



COMMISSIONERS MEETING

Wednesday, October 22, 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 8:30 AM

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

Absent:

Staff: County Administrator Coates, Finance Director Trombly, HR Director May, Grants Manager Bansley, Maplewood Facilities Director Newman, Director of Executive Services/Communications Bernstein, UNH Field Specialist Majewski, 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: Maplewood Administrator Kindopp proposed \$436 for ICF and \$468 for TLC daily pay rates for a January 1, 2026, start date. This would return to rates that were previously in place on January 1, 2025.

County Commissioner Clark made a motion to direct the Maplewood Administrator to raise the daily pay rates to \$436 for ICF and \$468 for TLC beginning on January 1, 2026. Commissioner Stewart seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

2: Finance Director Trombly said she has been working with the Richards Group to get quotes for health and dental for stop loss insurance since the County is self-insured. The stop loss carriers present their quote based on current year experience and prior year history. She said it has been a tricky year due to a lot of claims.

We received quotes from our current stop loss carrier as well as others.

They present their fixed costs as well as a projection of the County's claims, and a potential of a maximum amount. The maximum amount is always higher than what the reality is, but that higher projection is a worst-case scenario. Trombly said we typically hit 80% of the maximum.

Trombly recommended to the Commissioners that the County stick with HM Life and renew under their new terms. She recommended a 10% increase in health insurance and a 6% increase in dental insurance for employees.

The Commissioners' will vote on this matter on October 29, 2025.

II. Scheduled Items

Master Agenda Item #1298: Semi-Annual Report, UNH Cooperative Extension – C. Majewski
Action Expected: To receive an informational report on the last six months of operations for the UNH Cooperative Extension

1: Field Specialist Majewski said Christine Parshall is no longer with the County due to a loss of federal funding.

Majewski said that the County does not currently have a forester due to a hold up with the hiring process with the university system

Commissioner Clark asked how long the hiring freeze has been in place.

Majewski said it has been for several months.

Master Agenda Item #1298: Rubbish Removal RFP – A. Newman

Action Expected: To discuss responses received for the County-wide rubbish removal request for proposals.

Motion tabled until October 29, 2025.

Master Agenda Item #1298: Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Award Acceptance CY2026 – S. Bansley

Action Expected: Vote to accept the award and authorize execution award documents for the calendar year 2026 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant from the New Hampshire Department of Justice for \$30,000 plus \$10,000 match. Funds will be used for and cost share met with salary and benefits of the domestic violence prosecutor.

1: Grants Manager Bansley said this grant is through the state which passes through the federal government. She said it is the County's oldest grant.

Commissioner DiBernardo noted that the name of the grant is odd as most organizations have moved away from utilizing "women" only, versus being about against violence prevention in general.

County Administrator Coates agreed and said that men are becoming a higher percentage of domestic violence, and stigma against this needs to be ended. A more inclusive name of violence prevention etc. could be a better idea.

Commissioner Stewart made a motion to authorize County Administrator Christopher C. Coates on behalf of the County of Cheshire to accept the aforementioned grant and to enter into a grant agreement with the aforementioned funder and to execute any and all documents, agreements and other instruments, and any amendments, revisions, or modifications thereto, as he/she may deem necessary, desirable, or appropriate to effect the purpose of this vote; and to also enter into any contractual agreements; including, but not limited to vendor subcontracts, subrecipient agreements, and/or memorandums of understandings; as necessary to carry out the goals, objectives, and activities of the agreement; and that Grants Manager Suzanne Bansley or Grants Specialist Jennifer Robinson are hereby appointed as the authorized certifying officials, contacts, and liaisons with regards to the above referenced agreement and are both hereby authorized on behalf of the County of Cheshire to certify or sign vouchers or requisitions for payments or claims to the agreement. Commissioner Clark seconded. Upon a roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

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 said HR Director May, Visa Solutions, and himself will be meeting with the Governor's office to discuss improving the H-1B visa process to allow foreign nurses to get here and get licensed quicker.

2: Coates said the County will have a flu shot clinic tomorrow, October 23, for all County employees and elected officials.

3: Coates said there will be a capital improvement planning meeting for the County tomorrow, October 23.

4: Coates said Finance Director Trombly and himself were on the Dan Mitchell show on last Monday.

