

Belknap County Delegation Minutes
March 14, 2011 at 7:00 PM

Chair Millham called the Belknap County Delegation meeting to order at 7:00 PM on the above date at 34 County Drive, Laconia, NH and started with the pledge of allegiance followed by introductions.

In Attendance: Reps. St. Cyr, Millham, Russell, Tilton, Luther, Swinford, Pilliod, Comtois, Fields, Bolster, Malone, Worsman, Simpson, Tobin, Accornero, Greemore, Flanders. Rep. Kingsbury arrived at 7:20 PM.

Also present: Commissioners, County Administrator, and Department Heads.

Public Hearing on 2011 Belknap County Budget: Chair Millham stated that when she opens up the meeting for public input, that each member of the public will have 3 minutes to speak and will be allowed to speak twice for comments specific to the budget.

Public Comment: Several members of the public addressed the Convention and asked that taxes be reduced. Some specifically mentioned that employee wages and benefits were too expensive. There were a few members of the public who spoke in support of outside agencies.

Madam Chair asked twice if there was any other public input. There was none, the public hearing was closed at 7:35 PM.

M/Accornero to reduce the budget to \$29,534,610. S/Luther for discussion.

M/Worsman to amend the motion to specify that all stimulus money reserved for capital purchases totaling \$1,374,984 (revenue acct # 02.5020.0010.41) found in the various lines throughout the budget, primarily in 4160 (Maintenance Dept” be totaled in this budget in the account “Capital Projects” #01-4160-0906-55. Further, all expenditures out of this line are to first be presented to the entire delegation at a public hearing prioritized with the proposals and three bids for their approval. Lastly, the use of the fund balance will be the amount sufficient to reduce the amount to be raised by taxation by the towns in the amount of .28% than last year. S/Simpson. Chair asked Rep. Worsman to explain her motion. Simpson 100% agrees with amendment but would like to make it easier for public.

Rep. Tilton suggested we break the motion down into 3 separate parts as it is too broad in one amendment and it would create more transparency if separated.

Rep. Kingsbury spoke to the fact that all tax income comes from manufacturing and that we have to bring that back in this area to create jobs.

Rep. Fields expressed his difficulty with these cuts tonight. He stated that everyone has had time to look over the budget for over 2 months now. Everyone involved at the county has worked hard to keep the budget down and the delegation had time to ask their questions.

Rep. Greemore said that there were two items in the amendment. To remove the 2.1 Million and put it back in the fund balance. That gives back the .28% in original budget. Then the capital is in one line item and we have a public hearing on it.

Rep. St. Cyr stated that it would be easier to take each action as separate motions.

Rep. Accornero wants the Chair to call the question to vote on the amendment.

Roll call vote was called on the amendment. Re-count needed. Ended with a 9 - 9 Tie. **Motion Failed.**

Rep. Bolster made a motion to amend Rep. Accornero's motion to put stimulus money into a separate line item. Rep. Fields thought the stimulus money had to be used for particular purposes.

Administrator Shackett clarified that this stimulus money is required to be used for capital projects. It is already in one line item in the budget. The revenue is in the fund balance number. It has always been here. Changing the stimulus spending will not affect the amount to be raised by taxes. It is still the .28% that they are talking about.

Rep. Bolster asked Administrator Shackett about when the stimulus money came in 2009. Ms. Shackett reiterated that in 2009, what wasn't spent lapsed into fund balance and was re-appropriated in 2010. That is what is planned again for 2011.

Rep. Bolster asked the Board of Commissioners if they would be adverse to bringing those projects to the delegation to discuss. Commissioner Philpot stated that that Commissioners want to bring projects to the delegation and have these discussions. The Commissioners always share these discussions and are very open to it. Rep. Bolster asked if he could get a commitment from the three Commissioners to have a conversation with the delegation before they spend the money. Commissioner Philpot stated that the Commissioners talk about it all the time at their meetings, they decide and they talk, etc. That is what they are elected to do, they're always happy to have discussion and talk about it anytime.

