeting of staff and residents at Maplewood a general consensus to remain in the current building was expressed. It was noted that elderly people tend to not favor change, so this was not unexpected.

There was discussion of the 150 bed cap imposed by the State at the nursing home and that we can build or remodel for less than the allocated number of beds, but the number cannot be exceeded. If the county was to exit the nursing home business the 150 beds could potentially be sold to private nursing facilities, or if the county was to facilitate fewer beds, the resulting difference in the number of beds could be sold.

The situation of some rooms at Maplewood having to share a bathroom among four residents, two to one room, bathroom between rooms, was discussed again. When the facility was built, this was an accepted plan; however, today's regulations have changed due to best practices regarding the spread of infection. It was also discussed that the room assignment and bathroom arrangements can be affected by gender differences as only those of same gender are expected to share a room or a bathroom assignment.

Comments, as well as questions from the audience were encouraged.

Retired geriatric care manager, Owen Houghton, commented that the Green House model of nursing facility doesn't fit Cheshire County's needs. He suggested that from his experience a hybridized method that would include a Green House-like wing within a traditional home would work. He also emphasized the importance of the Golden Rule when considering the solutions, pointing out that environment is a huge factor in how people feel.

Bud Creekmore of Jaffrey accented the demographics of nursing home population and the fact that because of their acuity levels the residents would not likely would use the city, for example walking about, biking, driving, and eating in restaurants.

Jack Calhoun, Harrisville, asked for information about the physical structure of the Westmoreland facilities and Rep. Eaton explained the County's building of the Assisted Living in Westmoreland in 1998 as being the first in the County and that it has been popular, receiving praise and demand for residence.

The demand for and provision of nursing care that is applicable to a County facility was discussed. It was pointed out that the County's obligation is to provide for the medically and economically neediest citizens of our County.

Administrator Kindopp added that when addressing waiting lists and admissions Cheshire County residence is a consideration and they are "first served", although we sometimes accommodate residents who have moved from other areas. Heather Ames, of Jaffrey commented as to the number of Jaffrey and Rindge residents frequenting the population at Westmoreland and Kindopp answered that most of the residents are from the western area of our

county. There are a number of nursing homes in the Jaffrey-Rindge area, but not county-operated.

Commissioner Rogers was recognized to speak. He stated that although the Town of Westmoreland and its residents are deeply vested in keeping the facilities there, Westmoreland “is far” and the facility should be more central. He added that if Option A2 with a wing added to the current facility were to be the choice he has misgivings about how long it would service the County, thus adding more expense. He offered to discuss the issue with those in attendance after the meeting adjourned.

Rep. Eaton added that the Commissioners may make recommendations and the Delegation then votes as to funding those recommendations or not.

A Walpole resident pointed out that Keene to Westmoreland is not a problem, Jaffrey to Westmoreland is a different matter, but Jaffrey to Keene is also far and there are nursing homes nearer that are probably preferred. He mentioned the hospital in Keene being always under renovation or restructuring construction and continues to serve its purpose, adding that the plumbing in Westmoreland could be relined with today’s advance in procedures. Representative Mann inserted that the plumbing problems may not be a reliable indicator of need.

Ernest Perham, Westmoreland, again addressed the tax impact of a new building, summing it up by saying that what would be saved by using New Market Tax Credits (\$3M estimate) would be lost in the resulting financing of a new building. A renovation of the current structure is almost equal to the financing of new. (Tax estimates and other financing estimates may be accessed on the County website.)

Others addressed the land in Westmoreland and Malia Boaz, Westmoreland, asked why we would purchase other land when we own approximately 600 A. She added that this was not in step with New England’s long-standing principles.

Earl Anderson, Surry, referred to the comments made in Keene by Swanzey resident, Greg Johnson. Johnson is familiar with the current facility’s infrastructure having been involved in the original building of Maplewood and then touring it in May of 2015. He had stated that the likelihood of upgrading the air conditioning, the electrical, and the plumbing was possible. He said that Johnson addressed the current state of economy in our area, the standing empty space in Keene, and the need for new enterprises in the area as things to consider before moving on to new buildings in a new location.

Anderson said that these factors had led him to believe the most possible choice of options would be the added wing design as it allows upgrading and continued use of standing structure, dietary and water treatment/sewage treatment existing facilities.

Some attendees questioned the information available, but Representative Ames and others gave specifics to support the information. It was explained again that EGA is an experienced firm and their explanations of the options and how they were formed is available on the County’s website.

Representative Paul Berch asked about the transferability of current staff to a Keene location. Administrator Kindopp explained that the Green House model is unique in that it would require universal workers, LNAs, who would do housekeeping, laundry, and dietary chores as well as administering care to residents. This would demand an increase in number of LNAs and would change the job description of those who might transfer. All other employees would remain constant and most now come from the Route 12 corridor. There is, however, a limited number of skilled care LNA being felt in the area. Her summation was that the Green House model would result in a loss of staff. In addition to her comments a listener reminded that a Green House facility also comes with a franchise fee and training expense.

Joe Cartwright of Surry asked if the Keene options were based on New Market Tax Credit availability, to which Rep. Eaton answered that they were not.

Rep. Douglas Ley commented on the possibilities for the repurposing of the current facility, adding that “dead space equals dead loss.”

Commissioner Weed brought up the question of the bridge on River Road in Westmoreland that provides access to the nursing home and Rep. Eaton answered that it was not a consideration as it is property of the State, not the County or Town, adding that it has not been listed as a danger.

Rep. Mann addressed the “wish list” that has been discussed previously, that is, elevator, generator, doors, dishwasher, etc. He added that these are needed now and that addressing them would add to the energy efficiency of the established facility.

Some of the audience expressed their opinions as to preferred choices ranging from a more central location, but with a plan for the current buildings in place; to a preference for the A2 option-the added wing in Westmoreland.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00PM. The Subcommittee will schedule additional meetings to discuss the findings of the Public Hearings, and their recommendation will go before the Executive Committee of the Delegation.

Respectfully submitted,
Jane B. Johnson