



County of Cheshire

12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431

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MINUTES

Cheshire County Delegation Meeting
Monday, March 16, 2026, 07:00 PM
County Hall Building
12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431

Present: Representatives, Hunt, Harvey, Faulkner, Fox, Parshall, Qualey, Rhodes, Newell, Germana, Jacobs, Mattson, Nalevanko, Jones, O'Rorke, Ames, Gruber, Murphy, Karasinski, Berch, Weber

Absent: Representative Thackston

Virtual:

Commissioners and Treasurer: Terry Clark, Claudia Stewart, Skipper Dibernardo

Staff: County Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, Assistant Finance Director Hall, and Director of Executive Services/Communications Bernstein

At 7:00PM Representative Cathy Harvey opened the meeting.

Harvey said the first order of business was voting to ratify the union contracts for the Department of Corrections. The contracts were approved by the Executive Committee and will be effective from April 1, 2026, to March 31, 2029.

Motion made by Representative Jones, and seconded by Representative O'Rorke to accept and ratify the collective bargaining agreement for the Department of Corrections for the term of April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2029.

The motion passed 20 to 0.

County Administrator Coates and Finance Director Trombly discussed the budget and county fund balance policy.

They noted that each year it becomes more difficult to balance the budget and thanked department heads for maintaining operations within fiscal constraints. Over the past eight years, taxes to be raised have increased by less than 1% annually. Concern was expressed about continued reliance on the fund balance, which is currently approximately 16%, within a target range of 13%–18%. Approximately \$4.2 to \$4.3 million in fund balance is proposed for use in 2026. ProShare revenue is estimated at approximately \$4 million, though this remains uncertain. The team cautioned that if revenues fall short, the fund balance could be significantly reduced, potentially impacting cash flow and leading to future tax increases or cuts in services.

Motion made by Representative Gruber, and seconded by Representative Germana to adopt the Cheshire County budget for 2026 in the amount of \$78,658,132.00.

The following questions, comments, and amendments arose before the vote.

Area Code 603

♦ County Commissioners 352-8215/Fax 355-3026 ♦ Registry of Deeds 352-0403/Fax 352-7678 ♦ Finance Department 355-0154/Fax 355-3000 – 12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431 ♦ County Sheriff 352-4238/Fax 355-3020 ♦ County Attorney 352-0056/Fax 355-3012 – 12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431 ♦ Behavioral Health Court 355-0160/Fax 355-0159 – 33 West St. Keene N.H. ♦ Department of Corrections 825 Marlboro Street, Keene, 03431 - 903-1600/Fax 352-4044 ♦ Maplewood Nursing Home & Assisted Living 399-4912/Fax 399-7005 - TTY Access 1-800-735-2964 ♦ Facilities 399-7300/Fax 399-7357 ♦ Human Resources 399-7317/399-7378/Fax 399-4429 - 201 River Rd, Westmoreland, NH 03467

Representative Newell said she supported the Executive Committee's proposed budget but she wanted to see opioid abatement settlement funds used for a recovery residence for women and/or families. She pushed the Delegation to keep this need at the top of their mind.

Commissioner Stewart said she supports the Executive Committee's proposed budget, and wants to see taxes as low as possible for taxpayers, but she wanted to stress the need for a healthy fund balance as other counties such as Belknap, Carroll, and others drew down on their fund balance too much and that resulted in double digit increases in taxes to be raised. She wanted the Delegation to consider the long-term consequences of utilizing these funds to bring down the increase in taxes to be raised.

Motion made by Representative Germana, and seconded by Representative O'Rorke to amend the Executive Committee recommended 2026 budget by \$125,000 by decreasing the amount to be set aside in Capital Reserves for EMS and to decrease offsetting EMS revenues by the same.

Finance Director Trombly explained that the amendment reflects a change in how the ambulance purchase will be funded. She said the original budget included both an expense and corresponding revenue related to placing funds into the EMS capital reserve. With the updated approach, that transfer is no longer necessary, so both the \$125,000 expense and the offsetting revenue are being removed. She emphasized that this is essentially a bookkeeping adjustment and does not impact the taxes to be raised. The overall effect is a reduction to both sides of the budget without changing the bottom-line tax impact.

The motion passed 19-1.

The amended budget motion was brought forward.

Motion made by Representative Fox, and seconded by Representative Germana to adopt the amended Cheshire County 2026 budget in the amount of \$78,533,132.00.

The motion passed 19-1.

Motion made by Representative Parshall, and seconded by Representative O'Rorke to adopt 2026 taxes to be raised by the city and towns of the County in the amount of \$30,989,160.00

The motion passed 19-1

Motion made by Representative Jacobs, and seconded by Representative Germana to set Elected Officials salaries effective January 1, 2027 to:

**County Commissioner Chair– \$14,000 per year
County Commissioners Vice Chair & Clerk \$12,500 per year**

County Treasurer – \$1,575 per year
Register of Deeds – \$70,000 per year
County Attorney – \$110,000 per year
County Sheriff – \$75,000 per year

The motion passed 16-4.

Finance Director Trombly explained that the following motion is to increase fees for the Sheriff's Department. It is a "cost of living increase" that is adopted by all Sheriff's Departments across the state, and the Delegation simply needs to sign off on it. Trombly said this will likely add \$1,000 in revenue per year.

Motion made by Representative O'Rourke, and seconded by Representative Fox to increase fees of Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs by 3.3% effective July 1, 2026.

The motion passed 20-0.

07:48PM Rep. Harvey adjourned the meeting.

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

Minutes Reviewed and Approved by:
Representative Lucy McVitty Weber
Clerk, County of Cheshire Delegation


