

MINUTES
Cheshire County Commissioners Meeting
Wednesday, May 04, 2022
County Hall Building
12 Court Street, Keene, NH 03341

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, HR Director May, IT Director Hummel, Superintendent Iosue, and Assistant County Administrator Bouchard.
Guest(s):

At 08:30 AM, Commissioner Wozmak opened the meeting, and Administrator Coates conducted a roll-call with the Commissioners, Wozmak, Englund, and Clark, responding as "present."

Public Comments

Upon recognition from the Chair, a Public Comment on topics of interest may be made, not to exceed three (3) minutes in length. No comments were received.

Elected Officials & Department Head Updates

To receive, as informational, departmental updates requiring Commissioner review, participation, approval, and impactful departmental and operational issues.

Superintendent Iosue was then recognized and presented a final document concerning the recommendation of stipends to the existing Department of Corrections staff. A discussion of the applicable staff for hiring bonuses began, and it was said that the hiring bonus applies to Correctional Officers and Nursing Staff as of now. The overall state of the job market was discussed. Iosue spoke to the issue that his financial analysis included all staff at the DOC.

The Commissioners asked several questions about the applicability of the retention bonus program to other departments and the financial impact if it was implemented. Ideas for hiring a prep cook position that is very difficult to fill were discussed. The discussion of the cost of these programs was explored in depth.

Hiring bonuses for the DOC dietary staff were discussed, and the Commissioners discussed the implementation of a \$1,000 bonus hiring bonus for all correctional officers, nursing, and dietary positions. The bonuses would be paid in months three, six, and nine at \$250.00, \$250.00, and \$500.00.

Commissioner Englund moved to authorize the hiring bonus plan after discussions, and Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Scheduled Items

At 9:40 AM, Hummel was recognized to address Master Agenda Item #985: Semi-Annual Report – Information Technologies. Hummel presented the following written report and spoke to the document at length.

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IT Department Status Report

Staffing & Workload

The IT Department has an ongoing shortage of one FTE per budget and close to two FTEs based on workload. The average IT staff task list has expanded significantly over the past two years. Some drivers of increased support and additional workload are:

- A need to support multiple desktops per user (work from home)
- An increase in the number of mobile/VPN users (system of care)
- Software end of support-driven upgrades (Windows 10, Office 2021)
- Design and implementation of TV system for Maplewood
- Integration of Claremont facility into the secure network
- Integration of EMS services into the secure network
- Increase in system monitoring for malware/ransomware
- Increased demands for vendor support (direct and indirect)
 - Maplewood access, video, thermostat systems
 - HVAC systems (all campuses)
 - State of NH AFIS/Intoxylizer communication
 - Dispatch bodycam geolocation system
 - Dispatch remote access VPN for radio control

In addition, all aspects of the IT operation are under constant review and revision to keep pace with changes in best practices, anticipate new threats, and increase resilience. All staff members perform various activities, including routine monitoring and maintenance, user support, and active research and development.

Cybersecurity

Maintaining a healthy cybersecurity posture continue to be one of the most challenging and impactful functions of the IT Department. We are observing an increase in casual and targeted attempts to breach our data systems. Included is an email from April 7, 2022, documenting one such targeted attack.

A critical step in infrastructure management is installing security patches to both software and hardware. However, keeping the County safe is not the same as keeping the County operational. Microsoft, for example, frequently releases patches whose side effects are worse than the original issue. One such patch, for example, was designed to close a vulnerability in Windows printing services that allowed attackers to execute malicious code on a computer. Unfortunately,

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the patch had the side-effect of disabling all network printing. Businesses that rely on automatic patch distribution found that hundreds or thousands of users were suddenly unable to print.

To avoid incidents of this type, every patch must be researched, evaluated, and tested before we release it to the network. Microsoft's January 2022 security update contained 96 such patches. Blind deployment of these patches can result in significant downtime and productivity loss for the County – consequences we've avoided in many cases through our program of test and evaluation. In addition to Windows patches, patch management is required for server hardware, network switches, firewalls, non-Windows servers, VPN clients, and more.

Included with this report is May 1, 2022, Cyber Hygiene Assessment provided by CISA/DHS. This analysis of our external-facing systems is performed weekly. Additionally, a list of the major cyber incidents that have directly impacted the County since August 2019 is provided.

IT Department Projects

1. HVAC Monitoring Services (Maintenance)

IT continues to work with ENE to complete its installation and integration of boiler and HVAC controllers that require an Internet connection for monitoring and control. Recently, IT provided a secure connection between the systems installed at Maplewood and at Keene to link them under a single control "server."

To ensure that these systems do not provide a pathway for unauthorized access to County data, we provisioned them with network and firewall connections that are isolated from the secure network. As is typical with industrial systems, the hardware and software provided by ENE contain a significant number of cyber vulnerabilities. Even when patches are available, systems are rarely upgraded. IT is working with ENE to address some of these vulnerabilities.

2. Expansion of service to Maplewood water treatment outbuildings

By upgrading select components at Maplewood, IT has been able to extend the VOIP phone system, ENE monitoring, and Wi-Fi to the fresh and wastewater outbuildings on the Maplewood campus at a minimal cost.

3. Telephone System Replacement and Upgrade

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With the completion of rewiring at 33 West, our SIP phone system has been extended to that building. The only remaining analog lines are in place to meet support requirements for alarms and elevators.

