

MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, January 26, 2022
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, Department of Corrections Superintendent Iosue, Grants Manager Bansley, and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard.
Guest(s): Tom Julius, Janet Furcht, Laura Tobin, Laurie Jameson, and Angela Pape of the Monadnock Interfaith Project.

At 8:33 AM, Commissioner Wozmak opened the meeting, and Administrator Coates conducted a roll-call with the Commissioners, Wozmak, Englund, and Clark, responding as "present."

At 8:34 AM, the Commissioners opened the floor for public comment and Department Head updates.

Public Comment: None

The Commissioners then took up Master Agenda Item #955: Affordable Housing Trust Fund - Monadnock Interfaith Project to receive, as informational, a report on new affordable housing initiatives in the County. Administrator Coates provided an introduction of the issue, and the guests from the Monadnock Interfaith Project provided the following handout.

Affordable Housing Trust Fund
Fact Sheet

We all need a home to thrive!
When everyone is safely housed, our whole community is stronger.

Cheshire County is facing a Housing Crisis

- For many Cheshire County residents, housing costs are disproportionate to wages
- The hospital, nursing home, restaurants, and other businesses struggle with a lack of staff
- Increases in homelessness, and the resulting cascade of need for additional services

Who needs Affordable Housing? Everyone!

For a healthy, vibrant, and thriving region, more housing options are critical to:

- Attract and retain essential workers
- Ensure older adults can live in their communities as they age
- Sustain rural schools
- Control and reduce local tax rates
- Preserve local services (volunteer fire departments, general stores)

Affordable Housing Trust Funds are a key strategy for our region to explore that can significantly expand affordable housing.

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What is an Affordable Housing Trust Fund?

They are funds established by city, county, or state governments that use dedicated sources of public funding to support the production, preservation, and rehabilitation of affordable housing. They increase opportunities for families and individuals to access decent, affordable homes. Affordable Housing Trust Funds can be a key part of a systemic, proactive approach to housing.



How did AHTFs get started?

In the 1980s, the US federal housing budget was cut by over 2/3, resulting in affordable public housing reductions and large increases in homelessness. In response, over the last several decades over 800 communities have created Housing Trust Funds.

Case Study: Tompkins County, New York, with similar demographics as Cheshire County, has used their Affordable Housing Trust Fund to provide funding for the creation, rehabilitation and preservation of 802 affordable housing units since 2009. Leverage of additional funds has been critical to their success.

On average, County based Affordable Housing Trust Funds per \$1 invested leverage \$8.50 in additional funding.

Why now?

Our region is facing a housing crisis and we must act. Housing options are critical to retaining and attracting people to our region and supporting our local economy. We have a unique opportunity as American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies are additional funds to consider as seed money.

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Why are Affordable Housing Trust Funds a better strategy compared to others?

- Dependable and flexible money can support a variety of strategies
- Solutions must come from public investment; the private market won't solve this problem!

What can be accomplished with AHTFs?

Housing trust funds are extremely flexible and can support innovative ways to address many types of housing needs. Typical activities include new construction, rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, acquisition, rental assistance, cooperative housing, transitional or emergency housing, preservation of assisted housing, weatherization, and emergency repairs.

How are AHTFs created?

Affordable Housing Trust Funds are created through passing legislation that includes details about priorities, eligible uses, and administrative processes. Funding can come from many sources such as record document fees and increases in local fees.

Having affordable housing is critical for people working in essential low wage jobs or that have limited income, and everyone benefits by living in a thriving community with fully staffed healthcare facilities, restaurants, and downtown shops. School communities and families are more stable with good housing options.

Together we can enhance housing options in our region.
Let's create an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to build a stronger community!

Monadnock Interfaith Project (MIP) is a non-profit coalition of congregations, organizations, and individuals working together to foster interfaith community, understanding, and systemic change that benefits the Monadnock region. The MIP housing team has people from varied backgrounds and experiences, including a former realtor, manager of subsidized housing, social worker, clergy, and people with personal experiences facing housing challenges.

A very lengthily and detailed discussion was had and covered a wide range of topics including past attempts at providing affordable workforce housing and the numerous important ancillary areas that would need to be addressed including, location, funding, transportation, cooperative collaboration with other housing groups, sustainability, marketing, maintenance, and many other issues that such a broad-based effort engenders.

Two of the presenters told personal stories of the impact that the lack of affordable housing has had on their lives and the Commissioners and staff asked many questions that reflected their concerns and issues on launching a successful effort as so many others have failed in the past 30-40 years.

