COMMISSIONERS MEETING
Wednesday, January 28, 2026
Minutes

This meeting will be conducted in person and via Zoom at
Maplewood Nursing Home
201 River Road
Westmoreland NH, 03467

Zoom Call-in Number: +1 646 558 8656
Meeting ID: 409 748 8803
Pin #: 603123
Start Time 9:30 AM

Present: Commissioners Terry Clark, Claudia Stewart, and Skipper DiBernardo
Absent:
Staff: County Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, HR Director May, Maplewood Administrator Kindopp, CCEMS Chief Kreamer, and Director of Executive Services/Communications Bernstein,
Guests:

Public Comments
Upon recognition from the Chair, a Public Comment on topics of interest may be made.

I. Elected Officials & Department Head Updates

To receive, as informational, departmental updates requiring Commissioner review, participation, approval, and impactful departmental and operational issues.

II. Scheduled Items

Master Agenda Item #1326: Semi-Annual Report, Human Resources – K. May
Action Expected: To receive an informational report on the last year of operations from the Director of Human Resources.

1. HR Director May presented the following report.

Total Hires: 145

Downtown – 22
- Attorney – 2
- BHC - 1
- Connected Families – 2
- Conservation District – 1
- Deeds - 2
- IT – 4

- Sheriff's Office – 10
  - AA – 2
  - Bailiff – 3
  - Dispatch – 2
  - Deputy - 3

Department of Corrections - 29
- Corrections Officers – 15
- MSO/Nursing – 9
- Facilities - 1
- Food Service – 4

CCEMS – 17
- EMT – 10
- AEMT – 2
- Paramedic – 5

Maplewood - 77
- Activities - 1
- Administration – 2
- ALF - 1
- Dietary – 13
- Environmental Services - 18
- Nursing – 39
- LNA – 21
- LPN/RN - 2
- Ward Aide – 16
- Rehab – 1
- PT – 1
- Social Services - 1

Total Terms: 124

Keene – 25
- Attorney - 5
- BHC - 1
- Connected Families – 4
- Conservation District - 1
- Deeds - 1
- IT - 5
- Sheriff – 8
  - Administrative Assistant - 2
  - Bailiff – 2
  - Deputy - 1
  - Dispatch - 3

Department of Corrections - 26

- Corrections Officers – 13
- MSO/Nursing – 7
- Facilities - 1
- Food Service – 4
- Superintendent - 1

CCEMS – 13
- EMT – 8
- AEMT – 3
- Paramedic - 2

Maplewood - 60
- Administration - 4
- Dietary – 14
- Environmental Services – 12
- Facilities - 2
- Nursing – 27
  - LNA – 12
  - LPN/RN – 3
  - Ward Aide – 12
- Social Services - 1

- Some of the reasons for resignations are as follows:
  - Unable to return after medical leave
  - Realized work is not for them
  - Terminated due to attendance issues
  - Terminated due to behavior
  - Moved out of area
  - Per diem w/no availability to pick up hours
  - Retired
  - Deceased

MAPLEWOOD:
- RN recruiting efforts – continuing with School Hours = Work Hours and conjunction with tuition reimbursement, continuing with Loan Forgiveness and now offering a Pay in Lieu of Benefits option of 20% above base for a 32-hour work week with no benefits.
- We are currently continuing to offer a $2,000 sign on bonus at Maplewood for any LPN/RN This is paid out as follows: $500 at 3 months, $500 at 6 months and $1,000 at 1 year for a 40 hour/week employee - prorated for part time. We are offering the same sign on bonus for Corrections Officers & nursing at the DOC.
- Contracted with 7 nurses with VISA Solutions Healthcare with our first one arriving within the next few weeks. Delay in processing her SS card but hopefully will be issued within the next week and will then apply for NH RN license.
- Initial conversations with VISA Solutions Healthcare for an LNA Initiative. They are offering us discounted per person rates of $2,000 per person rather than $10,000. Hopeful to be able to partner with another county

KEENE CAMPUS:

- Sheriff's dispatch has one full time opening.
- Final deputy position candidate in process; this is a contracted position
- County Attorney's office has two full time openings
- Two FT openings in IT

CCEMS:

- Fully staffed at this time

CCDOC:

- Openings for 2 Corrections Officers at this time with applications coming in
- Advertising and recruiting for DOC nursing with sign-on bonus. Using staffing agency and have recently signed on with VISA Solutions Healthcare for an RN through them.

