

Carroll County Commissioner's Meeting

Minutes

November 18, 2009

Commissioners Present: Commissioner Sorensen, Commissioner Solomon, Commissioner Albee

Public Present: (speakers) Paul Zimmerman, Attorney Randy Walker, Rep. Susan Wiley, Sandy Stowell, Marian Shakir, Don Litchko, Lorraine Donovan, Diane Gueriere, Eileen Leavitt, David Babson, Henry Spencer, Rep. Fleck, David Robinson. Approximately 150 were present for this meeting.

Commissioner Sorensen called meeting to order at 7:00pm and laid ground rules for keeping order during the session.

Public Input

- 1. Sandy Stowell: Why was this not brought up before plans were finalized? Sick of having elderly/disabled treated as "throw aways." Need a nursing home that we/they can be proud of.**
- 2. Rep. Susan Wiley: Excited about night meeting. Explanation of process that has been gone through in last 11 months of planning. 44 public meetings, 10 delegation meetings, 22 building committee meetings, 7+ subcommittee meetings, CON approval from state, 12 currently working on non-profit organization to raise money to offset tax impact. This project has had more visibility than any other in New England. Commissioners went to numerous places and presented detailed planning to the public. Alterations were made at public request. Cost saving measures were implemented. In regard to Erie, PA being used as a reference by Mr. Zimmerman; cost of living/goods and service is much lower than here in Carroll County. We need to do what is right and build this home the way it should be done.**
- 3. Marian Shakir: Why was this not brought to vote to see if towns wanted it? Maybe some more maintenance could have helped this home. This (existing home) looks like a "Taj Mahal" compared to some hospitals in New York City. Don't believe in private rooms, baths, or kitchens. If I can't afford it I should not have a choice to have a private room. Think of the taxpayers.**
- 4. Commissioner Sorensen: Become familiar with County government and how it is run in NH in comparison with NY. 14 representatives vote and appropriate money, commissioners are just the managers of their appropriations.**
- 5. Don Litchko: Retired taxpayer. Retired consolidation expert, Director of programs and contracts. Experience in consolidation and making plans/layouts. Has looked at plans, has no connection with architects. These are good layouts/plans. Compared to this home this new layout will be more efficient, save energy, work savings and steps.**

6. **Lorraine Donovan:** People here are fantastic. It is sad that they have to live in a cubicle, 2 people in one tiny room. 4 people sharing one bathroom. That is not the way that elderly should be taken care of. This is a County nursing home, not a big city. The people who live here are not the richest; they are here because this is what they can afford. I think the plans for this new nursing home are perfect.

7. **Diane Guerierre:** This is the only place in Carroll County that would take my brother due to his medical issues. Should not have to share a room, is not fair to his roommate when he needs help in the middle of the night. There is no dignity. Need new facility, 100% in favor.

End Public Input

Commissioner Albee made motion to accept public minutes from November 4, 2009. Motion seconded by Commissioner Solomon. Commissioners Sorensen, Solomon, and Albee in favor. So voted.

Commissioner Solomon made motion to accept non-public minutes from November 4, 2009 and November 11, 2009 (2 sets). Commissioner Albee seconded the motion. Commissioners Sorensen, Solomon, and Albee in favor. So voted. Minutes are to remain sealed.

Attorney Randy Walker/Representing Paul Zimmerman, Tuftonboro

1. **Commissioner Solomon:** Mr. Zimmerman, why are you not giving your own presentation?

2. **Mr. Zimmerman:** It is not my profession.

Presentation/info. Copies of reports and exhibits and studies.

3. **Randy Walker:** Mr. Zimmerman has put together information in the *last couple of weeks* that he hopes will aid the delegation in making a decision as we move forward.

4. **Commissioner Albee:** Is there some reason that you did not want to share the information with us before the meeting? We requested the info but did not get it.

5. **Walker:** I did not even have the information until this afternoon. Lots of people have done good work in this home. The time has come for a new, cost efficient, nice home. The question is on options and which one gets selected. There are 10k nursing homes in the US, which one gets selected? Why not use a plan that has already been built somewhere else to lower architect costs? I am going to quote Jeb Bradley from a letter he sent to me. "More than 53k NH citizens are out of work right now; families across the state are making tough decisions on how to pay their bills or worrying that their jobs may be cut. Small businesses are struggling to ride out the recession, to keep their doors open."