4. Work-From-Home and Mobile Clients

The number of work-from-home (WFH) and mobile clients continues to increase. The expansion of the System of Care (SOC) program has presented IT with significant challenges in purchasing (due to availability and supply chain issues) and setup of equipment as well as remote support for less-technical personnel in the field.

5. Enhancement of Internet Connections

The County contracts with Consolidated to provide Ethernet Direct Internet Access (EDIA) connections at each of the four campuses. The traffic that these connections carry to and from the Internet is relatively small. The majority of the available bandwidth is used for IT internal operations such as secure inter-campus connectivity, cross-campus replication and backup, and control and command operations.

Our current Internet connection speed is 100/100 Mbps. This speed may seem slow compared to consumer offerings. However, the difference between a business-class EDIA connection and a "best-effort" consumer connection is significant. IT is currently negotiating contract terms to deliver 1000/1000 Mbps speeds (900% increase) to each campus at a modest 13% increase over the current cost of 100 Mbps.

The new connection will enable increased efficiencies in IT operations. Cross-campus use of Kronos and ECS, for example, will not operate at speeds comparable to those on the local campus network. In the case of ECS, this will eliminate the need for multiple remote PCs, streamlining Finance department access.

The greatest benefit will be felt by IT operations. A 250GB file (typical PC disk size) at 100Mbps takes approximately 5.5 hours. At 1000Mbps, the same file can be transferred in 32 minutes. Currently, many IT operations are throttled or minimized due to bandwidth limitations. In addition, the increased speed will enable IT to execute plans for real-time cross-campus disaster recovery.

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6. Cybersecurity Infrastructure Enhancements

IT continues to enhance its internal security information and event monitoring (SIEM) systems. These systems, implemented at no capital cost to the County, provide real-time analysis of security alerts generated by applications and network hardware.

To improve the ability of the monitoring systems to maintain critical information during attacks or other situations that may interrupt or degrade inter-campus communication, a "store and forward" message server is being deployed to each campus. The system is being hosted on retired servers that have been re-purposed for this task.

Our current log aggregation system (Graylog) collects information and enables post-event analysis. IT is currently developing and deploying an instance of Wazuh, an additional system to collect, aggregate, index, and analyze security data in real-time. The goal is to enable IT to detect intrusions, threats, and behavioral anomalies as they are happening. There is no direct cost to the County for this system.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robert L. Hummel
Director of Information Technology

The Commissioners discussed the IT staff positions and the great difficulty in finding qualified personnel to fill the currently open position. The compensation competitiveness problems were covered, and the lack of qualified local candidates who have applied was discussed.

Hummel then reviewed a list of cybersecurity issues that the IT department has dealt with over the past few years and highlighted the number of attempted attacks and the significant increase in the sophistication of those attempted break-ins.

The Commissioners thanked Hummel for his report, and HR Director May was recognized for addressing the potential hiring of a staff member listed on the State Laurie's List. Coates background information on the situation and why the person was placed on the list were discussed in detail. Following discussions, the Commissioners unanimously decided to proceed with the job offer based on the facts of the case and the solid personal recommendation of a law enforcement official with knowledge of the case.

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County Administrator

Weekly Operations Report - The County Administrator will update the Commissioners on activities that have taken place since the previous meeting.

Coates informed the Commissioners that a meeting with National Grange Mutual personnel took place yesterday, and an agreement to obtain excess office furniture inventory from the Grange was reached. This will allow several County departments to receive upgraded office workspaces at no cost to the taxpayers. The County is very grateful to NGM for making this possible.

Coates then said that in communication with Keene State College, it was learned that following graduation, some of the contents of dorm rooms that remain from departing students would be made available to the County for furnishing the planned EMS facility. Typically, this would include beds, nightstands, microwaves, and the like.

Coates then discussed the ongoing efforts of the Monadnock Interfaith Council, United Way, Keene Housing, Chamber, and others around workforce housing in the County. Coates also coordinated with Taylor Caswell of the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs and Executive Councilor Cinde Warmington on the issue. An extended discussion of the aim and goals of the group began, and the role of the County was discussed at some length. It was stated that although the County is providing coordination and facilitation services, its mission is not to develop housing, as several local organizations have that mission and the expertise to establish sound programs.

Coates then said that he would attend a meeting with the Westmoreland Selectboard tomorrow afternoon and be in Harrisville on the 27th to meet with the Selectboard to update the board on County projects and to discuss EMS services.

He then related that there are currently 15 Maplewood residents and four staff that are presently COVID positive. He said the relatively good news is that thus far, symptoms and infections are mild.

Coates then said that he has contacted the County labor attorney concerning union negotiations at Maplewood Nursing Home and seeks guidance on subsequent negotiations with the union.

He then said that two potential buyers had stepped forward who are interested in purchasing a small dilapidated greenhouse on the 53 Monadnock Highway property purchased for the new County EMS department. He suggested that a simple bid process could be undertaken to resolve the buyer.

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Old Business: None

New Business: None

Consent Agenda Items:

Vote to accept the Weekly Manifests and approve the Minutes of April 27, 2022. **Commissioner Englund moved to approve the consent agenda items, and Commissioner Clark seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.**

Calendar

Action Expected: To accept the calendar as informational and to make necessary changes/additions.

General Discussion for Commissioners

Master Agenda Item #673: Commissioners - State Cost Shifting Letter and Restorative Justice Program

Nonpublic Sessions: None

Adjournment

At 11:31 AM Commission 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