

MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday October 11, 2017 09:30AM
Department of Corrections
825 Marlboro Road
Keene, NH 03431

Present: Commissioners Peter Graves, Joseph Cartwright, and Charles Weed

Staff: Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, Sheriff Rivera, IT Director Hummel, UNH Coop Forester Roberge, and Assistant County Administrator (ACA) Bouchard.

Guests: Keith Thibault, Chief Development Officer from Southwestern Community Services (SCS)

At 9:30AM Vice-Chairman Cartwright opened the public meeting and Commissioner Weed moved to immediately adjourn the meeting for the purposes of discussing a personnel matter pursuant to RSA 91-A:2, II (b) with the Attorney of Record for the County on the matter. Commissioner Cartwright seconded the motion and upon vote the motion passed with two (2) Yay votes.

At approximately 09:42AM Commissioner Graves joined the meeting.

Following discussion with Counsel and examination of the documentation provided by the Attorney on the matter at-hand, Commissioner Cartwright moved to authorize the termination of an employee and to pay them their accumulated vacation and leave time. Commissioner Weed seconded the motion and upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

At 9:57AM Commissioners Graves, Cartwright, and Weed voted unanimously to return to public session.

Keith Thibault, Chief Development Officer from Southwestern Community Services (SCS) was then recognized by the Chairman and discussed the application and monitoring process that the organization uses to verify conformance with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) rules for renters of the facilities that SCS builds, owns, and manages. He described in detail how the programs work for long term compliance monitoring and discussed the number of audits and monitoring programs that ensure full compliance with the federal requirements for all grants.

He then answered questions from the Commissioners and staff and said that due to the number and extent of rules governing compliance that SCS must meet and adhere to, the County and County taxpayers are very well protected from liability concerning any non-compliance issues for grants received from federal agencies.

Master Agenda Item #538: Westmoreland Timber Cut Status and Update was then taken-up for discussion and Steve Roberge was recognized. He said that the existing contract for the timber harvest on the land in Westmoreland property has been terminated without the full amount of work that was contracted for being completed.

He reviewed the status of the timber cut and said that the company that was awarded the contract has completed their involvement with the County without completing the work that was specified and that the remaining hardwood should be removed. He said that the cut areas need to be cleaned and erosion control instituted on the site. An extended discussion ensued.

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At the conclusion of discussions, Commissioner Cartwright moved to authorize the close-out of the timber harvest by contracting with Long View Forest of Westminster, VT to complete the work and was seconded by Commissioner Weed. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

Sheriff Rivera was then recognized and reviewed the previous weeks discussion around holiday pay for new employees who start work on a recognized Monday holiday. Rivera stated his objections to the policy for his staff and discussed two (2) instances where his staff is directly impacted by the practice. A review of the current policies was had and an in-depth discussion began of past-practice and the application of the policy to per-diem staff was covered.

It was agreed that presently employed staff who are per-diem or part-time employees who transition to full-time employees will be eligible to receive holiday pay for any holidays that fall on Monday's and that coincide with the employee beginning full-time work as determined by the department manager, will be paid for the holiday. Following discussion, it was agreed that the policy would be changed to reflect the departments manager decision of the date of hire in determining their eligibility to receive Monday holiday pay when appropriate. Finance will begin to implement the new policy as of this date.

A further discussion of per-diem compensation bonus payments of 15% over the hourly rate for all per-diem staff in the County was had and it was learned that some Sheriff department employees have not been participating in the program until July of this year. A review of how various department managers have instituted past practices was discussed. The fair application of County policies across all staff was then discussed.

Commissioner Weed moved to make the per-diem policy retroactive to the date that the new handbook was accepted on December 14, 2016. Commissioner Cartwright seconded the motion and upon vote the motion failed 2-1, with Commissioner Weed voted Yea, and Commissioner Cartwright and Commissioner Graves voting Nay.

Master Agenda Item #537: Semi-annual report for the Information Technologies Department was then taken-up for review and Hummel was then recognized by the Chairman and provided the following report.

2017 Semi-Annual IT Department Status Report

Staffing & Workload

A staff member who joined us in February, left in August to assume a position more suitable to his experience level. He was a seasoned IT professional who brought valuable skills and experience to the department. We were fortunate to have him, even if for a short time. In addition to advancing several projects, he helped us complete the final migration of our website off our old hosting service, which had become unreliable.

