



## COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Wednesday, April 23, 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, Director of Executive Services/Communications Bernstein, Grants Manager Bansley, Treatment Court and Behavioral Health Court Coordinator/Project Director Welsh, Register of Deeds Tilton, and Field Specialist Majewski.

**Guests:** Mike Kowalczyk (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 #1257: Sole Source contract with Brian Meyer, Ph.D. – S. Bansley, A. Welsh

**Action Expected: Vote to authorize sole source of Trauma-Responsive Treatment Court Consultant contract with Dr. Brian Meyer for \$82,589 from May 1, 2025 to August 30, 2026. Sole source from Brian Meyer is in the best interest of the County because after solicitation of a number of sources, competition was determined inadequate, Meyer was the only proposal received, and it meets all the requirements and criteria. This contract will be funded through a Drug Court Discretionary Grant from the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance.**

1. Treatment Court and Behavioral Health Court Coordinator/Project Director Welsh said Dr. Meyer reduced his quote for this project as a favor to the County. He is the only one able to do this work directly in the area.

Meyer will teach the team how to be trauma aware with progress to being trauma informed to

finally being trauma responsive.

**Commissioner Clark made a motion to authorize sole source of Trauma-Responsive Treatment Court Consultant contract with Dr. Brian Meyer for \$82,589 from May 1, 2025 to August 30, 2026. Sole source from Brian Meyer is in the best interest of the County because after solicitation of a number of sources, competition was determined inadequate, Meyer was the only proposal received, and it meets all the requirements and criteria. This contract will be funded through a Drug Court Discretionary Grant from the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance. Commissioner Stewart seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.**

Master Agenda Item #1258: American Trails Capacity Grant Agreement – S. Bansley, M. Kowalczyk

**Action Expected: Vote to accept and sign the grant agreement and related documents for \$9,350 and no match to rehab the Cheshire Rail Trail North 1.6-mile section from the Surry/Keene town line to the Aimee Brown trail header located in Keene, NH.**

1. President of the Rail Trail Collaborative Kowalczyk said this project will complete the Northern section of the rail trail project.

He said they will be looking at expanding the trail through Fitzwilliam in 2026.

Grants Manager Bansley said she hasn't heard from the funder recently. She said she assumes this funder is very informal and they are likely inundated with applications and awards to dole out.

This project won't begin until further discussions with the funder occurs.

**Commissioner DiBernardo made a motion to accept and sign the grant agreement and related documents for \$9,350 and no match to rehab the Cheshire Rail Trail North 1.6-mile section from the Surry/Keene town line to the Aimee Brown trail header located in Keene, NH. Commissioner Clark seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.**

Master Agenda Item #1259: FTA Section 5310 NHDOT RCC Program Grant Agreement – S. Bansley

**Action Expected: Vote to accept and to authorize Chris Coates sign the grant agreement and related documents for up to \$312,200 per fiscal year or \$624,400 total and up to \$78,050 match per fiscal year or \$156,100 total. Funds will be used to provide accessible transport, mobility management services for seniors & individuals w/disabilities. Match to be met entirely by volunteer driver hours.**

1. Grants Manager Bansley said this program is a large collaboration including Southwest Regional Planning Commission, Community Volunteer Transportation Company, Home Healthcare Hospice and Community Services, and Keene Senior Center.

**Commissioner Stewart made a motion to accept and to authorize Chris Coates sign the grant agreement and related documents for up to \$312,200 per fiscal year or \$624,400 total and up to \$78,050 match per fiscal year or \$156,100 total. Funds will be used to**

**provide accessible transport, mobility management services for seniors & individuals w/disabilities. Match to be met entirely by volunteer driver hours. Commissioner Clark seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.**

Master Agenda Item #1260: NH DOS Traffic Enforcement Grant Application & Agreement – S. Bansley

**Action Expected: Vote to apply to, and if awarded to accept, and to authorize Chris Coates sign any application documents and agreements and/or related documents for up to \$8,500 plus \$2,125 match for Oct 1, 2025 to Sep 30, 2026 to conduct patrols and reimburse officers' overtime. Match to be met by dispatchers time during the patrols.**

1. Grants Manager Bansley said this program funds overtime for deputies to perform high traffic patrol areas. This will commit at least one patrol for each date range, for a total of four minimum.

Commissioner Clark asked for a report from when this grant was previously received and utilized four years ago.

Bansley said she would get the Commissioners that report.

Commissioner Clark said he is not supportive of the grant as it appears to be downshifting to local law enforcement entities and does not properly reimburse the County. He said the state of NH receives millions of dollars through the grants, and delivers pennies on the dollar to counties.

Bansley said she brought this forward well before the deadline so there is no rush to complete this vote.

Commissioner Stewart said she did not feel comfortable taking a vote on this today.

The Commissioners determined they would ask Sheriff Rivera to attend a future meeting to discuss this further.