III. Old Business

IV. New Business

The Commissioners' budget review began at 10:30AM.

Department of Corrections

- Superintendent Phillips presented the department budget.
- The Department of Corrections budget proposal included several modest increases in operational costs. Outside Services rose by \$9,000 to fund a required PREA audit (\$4,000) and to cover higher electronic monitoring expenses as more inmates are on electronic bracelets.
- Continuing Education was increased by \$1,500 for new staff training programs (e.g. Taser

- glove certification and a Glock armorer course).
- Inmate Dental Care costs grew by roughly \$1,500 after the jail earned national healthcare accreditation, which involved more comprehensive dental screenings for inmates.
- Snow Removal (plowing and salt services) is budgeted about \$12,000 higher due to rising contractor rates and to ensure reliable winter access for the facility.
- Other line items such as inmate medical or bedding were level-funded, and no additional staff positions were requested in this budget.

Sheriff

- Sheriff Rivera presented the department budget.
- He said they maintained current staffing levels (no new positions) and focused on a small overall increase in operating costs. The Sheriff noted an operating budget increase of approximately \$11,500 (excluding personnel-related increases) to cover rising costs of supplies and services.
- Several originally requested increases were reduced based on updated needs and year-to-date spending. For example, the telephone line increase was scaled back (from a \$5,000 request down to \$3,000 extra), and the gasoline/fuel line was trimmed by \$5,000 (now a \$3,000 increase, for a total of about \$33,500) after reviewing current fuel usage. Similarly, the vehicle maintenance budget was adjusted to only +\$1,000, lower than initially planned. These adjustments were made while accounting for having all patrol cruisers in service next year at full staff.
- The Vehicle Fleet plan is a significant component: the Sheriff is requesting 4 new vehicles (three cruisers and one administrative vehicle). Estimated cost for the three new cruisers is \$358,000, though the final price may come in \$10–15K lower based on updated bids. The fourth vehicle will be an electric car for administrative use. Fully electric cruisers were deemed not yet suitable for patrol needs (due to range and charging limitations in rural areas), but an electric vehicle is planned for staff use.
- It was noted that no vehicles were approved last year, so this request catches up by replacing an aging fleet. The Sheriff explained financing options for the vehicles (e.g. potential to stagger payments or defer the first year) but left the final funding approach open for the Delegation's decision.

Conservation District

- Superintendent Hershon presented the department budget.
- The Cheshire County Conservation District requested essentially level funding. Their FY2026 budget is almost the same as last year's, with only about a \$420 increase to cover higher costs for a few office subscriptions. No new programs or significant changes were discussed, and the small increase simply reflects minor price upticks in operational expenses. (The Conservation District's presentation was brief, and no questions were raised by the Delegation.)

UNH Cooperative Extension

- Field Specialist Majewski presented the department budget.
- The UNH Cooperative Extension in Cheshire County proposed a level-funded budget of \$191,505 (no increase from the previous couple of years). This county appropriation supports several Extension staff and programs.

- Of that total, approximately \$109,787 goes toward program staffing costs. Notably, the county covers 25% of the salaries for two field specialist positions (the Food & Agriculture educator and the County Forester), since those specialists also serve other counties. It was mentioned that the County Forester position is currently vacant but expected to be filled soon. The county also funds 75% of the 4-H Program Manager's position, as that role serves youth exclusively within the county.
- The Extension budget also includes \$64,031 for the office's Administrative Assistant (salary and fringe benefits) and about \$17,687 for general operating expenses. Operating costs cover items such as office supplies, postage, insurance, and equipment service contracts.
- Extension representatives highlighted that the county's partnership enables local delivery of UNH's programs in areas like Food & Agriculture, 4-H youth development, Community & Economic Development, and Health & Well-Being. They noted the loss of a federally funded SNAP-Ed nutrition educator position last year due to federal cuts, but remaining staff continue nutrition education efforts at the state level. The Delegation inquired about the impact of certain programs (e.g. school nutrition education), and Extension staff explained how those programs, even if aimed at youth, also engage families by sending materials home and complement other adult-focused workshops. In summary, the Extension's county funding will remain flat, maintaining existing programs and staffing with no new funding requests.