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In August, we hired a local computer technician as our newest IT Specialist. He has a background in IT and has worked for service providers in the Keene area. His expertise in Dell systems management is a welcome addition to our department.

Events

As you are aware, Hewlett-Packard Enterprise (HPE) and Aruba recently featured Cheshire County in a print and video testimonial. Cheshire was selected because of its use of technology to improve delivery of IT services county-wide. We are fortunate to have cultivated a working relationship with these companies that allows us access to information and advanced product support at no cost.

Availability and Continuity of Business

A primary responsibility of the IT Department is to ensure the availability of computing resources to all County departments and to ensure the County's continuity of business. Our minimum RTO (return to operation) time has met our target of less than five minutes for a single server failure. A complete server rebuild can typically be accomplished in under 60 minutes without impacting ongoing operations. To date, in 2017, our unplanned downtime (outages caused by events we could have prevented) was zero hours. All of our server and network hardware is now backed up with on-site spares.

We have completed the first step of our cross-site disaster mitigation procedure. Leveraging our existing infrastructure, we now have critical systems replicating between campuses. In the event that a campus becomes completely unusable, we are able to activate essential services elsewhere. The project is in its early phases, but today we would be able to operate in "limp-in" mode – releasing inmates from jail, printing medication lists for patients, and processing payroll. Eventually, we will extend the same technology to enable the Dispatch center to relocate, in an emergency, while providing full services.

Infrastructure

Cheshire County operates a virtualized server environment. The advantages of this include more efficient use of resources, reduced maintenance, centralized management, and standardization. In addition, virtualized servers can be backed up, restored, and moved with an ease that is not possible with physical servers.

The fiber-based, high-speed, encrypted connections that link each campus have been performing without issue. Next year, in anticipation of migration of our telephone services, we will be upgrading the speed of these connections. We are also implementing a "management network" that will create an independent channel of access to our internal network structure to allow for remote management and repair in the event that the primary connections fail.

Security

External threats continue at a significant rate. Our "public" interfaces (firewalls, web services, email, and public-facing equipment) are subject to constant probing and directed attacks. To date in 2017, no successful penetrations were detected or observed.

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Our most significant weakness continues to be end users. In some cases, simply opening an email or browsing a website can be enough to download malware or viruses that could impact security. Our program to prevent unauthorized exfiltration or loss of data has added three major countermeasures this year.

First, we have enhanced domain blocking to prevent access to websites known to be high risks for infection. A major improvement has been to extend this protection to laptops when they are off the county network and to filter based on IP as well as name to block advanced internal threats.

Second, in the event that malware is downloaded, we have implemented “whitelisting.” This means that only authorized programs can execute on a workstation – everything else is blocked and an intrusion alert is sent.

Third, our firewalls have also been reprogrammed to support “geo-blocking.” In this case, all outgoing traffic to global destinations that are not on an approved list (such as Russia, Ukraine, China, and Viet Nam) is blocked. If a malware program was able to install and run, attempting to copy files to a server in China for example, this technique blocks its ability to transfer any data or receive commands and renders it ineffective.

Also under the security umbrella, we have upgraded our VPN services to allow us to provide a more secure and reliable connection to the county network. This improvement affects not only county staff, but also the town police agencies served by our dispatch center.

County-Wide Projects

1. Server & Systems Upgrades

The upgraded version of our time & attendance program, is now fully deployed and operational. This addresses the last of our servers that was running on an outdated software platform.

The 2018 budget includes, at the request of the HOC, a capital request to extend the life of the HOC security system. These systems run XP, but are isolated from the external network. The project will replace the physical workstations while keeping the software and programming intact.

2. Mail System

We are preparing for the roll-out of our new in-house based mail system. Security, both internal and external, is a major component of this service and is being integrated from the onset. The system will include archiving to comply with state and federal requirements. This will also require the discontinuation of use of private email for county business.

3. Telephone System Replacement

The new telephone system design project is going well. A prototype system has been constructed and is fully operational – including an interface to the outside telephone system. The next phase of the project

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is to scale the design to include inter-campus dialing, redundant service providers, significantly lower cost, and an upgrade of user features.

