

MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, December 15, 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, Suzanne Bansley, Behavioral Health Director Welsh, Communications Director Crowell, Sheriff Rivera, Nursing Home Administrator Kindopp, and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard.

Guest(s): Jamie Trowbridge, President/CEO, Yankee Publishing, Luca Paris, Executive Director, Greater Keene and Peterborough Chamber, and Julie Shoelzel, Director "PTR" Program.

At 8:30 AM, Commissioner Wozmak opened the meeting, and Administrator Coates conducted a roll-call with the Commissioners, Wozmak, Englund, and Clark, responding as "present."

At 8:31 AM, the Commissioners opened the floor for public comment and Department Head updates.

Public Comment: None

H.R. Director May requested an unpaid leave of absence for four weeks for an employee based on medical and family needs. Following a short discussion, Commissioner Wozmak moved to approve the request and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Superintendent Iosue was then recognized and informed the Commissioners that the Department of Corrections has one new case of a COVID-positive inmate that came into the facility this weekend. The inmate is in quarantine until cleared by the medical staff.

Sheriff Rivera was then recognized and said that the Dispatch communications infrastructure is critical to the County and the towns. He was disappointed that the requested network engineer position was removed from the 2022 budget. He reiterated his previous statements that if critical system elements fail, there may not be a way to recover because there are no replacement equipment or parts available for some of the outdated equipment in use.

Grants Manager Bansley was then recognized to review Master Agenda Item: Homeland Security F.Y. 2022 Application for MCP Overhaul. She said that a \$118,726 grant application to upgrade the mobile command post has been completed and now requires a formal vote to authorize the submittal of the grant. In answering a question from the Commissioners, Bansley and Crowell said that all radios, antennas, switches, routers, satellite phones, and electronics will be upgraded if the grant is approved. **Commissioner Clark moved to authorize the grant request submission and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

Master Agenda Item #943: Drug Court Expansion Grant was then taken up for discussion, and Bansley and Welsh spoke to the purpose and use of the grant funds. She said that a vote is needed to accept the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance's BJA FY 21 Adult Drug Court, and Veterans Treatment Court Discretionary Grant Program for \$550,000 plus a \$183,333 matching requirement.

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Bansley related that they had submitted the grant request last year for \$500,008.00 but have been awarded \$550,000 for four years. She said there is also a requirement for a 25% match that will be met with in-kind resources. Welsh stated that the funding would enable the funding of a full-time position and a contract to an outside vendor to assist in hiring an individual as a Recovery Coach. Welsh spoke to the position being significantly needed, and she is excited to be able to add the person to the staff. She expects a 30% increase in effectiveness for the drug court program when this position has been implemented.

Commissioner Wozmak asked, what happens at the end of the grant? Welsh said that the funding could be extended at least one additional year, and a plan will be developed to self-sustaining the position.

Following discussions, Commissioner Englund moves Vote to accept the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance's BJA FY 21 Adult Drug Court, and Veterans Treatment Court Discretionary Grant Program for \$550,000 plus \$183,333 match. Commissioner Clark seconds the motion. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Master Agenda Item #944: Greater Keene Peterborough Chamber "Promote the Region" Presentation was then taken up for review and discussion, and Jamie Trowbridge, President/CEO, Yankee Publishing, was recognized.

Trowbridge provided a detailed background on the purpose of the regional branding and marketing project and was effusive in his praise for the work that Grants Manager Bansley had done to enable them to receive a \$300K grant from the EDA that was matched by \$100K from local donors to kick off the program. He spoke at length of the need for the program and of another grant prepared for \$500K that would enable the branding and marketing project to be fully implemented. He said that the Monadnock Region is mainly unknown even in other parts of the state and doesn't have a positive image to help it offset both a slowing declining and rapidly aging population. An excerpt of the presentation follows, and the complete PowerPoint PDF can be found on the County website here:

https://www.co.cheshire.nh.us/new_and_alerts/chamber-educational-presentation-regional-branding-initiative/

Commissioner Wozmak spoke at length concerning his hopes that this effort would be fruitful, unlike many previous efforts that have failed or faded away. He described his frustration with prior programs not understanding the difference between branding and marketing and how they need to be designed to be effective.