Register of Deeds

- Register of Deeds Tilton presented the department budget.
- The Register of Deeds plans to shift roughly \$34,000–40,000 of costs (such as some outside services) off the county general budget and pay them from the dedicated surcharge fund. This surcharge account accumulates a \$2 fee on recorded documents (deeds, etc.) and currently has a healthy balance (approximately \$209,000 available). The Delegation will need to pass a separate authorization to allow spending from this fund for the coming year. Utilizing the surcharge for eligible expenses will save county tax dollars.
- The Registrar noted ongoing records management challenges. Due to space constraints, the office has stopped printing new deed record books. There is simply no room for additional large record volumes past attempts to add shelving in the basement were not feasible (low ceilings and sprinkler pipes limit storage space). Instead, newer records are being stored in compact archival boxes and, of course, digitized. (Historic deed books from 1771–1900 were restored at significant cost in the past and are kept in protective archival conditions on site.) The Registrar assured the Delegation that even as records go digital, maintaining physical archives remains important for long-term preservation, and the office will continue to securely store older records while managing new records electronically.

Grants Department

- Grants Manager Bansley presented the department budget.
- The Grants Management Department reported another productive year and proposed maintaining its program with minimal change in county funding. The Grants office, which has annual expenses around \$185,000, manages a large portfolio of state and federal grants for the county and communities. As of the end of Q3, 2025, the county had \$12.7 million in active grant awards for the year (down from a record \$21 million the prior year, which had included two large \$4 million "Connected Families" grants that have since concluded).
- Grant revenues year-to-date total roughly \$1.9 million (as of Sept 30), and the department

expects to reach about \$3 million in grant revenue by year's end. These funds come from a variety of sources such as federal DOJ grants, state programs, and others. The Grants Department also earned approximately \$125,000 in indirect cost fees, which help offset administrative expenses.

- The return on investment for the Grants office remains extremely high on the order of 945% ROI. In other words, for every dollar spent on the Grants Department, the county receives about ten dollars in grant funding. This was calculated by comparing grant revenues brought in (nearly \$2 million so far this year) versus the department's operating cost.
- The Grants Manager provided highlights of current grants: for example, an opioid abatement grant for the Department of Corrections (one-year award), several federal CDBG projects that closed out last year, an ongoing JAG (Justice Assistance Grant) shared with the Sheriff's Office, a Bulletproof Vest grant that is being renewed (providing new vests for the Sheriff's Dept. and Department of Corrections), a multi-year Body-Worn Camera grant (running through 2027), a K-9 unit grant (Stanton Foundation) supporting the Sheriff's K9 program, a Recreational Trails grant (most recently funding a trail project in Troy and pending a new one in Fitzwilliam), a DOJ Compassionate Care grant entering year 2 of 3, and a Highway Safety grant.

Commissioners & Delegation

- County Administrator Coates presented the department budget(s).
- The Delegation's budget includes stipends for the delegates and meeting expenses. Each Delegation member receives a modest per-meeting attendance fee, and if they attend in person they are also reimbursed mileage. (It was noted that going forward, attendance is tracked by the Clerk administratively rather than using a sign-in sheet, to ensure stipends are accurately processed.) The Outside Services line in this budget is mainly for hiring a photographer for official Delegation functions. The food budget for Delegation meetings was "bumped up" slightly to account for rising food costs (light meals or refreshments are provided during lengthy sessions). The travel line covers mileage reimbursements for members and is based on expected in-person meeting frequency. Overall, the Delegation budget remains small; these few increases were made to reflect higher prices, and no other significant changes were made. There were no questions from delegates on this section.
- The Commissioners increased their travel and conference line slightly. This covers attendance at conferences (e.g. the NH Association of Counties conference, training with organizations like Primex, and occasional trips to advocate in Concord or Washington, D.C.). The Administrator noted that engaging in these events over the past year has been valuable for the county for instance, networking helped preserve funding for the Southwest NH Fire Mutual Aid so they intend to continue these efforts.

County Attorney's Office

- County Attorney McLaughlin presented the department budget.
- The County Attorney's Office budget for FY26 includes a few targeted increases in operating lines, totaling roughly +\$6,700 over the previous year. There are no new positions being added (staffing remains the same). The increases are mainly to address rising costs in several areas:
- Continuing Legal Education (CLE): Up by \$1,500. Attorneys are required to complete CLE credits each year, and the cost of courses (even online seminars) has been increasing. The budgeted amount was raised to ensure all prosecutors can obtain their mandatory

training hours.