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Commissioner Wozmak said that it is very important that the business community be deeply involved in this effort as they will be the prime beneficiaries of a successful program. In the same way that commercial enterprises offer skilled training to improve the skills of their workforce there now needs to be a similar focus on helping to provide affordable housing to its workforce.

At the conclusion of the discussions, it was agreed that a steering committee will need to form a working group to begin to fully understand all of the issues incumbent on creating a successful workforce housing group and invite a cross-section of community members that can participate in bringing an executable and sustainable plan to fruition. The Commissioners and senior staff may join if the community members pledge enough resources to ensure the right resources are available for the project.

Master Agenda Item #956: Semi-Annual Report from the Registry of Deeds. A – Tilton
Action Expected: To receive, as informational, a report on the operations and status of the Registry of Deeds.

Tilton was then recognized and presented the following information. She said that the 2021 14,400 documents were recorded in the registry. She noted that Deeds pays the IT vendor by the document, and the new contract she is looking at signing will cut the cost in half going forward. The copy revenues have also grown and are now at about \$10,000 per month. She is also planning the move to 86 West Street for the HVAC upgrade period.

Tilton provided the Commissioner handout for the past three-year period, and it is noted that in 2021 the total fee's due to the County for registry services was \$810,318.03.

Tilton presented the following statistics for 2019 – 2021, highlighting the growth in registry transactions and cited a 30% growth in total filings, with paper filings increasing almost 10% and electronic filing growing at a 30% rate.

2019 Total Documents: 11,025 Paper Documents: 5,443 eRecorded Documents: 5,582
2020 Total Documents: 12,323 Paper Documents: 4,648 eRecorded Documents: 7,675
2021 Total Documents: 14,473 Paper Documents: 4,969 eRecorded Documents: 9,504

Commissioner Wozmak asked about the period of the temporary move and its impact on the number of electronic filings. Tilton said that she doesn't anticipate much change in the percentages as the bulk of paper filings come from Keene-based law firms, and she expects that to continue.

The Commissioners thanked Tilton for her report.

The Commissioners then took-up **Master Agenda Item #957: Violence Against Women Grant Request**, and S. Bansley and G. DeSantis spoke to the following request to discuss and vote to apply to the DOJ, Office on Violence Against Women, for \$550,000 to \$650,000 to create a supervised visitation

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and safe exchange center and develop related infrastructure and programs to be fiscally sponsored as a county department fully funded under the grant for three years.

In response to a question, Bansley first spoke to an increase of State funding to offer more funding to local agencies such as the Hanna Grimes center in Keene, which runs programs like the Microenterprise program.

Bansley then addressed the Violence Against Women grant that would run for three years. Gina DeSantis then spoke to a previous center in Rindge, and she told of a personal experience that she experienced. She said that the current laws are very antiquated and that these poor laws place children in constant danger. She said that she has coordinated with many local agencies, and there is an extremely high need for a safe exchange center. Bansley said NH is the only state that does not fund these centers. Other counties in NH support these services, but it is not available in Cheshire County.

A discussion of the sustainability of the project how funding would continue the operation of any new center.

It was learned that the Jaffrey center closed due to the State funding being removed. An extended conversation on how to support and implement the program was had.

Following discussions, Commissioner Englund moved to apply to the DOJ, Office on Violence Against Women, for \$550,000 to \$650,000 to create a supervised visitation and safe exchange center and develop related infrastructure and programs to be fiscally sponsored as a county department fully funded under the grant for three years., and seconded by Commissioner Clark. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

11:46 AM, Administrator Coates was then recognized for the Weekly Operations report.

The following report was provided by Cheshire Medical Center on COVID data within the County.

IP Update Week of 1/24/22

Total Tests Collected / Percent Positive: (per eDH)

| | Detected | Not Detected | Grand Total | % Detected |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 12/24/2021 – 12/30/2021 | 291 | 947 | 1,238 | 23.5% |
| 12/31/2021 – | 338 | 887 | 1,225 | 27.6% |

