

## Minutes

### Merrimack County Delegation Meeting

March 24, 2009 - McDonnell Building, 4 Court St, Concord, NH.

Chairman Bouchard called the Merrimack County Public Hearing to order at 6:00p.m. and read the public notice.

Chairman Bouchard explained the budget process for Merrimack County and stated the sub committee's that review the budget put a lot of hard work into the process.

Chairman Bouchard called upon Commissioner JD Colcord to address the 2009 budget.

Commissioner Colcord explained we ended 2008 with a small surplus and will be applying \$750,000 of surplus to reduce taxes in 2009. The Counties financial position is strong and Standard & Poor's recently increased our bond rating to an A which allowed us to borrow on our Tax Anticipation Notes at a better interest rate.

Commissioner Colcord also explained that the 2009 budget process began in September with a Delegation presentation in December. Sub committee's began their work in January and worked right through to March. The Executive Committee met on March 9<sup>th</sup> and approved the sub committee's work and here we are.

Commissioner Colcord touched on some highlights: The new nursing home is up and running and everything seems to be fine, assisted living moved into their new quarters in November. Final construction and demolition of old building pretty much on schedule as planned. During the year we experienced the same high energy cost as every body else. On the revenue side, nursing home revenues were up over estimated and we continue to operate at capacity. Our other big revenue producer, Registry of Deeds was a little short of projected revenue. All in all, things are going well.

Chairman Bouchard called upon the Representatives to introduce themselves.

Chairman Bouchard called upon any member of the public that wished to speak.

Mr. Harry Judd - Selectmen from the Town of Bow spoke in opposition to the \$130,000 resolution for Dispatch. Mr. Judd stated that a meeting was held in December with those towns interested in a regional approach to dispatching. After that meeting the committee collectively agreed to study the needs of dispatch. Mr. Judd would urge the Delegation to not approve the resolution now and to give Bow another year to pull together and ask the committee to continue working on the regional approach. Mr. Judd pointed out that the Town of Bow was never asked to participate in the December meeting. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Colcord did respond by saying the County has received in writing that three towns would come on board and that Pembroke has also asked to come on board.

Mr. Keith Cotter - Town of Epsom asked the Delegation to approve the \$130,000 dispatch resolution and stated it is critical to do so.

Mr. Tom Gilligan - Town of Allenstown read a letter of support from the Town and indicated the reason for their change to Merrimack County is that there is a 50% increase in services from the Town of Bow.

Mr. Harry Judd explained the reason for the December meeting was to seek an alternative solution to take a year to achieve this.

Mr. Cotter stated that we still need a long term regional fix but we also have short-term needs as well.

Seeing not other member of the public wished to speak the public hearing was closed by Chairman Bouchard at 6:35p.m.

Chairman Bouchard opened the Delegation meeting at 6:35p.m. and read the public notice.

Clerk Shurtleff called roll with the following members present: Anderson, Bartlett, Bouchard, Brown, Coffey, Davis, DeStefano, Foose, French, Gile, Hamm, Kelly, Kidder, Kotowski, Lockwood, McGuire, McMahaon, Osborne, Owen, Palfrey, Porter, Potter, Reardon, Reed, Rice, Richardson, Rodd, Shuett, Shurtleff, Smith, Stetson, Tilton, Tupper, Walz, Watrous, Webb, Wheeler, Williams and Yeaton.

A quorum was declared with 39 present.

Chairman Bouchard explained that the 2009 budget is predicated on the withdrawal of \$130,000 from Capital Reserve for the purposes of upgrades and augment infrastructure for Dispatch services.

Representative Walz spoke against the resolution and feels this is premature and that the proper planning has not taken place. More work needs to be done here.

Representative Webb indicated he would like to see more information as far as cost analysis and assessment of these services.

Representative Osborne explained that we are charging a per call basis and that we are not undercutting anyone.

Representative Anderson asked how many towns currently under Merrimack County dispatch and that Bow was definitely not invited.

