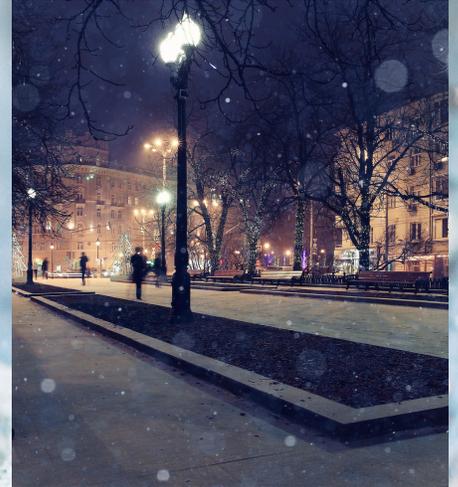


DECEMBER 2020



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All About NACo's Live Healthy Prescription, Health & Dental Discount Program

The National Association of Counties (NACo) Live Healthy Prescription, Health & Dental Discount Program is a NO-COST program available to all member counties. It provides relief to uninsured and underinsured Americans who face growing health costs offering ways to save: Prescription Drug Discount Card; Health Discount Program; Dental Discount Program; MinuteClinic Savings.

The Live Healthy Discount Card works for medications that are not covered by your insurance plan or if you do not have insurance. It can also work if your plan covers less than the Live Healthy Discount Card – in other words, if the Live Healthy Program can save you more, it will. Your pets are automatically eligible for prescription discounts too! There are over 66,000 participating pharmacies across the country and you can use your discount card at any one of these locations to save money. Download or print your Live Healthy Discount Card here and start saving: www.livehealthycard.com. If you have questions about the Live Healthy Discount program, call 1-877-321-2652 or visit www.livehealthycard.com. We hope you will take advantage of this helpful program, designed to save you money and provide important health benefits. Head to www.naco.org/live-healthy-us-counties to learn more!



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Spotlight on Sullivan County

Total population: 43,146 (2019)

County employee census: 338

NEW PROJECTS:

A 28-bed sober housing facility ("Sullivan House") is under construction. The project is renovating a 3-story brick building originally constructed in 1930 as the home of the Eagle Times newspaper in Claremont. The project total renovation cost is \$2.9 million and is expected to be complete in August 2021. Residents of the facility will primarily come from the Dept. of Corrections TRAILS program.

The county also designed a \$49 million nursing home project for our 156-bed facility that would have demolished a 1933 facility, renovated our 60,000 square foot facility built in 1970, and added on 80,000 square feet. That project was not approved to move forward by the county Delegation and will be discussing this with them soon to determine the next steps.

Fun historical fact: Sullivan County was created in 1827 and was originally part of Cheshire County. And although the county might be small and poor, the county is home to several "we are number 1" claims to fame including: Home to America's greatest rock n' roll band (Aerosmith) formed in Sunapee; home to the author of Major League Baseball's most iconic moment—Pudge Fisk (Charlestown) waving his home run fair in the 1975 world series; home of the only National Historic Sites in NH—St. Gaudens in Cornish; home to of the longest two-span wooden covered bridge in the USA in Cornish; home of NH Electric Cooperative's first-ever electric utility pole erected in 1939 in Lempster; the first municipality in the country named after George Washington in...you guessed it, Washington; home to the State's leader in maple syrup production—Bascom Maple Farms in Acworth; the State's first Roman Catholic Church—Old St. Mary's—built in 1823 in Claremont; linens on the Titanic were made at Monadnock Mills in Claremont.

2019 award recipients: 2019 NH Association of Counties Corrections Superintendent of the Year, Dave Berry, Superintendent; 2019 NH Association of Counties County Commissioner of the Year, Commissioner George Hebert; 2019 NH Association of Counties Register of Deeds of the Year, Janet Gibson, Registrar of Deeds; 2019 Sullivan County Corrections Employee of the Year, Charles "Joe" Brookens, DOC Captain; 2019 Sullivan County Nursing Home Employee of the Year, Beth Renkowsky, Interim Director of Nursing

In The News:

Shaheen Discusses Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on North Country Tourism Industry during Visit to White Mountains Visitor Center

Oct. 28 (North Woodstock, NH) – Today, U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) visited the White Mountains Visitor Center to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the North Country's tourism industry. As the state's second-largest industry, tourism is critical to New Hampshire's economy, supporting tens of thousands of jobs and producing millions of dollars in revenue for local communities and the state. However, the sector has been hit especially hard by the economic crisis spurred by the pandemic, with many of the state's most cherished and well-known attractions suffering devastating financial losses. During her visit, Shaheen was joined by tourism industry leaders from the area, including representatives from the White Mountains Attractions Association, Hobo Railroad, Santa's Village and the Mount Washington Cog Railway. She highlighted the need to provide additional relief to the tourism industry in the North Country and throughout the state.

