



COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Wednesday, July 8, 2026

Minutes

This meeting will be conducted in person and via Zoom at
County Hall
12 Court Street
Keene NH, 03431

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: Commissioner Stewart, with notice.

Staff: County Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, HR Director May, Grants Manager Bansley, Connected Families Director Calcutt, Sheriff Rivera, Conservation District Manager Hershon, and Director of Executive Services/Communications Bernstein

Guests: Jack Ahern (Southwest Region Planning Commission)

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.

1. Superintendent Phillips

II. Scheduled Items

Master Agenda Item #1369: Public Hearing – J. Ahern

Action Expected: To hold a public hearing on the CDBG Application for Fortune Commons Housing Project.

Commissioner Clark began, I open this public hearing to address a proposed Community Development Block Grant application.

Commissioner Clark read the following public notice.

Cheshire County Commissioners will hold two consecutive public hearings on 7/8/2026 at 8:30am at 12 Court St, Keene, 2nd floor conference room, to hear public comment on a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application proposal to the NH Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA). Up to \$750,000 annually is available on a competitive basis for housing, public facilities, economic development, and emergency

activities that directly benefit low- and moderate-income persons. Housing grant proposals may request an additional \$250,000 if they are providing permanent supportive housing and services, totaling \$1,000,000. Up to \$750,000 can be applied for in the microenterprise technical assistance category. Up to \$25,000 is available for feasibility study grants. The proposals to be considered include: 1. A proposed housing grant for \$1,000,000 in CDBG funds. A portion of funds will be subgranted to Monadnock Affordable Housing Corporation to support the construction of 30 units of affordable housing on the property of the former Saint Patrick's School in Jaffrey, NH. Permanent supportive services will be available to residents.

Clark recognized Jack Ahern to address the grant request.

Jack Ahern of the Southwest Region Planning Commission began, as required for these hearings, I will begin by providing a brief overview of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program and then provide a description of the application in question. CDBG funds are available to municipalities and counties on a competitive basis for projects that primarily benefit low- and moderate-income persons. Cheshire County is eligible to receive up to \$750,000 in CDBG funds per year in public facilities and housing grants, \$500,000 in economic development grants, and up to \$1,000,000 in funds in the microenterprise technical assistance category. Feasibility and planning study funds are also available for up to \$25,000 annually. Housing grant proposals may request an additional \$250,000 if they are providing permanent supportive housing and services. I have provided handouts describing the NH Community Development Block Grant Program eligible activities and funding amounts, and the area HUD income limits. The proposed application to the Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) is for \$1,000,000 to be subgranted, less administration costs, to Monadnock Affordable Housing Corporation, an affiliate of Keene Housing, for the construction of the Fortune Commons Housing Development in Jaffrey, NH. Located on the site of the former Saint Patrick's School, the building will consist of 30 housing units for low- and moderate-income households receiving a housing subsidy. Keene Housing intends to use its status as a Community Based Development Organization in order to use CDBG Housing funds for new construction.

I am here today with representatives from Keene Housing who can provide additional details on the proposed project.

Clark recognized the representative from Keene Housing to further address the grant request.

The Keene Housing Representatives said, "to continue our trend of building additional housing in the Monadnock region, our CBDO status is what has allowed us to construct the new housing portions that are at the Roosevelt School Building. Following that trend, we'll be using low-income housing tax credits. in the project, which takes a lot of the burden of the construction costs off of the community and makes it towards tax credit investors. There are a lot of additional funds coming into this project.

The properties that Keene Housing is currently developing through the ARM and ADMA Affordable Housing Development Corporation include project-based vouchers, which means that people who live in them pay no more than 30% of their income.

There are some set-asides in the Fortune Commons building. There are five units that are ADA

enabled units, and there will be 6 units for supportive services.

County Administrator Coates noted he is Chair of Keene Housing and a member of MAHC, but said he receives no benefits for these roles, and there is no conflict with taking part in this discussion.

Clark opened the floor to public comments and questions about the proposed CDBG project.

Seeing none, Clark opened the floor to staff and commissioners for comment.

Seeing no other public input, Clark closed the public hearing for the proposed Community Development Block Grant application.

Commissioner made a motion to approve the submittal of the application and vote to authorize County Grants Manager, Suzanne Bansley, as the Authorized Designee to sign and submit the CDBG application, and upon approval of the CDBG application, authorize the Authorized Designee to execute any documents which may be necessary to effectuate the CDBG contract. Commissioner DiBernardo seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Master Agenda Item #1370: Public Hearing – J. Ahern

Action Expected: To hold a public hearing on the Adoption of the Residential Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan (RARA).

Commissioner Clark opened the second public hearing for discussion of the Residential Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan relative to the proposed application.

I recognize Jack Ahern to address this matter.

Jack Ahern said If any displacement takes place as a result of the proposed CDBG project, the Uniform Relocation Act must be followed, which requires that any displaced household or business in a project using federal funds must be found comparable housing or commercial space in a comparable neighborhood at a comparable price. Under the certification section of the application, the County will certify that the Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance (RARA) Plan is in place, and in the event that it is discovered that this specific project does displace persons or households, a displacement implementation plan must be submitted to CDFA prior to obligating or expending funds. At this time, displacement is not anticipated for the proposed project.

Clark opened the floor to public comments and questions about the Residential Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan.

Clark opened the floor to staff and commissioners for comment.

Seeing no other public input, Clark closed the public hearing for the Anti-displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan public hearing.

