



COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Wednesday, August 12, 2026

Minutes

This meeting will be conducted in person and via Zoom at

County Hall – Delegation 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:

Staff: County Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, HR Director May, CCEMS Chief Kreamer, Register of Deeds Tilton, and Director of Executive Services/Communications Bernstein

Guests: Architect Michael Petrovick

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 reported on the status of repairs at the Department of Corrections following the recent power surge. He said that air conditioning service had been restored and that one of the two hot water heaters was operating, with the second still out of service. He noted that a claim had been filed through Primex at the recommendation of County Administrator Coates, and that a full timeline had been compiled documenting the loss of power, the point at which the resulting problems were identified, the calls placed to vendors, and the invoices received.

He said that a quote of approximately \$27,000 had been received from E and E Systems to perform a detailed inspection of the affected systems. He advised that when the lead engineer visited the site, staff inquired about establishing a backup capability for the future, and that no simple redundant system was available for this type of equipment.

Commissioner Stewart asked whether the disruption had affected operations.

Coates responded that the absence of air conditioning over approximately six days had created discomfort. He reported that staff managed the conditions well, providing additional

water and bringing in industrial fans, and opening activity area windows overnight to draw in cooler air. He advised that no incidents were reported.

2. HR Director May presented a request to extend a leave of absence for an employee at Maplewood Nursing Home who will exhaust Family and Medical Leave effective September 2nd. She advised that the employee sustained a significant non-work related injury with subsequent complications, and that an additional eight weeks of unpaid leave was requested, which would return the employee to work at the end of October. She noted that the employee had exhausted available paid time.

Commissioner DiBernardo made a motion to approve the non-FMLA leave of absence. Commissioner Clark seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

II. Scheduled Items

Master Agenda Item #1378: Second Quarter Budget Review – S. Trombly

Action Expected: To receive an informational report on the second quarter budget.

1. Finance Director Trombly presented the second quarter budget review and advised that the report would be presented to the Executive Committee the following Monday evening. She reported that at the six month mark of 2026, combined expenses for the nursing home and the general fund were approximately \$1,384,000 under budget, with the general fund having expended approximately 49 percent of appropriations and the nursing home approximately 46 percent.

She reported that combined revenues were approximately \$688,000 under projection, with the general fund having achieved approximately 49 percent and the nursing home 48 percent, resulting in a net favorable position of approximately \$696,000. She advised that the trend could reasonably be expected to approximately double by year end, subject to the effect of cost of living increases that took effect April 1 and additional increases occurring throughout the year.

Trombly reported that Cheshire County EMS had achieved 46 percent of revenues and expended 48 percent of appropriations as of June, reflecting a deficit of approximately \$150,000. She advised that July revenues were approximately \$340,000 against a typical month in the low \$300,000 range, that interfacility transfer and emergency billing were performing at projection, and that a contract with the City of Keene and deeper discussions with towns receiving backup coverage could narrow the gap over the balance of the year.

County Administrator Coates advised that town contracts converted to full rate effective July 1, so that 2026 reflects only half a year of the increased amount, which had been budgeted accordingly, and that the full year effect would benefit the 2027 budget.

She reported that Registry of Deeds fees appeared off the mark at this point in the year but that the Registry had recorded a strong July, including the largest payment to the

Department of Revenue on record at over one million dollars.

Trombly reported that the Connected Families program was under budget on both revenues and expenses, and that vacancies had not been filled pending confirmation that the State would refer sufficient cases to support additional staff.

Coates advised that the expectation is for each staff member to carry at least eight cases, that referral volume is affected by school not being in session, and that delays occur at the State level in turning around caseloads after intake.

Trombly added that the program was pursuing additional temporary funding related to uninsured clients, as the State contract amount had remained unchanged for many years.

She reported that miscellaneous revenue reflected a credit of approximately \$476,000 above expectation, and that a request would go before the Executive Committee to place the amount in fund balance for potential use in future budget years to offset taxes to be raised, consistent with the Board's discussion of several weeks prior.

Trombly reported on the Department of Health and Human Services additional credit of approximately \$334,000 per year, first received in 2025 and continuing through 2028, arising from the State's retention of increased federal Medicaid contributions during the COVID period. She advised that the amount had been budgeted, that the payment was received in July, and that the credit will end after 2028.

She reported that the Commissioners' budget was slightly over budget with 45 percent remaining, attributable principally to the travel line and the annual conference. She reported that the medical examiner line stood at 37 percent remaining, noting that payment for untimely deaths is a statutory obligation of the County through the County Attorney's office and is not predictable.

Trombly reported that the nursing home census stood at 115 against a budget of 120, and that the facility was working to open additional beds toward a capacity of 124. She advised that a one time distribution of approximately \$223,000 had been received from the State from excess funds in the account used to reimburse nursing homes at the Medicaid rate, the first such distribution in several years, and that the amount would help close the nursing home revenue shortfall without a budget amendment.

Master Agenda Item #1379: Semi-Annual Report, Registry of Deeds – A. Tilton
Action Expected: To receive an informational report on the last six months of operations.

Tabled to a date yet to be determined.

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 discussed the upcoming Delegation meeting. He reported that the first topic was a proposed addition of \$20,000 to the Community Kitchen, arising from concern over the cost of food and fuel, and that he had asked Barb Weisman to attend both upcoming meetings to respond to questions. He reported that the mobile pantry program in Gilsum, Richmond, Fitzwilliam, and Winchester had expanded from four months a year to year round monthly distribution through satellite pantries established in each town. He further reported that a truck purchased at the end of the prior year now makes regular trips to the New Hampshire Food Bank in Manchester with a full time driver, that more than 90 tons of food had been delivered year to date to 12 agencies across the region, and that a mobile pantry bus had been acquired and would arrive on Monday.