Shaheen has called for the passage of the HEROES Small Business Lifeline Act, legislation she introduced that would allow many businesses and nonprofits within the industry to access a second round of Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans. The PPP has been a lifeline for businesses and nonprofits in New Hampshire, with over \$2.5 billion in assistance disbursed to more than 25,000 businesses across the state. "Tourism is the lifeblood of New Hampshire's economy, with thousands of businesses in the North Country and throughout our state relying on the millions of tourists who visit each year to see firsthand our beautiful lands, enjoy our cherished attractions and experience Granite State hospitality. However, as was made clear to me this afternoon, Granite State businesses in the tourism industry are hurting and need help as soon as possible if they are to keep their doors open in the coming year," said Shaheen. "It's shameful that Mitch McConnell has sent the Senate home without voting on a bipartisan COVID-19 relief bill that includes help for our small businesses and addresses the priorities of Granite Staters. I'm committed to doing everything in my power to push the Senate to put aside partisanship and finally deliver the comprehensive COVID-19 relief Americans need and deserve."

Earlier, Shaheen visited Coos County Nursing Home in Berlin to discuss the continuing effects of COVID-19 on northern New Hampshire nursing homes and highlight the need to provide additional resources to providers in COVID-19 relief legislation.

In The News, continued,,,

In New Hampshire, the pandemic has had a severe and disproportionate impact on nursing homes, with more than 80% of all COVID-related deaths in the state occurring among residents of these facilities. Additional federal support is needed to ensure nursing homes in the North Country and throughout the state are able to hire and train staff and purchase PPE and COVID-19 testing that will help protect the health and well-being of residents and caregivers. During her visit, Shaheen heard more from the facility’s leadership and staff, who iterated their experiences working during the pandemic. Shaheen also thanked them for their efforts on the front lines of the crisis. Shaheen has fought to provide resources and support for Granite State nursing homes during the pandemic. Last month, she questioned top Trump administration officials on the administration’s failure to fully distribute relief funds meant to help COVID-19 mitigation efforts at long-term care facilities. “I want to thank the leadership and staff of Coos County Nursing Home for their tremendous work during such a difficult time to protect and care for their patients, at great personal risk to themselves and their loved ones. Granite State nursing homes throughout New Hampshire have been especially vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic, with facilities suffering from outbreaks that have led to more than eighty percent of all COVID-related deaths in the state,” said Shaheen. “The federal government has a responsibility to provide additional support to help facilities like Coos County Nursing Home control the spread of the disease and protect the lives of residents and caretakers. Securing these resources for New Hampshire will continue to be a top priority for me in the Senate.”

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Spotlight on Outgoing Elected County Officials

The NHAC would like to thank all our non-returning elected officials. Being an elected official is one of the hardest jobs out there and their contributions to the NHAC and their individual counties, especially during this unprecedented time of COVID, are unmatched. The NHAC thanks them for their service and as you look back on your time with us, please know that all our achievements would not have been possible without your guidance.

County	Non-Returning Officials	Office
Belknap	Dave DeVoy	Commissioner
	Michael Moyer	Sheriff
Carroll	Amanda Bevard	Commissioner
	Dave Babson	Commissioner
Coos	Rick Samson	Commissioner
Cheshire	N/A	
Grafton	Marcia Morris	Commissioner
Hillsborough	Paul Bergeron	Commissioner
	Michael Conlon	County Attorney
	Edward Sapienza	Deeds
	James Hardy	Sheriff
Merrimack	Robin Davis	County Attorney
	Leo Bernier	Treasurer
	Robert Kreiger	Interim Sheriff
Rockingham	Scott Hillard	Sheriff
	Kevin St. James	Commissioner
	Kevin Coyle	Commissioner
Strafford	Dave Dubois	Sheriff
Sullivan	Jeffrey Barrette	Commissioner