In light of this situation where we have to make tough choices, we need to make some hard financial decisions as we move forward. Referenced Commissioners

meeting minutes from April 27, May 18, and June 29th with amounts (\$15 million to \$24 million) that had been in discussion at the time. Quoted one Representative on bathroom concerns and overall cost. Also per capita tax rate for Carroll County.

6. Commissioner Albee: There were actually 101 meetings. The figure of \$15 million option was only for example purposes to examine operational issues. You are going to present us with more concrete evidence? Nowhere in this information are operational costs taken into consideration. Only looking at capital costs. We looked at 20 year cost for whole deal, including operational deficiencies. What is the extraordinary information that you have for us?

7. Walker: I am only speaking for one person.

8. Commissioner Sorensen: What is the person you are representing suggesting/proposing?

9. Attorney Walker: We do not have suggested options, we have suggested suggestions. Contracts with construction manager and architect, base line of \$200 per sq ft. coming in at \$283 per sq ft. Replication of another 102 bed nursing home instead at a cheaper cost. Existing facility is 40k sq ft. Proposal is for 80k sq ft. Larger to heat, clean, paint, floors to wash. Financial standpoint operational costs are higher.

\$23.5 million dollars divided by 103 = \$228k per bed. This is average cost of a home in Carroll County. Accessed website with some 2008 data where national average cost of a nursing home was \$123 sq ft. Understand that estimates here are higher due to frost/snow loads

Comparison to facility in Erie, PA. Cost to construct facility was \$11.5 million (construction only of 115 bed facility, 72k sq ft. \$159 per sq ft or \$100k per bed). Private sector building, not county. Why is it so much less expensive?

Have only 19 private rooms and 48 semi-private rooms.

Merrimack County just spent \$43.7 million on a 291 bed facility for \$186 per sq ft.

Conclusion: Suggest many alternatives at significantly less cost. Private sector generating homes which people work well with. Other counties have built facilities at significantly less cost. \$23.5 million was one of the most expensive. If you are looking at the high end wealthier population of Carroll County, private, spacious rooms, then it is a prime facility. If you are looking at a more modest facility for less money those are tradeoffs you have to make. Need to use restraint and keep from spending taxpayer's money.

Open for Questions:

1. Rep. Fleck: Attorney Walker referred to a letter from Senator Bradley; I never received such a letter. Was this in objection to the nursing home?

2. **Walker:** No, it had nothing to do with the nursing home. Just used as reference for the economy.

3. **Linda Teagan:** Went to public hearing in North Conway. Issues about construction costs and issues were raised at meetings. Paper said Reps were not aware of what happened at that meeting. Were they given notes on meeting? Now understand operational deficit. Never saw how you are going to erase operating deficit. My question is, when National health care comes in it will be financed by cuts in Medicaid. Some of those have already been legislated. Can you make a new spread sheet and recalculate the new operating budget with these reductions?

4. **Commissioner Sorensen:** Next item on agenda is the Sheriff's budget. Thank you all for coming.

Sheriff Connelly and Lt. Myers

1. **Refinement of budget.** Increase of \$59k or 3.6% increase after revenue. Level budget except for \$21,775 for 4 new cruisers.

2. **Commissioner Albee:** One car has 54k miles on it, look into buying that car. Made offer of \$2k to leasing company. Need to find money in budget. Most is in wages and association costs.

3. **Sheriff Connelly:** Kept it the same even though items have increase such as fuel.

Discussion of Sherriff budget line items and Administrative Assistant/secretary items. Questions on line items. Communication 5.1% increase. Talk of level funding/ look at uniform costs, salary lines, personal days YTD. Increase in training/ education conference.

Discussion of proposed increase in revenue is it realistic. Questions on special details increase. Total expenditure increase

Total department expenses, increase of \$59,233. Dispatch increase of \$37,619.

Discussion on specific department increase in expenditures.