- Witness Expenses: Up by \$1,000 to \$6,000. This covers travel and lodging when expert witnesses or out-of-state witnesses must be brought in for trials. The office has needed to use this line more frequently, so a slight increase was deemed prudent to cover airfare, hotels, and mileage reimbursements.
- Office Supplies (Evidence Media): This line saw the largest increase (several thousand dollars) due to the growing demands of digital evidence storage. The widespread use of police body cameras means the Attorney's office receives large video files for many cases, as well as extensive data from cell phone extractions (forensic downloads of smartphones). These digital files must be copied and provided to defense counsel during discovery. The office must purchase high-capacity storage media (e.g. external hard drives or encrypted flash drives) to share this evidence, and those costs have risen. The increase in the supplies line is primarily to cover the cost of these devices for evidence disclosure. (One attorney joked that they had plenty of unused legal-size paper, but modern prosecutions need digital storage more than paper).
- Postage and Telephone: Both saw minor increases (postage slightly up, and telephone up about \$400) to reflect normal cost upticks and usage. Much of the office's communication with victims, witnesses, and other agencies still relies on mail and phone, so these incremental adjustments keep those accounts adequately funded.

Finance Department

- Finance Director Trombly presented the department budget.
- The Finance Department budget was presented with a slight increase overall, mainly driven by contractual and personnel cost changes. A primary factor was the cost of the annual audit: the county's auditing firm increased its fee, resulting in about a \$15,000 rise in the auditing services line. (The administration had anticipated a possible jump in audit costs, so a \$15K increase was considered not as high as it could have been.)
- Personnel Costs: Regular staff salaries in Finance reflect standard raises; however, one adjustment is an increase in the overtime budget. The Finance Director explained that extra hours are needed as they continue the transition to a new payroll/HR system (the UKG software implementation), so some staff overtime is expected to complete that project. On the other hand, the department will see some savings in retirement contributions one Finance employee reduced their schedule to 32 hours per week, dropping them below the threshold for mandatory NH Retirement System contributions. Because that position is now part-time (no county-paid pension benefit), the retirement line was decreased accordingly.
- Periodic Expenses: The Finance outside services line is lower this year because it does not include an actuarial study that was funded last year. (The required actuarial valuation for other post-employment benefits is done every other year, and FY26 is an off year with no payment due). This biennial expense rolling off helped keep the Finance budget from climbing.
- Office Supplies and Equipment: Like other departments, Finance is seeing price increases for supplies. The office supplies line was bumped up modestly to cover items such as tax forms (W-2s), envelopes, and general office materials, which have become more expensive. (The Finance office also serves as a central hub for some supplies for instance, they had a surplus of legal-sized paper that other departments have been using, as humorously noted in discussion.) Additionally, the equipment rental line, which covers the postage machine lease used by all departments, remains a shared expense the costs are tracked and allocated to departments based on usage.

Cheshire County EMS

- CCEMS Chief Kreamer said the budget for Cheshire EMS at the same level as the current year, which is \$1.2 million. This funding is drawn from federal ProShare revenue that the county receives via the nursing home. In prior years, the county used ProShare funds for state-directed community health programs called IDNs (Integrated Delivery Networks); now those dollars are being invested in local needs like Cheshire EMS, with the Delegation's approval. The \$1.2 million allocation helps underwrite EMS services county-wide, ensuring smaller towns have reliable ambulance coverage. It also had a strategic benefit: by directing some county funds to this purpose, the N.H. Department of Health and Human Services was able to "unlock" additional federal matching funds that flow back to the county and state. In fact, over a five-year period, the state leveraged these kinds of county contributions to bring in roughly \$150 million for local healthcare initiatives. The Commissioners and Delegation have consistently agreed to use a portion of the county's ProShare (nursing home) money in this way to support critical community health services.

V. Consent Agenda Items:

Vote to accept the Weekly Manifests and Minutes of October 8, 2025

Commissioner Clark made a motion to approve the manifests and minutes of October 8, and Commissioner DiBernardo 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.

VII. General Discussion for Commissioners

VIII. Nonpublic Sessions:

IX. Adjournment

At 3:30PM 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