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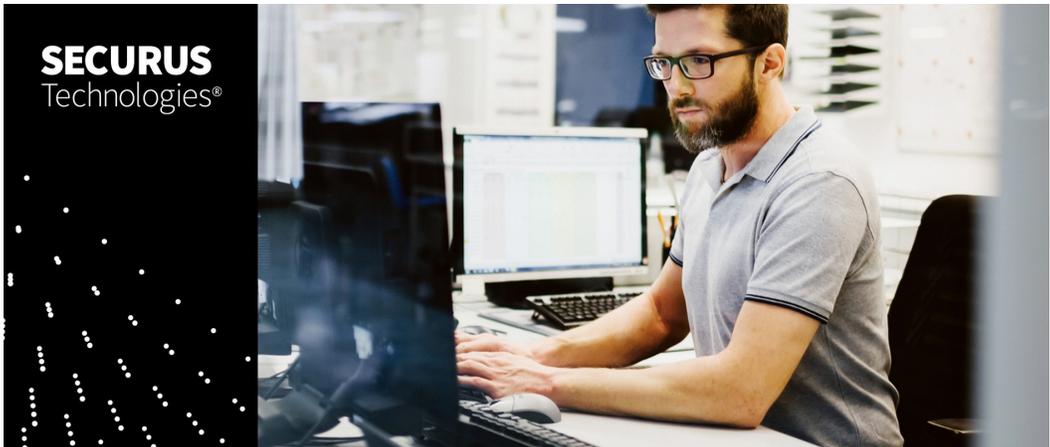
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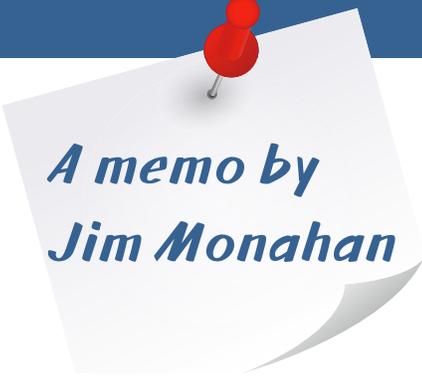
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*A memo by
Jim Monahan*

State Budget Outlook Is Improving, But Uncertainty Looms

Outlined below is an updated State budget summary and some observations concerning the current NH State operating budget and impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. As the State begins the 2022-2023 budget process, there are a number of uncertainties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Certainly, the county governments in NH are also impacted from both a revenue and expenditure challenge and trying to work through a series of existing and perhaps future federal relief programs. However, keeping informed about the State budget will assist in how the counties might approach the state budget process and prepare for both challenges and opportunities.

As detailed below, the general fund impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are not proving to be as bad as was feared, but uncertainty remains high.

As of December 1, 2020 the state budget picture looks like this:

1. The State budget assumes about \$2.6 billion in General Funds (GF) and Education Trust Funds (ETF) collected each year.
2. 2020 GF/ETF shortfall will be about \$65 million. This is much lower than was anticipated due to a combination of higher State agency lapses and higher business tax collection in July. Earlier estimates were \$144 million.
3. The increased business tax collections might be related to the surge in federal relief funds into the state, which in many cases would be taxable.
4. The higher State agency lapse is related to a slowdown in government services and activity in the last quarter of the State fiscal year.
5. 2021 GF shortfall estimates from the Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) were estimated between \$200 million and \$300 million when examined in the first quarter of the State fiscal year; however, new estimates from the State agencies now show the estimated shortfall to be as high as \$75.9 million and as small as \$3.7 million.
6. No direct cuts yet. The Governor continues to anticipate more federal relief before taking any steps. However, such additional relief legislation has been elusive.
 - a. Congress has been slow to act. Options range from as much as \$600 million in aid to NH; to relaxing some of the of existing restrictions on CARES monies to allow for backfilling of lost State revenues; to no help at all.
 - b. Going into the last 60 days of the calendar year, the Governor's office was holding on to about \$100 million in unallocated CARES funds to potentially replace lost revenues if new federal legislation allows. However, because all the CARES Act funds needed to be spent by December 31, 2020, recent steps have been taken to spend down all available federal relief funds by year end on approved COVID-19 related expenses.
 - c. In the past when shortfalls have arisen, the Governor brought a set of cuts to the Legislative Fiscal Committee for action. However, with improving revenue estimates, it is less likely that budget cuts will emerge in 2020.
 - d. There is a 3.1% Medicaid rate increase scheduled for January 1, 2021. This has a \$25 - \$30 million impact on GF. However, the federal match will be lost if the State portion of the rate is not paid out, thereby having a \$60 million impact on health care providers at a time when their costs are rising.