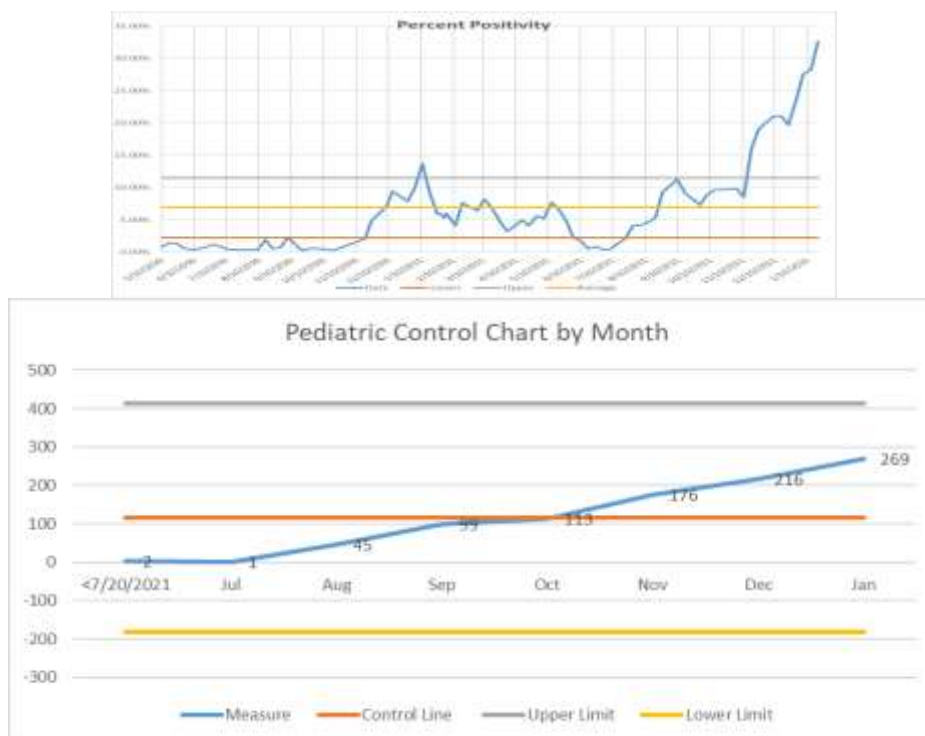
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| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1/6/2022 | | | | |
| 1/7/2022 – 1/13/2022 | 325 | 828 | 1,153 | 28.2% |
| 1/14/2022 – 1/20/2022 | 403 | 835 | 1,238 | 32.6% |
| Grand Totals since JAN2021 | 4,755 | 36,199 | 40,954 | 11.6% |

Symptomatic vs. Asymptomatic Tests Collected – 25% asymptomatic, 12% symptomatic, and 63% unknown for 1/14/2022 – 1/20/2022.

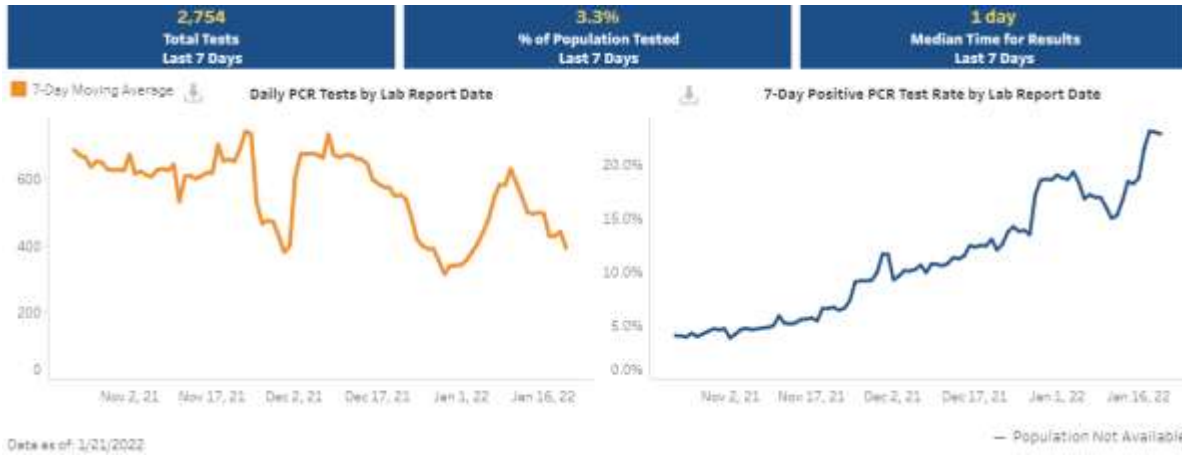
Pediatric Control Chart:



State Data for Cheshire County: Our State transmission is **substantial** with Cheshire see the State's percent positivity lower due to the mass of tests being collected. These large numbers of tests being collected by our higher education dilute the State percent positivity. **Currently the state is reporting the state-wide percent positive at 20.4% with 2,981.1 new cases per 100k over 14 days.**