Commissioner Colcord explained there are 13 Towns currently with Merrimack County dispatch.

Representative DeStefano stated in all fairness, we just found out, we thought we had a year to come up with an alternative plan.

Representative Osborne moved and read the budget resolution as follows, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Merrimack County Delegation approve the withdrawal of funds from the Capital Reserve - Dispatch account in the amount of \$130,000. These funds will be expended to upgrade and augment the infrastructure and licensing for the migration of two towns, i.e., Allenstown and Epsom, to the current Dispatch Center. The radio equipment is needed to communicate with Allenstown and Epsom as they operate on different radio frequencies. We will also update a third Dispatch workstation to handle additional call traffic from Allenstown and Epsom. We expect this migration to occur on July 1, 2009. Seconded by Representative Kidder. After a lengthy discussion, on a roll call vote, motion passed 33 yes, 3 no.

Chairman Bouchard explained that the 2009 budget is also predicated on the withdrawal of \$74,000 from Capital Reserve Equipment account.

County Administrator Kathleen Bateson explained that the Merrimack County accounting software and hardware systems is outdated and needs replacement. Discussion followed.

Representative Rice moved and read the budget resolution as follows, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Merrimack County Delegation approve the withdrawal of funds from the Capital Reserve - Equipment account in the amount of \$74,000. These funds will be expended to replace the current outdated accounting software & hardware system. Seconded by Representative Owen. On a roll call vote, motion passed 34 yes, 1 no.

Chairman Bouchard called upon County Administrator Kathleen Bateson to present the Merrimack County Nursing Home Union Contract as well as the Merrimack County Department of Corrections Contract.

County Administrator Kathleen Bateson explained that the Nursing Home contract is a three year contract January 1, 2009 - December 31, 2011 with 1.5% COLA and two steps the first year, 1.5% COLA the second year and a 1.\*% COLA with reopener for wages only if economic conditions improve. Also in this contract, two positions were reclassified. Sick days were increased from 10 to 20 with a 50% buy back at year end for unused portion. Removal of short term disability for union members and a plan for members to purchase on their own. Approximate savings for 9 months \$72,000. Approximate costs for 2009 \$298,608, 2010 \$307,566 and \$313,102 for 2011.

Ms. Bateson further explained this is a good contract and the process went smoothly.

County Administrator Kathleen Bateson explained that the Union contract between Merrimack County Department of Corrections and State Employees Association has not been voted on as of yet. The fact finder's report has been accepted by the Commissioners as well as the State Employees Association. All information was forwarded to the Union Representative on December 1, 2008.

Wage changes were submitted on December 4, 2006 they are: 4% COLA 7/1/07-12/31/07 with 2 additional steps, increase in shift differential .75 cents - .90 cents = .15 cents per hour second shift. \$1.00 - \$1.10.10 cents per hours third shift and \$1.05 - \$1.10 = .05 cents weekends with a cost of \$76,244.29. 3% COLA 1/1/08-12/31/08 cost of \$310,784.75. 3% COLA 1/1/09-12/31/09 cost of \$320,108.00. One time bonus for employees who maxed out in 2004. Six employees \$2,500 and one employee \$2,000 for a total of \$17,000. Total cost in budget \$724,137.04 plus \$91,820.58 retirement fringe. Total cost \$815,957.62. This is an evergreen contract so step increases will continue, if eligible, if contract goes beyond 2009 without new one in place.

Chairman Bouchard a motion was in order to approve the 2009 budget.

Representative French moved the 2009 expenditures of \$71,988,740 be approved. Seconded by Representative Davis. On a roll call vote, motion carried 34 yes, 1 no.

Representative Rice moved the 2009 revenues of \$30,246,234 be approved. Seconded by Representative Coffey. On a roll call vote, motion carried 34 yes, 1 no.

Representative Owen moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:47p.m. Seconded by Representative Webb. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Shurtleff, Clerk  
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Representative Owen moved to adjourn at 7:05p.m. Seconded by Representative Clarke. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Shurtleff, Clerk  
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