4. Secure File Share

Secure exchange of files is quickly becoming a requirement for our attorneys, law enforcement, and health care services. IT is preparing to create a secure, on-site file sharing service that will allow County departments to share files securely, both internally and with external users, without the need for external providers.

5. Internal Notification Servers

To improve our monitoring of internal systems, the IT department recently created and deployed “SMTP relay” servers on all campuses. These servers collect notifications about hardware and software events and relay them to our staff. These servers were programmed as a training exercise for staff and re-used older PCs that were no longer usable as workstations.

6. Network-based Console Access

In anticipation of the future deployment of our management network, “console servers” were put in place at each campus to give “offline” access to critical equipment in case of emergency. Using this alternative control device, we can access, reboot, and repair equipment that would otherwise require an on-site visit.

7. Video Training

Developing the in-house capability to produce and distribute training videos for common computer tasks is a goal of the department. To do so, we will need to develop the expertise to use specific applications for this niche application.

The Commissioners thanked Hummel for his report and expressed their support and thanks to the IT department for a job well done.

At 11:45AM Pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(b) Commissioners Cartwright moved to enter non-public session and was seconded by Commissioner Weed to discuss RSA 91-A:3, II (a) The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her, unless the employee affected (1) has a right to a public meeting, and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

As a result of deliberations in non-public session Commissioner Cartwright moved to authorize the termination of an employee who has failed to meet minimum standards of performance over an extended period of time despite numerous documented counselling and training efforts. Commissioner Weed seconded the motion and upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

At 11:52AM Commissioner Cartwright moved to exit non-public session and was seconded by Commissioner Weed. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

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Administrator Coates then provided the Weekly County Operations report.

Coates said that a potential resident that has numerous mental health issues was not accepted for admittance to the Maplewood Nursing home. Coates outlined an initiative with Monadnock Family Services personnel to study the issues surrounding similar cases and will be meeting to discuss how, or if, the nursing home can accommodate these types of cases in the future and the potential impact on staffing.

Coates described his visit to Keene High School to visit the LNA training class and he said that it went very well. He said that he hopes that some of the participants will be interested in working for the County nursing home after they graduate.

He then described the Keene Book Sale that is taking place this weekend (13th – 15th) and said that the cooperation between the Library Staff and County personnel has been excellent.

The pending 2018 Departmental Budget Review on the 24th – 26th was then discussed by Trombly.

The demolition of Old Jail was discussed and the remediation of the asbestos that has been found was reviewed and the potential costs were covered.

The Delegation Farm Committee will meet on October 23rd to do a review of the farm status. Coates and Bouchard will attend.

Coates then said the cement block garage to the right of the Old Jail will be cleaned out and used for storage. He also discussed the potential re-use of the Old Red Barn on the property as an agricultural training and education center and a possible public meeting space.

Lastly, he reviewed the current status of regional discussions for first responders to work cooperatively for emergency responses.

Old Business

Bio-Mass – Commissioner Cartwright said that he called a number of installations that have started bio-mass plants and found them to be happy with the Green Chip systems that they installed.

He discussed his findings about the BTU sizes and the storage capacities of the existing plants. Average costs of between \$50 - \$60 per ton. He then reviewed the information that he received and said that he believed that green chip offers the overall lowest cost of operation based on his findings. A discussion of site challenges and building modifications that would be needed at the nursing home began. More data for a bio-mass plant at the nursing home that meets heating and costs savings needs will need to be developed to determine the best path forward.

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New Business

Coates said that the local Bar Association wants to hold an event at the Delegation Hall facility in the near future for a retiring colleague at the Superior Court. They are looking to be able to wave the insurance requirement for the one-time event.

Commissioner Cartwright then discussed that it appears that the County is not receiving any PUC energy credits for the Geo Thermal system at the new jail. The staff will investigate applying to obtain the credits through the State Energy Credit program.

The weekly census was then reviewed.

The minutes of October 5, 2017 were then reviewed and Commissioner Cartwright moved to accept the minutes as presented and was seconded by Commissioner Weed. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

The Weekly Manifest was then reviewed and Commissioner Cartwright moved to accept the Manifest as presented and was seconded by Commissioner Weed. Upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

At 1:01PM there being no further business to discuss, Commissioner Cartwright moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion to adjourn was then seconded by Commissioner Weed and upon vote the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
C. Weed