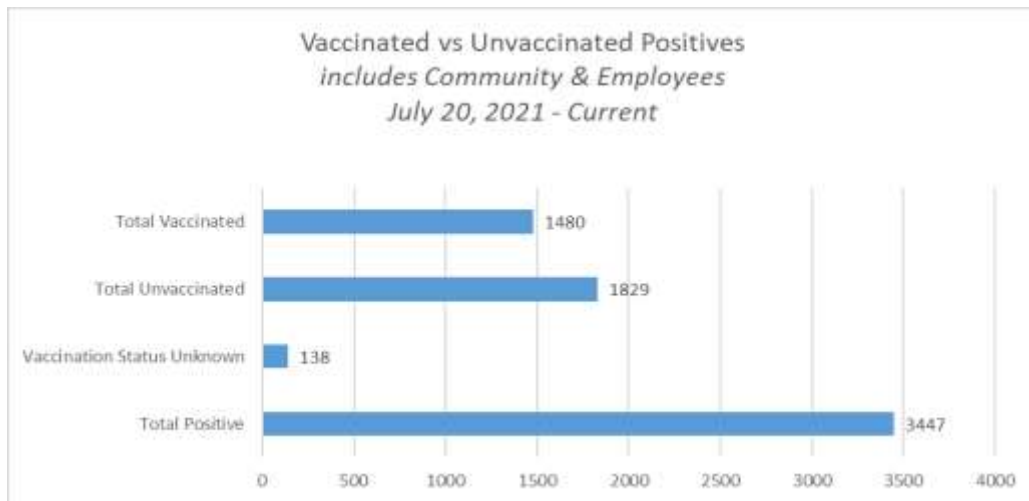
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Visitor Status: RED

Positives Compared to Vaccination Status (as of 1/1/22 this data includes community positives and employee positives only. Historic inpatients will remain.) **42.94% vaccinated / 53.06% unvaccinated / 4.00% unknown**



Inpatients (7 day average, age range, and vaccination status) **33.33% vaccinated / 58.78% unvaccinated / 7.89% unknown**

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1/7/22 – 1/13/22: total of **163** active COVID patients over 7 days, an average of **23** patients per day. This week we had **19** newly admitted, with ages ranging from **13-19, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and 80+**; **9** of which were fully vaccinated and **10** were not vaccinated.

Of the **19** newly admitted:

- Confirmed and admitted due to COVID – 14 (6 vaccinated, 8 unvaccinated, 0 unknown)
- Confirmed asymptomatic and admitted due to other etiology – 5 (3 vaccinated, 2 unvaccinated, 0 unknown)

1/14/22 – 1/20/22: total of **152** active COVID patients over 7 days, an average of **21.7** patients per day. This week we had **17** newly admitted, with ages ranging from **30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, and 80+**; **6** of which were fully vaccinated, **6** were not vaccinated, and **5** had an unknown vaccination status.

Of the **17** newly admitted:

- Confirmed and admitted due to COVID – 12 (4 unvaccinated, 4 vaccinated, 4 unknown)
- Confirmed asymptomatic and admitted due to other etiology – 5 (2 vaccinated, 2 unvaccinated, 1 unknown)

Coates said that a request was received from Hundred Nights shelter and they are seeking funding for the next 14 weeks for hotel rooms for a total of \$5,341.00 due to the high need for the protection of homeless individuals and families. **Commissioner Englund moved to approve the funding request and, based on a recommendation from the Director of Finance, will provide the funds from the Hemmingway Trust fund that was set up specifically for situations such as this request. Commissioner Clark seconded the motion, and upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

Iosue was then recognized and said that an active COVID case had been found in the general inmate population. The previously established protocols were implemented, and a general lockdown went into effect. Three to four more cases were identified and moved to the quarantine area upon retesting. He said that the cases have not been severe thus far.

Coates then presented and discussed the 86 West Street lease for the temporary housing of the Registry of Deeds office while the energy project upgrades take place. **Following a short question and answer period, Commissioner Englund moved to authorize the Administrator to sign the lease for the temporary space and was seconded by Commissioner Clark. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

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Old Business: None

New Business: None

Consent Agenda: Minutes of 01/19/2022 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.

General Discussion:

At 12:41 PM, Commissioner Englund moved to enter a non-meeting pursuant to RSA 91-A:2, I: Strategy or negotiations regarding collective bargaining and was seconded by Commissioner Clark. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

At 12:59 AM, the Commissioners voted unanimously to return to the public session.

01:09 PM, there being no further public business to conduct, Commissioner Englund moved to adjourn the meeting and was seconded by Commissioner Clark. 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