Trowbridge, Paris, and Shoelzel concurred with Wozmak's assessment and said this effort is specifically designed to answer those objections. They believe that the program will ultimately be successful with the funding to help sustainability.

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Regional Branding & Marketing Initiative

Positioning The Monadnock Region for A Strong Future



Our Region Is Not Widely Understood

While we are well regarded by those who do know us, not enough people know us

Only 1 in 5 in New Hampshire are "very familiar" with our region

Outside of our region across the state, there is **low intent to work, live or go to school in The Monadnock Region**

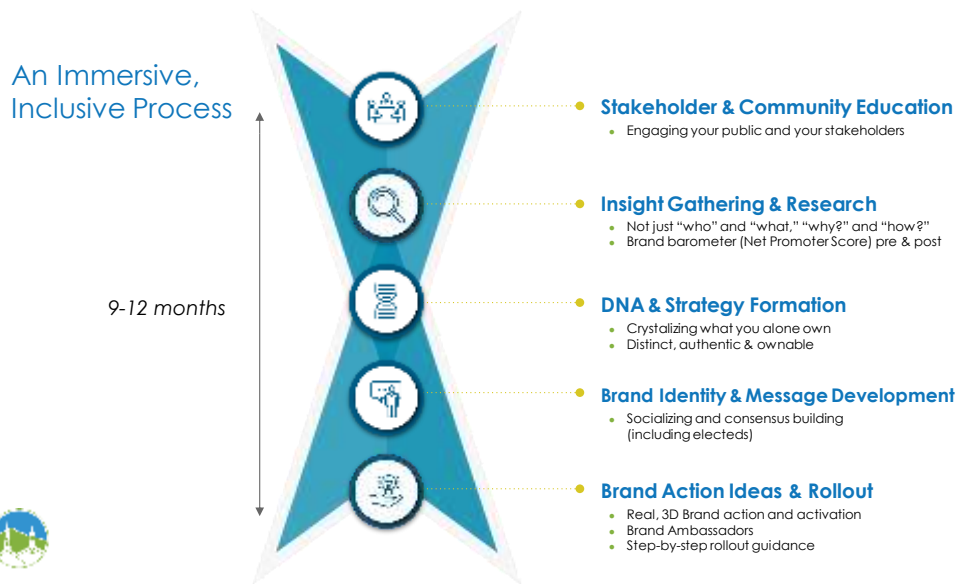
Only 1 in 10 in Massachusetts are "very familiar" with our region

Only 1 in 3 in Massachusetts even know where The Monadnock Region is

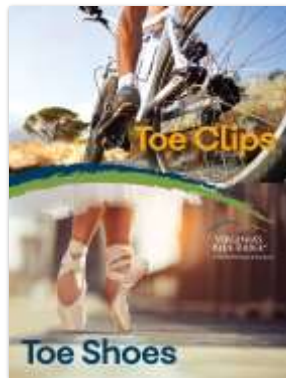


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VIRGINIA'S BLUE RIDGE



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What Do We Expect to Happen?

- Wider, more frequent **consideration** from:
 - Visitors
 - Investors
 - Employers
 - Residents & Workers
- **Conversions** on key economic metrics:
 - More tourism
 - More investment
 - Expanding and diversifying our employment base
 - Attracting new residents & workers
 - Increase "Return Migration"
 - Increase Resident Retention



Once We Determine Our Brand, How Will We Implement?

- The process will include a **marketing plan** which will define:
 - **What** do we want to happen?
 - **Who** we should target?
 - **Where** should we market?
 - **How** will we measure success?
- We will need to **raise funds for the plan implementation**



The Commissioners thanked the group for their presentation and looked forward to positive outcomes.

Master Agenda Item #945: State of N.H. Medicaid pending resident reimbursement was taken up for discussion, and Kindopp related that the program for transportation reimbursements has changed for the better, and billing for services should begin to be easier in the future. She also asked the Commissioners for the annual reauthorization for her to sign legal paperwork for the operation of the Nursing Home, as has been done for several years.