Rep. Bolster then withdrew his motion. S/Swinford.

Rep. Accornero then asked the Commissioners if they planned to do whatever they want with the stimulus money regardless of what the Delegation says? He demanded a Yes or No answer. Commissioner Philpot responded by saying that they have different jobs (delegation and Commissioners). It is the Commissioners job to manage the affairs of the county and the day to day operations and they will not delegate that responsibility. It is what they are elected to do. The Commissioners need to do their job and the Delegation needs to do it's.

Rep. Accornero followed up by again saying that the Commissioners just give the delegation the budget and then they say that they will do what they want anyway. Commissioner Thomas reminded him that the Commissioners have statutory responsibilities and there are statutory responsibilities of the Delegation. Rep. Accornero stated that reducing the budget to the \$29,534,607 is a small step, but it is a step. He was elected by the people to be fiscally responsible and to do what the member of the public said earlier, run the county budget like we run our home budgets. His constituents want it cut.

Rep. Tobin said that he doesn't want to micro manage those that are in office, but that he is elected to do a job. He then made a motion to reduce the Commissioner's recommended budget by 7%. It was stated that Rep. Accornero's motion already does that.

Rep. Tilton said that after three months of reviewing the budget, that we should clearly see where we are reducing the line items. Rep. Accornero said that would be a waste and their time is valuable and that he was already told by Commissioners that they would spend as they want. Chair Millham pointed out that we have already had that discussion and it clear that the delegation is the legislative body, not the executive body.

Rep. Accornero wants to call the question to vote on the amendment. (To reduce the budget to \$29,534,610) Roll call vote resulted in a 9 - 9 Tie. **Motion Failed.**

M/Accornero to reduce the fund balance by 7.03%. S/Luther for discussion. Commissioner Philpot reminded him that if they take an additional 7% from the fund balance and add it to the budget it will raise taxes. Rep. Bolster asked Admin. Shackett how much money would be needed to reduce the fund balance in order to achieve a zero increase in what they ask the towns. Commissioners pointed out that they already reduced the amount to be raised in taxes by .28%. Admin. Shackett stated that she would need clarification on which number and in which direction Rep Accornero would like to affect fund balance. Rep. Luther withdrew his second of the Accornero motion. Rep. Worsman said she would second the motion and would like Rep. Accornero to clarify it. He said he would like to increase the amount added to the budget. Chair Millham asked him to clarify. He replied that he would like to reduce the fund balance.

Rep. Bolster said the fund balance saves the County from borrowing for Tax Anticipation notes. Rep. Simpson asked if Rep. Bolster knows where that money comes from; it is from the tax payers. Rep. Worsman does not want to use every bit of the county's savings.

Rep. Swinford stated that if we empty the fund balance that we are doing a disservice to taxpayers. She sat in on the hearings, and three departments of the county were level funded and one department came in under budget. That is responsible budgeting. Rep. Swinford is not willing to sacrifice the care of residents etc, but the Nursing Home also was a level funded budget. Rep. Swinford also stated that there are Collective Bargaining Contracts that need to be followed, by law.

Rep. Worsman said that management has the right to decrease personnel and that she ran to cut spending and shrink the government.

Rep. Accornero withdrew his motion and asks the chair for a 15 minute recess. All concur. The County Delegation paused for a 15 minute recess at 8:45 pm.

Chair Millham then resumed the meeting at 9:00 pm.

Budget Vote: Rep. Bolster made a motion to reduce the bottom line of the budget by \$224,000 to achieve a total budget amount of \$32,158,768 and to make sure the \$224,000 reduces the amount to be raised in taxes. Rep. Fields seconded. Chair Millham asked for any comment. There was none. Chair called for a roll call vote. 10 – Y, 8 – N. **Motion passed.**

Rep. Comtois spoke briefly to say that he thought this was a joke and was ashamed that he was even present.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 9:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela A. Bovill,
Administrative Assistant