



## COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Wednesday, June 25, 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, Director of IT Hummel, Systems Administrator Melissa Beckford, Water/Wastewater Chief Operator Riendeau, Maplewood Facilities Director Newman, Sheriff Rivera, HR Director May, and Superintendent Iosue

**Guests:** Jack Ahern & Todd Horner (Southwest Regional 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.

#### **II. Scheduled Items**

Master Agenda Item #1275: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Mid-Grant Hearing, Monadnock Peer Support – J. Ahern

**Action Expected: Conduct mid-grant public hearing for the Monadnock Peer Support CDBG grant.**

**The Chair opened the first public hearing for discussion and public comment on the Community Development Block Grant project at 8:38am**

Jack Ahern, Associate Planner with Southwest Regional Planning Commission explained that it is a requirement of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to hold public hearing while the project is underway to allow the public the opportunity to comment and ask questions about the project. Jack Ahern described the project being discussed today as a \$750,000 Public Facilities Grant subgranted to Monadnock Peer Support (MPS) to renovate their facility located at 24 Vernon Street, Keene, NH. To date \$20,686 in funds have been drawn down for project costs. Jack Ahern provided the following details on the status of the

project: Renovation of the subject building is estimated to be 30% complete. The project has experienced several setbacks, including executive leadership turnover at Monadnock Peer Support, budget shortfalls that required extensive value engineering, and the discovery of asbestos containing materials in the building that were not found by initial hazardous materials testing. MPS has a viable strategy of asbestos abatement in place and it is not anticipated that the work will cause delays in the overall construction timeline.

**The Chair opened the floor to public comment on the projects.**

**The Chair closed the public hearing at 8:54am**

Master Agenda Item #1276: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Mid-Grant Hearing, Transformational Planning Grant – J. Ahern

**Action Expected: Conduct mid-grant public hearing for the Transformational Planning Grant.**

**The Chair opened the second public hearing for discussion and public comment on the Community Development Block Grant project at 8:55am.**

Jack Ahern, Associate Planner with SWRPC explained that it is a requirement of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to hold public hearing while the project is underway to allow the public the opportunity to comment and ask questions about the project. Jack Ahern described the project being discussed today as a Transformational Planning Grant in the amount of \$100,000 awarded to Cheshire County and sub-granted to Southwest Regional Planning Commission. The funds, less administrative costs, are to assist municipalities and other organizations in addressing the state-wide affordable housing shortage through a variety of planning, coordination, and technical assistance activities. To date \$37,752 in funds have been drawn down for project costs. Jack Ahern provided the following details on the status of the project: Southwest Region Planning Commission organized an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) design challenge, which engaged architects to develop ADU concepts for existing properties in the Monadnock Region. Nashua Regional Planning Commission has focused on facilitating the redevelopment of a 14-acre parcel in Merrimack that was a former junkyard and is designated as a brownfield site for affordable housing. Rockingham Planning Commission has been working with the Town of Hampton to expand their affordable housing stock through zoning changes and public outreach with developers and landowners. Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission is working to build an understanding of housing's impact on employee retention in their region and solicit interest in reviewing underutilized property to build workforce housing. The Chair opened the floor to public comment on the projects.

**Chair closed the public hearing at 8:58am**

Master Agenda Item #1277: Wastewater Treatment Plant Clean Water State Revolving Fund Loan Application Signing – S. Trombly, A. Newman & R. Riendeau

**Action Expected: Signing of the loan application by the County Commissioners.**

Finance Director Trombly explained that she informed the Commissioners of this loan a few meetings back.

Through the loan process, Trombly said that we do not have the proper approval from the County Delegation to incur debt yet. She suggested that the Commissioners sign the document today, and she will check with the Clean Water State Revolving Fund if it is alright for the County Delegation to sign off on this in August.

Rob Riendeau said an energy audit revealed that a VFD which runs blowers on our lagoons are integral towards filtering wastewater needed to be replaced.

Unbeknownst to Riendeau and Aaron Newman due to previous staff turnover, they were awarded the loan with 50% forgiveness. The loan is for \$5,000.

Aaron Newman explained that they budgeted for this project, but due to being approved for the loan with a \$2,500 forgiveness of the \$5,000 loan, they wanted to complete the loan process.

Commissioner Stewart asked why should we take on debt.

Newman said that he was in favor of it because of the forgivable portion which will allow for the budgeted funds for this project to remain.

A motion was not brought forward and the Commissioners chose not to move forward with the loan application due to the timeline associated with the County Delegation meeting in August and the lack of interest in taking on any additional debt.

**The Commissioners directed Riendeau to move forward with the project with the budgeted funds.**

Master Agenda Item #1278: Semi-Annual Report, Information Technology – R. Hummel  
**Action Expected: To receive an informational report from the Director of IT on the last six months of operations.**

IT Director Hummel explained they have three FTEs open, with one new hire starting on July 14. He said that no known incidents of compromise have occurred.

He said that phishing scams have been reduced, but direct mail and group chat attacks have increased.

Vendor support and equipment availability has increased.

Hummel said he has received 56 applications since April, and only one of those applicants was qualified for a role with the IT Department.

Hummel said they are upgrading the network backbone. Server to server backups will be 10 times faster. Hummel said the average user will not see much change except for potentially faster download speeds on large files.

Hummel brought up concerns about AI programs and presented a draft AI application policy for County employees for the County Commissioners to review and consider.

Hummel said he is not necessarily concerned about basic use of AI for grammar checks, or refining writing. But he does have concerns about secure information such as at Maplewood Nursing Home or the Department of Corrections.

### **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 City of Keene and the Cheshire County Historical Society has asked that the County be involved in the 250th birthday of the founding of the United States. Coates requested more information on what this will look like.

2: Coates said that Mark Singer reaches out to him every six months representing a business called Recover Care offering to buy Maplewood Nursing Home. The Commissioners said absolutely not.

3: Coates said Don Bliss, Communications Director Bernstein, and himself met with Mark Doyle of NH 911 to discuss funding through the 911 tax for the Southwest NH District Fire Mutual Aid. Doyle said there is not funding available.

4: Coates thanked everyone at Cheshire County EMS for supporting Keene Fire during the funeral of Lieutenant Aaron Cooper. CCEMS covered Keene's contracted calls from Thursday night to Saturday morning.

Coates said Delegation Hall was ready to serve as an overflow room for the funeral if necessary.

Coates said the funeral was a wonderful tribute to Lieutenant Cooper and recognized Keene Fire for their loss.

5: Coates noted that there was a large gas leak at Home Depot this past week. Cheshire County EMS was there nearly instantly. The Keene Fire Union posted a thank you to all services that were involved in the gas leak, but purposefully thanked, and then deleted the thank you to CCEMS. Coates said it is disappointing for the teams that were there to help during this emergency.

6: Coates thanked those who helped organized the Summer BBQ that was hosted by the Cheshire County Employee's Association. He specifically recognized HR Director May and Finance Director Trombly for their work setting the event up.

7: Coates said the presentation to the Town of Stoddard went very smoothly. He said the set presentation they have for contracted towns is airtight.

Coates said it was great to hear the Stoddard Chief talk so highly of CCEMS.

**III. Old Business**

**IV. New Business**

1: Director of Executive Services/Communications Bernstein said the website redevelopment is going well.

**V. Consent Agenda Items:**

Vote to accept the Weekly Manifests and Minutes of June 18, 2025

**Commissioner Clark made a motion to approve the manifests and minutes of June 18, 2025. Commissioner DiBernardo 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**

**VIII. Nonpublic Sessions:**

**IX. Adjournment**

**At 10:18AM 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