



COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Wednesday, March 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, HR Director May, Grants Specialist Jennifer Robinson, and Superintendent Iosue.

Guests: Terry Johnson & J.B Mack (Southwest Regional Planning Commission), Chris Minkler & A.J Paige (Ruck-Up)

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. HR Director May said a Maplewood employee needs an additional 6 weeks of non-FMLA leave of absence.

Commissioner Stewart made a motion to approve the extension. Commissioner Clark seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

2. May said a Sheriff's Department employee needs 8 weeks of non-FMLA leave of absence.

Commissioner Stewart made a motion to approve the leave of absence. Commissioner Clark seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

II. Scheduled Items

Master Agenda Item #1247: DHHS Opioid Abatement Program Grant Agreement– J. Robinson

Action Expected: Vote to accept and sign the grant agreement amendment, which will add two years through June 30, 2027 and add \$188,375 funds for the DHHS Opioid Abatement Program grant and no match to provide recovery coaching, peer mentoring, and recovery support services to Cheshire County Drug Court

participants.

1. Commissioner DiBernardo was asked to sign the document approving the grant agreement later in the day of the meeting.

Commissioner Clark motioned to accept and sign the grant agreement amendment, which will add two years through June 30, 2027 and add \$188,375 funds for the DHHS Opioid Abatement Program grant and no match to provide recovery coaching, peer mentoring, and recovery support services to Cheshire County Drug Court participants. Commissioner Stewart seconded, upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Master Agenda Item #1248: Transit Project Presentation– T. Johnson

Action Expected: To receive updates on the ongoing transportation project from Southwest Regional Planning Commission.

1. J.B Mack began the presentation on the "Next Generation Transit System" in the Monadnock region, focusing on Cheshire County and Western Hillsborough County.

Terry Johnson explained the need for improved transit services, highlighting the limitations of current options and the potential benefits of a micro transit system modeled after Uber and Lyft.

They proposed expanding service hours, increasing coverage areas, and implementing a mobile app-based system to improve convenience and efficiency. The plan aims to increase ridership by 125%, provide access to 70% more people and 46% more jobs, and offer shorter wait times and trip durations. The presenters suggested Cheshire County as a potential sponsor for the project and emphasize the importance of partnerships to ensure its success.

Mack and Johnson said there will be a focus on expanding services in the greater Keene area and providing critical ride services to outlying towns.

Commissioner Stewart asked what their “ask” was.

Johnson said the request was to fully take on the transit system for the region, and provide a source of funding.

Stewart said this would be taxpayer funded, and she has severe concerns with the program since the majority of the program is Keene-centric.

Mack said critical ride services would be available for surrounding towns.

Stewart said she would not support this initiative in any way shape or form if it is to be tax payer funded. She said it would need to benefit the majority of towns in the County for it to make any sense, and since the presenters said surrounding towns would only benefit from “critical rides” this is wildly disproportionate.

Commissioner Clark said this presentation will be brought to County Delegation meeting on March 24th.

Master Agenda Item #1249: Ruck-Up Presentation– C. Minkler & A.J Paige

Action Expected: To receive updates on the mission of Ruck-Up.

1. Chris Minkler explained that Ruck-Up is a veteran support organization founded 15 years ago, it focuses on three main pillars: advocacy, counseling, and outreach.

Paige explained that the organization helps veterans with housing, mental health and substance abuse counseling, and assistance with VA/Social Security claims.

Paige explained that Ruck Up provided over \$93,000 in housing assistance last year and helped secure nearly \$1.9 million in VA and Social Security claims for veterans. The organization also runs support groups and suicide prevention initiatives, emphasizing the importance of maintaining the team mentality veterans experienced during their service.

Minkler explained that Ruck Up needs funding and volunteers to expand their services and requested support from the county.

County Administrator Coates brought up a potential idea for short-term funding of \$20,000, with options to use either opiate lawsuit funds or the Hemenway Fund.

Commissioner Clark made a motion to utilize \$10,000 from the Hemenway Fund to distribute to Ruck-Up, and an additional \$10,000 from the Opiate Lawsuit funds (pending Executive Committee & full Delegation approval), for a total of \$20,000. Commissioner Stewart seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

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 peak flooding week has passed, and Partridge Brook Road thankfully did not flood. He said it is important we continue to monitor it regardless.

2. Coates said he will be meeting Mayor of Keene Jay Kahn for lunch soon.

3. Coates said Finance Director Trombly, CCEMS Leadership, and himself will meet with City Manager Elizabeth Ferland in the coming weeks to discuss long term planning between CCEMS and Keene Fire.

4. Coates said all the Commissioners have been signed up to attend the Magnify Monadnock Gala hosted by the Greater Monadnock Collaborative on March 19th at 5:30PM at Keene State.

5. Coates said Commissioner Stewart testified at the State House against a bill that would harm CCEMS. He said her testimony was very strong and helpful.

III. Old Business

IV. New Business

1. Commissioner Clark stated we have 106 residents at Maplewood, he asked how many of them are on Medicaid.

Coates said the total was 85.

V. Consent Agenda Items:

Vote to accept the Weekly Manifests and Minutes of February 26, 2024

Commissioner Clark made a motion to approve the minutes of February 26th with the changes discussed, and Commissioner Stewart 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

At 10:51AM Commissioner Clark made a motion to enter into a non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II (a). Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

*RSA 91-A:3, II (a) The dismissal, promotion, or compensation of any public employee or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him or her, **unless** the employee affected (1) has a right to a public meeting, and (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted.*

At 11:49AM the Commissioners voted to unanimously exit the non-public. As a result of the non-public no decisions were made, and no actions were taken.

VIII. Adjournment

At 11:49AM 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