**Commissioner DiBernardo made a motion to table the motion until the next Commissioner's meeting on April 30 or May 7. Commissioner Stewart seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.**

Master Agenda Item #1261: Semi-Annual Report, UNH Cooperative Extension – C. Majewski

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

1. Field Specialist Majewski began by saying the Extension has hired a new forester, and she will be starting soon. With the gap in the position the former Cheshire County forester and the Sullivan County forester have been filling in and helping until the new person begins.

He said that Christine with Nutrition Connection has had a very positive impact. The program surrounds supporting low income audiences with improved nutrition. She works with local schools and introduces healthy snack alternatives for example.

Commissioner Stewart asked if the program is only focused on low income audiences.

Majewski said yes.

Majewski said the 4-H program is going smoothly and they recently had an event with 4-H kids from across the County. The kids practiced their communications skills by doing demonstrations, having presentations, and working on public speaking while utilizing topics that interest them. This allows them to develop skills that will be helpful as they grow up.

Master Agenda Item #1262: Presentation of Bids, Website Redevelopment – D. Bernstein  
**Action Expected: To discuss and decide on a vendor to work with for the redevelopment of Cheshire County's website.**

1. Director of Executive Services/Communications Bernstein said this bidding process was open for a little over a month. He said that 10 bids were received and he had three bids for the Commissioners to assess.

He said that other bids were not brought forward for a multitude of reasons, notably cost, lack of innovation, and too long of a timeline.

Bernstein said the three bids were from Snowberry Media, Planetaria Media, and the Communicators Group.

Bernstein said the Communicators Group is locally based, Planetaria is based out of California but has worked with local organizations who have stated the time difference was unproblematic, and Snowberry Media which is based out of Pennsylvania.

Bernstein said the bid totals were as follows:

Snowberry - \$12,700

Planetaria - \$24,440

Communicators Group – 24,500 – 33,950

Bernstein said the timelines were as follows:

Snowberry – 14-16 weeks

Planetaria – 4-6 months

Communicators Group – 4-6 months

The Commissioners had several questions, and explored various website examples from the three bids received.

The Commissioners stated they were happy with the options presented but they would like to think about it and explore for a week.

**The Commissioners will revisit this issue on April 30.**

### **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 stated the Leadership in 3 Acts event went incredibly well on April 16.

HR Director May said 117 people attended the leadership opportunity.

Commissioner Stewart said she would like to see more town leadership attend opportunities like this.

2. Coates said the County has submitted a proposal to Winchester NH to serve as their primary ambulance service.

Commissioner Clark asked if they have the money for the contract even though they have already had their town meeting where they solidified their budget.

Coates said they have the money available.

3. Coates said a meeting was held on Tuesday April 22 with facilities directors, and department heads of facilities. The meeting's purpose was to discuss capital planning, contracts, and fleet management.
4. Coates said the Westmoreland Select-board has voted to keep the River Road bridge closed.
5. Coates said the County will be taking on the three apartments above Barn and Thistle in Westmoreland for housing for traveling nurses.

Coates noted that the apartments are owned by his Sister in Law but he does not benefit from renting these apartments.

The Commissioners voiced their support for this idea.

Commissioner DiBernardo asked how much the rent is.

Coates said it is the same amount as the Valley St apartments we currently hold which we will no longer have after transitioning to these apartments.

6. Coates said the elevator is in working order at Maplewood
7. Coates said CCEMS leadership, Finance Director Trombly, and himself met with Cheshire Medical Center for general updates on the partnership between CCEMS and CMC.

### **III. Old Business**

### **IV. New Business**

1. Grants Manager Bansley brought forward a request to submit an application for funding to expand the rail trail system in Fitzwilliam, this will be for more than four miles of trails.

**Commissioner Clark made a motion to approve the submittal of the grant application. Commissioner DiBernardo seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.**

2. Grants Manager Bansley said due to the scale back of many grant programs as well as the funding freeze there has been a major reduction in grants available.

She said that the Department of Justice will be releasing many grants towards the end of June, including a grant that the County will likely apply for to go towards the Sheriff's office.

Bansley said the amount of grants available on Grants.gov is likely 1/5 or 1/10 of the typical amount of available grants. She suspects many of the grants will return with changes.

Bansley said the federal government is shuddering any grants that mention DEI.

Bansley said she was worried about the solar grant for the red barn, but thankfully they have received notice that the grant is likely to be funded.

County Administrator Coates said it sounded like we were insulated from most of the federal changes in relation to current grants.

Bansley agreed and said she has been putting in a lot of time to ensure we have a low amount of risk and exposure with grants.

Commissioner DiBernardo said he fully agreed with Bansley's assessment.

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

Vote to accept the Weekly Manifests and Minutes of April 9, 2025

1. **Commissioner Clark made a motion to approve the manifest and minutes of April 9, 2025. Commissioner Stewart seconded the motion. 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 11:33AM 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