GENERAL:

- Recently started using ZipRecruiter in addition to Indeed and County website. It's been 90 days – we've seen some traction with Sheriff's Office and DOC but not with other departments. May consider reducing subscription to 4 slots.
- Leadership Training done 1/16 in Delegation Hall with 17 employees attending from Maplewood, EMS and downtown campus.

Turnover Information

Campus	Turnover
2025	
MNH	29%
CCDOC	30%
CCEMS	25%
Keene	21%
2024	
MNH	39%
CCDOC	28%
CCEMS	44%
Keene	16%
2023	
MNH	36%
CCDOC	35%
CCEMS	91%
Keene	16%

County Administrator

Weekly Operations Report - The County Administrator will update the Commissioners on activities that have taken place since the previous meeting.

1. Finance Director Trombly and County Administrator Coates traveled to the State

House to give testimony against HB 1427, below:

We appreciate the opportunity to testify before you regarding HB 1427, known as the Sustainable, Honest Investment, and Elimination of Local Debt Act (SHIELD).
We wish to begin by stating that Cheshire County shares the values expressed in the bill's statement of purpose. Prudence, stewardship, and fiscal responsibility are principles that guide the Cheshire County Government every day. Counties do not borrow lightly, nor do we rely on debt as a substitute for planning. However, we are deeply concerned that the framing and substance of this bill imply a lack of honesty or discipline among local governments that is not supported by fact or by existing law. We hope to provide clarity today by explaining how counties already operate under extensive statutory controls and why this bill would be unworkable and harmful if enacted.

The bill asserts that bonds create unfair burdens on future generations therefor paying for something they did not choose. Counties are political subdivisions of the state and are required by statute to operate and maintain numerous programs, facilities, and services. These obligations are not discretionary. They are mandated by law. Our elected officials are legally required to adopt budgets that allow these programs to exist and remain compliant with state and federal regulations. When capital investment is required to meet those legal obligations, bonding is sometimes the only practical tool available. Further, the length of bonding cannot exceed the life of the asset which aligns with future generations benefiting from payments of ongoing debt.

The Municipal Finance Act, RSA Chapter 33, already establishes a comprehensive and conservative framework governing public borrowing. This framework exists precisely to ensure fiscal discipline, transparency, and oversight. The SHIELD Act would effectively dismantle much of that framework by prohibiting bonding for nearly all purposes after January 1, 2027, regardless of legal necessity, infrastructure lifecycle, or statutory requirements.

RSA 33:3-a provides a clear safeguard governing the use of bond proceeds. It explicitly prohibits the use of bond premiums to expand or inflate the scope of a project beyond what was originally authorized. This ensures that borrowing remains tightly tied to the approved purpose. This protection already addresses concerns about misuse or expansion of debt.

Counties do not issue bonds unilaterally. In Cheshire County and all counties, any bond issuance must be first presented at a public hearing and then approved by a majority of the County Commissioners, the County Executive Committee, and ultimately by a two-thirds vote of the County Delegation. This process is required by statute and occurs in public session. In addition, counties retain bond counsel to ensure that all borrowing complies with RSA Chapter 33 and that funds are used solely for their authorized purpose.

RSA 33:4 establishes statutory debt limits for counties and municipalities. These limits

cap the amount of outstanding debt as a percentage of valuation, providing a hard ceiling that prevents excessive borrowing. Counties cannot exceed these limits except under narrowly defined circumstances and emergencies already recognized in law.

RSA 33:6 already governs emergency borrowing. It allows debt limits to be exceeded only in extraordinary circumstances such as war, natural disaster, or other declared emergencies. This statute already balances fiscal restraint with the practical reality that emergencies do occur. The SHIELD Act would override this balanced approach by restricting borrowing almost exclusively to emergencies while simultaneously narrowing the definition of what qualifies, effectively removing counties' ability to responsibly manage infrastructure.

RSA 33:10 requires public hearings prior to bond issuance, specifies how far in advance notice must be given, and mandates a two-thirds vote of the County Delegation to approve county borrowing. These hearings provide the public with direct input into capital decisions and already serve the transparency function the bill claims is lacking. A problematic provision of the bill is the requirement for warrant articles approved by a majority of all registered voters, with a two-thirds approval threshold of those voting. Counties do not operate under a warrant article form of government. There is no statutory mechanism for counties to conduct such votes. Public participation at the county level occurs through public hearings and through elected representatives serving on the County Delegation, which consists of every state representative representing the county.

