



## COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

### Minutes

This meeting will be conducted in person and via Zoom at  
CCEMS  
66 Lake Street  
Swanzey NH, 03446

**Zoom Call-in Number: +1 646 558 8656**

**Meeting ID: 409 748 8803**

**Pin #: 603123**

**Start Time 8:30 AM**

**Present:** Commissioners Terry Clark, Claudia Stewart, and Skipper DiBernardo

**Absent:**

**Staff:** County Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, CCEMS Chief Kreamer, Deputy Chief Bishop, Deputy Chief Atkins, County Attorney McLaughlin, HR Director May, 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 #1333: Contract Discussion, County Attorney – C. McLaughlin  
**Action Expected: To discuss a contract for the County Attorney's office to assist in the recruitment of attorneys.**

County Attorney McLaughlin said he has had two openings for several months. He said HR Director May forwarded him an email from a headhunting agency and would like to move forward pursuing this.

The fee is equivalent to 20% of the new hire's salary.

McLaughlin said one of the positions requires significant experience. He said with that needed experience will come with a \$90-95,000 salary. The other position can be someone with far less experience. He said he doesn't know if this will get anyone hired, but the headhunter firm does not get any money from the County unless they are successful in hiring someone.

McLaughlin said he is planning on hiring a law student for lesser experience role.

Commissioner Stewart asked how the fee to the company is paid out.

McLaughlin said some renegotiations of the contract would need to occur. He asked for guidance from the Commissioners on parameters her should follow within renegotiations.

Commissioner Stewart said she would like to see the 20% fee spread out over time in case the candidate quits.

HR Director May said she will research other companies that do this work as well.

Master Agenda Item #1334: Fund Balance Policy – S. Trombly

**Action Expected: To discuss and review the Commissioner’s policy on the County fund balance.**

Finance Director Trombly said she sent over the Commissioner’s fund balance policy last week.

She said the fund balance is given back subsequent budgets if the balance exceeds 18%.

She said with the recent passing of the budget the County is starting with a 15.99% fund balance. She said it would be very difficult to deal with a fund balance of 12 million dollars.

She said if the fund balance and the reserves are both expended too much, we will reach a year where the taxes have to be raised a significant amount since there will be nothing to pay down the increase in taxes to be raised.

County Administrator Coates said he doesn’t want Cheshire County to be a County that has to raise taxes by 15, 20, or 30%. He said the increase in taxes to be raised has been low over the past years and he is proud of that.

Commissioner DiBernardo asked if this was an issue of educating the Delegation Members on the significance of lowering the fund balance.

Commissioner Stewart said she attended all of the Executive Committee budget review meetings. She said this is raised by Coates and Trombly constantly.

She said that she believes some elected officials are okay with taking the risk of lowering the fund balance in order to be cautious of raising taxes in an election year.

Stewart said that she is in favor of the lowest taxes possible, but not if it done in an irresponsible way that brings on the risk of a radical tax increase in the future.

Commissioner Clark said he would like to raise the minimum recommended fund balance from 13% to 15%.

Commissioner DiBernardo agreed.

Coates said he suggested Trombly makes the change to the policy and returns next week for the Commissioners to vote on the amended policy.

### **County Administrator**

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

1. Coates said Leadership Monadnock was hosting a summit that he invited the Commissioners to. He said he would follow up with the date.

2. Coates said that the yearly Keene Legislative meeting will also be taking place in April.

### **III. Old Business**

### **IV. New Business**

1. CCEMS Chief Kreamer thanked the Commissioners for supporting the CCEMS budget. He wanted to highlight the lack of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) funding for CCEMS employees that have experienced distressing or traumatic calls. He referenced the tragic loss of the 13-year-old boy who died in Alstead last week which CCEMS responded to. He said it is hard when there are not enough resources for employees to process and work through trauma as they often must use their sick time or vacation time to recover.

Deputy Chief Bishop said the trauma can last for a long time and not just in the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event, and long-term support would be appreciated.

Coates said he wants the Commissioners and Delegation to hear more about this program and would like Kreamer and Bishop to work on a presentation on EAP.

### **V. Consent Agenda Items:**

Vote to accept the Weekly Manifests and Minutes of March 11, 2026

**Commissioner Stewart made a motion to accept the manifest and minutes of March 11, 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:**

### **IX. Adjournment**

**At 9:30AM 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