4. **Commissioner Sorensen:** Check figures and submit final budget next Wednesday.

5. **Commissioner Albee:** Look at Administrative Assistant line – adjust, make clear.

Sandi McKenzie, MVNH, Paula Coates

1. **Looked at changes, discussed therapy and revenue increase. Resident needs have increased revenue. Expanded rehab services and optimized. Numbers are conservative, more room to grow.**

2. **Commissioner Sorensen:** \$215k revenue increase on therapy?

3. **Sandi:** Concerned about Medicaid reimbursement.

4. Paula: Contractual rate – budget is based on it. Room rate is \$254, reimbursement rate is \$150.

Discussion of line item adjustments. Expenses.

Bottom line – reduced total budget deficit from \$2,736,496 in 2009 to \$2,337,257 projected in 2010.

Kathy Garry, Business Office

1. Handed Commissioners closed bids for ambulance. 2 bids. Joseph Thibodeau from Conway bid of \$2200. New England Door and Barge, bid of \$600.

Commissioner Albee made motion to accept bid from Joseph Thibodeau for the amount of \$2200. Commissioner Sorensen seconded the motion. Commissioners Sorensen, Albee, and Solomon in favor. Ambulance sold to Joseph Thibodeau for the sum of \$2200.

2. Kathy: Regional appropriation budget requests are all in. \$40k- Child Advocacy, level funded. \$1k Transportation – level funded.

Commissioner Albee made motion to level fund Child Advocacy and Transportation. Motion seconded by Commissioner Albee. Commissioners Albee, Sorensen, and Solomon in favor. So voted.

3. 2009 CDBG project. We have been awarded position of conveyor again. \$200k – act as administrators. Who do you need to see next week for budget?

4. Commissioner Sorensen: Look at water/sewer.

5. Commissioner Albee: Need to standardize wage positions County wide. Once union negotiations are done, we may be able to do it. Looks like total budget has a 1% increase.

Public Input 8:33pm

1. Henry Spencer: Did you approve non-public minutes? Could not hear.

2. Commissioner Solomon: Yes, approved and sealed.

3. David Babson: Why are you not telling the sheriff that the uniform budget does or does not include him? Need to draw the line, make rules clear.

4. Commissioner Albee: Will take a look at that.

5. Babson: What did Sandi mean on therapy revenue increase?

6. Commissioner Albee: They are matching 2009 plus additional.

7. Babson: Are we looking at purchasing ability/savings of group?

8. Commissioner Sorensen: We are looking at it now.

9. Commissioner Albee: We want to coordinate purchasing.

Comments on the Zimmerman Presentation:

1. **Eileen Leavitt: Want to thank you for planning this nursing home. Encourage you to continue.**

Smug assumption from Attorney Walker about care for the wealthy and care for the less affluent people of this county.

2. **Commissioner Sorensen: Doing all we can to save money. Why shouldn't we give our elderly and disabled what they want? Private rooms and baths, they deserve that dignity.**

3. **Commissioner Solomon: His numbers do not reflect this location/this area.**

4. **Commissioner Albee: Huggins Hospital is spending \$450 per sq. ft.**

5. **David Robinson: Website comment; has come a long way. Should be one universal way to comment. Who answers the comments?**

6. **Commissioner Sorensen: One of us will answer any comments.**

7. **Babson: Confuses me - \$23.5 million, you have not decided on how you are going to heat facility. How does that work in to the \$23.5 million? Is it included?**

8. **Commissioner Albee: We can build this building on this budget and use propane. Explaining bio-mass, not hard to figure the cost. (propane, pellets, campus wide). Nothing is hidden. Obvious where money is going.**

Everything is in the design of the new home to make it work.

9. **Rep. Wiley: Need to have newspaper talk to the Leavitts.**

10. **Commissioner Albee: Nate's article on caucusing was the best I have read. Truly enjoyed it.**

Commissioner Solomon made motion to move into non-public session pursuant to RSA91A; 3 for personnel. Commissioner Albee seconded the motion. Commissioners Sorensen, Albee, and Solomon in favor. Into non-public at 9:00pm.