

**MINUTES**  
**Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting**  
**Wednesday, November 24, 2021**  
**County Hall Building**  
**12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03431**

**Conference Call Information**  
**Phone Call-in Number: +1 646 558 8656**  
**Meeting ID: 409 748 8803**  
**Pin #: 6031233**

**Present:** Commissioners Jack Wozmak, Robert Englund, and Terry Clark  
**Staff:** County Administrator Coates; Finance Director Trombly, Assistant Finance Director Hall, Nursing Home Administrator Kindopp, and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard.  
**Guest(s):**

At 8:31 AM, Commissioner Wozmak opened the meeting, and Administrator Coates conducted a roll-call with the Commissioners, Wozmak and Englund, responding as "present."

At 8:32 AM, the Commissioners opened the floor for public comment and Department Head updates.

Public Comment: None

Master Agenda Item #993: 2022 Employee Holiday Calendar.  
Action Expected: To review and approve the 2022 Holiday Calendar.

**The Commissioners reviewed the proposed 2022 Holiday Calendar, and Commissioner Englund moved to accept the document, and Wozmak seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote, the motion was approved unanimously.**

Master Agenda Item #935: County EMS RFI Responses were then taken up for discussion. Commissioner Wozmak and Administrator Coates spoke to the recently issued Request for Information document for a potential County Emergency Medical Systems (EMS) building renovation or construction. Coates explained the history of the request for qualifications. Wozmak said this was done to have contractors of record qualified through a public process available to help work for the new County EMS department.

**Wozmak moved to accept DEW and SUR as qualified contractors of record for projects related to work that needed to be accomplished to establish the County EMS department. Commissioner Englund seconded the motion, and upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

Master Agenda Item #936: Discussion and vote to set Private Pay Nursing Home and Assisted Living daily rates for 2022. Finance Director Trombly spoke to the suggested five percent increase for the nursing home residents and said that the daily rate was currently \$341.00 and will need to be raised to \$358.00 per day to cover increased costs. She also noted that the Therapeutic Living Center (TLC) rates currently at \$366.00 per day will move to \$384.00 on February 1, 2022. She then discussed that the Assisted Living Facility rate would need to change from \$3,200.00 per month to 3,255.00 per month to cover the increased costs.

**Following extended discussions, Commissioner Englund moved to accept the rate changes and was seconded by Commissioner Wozmak. On roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

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Master Agenda Item: #934: Commissioners 2022 Budget

**Action Expected: To review, approve, and submit to the Delegation the Commissioners 2022 Budget Recommendations.**

Coates discussed the Delegation meeting that will be held on December 13, 2021, to review the proposed Commissioners budget and said that the delegation executive committee budget review meetings would begin in January. Director Trombly noted that a letter would be sent to the Treasurer to request their appearance for the December 13<sup>th</sup> meeting and asked for the Commissioners to authorize the sending of the letter.

**Commissioner Wozmak moved to authorize the Finance Director to send the letter requesting the presence of the County Treasurer at the December 13<sup>th</sup> delegation meeting on behalf of the Commissioners, and Commissioner Englund seconded the motion, and upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

A discussion of the County's long-term debt obligations for the Department of Corrections and the 33 Winter Street building and other expenses was discussed at length. It was also discussed that the Energy improvement project is expected to decrease heating, cooling, and electrical costs at the Department of Corrections, 33 Winter Street, 33 West Street, and 12 Court Street buildings.

**Commissioner Englund moved to accept the proposed 2022 budget as presented by the staff with an overall projected increase of 1.85% and to recommend the budget to the Delegation for consideration. Commissioner Wozmak seconded the motion, and upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

Coates was then recognized for the Weekly Operations report.

Coates said that a meeting is planned today with an attorney to discuss possible COVID exemptions that go into effect nationwide on December 5, 2021. He noted that eight employees will be leaving due to the mandate and that another eight to nine staff members are requesting exemptions due to religious or health concerns.

A discussion of the impact on nursing census and the temporary closing of one of the floors due to staffing shortages began. It was learned that for the week of November 5 – 11 that 983 tests were conducted at Cheshire Medical Center and that 84 tests were positive. This last week there were a total of 998 tests and with 837 negative and 161 positives showing an alarming increase in the overall percentage of infections. The result is that the COVID positivity rate was 8.5% and is now 16.1%. This is a significant surge before the holidays and is very concerning.

Coates said that the Monadnock Interfaith Project would contact the Commissioners to discuss affordable housing and look for support in constructing affordable housing in the community.

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Commissioner Wozmak asked if the current housing programs run by other agencies shouldn't be involved as the County has never been directly involved in constructing and managing housing in the County.

Coates then said that he plans to meet other towns, including Alstead, Gilsum, Harrisville, Marlow, and Sullivan, in the coming weeks to review and discuss the potential impact of the County EMS project. He said that once these meetings are concluded, he will have met with all of the towns in the County.

Old Business: None

New Business: Patrick Heneghan spoke at the Keene Elm City Rotary meeting at the request of Commissioner Englund, and the response was very positive. A follow-up meeting with Heneghan will be scheduled with the Commissioner in early 2022.

**Consent Agenda: Minutes of 11/17/2021 and Manifests for the week. Commissioner Wozmak moved the consent agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. The motion passed with unanimous consent upon roll call vote.**

General Discussion: Commissioner Wozmak spoke to the delegation's support, which overwhelmingly supported the EMS program. He said that he had ordered an ambulance, and interviews for a billing company would happen shortly. A conference call with attorneys to obtain the Medicare application agreement are underway.

Master Agenda Item #937: Maplewood Nursing Home - Staffing - K. Kindopp  
**Action Expected: To receive as informational a report of staffing issues affecting the nursing home.**

Kindopp provided background information on the current state of staff vaccinations at the nursing home with 85% vaccinated. Ten requests for exemptions based on medical or religious issues.

She stated that the most impacted areas are dietary, almost all second shift positions. Several operational changes and menu changes have been put into place to help relieve the staffing shortage.

Kindopp said several nurses have chosen not to get vaccinated, including some of the traveling nurses and a few staff nurses. She said the only way to provide the needed level of care is to the residents is to shut down one of the floors to lower the number of required staff. She said the third floor is being targeted for closing, and residents will be moved to the second and fourth floors.

Kindopp said this would allow the staffing rate to rise to about 90% once the floor is closed. Also affected will be the available LNA's to support the daily operations. Housekeeping, dietary, and laundry

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will also have fewer demands placed on the departments and contribute to relieving the staffing shortage.

Trombly said that one of the issues discussed was to highlight the need for fully vaccinated staff and noted that several outreach programs identify and attract these individuals to the County via job fairs and advertising.

A discussion of possibly seeking out retired nurses and other retired personnel to supplement the workforce was covered. Outdated rules and regulations severely hampered the training requirements for conducting nursing and additional medical training.

Wozmak asked about the status of telehealth program usage, and Kindopp said that the nursing home is still using the service, but some programs are being shut down nationally.

Englund asked about vaccine exemptions and specifically religious exemptions. Kindopp said that a meeting with an attorney to discuss this issue is scheduled for today. The medical exemption is much more structured and objective, and it is easy to understand the qualifications.

**At 10:09 AM, Commissioner Clark joined the meeting.**

**At 10:12 AM, there being no further public business to conduct, Commissioner Clark moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

Recorded and edited by:  
R. Bouchard  
Assistant County Administrator

Reviewed and submitted by:  
Terry Clark  
Clerk, Board of Commissioners