



COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Wednesday, September 3, 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 10:30 AM

Present: Commissioners Terry Clark, Claudia Stewart, and Skipper DiBernardo

Absent:

Staff: County Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, County Treasurer Wozmak, HR Director May, Director of Executive Services/Communications Bernstein, and Superintendent Phillips

Guests:

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: County Treasurer Wozmak presented the following letter;

“I read, with interest, the front-page article in the Keene Sentinel regarding the problems at the Mutual Aid dispatch center. The report in the Sentinel points to significant problems with operational performance, internal culture problems, dangerous equipment failures that put the region at significant risk, indecisive leadership, a frustrated board, and low morale among employees. The Sentinel article states that there are issues with leadership’s capacity to execute strategies. The report contained thirty recommendations so there are other, more detailed, problems identified in the full report.

If everything in the article is true, there are serious problems that deserve dramatic and immediate attention by those who have a fiduciary and legal obligation to operate and oversee this critical emergency service to the region. The Sentinel article suggests that there has been a failure at both the leadership level and the Board of Director level.

I bring this information to the County Commissioners because the County has been the lead agency for securing approximately \$2.7 million in federal and state funding (to date) for the

nearly \$5 million needed to rebuild the infrastructure of the mutual aid network.

While the County has no oversight role in Mutual Aid, we offered county resources to help get the funding that Mutual Aid was otherwise not capable of securing.

But let's be clear, as the entity that secured these funds for Mutual Aid, the County has an obligation, legally and ethically to assure that any funds distributed to Mutual Aid for the infrastructure project are only distributed once the Mutual Aid Board and leadership have demonstrated that they have the capacity, systems and leadership to expend those funds according to federal guidelines and in compliance with normal financial accounting principles. They must show that they have the competence and the capacity to run the organization. The Sentinel article suggests that, currently, they do not.

As the elected County Treasurer for Cheshire County, I have a legal and fiduciary obligation to expend funds authorized by the County Commissioners in a manner that is appropriate, sound, transparent and in compliance with financial and regulatory rules.

In view of my fiduciary obligations regarding County funds, I am putting the County Commissioners on notice that I will refuse to transfer any funds to Southwest Fire District Mutual Aid unless there are confirmed, public assurances that competence and capacity issues have been resolved at the at SW Fire District Mutual Aid.”

Commissioner Clark said he did not want to make any decisions today.

The Commissioners agreed with Wozmak on how concerning the report is, but would like to invite Don Bliss from Municipal Resources Inc. to discuss the report he authored at the September 17 Commissioner's meeting.

II. Scheduled Items

Master Agenda Item #1291: Signing of the MS-45 – S. Trombly

Action Expected: To have the Commissioners sign the MS-45 form for the Department of Revenue Administration.

1: Finance Director Trombly said this form presents the County's audited financial statements to the Department of Revenue Administration and needs to be signed by the Clerk of the Commission.

Clerk Skip DiBernardo signed the MS-45 form.

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 asked whether the Commissioners were interested in selling a plot of land owned by the County in Westmoreland.

The Commissioners determined they were not interested.

2: Coates said that due to businesses struggling throughout the County, he plans to utilize extra funding originally used for the County Conversations podcast to help highlight and promote local businesses.

III. Old Business

IV. New Business

V. Consent Agenda Items:

Vote to accept the Weekly Manifests and Minutes of August 27, 2025

Commissioner Stewart made a motion to accept the manifest and minutes of August 27, 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.

1: County Administrator Coates said the County Commissioners will be meeting at the September 4 Keene City Council Meeting at 7:00pm.

2: Coates said the Commissioners and CCEMS leadership will attend the Keene City Council Meeting on Thursday September 4 at 7:00pm.

3: Coates said he would be meeting with the Westmoreland Selectboard on October 21 at 1:00pm to discuss funding of the river road bridge.

4: Coates said Trombly informed him the County would be receiving \$86,000 in Opioid abatement funding.

VII. General Discussion for Commissioners

VIII. Nonpublic Sessions:

At 11:03AM 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.

As a result of the non-public the Commissioner's directed Attorney Closson to begin drafting a letter with the Commissioner's decision regarding the appeal of the recommendation for termination.

At 11:50AM the Commissioners unanimously voted to re-enter the public session.

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

IX. Adjournment

At 12:25PM 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