



## **Delegation Meeting Minutes** **January 12, 2015 at 6:00 pm**

Chair Frank Tilton called the Belknap County Delegation meeting to order at 6:00 pm on the above date at 34 County Drive, Laconia, NH and recited the pledge of allegiance. The Chair asked the Clerk to call the roll.

In Attendance: Representatives Aldrich, Comtois, Dumais, Fields, Flanders, Fraser, Gallagher, Howard, Hurt, Lebreche, Luther, Spanos, Sylvia, Tilton, Vadney and Varney.

Absent: Representatives Fisher and Russell.

**Minutes:** M/Gallagher, S/Fields to approve the 12/08/14 minutes. Unanimous. **Motion passes.**

**Appointment to fill vacant Commissioners seat:** Chair Tilton would like the administration staff to assist with advertising for the vacant commissioner position. He asked the Delegation to pick a date for responses to be submitted. Past practice has always been for the 18 members to participate in the process as a whole. A question was posed on whether the Delegation would still like to be part of the process or would they prefer a committee of the Delegation. The Delegation collectively decided to continue with this process as a whole committee and make the deadline for resumes, cover letters Friday, January 23, 2015 by Noon. Chair Tilton would like the staff to assist with collecting responses and mailing correspondence to the 18 members. Rep. Vadney asked if an ad hoc committee should be formed for the initial interview of say 7 and to set a date for interviews. M/Comtois to give the Chair the discretion to advertise and navigate the process of interviews, etc. and work as a whole from there. S/Howard for discussion. All concur for the Chair to move forward with the process. Unanimous. **Motion passes.**

**Incoming Commissioners:** Rep. Tilton welcomed the Commissioners and wanted their insight on the proposed budget. He handed the floor over to the Commission. Commissioner DeVoy welcomed everyone and stated that he is ready to go to work on this proposed budget. Commissioner Burchell echoed this statement and reviewed a few key points that the Commission will focus on including amount to be raised by taxes, addressing problems at the jail, health insurance, the unions, and the fund balance. The Commission feels that there is structural deficit in Belknap County and that recommendations will be forthcoming to address this situation. The Commissioners will work diligently. Rep. Luther said that there was currently no money in the proposed budget for improvements, etc. to the jail and asked if the new Commissioners plan to add. Commissioner DeVoy said that he is working on details now and getting a plan from Superintendent Ward to address getting programs going. He has a list of all repairs needed at the jail. Rep. Gallagher said that they have a baseline budget with a 10% increase currently and asked if the Delegation would receive a new proposal from the

Commissioners less than 10%. Commissioner DeVoy stated yes and that he will protect Laconia's tax cap. Commissioner Burchell said many factors will all be taken into consideration when working on the budget. The Commission acknowledged there is a lot of work to do and that they will do what they have to do to remedy the jail. They need costs estimates. Rep. Dumais asked if they have the time to redo the 2015 budget and have the costs for the jail by March 2015. The Commissioners said that is where a third Commissioner is needed and will be helpful. Commissioner Burchell stated that he hopes to make the Commissioners final recommendations by 03/01/15 and get the unions on board to pay more towards their health insurance. Commissioner DeVoy said that they will handle safety issues right away at the jail as a priority.

**Supporting data for 2015 budget:** Administrator Shackett gave the Delegation the 2015 Wage and Benefits calculations spreadsheet. Rep. Gallagher asked if there was a COLA in the 2015 budget. Administrator Shackett said yes, 1.4%. The next spreadsheet reviewed was the Departmental wages, increases and health insurance costs. Administrator Shackett said the estimated increases for health insurance for 2015 are anywhere from 4.9% - 6.4% depending on the plan. Rep. Gallagher asked if these were guaranteed maximum rates. Answer: Yes. This means the rates could decrease but not increase. Rep. Tilton would like a spreadsheet provided to the Delegation with a census for how many employees are on a single, 2 person or family plan. Administrator Shackett will provide and reminded Rep. Tilton that these numbers are always changing. Rep. Vadney said that he calculates a \$500,000 increase in the percentages for health insurance. There are two ways to reduce, either to negotiate or to have layoffs. He stressed that the negotiations need to be serious. Rep. Hurt asked about the Cadillac tax; this won't factor in until at least 2018 on some plans.

**Next steps:** A copy of the committee assignments was given out. Generally each subcommittee has 1 or 2 meetings (except Gunstock) and they are usually on Mondays and Fridays. Rep. Tilton instructed the Chair of each subcommittee to contact Angela Bovill to schedule/coordinate their subcommittee meetings. He also encouraged the sub committees to try and meet at each department to see what they do on a daily basis.

**Tours of the county complex and county courthouse:** Chair Tilton stated that the tour of the county complex today went well and encouraged all members that didn't make it to contact department heads. They will give a tour anytime. Administrator Shackett said that she could schedule another tour at the complex/courthouse if anyone was interested. There are 4 more members interested in receiving a tour at the County complex Administrator Shackett suggested that members send her an email on their interest at the complex/courthouse and she would get it set up. Rep. Vadney said these tours are very valuable and that all members should make it a point to go.

**Rep. Sylvia request for an investigation:** Rep. Sylvia stated that he was happy the voters elected 2 new Commissioners as the last two years have been difficult. The legal bills proved, in his opinion that the Delegation prevailed in their court decision. Some things have gone on that are wrong including the inspections for the jail that are required every 6 months. He felt that this went undone for 3 years and doesn't want it swept under the rug. He suggested that the lawsuit regarding authority over appropriations was a tremendous hit to the taxpayers. In his opinion,

the HealthTrust rebate was a violation to RSA24:15. Rep. Sylvia also felt that Nursing Home residents were terrorized by threats of the nursing home shutting down. In his opinion that was not right. Rep. Sylvia read from RSA24:17 – investigations and suggested the Delegation form a committee to investigate and gather information as to where monies like the health insurance rebate have gone. He questioned if it was a proper use and if anyone personally benefited from it. He mentioned the embezzlement issue at the county 6 or so years ago. He wants to consider forming a committee to look into some of these items. Rep. Tilton stated that there is no missing money. Monies were used for various reasons, but none of it is missing. He stated that the Delegation and the new Commissioners will be working very closely together. Rep. Sylvia is suggesting an investigation be done on where appropriated money may have been used elsewhere. Rep. Gallagher suggested that they not get ahead of themselves as the auditors will look into all this during the audit process. He suggested that they allow that existing process to proceed and provide additional focus on the previously suggested area. Then determine from there if an investigation is prudent.

**Public comment:** Ms. Paula Trombly, Meredith asked if public input will always be recognized at these meetings as it is not on the agenda. Chair Tilton responded that this is not a public hearing, but he is open to public input. Ms. Trombly asked Rep. Sylvia if there was proof of foul play. Answer was he has doubts. Ms. Trombly said he indicated clearly his feeling that money was missing. Rep. Sylvia said he didn't mean to and perhaps he misspoke. Ms. Trebly said these accusations were slanderous and inflammatory; unless there is proof, it causes bad blood. Mr. Gordon Blais, Meredith asked when the appointment of a new commissioner is made, does that applicant have to be a resident of the district. Answer: Yes. Mr. Blais also agreed with Rep. Sylvia that there is good reason to have an investigation as he felt the previous Commissioners ran the county terribly, neglected jail inspections and should be punished for violating that RSA.

**Adjourn:** M/Hurt, S/Comtois to adjourn at 7:45 pm. Unanimous. **Motion passes.**

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Gallagher  
Clerk, County Convention