



COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Wednesday, February 12, 2025

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:

Staff: County Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, Grants Manager Bansley, HR Director May, Director of Executive Services/Communications Bernstein, and Superintendent Iosue.

Guests: Cody Morrison (Monadnock Economic Development Corp) and Mike Kowalczyk (Monadnock Region Rail Trail Collaborative)

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 #1240: Monadnock Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) Updates– C. Morrison

Action Expected: To receive updates on the ongoing work of MEDC, from Executive Director Morrison.

1. Executive Director Cody Morrison introduced himself to the Commissioners and stated that MEDC covers Cheshire County and parts of Western Hillsborough County.

He said the focus of the organization is on economic growth and development. Recent updates include a new environmental remediation program, a housing development fund, and a childcare home renovation program. Cody also mentioned the organization's plans to expand its board and undertake a strategic planning process.

The discussion with the County Commissioners also touched on the challenges faced by the organization, such as the need to adapt to changing market conditions and the importance of maintaining relationships with policymakers.

Master Agenda Item #1241: Rail Trail Updates – M. Kowalczyk

Action Expected: To receive updates on the ongoing work of the Monadnock Region Rail Trail Collaborative.

1. Mike Kowalczyk began his presentation. He said he attended this meeting to provide an update on the ongoing work of the Monadnock Region Rail Trails Collaborative to improve regional rail trails.

The collaborative is working on several projects to upgrade sections of the Cheshire Rail Trail, including completed work in Surrey and Troy, and ongoing projects in Westmoreland, Marlborough, and Troy. They are using various grants to fund the work, including Recreational Trail Program grants and private funding. The goal is to make the trails usable for a wider range of activities beyond snowmobiling. He noted some challenges, including washouts that need repair and restrictions on when tree clearing can be done due to endangered bat species.

Kowalczyk said an increased focus on marketing and communications, and the potential for partnerships with local businesses and influencers will be paramount to the success of the rail trails. He said he has partnered with the Greater Monadnock Collaborative to make this happen.

Lastly, he mentioned the ongoing efforts to secure funding for the project and the need for volunteers to drive it forward.

Master Agenda Item #1242: Semi-Annual Report, Grants Department – S. Bansley

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

1. Grants Manager Bansley began her semi-annual report.

She highlighted the complexity of managing grants, which involves understanding multiple layers of rules, including federal, state, agency, program, and grant-specific rules. She said there are at least six layers of rules for every grant.

Bansley and Grants Specialist Jen Robinson manages 44 grants, with 14 directly from the federal government, 21 passing through the state, and 3 from private sources.

Bansley also discussed the creation and implementation of policies for the county. She mentioned that the department has launched 13 new grants in the past year and has created around 15 jobs due to these grants.

She said the Sheriff's Department is the department with the most grants.

Bansley noted that the county has a record-breaking 7.4 million in award value for 2024 and is currently working on 5 to 6 grants for 2025. She emphasized the complexity of the grant writing process, which involves extensive research, coordination, and strategic planning.

She discussed the challenges and uncertainties surrounding grant writing due to the changing Federal grant landscape. Despite these challenges, she said she would continue grant writing

courses and training, potentially in early May.

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 he is presenting a policy resolution at the National Association of Counties Legislative Conference on March 1. He said the policy is focused on funding for 911 programs beyond the fire apparatus.
2. Coates said he was attending the Westmoreland Selectboard meeting on Tuesday February 18th to discuss funding for the River Road Bridge.
3. Coates said the Delegation Executive Committee is circling around a 3% tax increase. He said he has concerns with this figure as he thinks it is risky to deplete the County fund balance.

Commissioner Stewart said utilizing fund balance dollars is artificially depressing the budget, which is unnecessary.

Commissioner Clark said the County should rip the band aid off and go with the 6% increase.

Coates said the County has had the lowest average taxes to be raised over the past years, averaging at .5%.

III. Old Business

IV. New Business

V. Consent Agenda Items:

Vote to accept the Weekly Manifests and Minutes of February 5, 2025

Commissioner Stewart made a motion to approve the manifests and minutes of February 5. 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

General Discussion 2025 #1

Fleet Management Consideration

1. Commissioner Clark said he would start conversations about implementing a centralized fleet management system for all of the departments that have vehicles.

VIII. Nonpublic Sessions:

At 11:53 the Commissioners unanimously moved to enter into a nonpublic session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(d) consideration of the acquisition, sale or lease of real or personal property which, if discussed in public, would likely benefit a party or parties whose interests are adverse to those of the general community.

At 12:38PM the Commissioners voted unanimously to exit the nonpublic.

As a result of the nonpublic no votes were taken and no decisions were made.

IX. Adjournment

At 12:40PM Commissioner Clark made a motion to adjourn, and Commissioner Stewart 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