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Following discussions, Commission Englund moved to authorize the nursing home administrator to be designated on the Certificate of Authority and as the primary contact for nursing home signing authority. Commissioner Wozmak seconded the motion, and upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Master Agenda Item #946: To authorize the Sheriff to sell at the cost of replacement, retiree firearm. Rivera said that two recent retirees have asked to purchase the duty weapon they carried for their careers as deputies and mementos. They would pay the County total replacement cost for the pistols so the Sheriff or County would incur no expenses. Because it would be considered a county asset disposal issue and N.H. RSAs require any item over \$300 to be approved by the Commissioners before the sale; he is asking them to support the sale of the weapons to former employees.

Commissioner Clark moved to authorize the sale of the weapons to the two former deputies at the price of two new replacement pistols and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon Vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Master Agenda Item #947: State of N.H. Coates and Bouchard then reviewed hydro Power Participation Payments. They explained that this is a new program from the Public Utilities Commission that enables state municipalities and counties to participate in a hydro generation power program that County to participate in a group net metering program to promote the use of hydropower. The program is authorized for five years and will pay Cheshire County approximately \$30K per year based on total kilowatt usage per year. This will result in a total payout over the five years of about \$150K.

A short discussion on working with CPCNH and other brokers was discussed. It was learned that this program does not affect or limit the County's ability to purchase or manage its electrical power purchases.

Following discussions, Commissioner Wozmak moved to approve the Administrator signing the agreement and was seconded by Commissioner Englund. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Coates was then recognized for the Weekly Operations report.

Coates said that the weekly COVID update from Cheshire Medical shows that there is currently a 21.0% positivity rate. This is based on 1,324 tests administered with 1,054 negative results and 280 positive tests. Of the 280 positives, 87% were asymptomatic, and 13 had symptoms.

Coates said that a meeting with DHHS and managed care companies on billing issues had produced some excellent results since that meeting, including the reimbursement payments received for resident and patient transports in a timelier manner.

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It now appears that the three transportation reimbursement companies that participate in the reimbursement billing program are currently working together to simplify the rules and regulations.

Coates said that he learned that the nursing administrator in Merrimack County is leaving his position, and the County Administrator in Grafton has also left.

Coates said that it appears that additional opiate settlement payments will be received by the County as the lawsuits against the pharmaceutical companies continue. He requested the continuation of authority to sign the documents to participate in the national settlement process in trust in N.H., with 70% into the trust, 15% to subdivision, and 15% to State. **Commissioner Englund moved to authorize the Administrator to sign documents related to the opiate settlement and was seconded by Commissioner Clark. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

The Commissioner agreed unanimously to authorize the Administrator to continue signing related documents to participate in the settlement agreements.

Old Business: Commissioner Wozmak said that the RFP for Ambulance billing was successful. Four companies responded to the RFP, and a review team, including the MRI consultants, chose to work with Coastal. Following a wide-ranging discussion concerning the work needed to get the ambulance department ready for a January launch, **Commissioner Englund moved to accept the proposal for medical billing services from Coastal. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion, and upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

Commissioner Englund asked about a garage space for the ambulance vehicles. A discussion of the vetted construction vendors and who submitted proposals were appointed as the vendors of choice for future building needs or modifications to existing structures.

A discussion of ambulance equipment that is needed was had. It was learned that there are currently shortages of available ambulances and equipment. The space requirements for the vehicles, equipment, and personnel were discussed. The use of a hub and spoke model where the ambulances are located in outlying communities was addressed. Wozmak said that thus far, 60 applications have been received, and about 20 interviews have been completed, with more interviews scheduled for the next few days.

New Business: None

Consent Agenda: Minutes of 12/08/2021 and Manifests for the week. Commissioner Englund moved the consent agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Clark. The motion passed with unanimous consent upon roll call vote.

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General Discussion – It was suggested that January 12th would be a suitable date for a meeting with FirstNet and State personnel to review the FirstNet public safety network options.

At 11:16 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