Even setting governance structure aside, the numerical threshold imposed by the bill is infeasible. Cheshire County has approximately 66,000 registered voters. The bill would require at least 33,000 voters to participate in a countywide vote and at least 22,000 to approve a bond. No county election mechanism exists to accomplish this, and the cost and administrative burden of attempting to do so would be extraordinary. In practice, this provision functions as a prohibition, not a safeguard.

Finally, the bill would limit counties to bonding only in emergencies. If that standard were applied, counties would be forced to defer or abandon essential capital projects until facilities fail. This would jeopardize compliance with state and federal regulations governing nursing homes, correctional facilities, and public safety infrastructure. It would also increase long-term costs by eliminating the ability to plan, phase, and finance projects responsibly over the useful life of assets.

In closing, Cheshire County respectfully submits that HB 1427 is unnecessary, unworkable, and contrary to the existing statutory framework that already ensures fiscal discipline and public accountability. RSA Chapter 33 provides extensive controls on borrowing, debt limits, public hearings, and use of proceeds. This bill would replace that proven system with rigid prohibitions and infeasible requirements that would impair counties' ability to meet their legal obligations to the residents of New Hampshire.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the Committee find HB 1427 inexpedient to legislate.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sources
RSA 33:3
RSA 33:3-a
RSA 33:3-b
RSA 33:3-c
RSA 33:4
RSA 33:6
RSA 33:7
RSA 33:8
RSA 33:10

III. Old Business

IV. New Business

1. CCEMS Chief Kreamer said the town of Rindge reached out to CCEMS to assess a potential partnership, this request arose from JRMA proposing to pull out of Rindge. He said he has had many conversations with the Town Administrator.

Kreamer said this would hypothetically be a joint venture for short term, long term, or permanent service. All of this is in its infancy and no decisions have been made at any level.

2. Maplewood Administrator Kindopp said Cheshire Medical Center is pulling out of Maplewood Nursing Home in 60 days due to internal CMC changes. This means no Medical Director and no medical services from CMC. A Medical Director is needed to run a nursing home.

Kindopp has asked the Medical Director to stay on a bit longer to give the nursing home more time to come up with a plan to deal with these changes.

Kindopp said due to the extreme time constraints of 60 days, she is asking the Commissioners to waive RFP/bid requirements for seeking out new coverage. Kindopp said she would meet with these companies individually and seek to get a contract as soon as possible. She said she would hope to secure a one-year contract, and then go out for an RFP at the end of the one-year term.

County Administrator Coates said this does not show good faith partnership from Cheshire Medical Center.

Finance Director Trombly and Commissioner Clark said something bad must have happened to CMC.

Coates said he agrees, but our long-term relationship warrants more than a 60-day notice.

Commissioner DiBernardo asked what the Commissioners can do to support Maplewood at this time.

Coates said to reach out to any resources or contacts to seek out support, and ultimately a Medical Director.

Commissioner Clark made a motion to waive any RFP/RFA requirements due to the emergency time constraints. Commissioner Stewart seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

3. Finance Director Trombly said that Troy has asked to join the regional prosecutor program.

The Commissioners signed the agreement with Troy.

V. Consent Agenda Items:

Vote to accept the Weekly Manifests and Minutes of January 21, 2026

Commissioner Stewart made a motion to accept the manifest and minutes of January 21, Commissioner Clark seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

VI. Calendar

Action Expected: To accept the calendar as informational and to make necessary changes/additions.

VII. General Discussion for Commissioners

VIII. Nonpublic Sessions:

At 11:15AM Commissioner Clark made a motion to enter into a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a). Commissioner Stewart seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

As a result of the non-public the Commissioner's made no decisions and no votes were taken

At 12:07PM the Commissioners unanimously voted to re-enter the public session.

IX. Adjournment

At 12:08PM Commissioner Clark made a motion to adjourn, and Commissioner DiBernardo seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Minutes Recorded by:
Davis Bernstein
Director of Executive Services & Communications

Minutes Reviewed by:
Commissioner DiBernardo

Clerk, Cheshire County Commissioners