2. Coates said that the second topic concerned the restorative justice program. He advised that the Delegation had directed a review of available grant funding, that the review identified no grant that would fund the administrative cost of the program, and that the program had been scheduled to end December 31 in accordance with the Delegation's direction. He reported that the Director, Patrick Heneghan, had advised in May that he and his family were relocating to Canada, that his last full time day was June 26, and that he was working minimal hours to close out four remaining cases. He advised that he had consulted the Board and concluded that recruiting a replacement to work September through December was not reasonable.

He said he was expecting that the delegation would decide whether to restore funding for the restorative justice program in the 2027 budget, so that the program could continue past December 31 and be revisited in March 2027, noting that the motion adopted in March 2026 provided no authority to budget for the program after December.

III. Old Business

IV. New Business

1. County Administrator Coates provided background on the growth of CCEMS operations, noting that the service was initially conceived around two ambulances for interfacility transfers, expanded to three, and reached five following the addition of Swanzey. He advised that the facility had been constructed with capacity for six vehicles in the bays, that multiple ambulances are currently parked outside, and that an additional ambulance and a new paramedic intercept were expected in September, which would place further strain on the site.

He reported that the second floor storage area was not constructed as occupiable program space and is not handicapped accessible, notwithstanding that community trainings are held at the facility. He advised that the County had applied for a \$50,000 planning grant in order to preserve the opportunity while evaluating whether to build off the existing structures or construct new.

Coates further reported that current guidance from GO NORTH permits reimbursement for renovation of existing infrastructure rather than new construction, and that he had confirmed

with the director and assistant director of GO NORTH and with the executive director of CDFA that an enlarged footprint would be treated as the County's footprint for that purpose. He advised that GO NORTH was reportedly pursuing a waiver from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to permit new construction, and that securing a planning grant would position the County to apply in the next round for full rather than partial project funding.

Chief Kreamer stated that the department had managed well within its existing resources and that the current funding environment presented an opportunity to address the limitations of the facility. He advised that he was present principally to answer questions from the Board.

Mr. Petrovick advised that he served as architect for the current site and that the original project accomplished a great deal within a limited budget, with the priority being construction of a new building to house the ambulances. He stated that two existing buildings were adapted to function within that budget, and that the administration building received only minimal investment. He advised that the site is underutilized and that substantial opportunity exists to bring it up to the standard of a purpose built EMS facility.

Chief Kreamer reported on the composition of the department's call volume, identifying Swanze as the largest contributor at approximately 1,200 calls, followed by Winchester, with Marlborough, Westmoreland, Harrisville, Gilsum, and Stoddard comparable to one another, and Richmond and Gilsum among the lowest. He advised that he could provide town by town call figures. He noted that two ambulances were committed at that moment to a motor vehicle accident on Route 119 in Fitzwilliam.

He advised that he and Deputy Atkins had met regularly for more than two years to assess the condition of surrounding ambulance services and to plan for the possibility that a neighboring service ceases operation. He described an occasion during the summer when Keene had committed all of its units and neither Fitzwilliam, Troy, nor Winchester had coverage, leaving a single ambulance available for the City.

Commissioner Stewart asked whether the facility under consideration would prove insufficient within ten to fifteen years given the pace of growth, and whether surrounding towns coming online would exceed the planned capacity.

Kreamer responded that the site has a finite capacity for expansion, that certain towns are not geographically served from that location, and that substations would be required in those cases. He advised that the planned expansion would maximize the area reachable from the site.

Coates advised that the Board was building a fifty year building while planning for ten to twenty years of growth, and that the County would retain the ability to expand as it had at the Department of Corrections. He stated his expectation that substations would develop naturally over time, as had occurred in Westmoreland.

Mr. Petrovick advised that his firm designs public safety facilities and that the planning process includes an extensive programming discussion to translate operational criteria into present need, projected forward ten to twenty years, with consideration of what could be added to the site thereafter without major reconstruction. He stated that interiors are designed for flexibility so that changing needs can be accommodated without renovation or demolition, and that budget analysis is part of the process, including the option of building a portion of the site now with a documented path for future expansion.

County Administrator Coates said that the planning grant application had been submitted the prior week, that additional information might be requested by GO NORTH, and that the resulting plans would present both scopes for the Board's decision before proceeding to the Executive Committee and the Delegation, noting that bonding might be required. He committed to keeping the Board informed at each step.

2. Chief Kreamer read into the record a letter of appreciation received the previous evening from a family member of a patient transported from Troy to the hospital and subsequently to Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center on August 10, 2026. The patient's name and medical condition were redacted from the reading.

The letter commended the two paramedics and the emergency medical technician who provided the care, and described the crew's practice of addressing the patient directly and allowing her time to respond notwithstanding a communication impairment, turning to the family member only for clarification. The writer, who works in emergency medical services, described the crew as professional, patient, and compassionate toward both the patient and the family, and asked that the appreciation be conveyed to the three providers.

V. Consent Agenda Items:

Vote to accept the Weekly Manifests and Minutes of August 5, 2026

Tabled until the Commissioner's Meeting on Wednesday August 19, 2026

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 10:10AM 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.

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At 10:38AM the Commissioners unanimously voted to re-enter the public session.

IX. Adjournment

At 10:40AM 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