Commissioner Clark made a motion to adopt the Residential Anti-displacement and

Relocation Assistance Plan. Commissioner DiBernardo seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Master Agenda Item #1371: Cost Allocation Plan, Indirect Cost Rate Policy, & Fringe Benefit Rate Policy – S. Bansley

Action Expected: Vote to approve and execute a Cost Allocation Plan and corresponding Indirect Cost Rate Policy and Fringe Benefit Rate Policy for the County to meet the requirements of the Uniformed Grant Guidance.

1. Grants Manager Bansley said these policies are required to be accepted each year. She said the fringe benefit rate is the same as last year.

Commissioner DiBernardo made a motion to approve and execute a Cost Allocation Plan and corresponding Indirect Cost Rate Policy and Fringe Benefit Rate Policy for the County to meet the requirements of the Uniformed Grant Guidance. Commissioner Clark seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Master Agenda Item #1372: Semi-Annual Report, Conservation – B. Hershon

Action Expected: To receive an informational report on the last six months of operations.

1. Conservation District Manager Hershon began her report. She said they focus on program areas of soil, water, farm life, and farm viability.

Hershon discusses bulk seed sales, crop covering, and climate resilience programs, among others.

Hershon said the team was working on the Connecticut River Watershed Planning Project to identify best practices for reducing nitrogen runoff into the river.

Master Agenda Item #1373: Semi-Annual Report, Sheriff's Department – E. Rivera

Action Expected: To receive an informational report on the last six months of operations.

1. Sheriff Rivera said they have had two retirements recently but the positions have been filled in. They are currently trying to fill in one dispatch position which they hope to have filled by the end of July.

Rivera said they are working on a grant in progress for upgrading records management systems.

He said the Courthouse is upgrading security.

2. Commissioner DiBernardo asked if it is easy to hire officers now.

Rivera said it has become easier than it was a few years ago. He said part of this is due to the fact that the Sheriff's Department can help people strike a good work-life balance.

County Administrator Coates commended the Sheriff for working hard to hire younger officers

and meeting a work-life balance that can attract the next generation of law enforcement.

Master Agenda Item #1374: Semi-Annual Report, Connected Families – D. Calcutt

Action Expected: To receive an informational report on the last six months of operations.

1. Connected Families Director Calcutt introduced Jim Fauth (KSC), the outside evaluator of Connected Families.

Calcutt gave an example of a child who was placed in foster care after his father died. He participated on the TrECC program and has moved forward to the Fast Forward Wraparound program.

Because of Connected Families' intervention, the child is doing well and was reunited with his birth mother.

Calcutt said that the System of Care Grant will reach its twelfth year. He said the county model is working very well and he is thankful for the support.

He said they are into their second year of the SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) grant. This is currently providing \$1,000,000 of funding a year; which allows for expansion of care coordination services to include brief care coordination and quicker access to intensive in-home supports.

Calcutt said the care management entity began in 2020. This is for the highest need children, those who are at risk of suicide and hospitalization.

Calcutt showed that revenue peaked in 2022 nearing \$5,000,000, and has leveled out in the past few years at \$4,000,000.

Jim Fauth of the Behavioral Health Improvement Institute at Keene State College began his portion of the presentation.

Fauth said in the five years since Connected Families became a care management entity, they are seeing, keeping kids in the home, families measurably better off, program implementation/fidelity improving, and identifying challenges and solutions.

In terms of keeping kids home, he said one of the outcomes they track is service escalation. That is when one of the families enters a program within Connected Families, do they end up needing to escalate to a higher level of service. Currently there is a very low rate of escalation which shows that the programs are doing what they intend to do.

With families being better off:

77% of TrECC cases see reliable improvements in their readiness for community living.

65% of Fast Forward cases caregivers have a reliable reduction in strain.

97% of BrECC cases with strength maintained.

Connected Families is on target with coordinator-rated benefit at discharge across programs.

Fauth said all fidelity metrics are climbing consistently.

In terms of challenges, Fauth said referrals are down 25-30% from peak. Non-enrollment is up 11-21%.

Calcutt said they are about to undergo a routine audit this month.

County Administrator

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

1. County Administrator Coates said the County's participation in the America 250 Parade went very well. He thanked everyone who participated.
2. Coates said that he is meeting with the Selectboard Chair of Winchester later today.
3. Coates asked if the Commissioners were okay with a local business hosting a block party in the parking lot of 33 West Street on Friday and Saturday September 11 & 12. He said they are fully licensed/insured and it will only impact employee parking for an hour or two on that Friday afternoon.

The Commissioners saw no issue with this.

4. Coates said the first pertinent RFP for the Rural Health Transformation Grant has been released. He said primarily the County will be pursuing funding for the Southwest NH District Fire Mutual Aid communications infrastructure upgrade, and some other EMS related projects.

5. Coates said the First Responders Appreciation event is on Sunday, August 16 from 10:00am to 3:00pm.

III. Old Business

IV. New Business

V. Consent Agenda Items:

Vote to accept the Weekly Manifests and Minutes of July 1, 2026

Commissioner Stewart made a motion to accept the manifest and minutes of July 1, 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.

1. Director of Executive Services/Communications Bernstein reminded the group that the Commissioner's meeting on July 15 is cancelled. The next meeting will be on July 22 at County Hall.

VII. General Discussion for Commissioners

VIII. Nonpublic Sessions:

IX. Adjournment

At 10:41AM 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