State Budget Outlook, continued...

- e. The budget passed by the legislature included a \$25 million back of the budget cut which has not yet been detailed by DHHS. However, the increased DHHS lapse has covered the need for the cuts.
7. Governor/State is holding back some authorized and budgeted resources/funds:
 - a. SLRP (State Loan Repayment Program)
 - b. FMAP benefits
 - c. Some delays in new programs
8. FMAP (Federal Medical Assistance Percentage) increases for Medicaid changed the Federal/State match from 50-50 to 56.2-44.8; is worth about \$10 million a month for NH; and will reduce GF spending. However, increased enrollment in Medicaid is costing the State \$8 to \$10 million.
 - a. The current FMAP for the expanded Medicaid program is currently funded with 90% federal funds and 10% State funding. There is no change to the FMAP for this portion of Medicaid.
9. The FMAP benefit is retroactive to January, well before the big uptick in Medicaid enrollment in May-June. Thus, the State should have \$40 to \$50 million in FMAP benefit to apply to GF shortfalls.
10. The FMAP increase is tied to the national declaration of emergency and is in place for any quarter for which the declaration is in place. This declaration was extended to January of 2021, so the FMAP benefit will continue until at least March of 2021.
11. The 2020-2021 budget for the GF/ETF was an increase of \$646 million from 2019. The Governor made the observation that one scenario might be that all we need to do is go back to 2019 spending levels. While this approach offers some good perspective, it may be too simple and optimistic as some programs are protected from cuts due to federal Medicaid rules, and social service needs are rising due to the economic decline. In addition, critical new mental health, SUD, and school funding changes would be at risk with this approach.



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A Note from our Outgoing President, Chuck Weed:

Goodbye Chuck, Hello Wendy

Looking back, I want to affirm again that as I took over from Tom Tombarello, with the help of the Dupont Group, contact with the counties, and organization of the NHAC was never better.

I had hoped that Wendy and I could investigate and publicize initiatives developed in New Hampshire counties, and that we could publicize and offer as model ideas that might work in other parts of the state.

I also had hoped to publicize and increase the awareness about the inclination of New Hampshire to balance its budget by passing down costs to county property taxpayers. I estimate that property taxes have increased by three times over since the 1990s because of cost shifting, not the financing of local initiatives. I hoped by developing a trust through the legislature with very strong county participation, we would be able to prevent the state from dealing with any possible opioid settlement like it did with the proceeds of the tobacco settlement in the late 90s. This is to be determined in the future.

As you are well aware, the best of plans is often lost to the reality of day-to-day activity, the influence of those beyond our control, and in this year, the plague of COVID-19. But I can say without doubt, that communication with the counties by the NHAC continues to be superb under the talent and demonstrated responsibility of the Dupont Group. I also can say that I am delighted not to have seen the frustration and anger that used to characterize many of the exchanges and meetings between the NHAC in the counties. I think Treasurer Suzanne Collins deserves substantial credit for her ongoing transparency and professional operation in keeping the books.

I also regret the tactics used by Rockingham county during the last biennium that were able to provoke changes to the county organization by threat, rather than using the processes in place to rationally and democratically fix the problems. But perhaps a new day has come to the Board of Commissioners of Rockingham, and we won't have to rely on just the responsibility and maturity of our former past president and a few others to cajole his colleagues about the rules and support structures which enhance and encourage mutual support between the counties.

There is one item that I hope receives special attention in the near future. It is clear that the corrections, Nursing Home, County Administrator, and County Attorney affiliates are meeting regularly and reporting back to the counties. Deeds and Human Resources have also been reliably able to report to the Executive Committee of the NHAC. I hope that the future NHAC will be able to motivate Sheriffs to be engaged and to provide their perspectives. I leave Wendy in charge of a strengthened and eminently functional organization. The election has brought new relationships with state politics. One clear result from my perspective is that there is now a more rational national government to work with. May the NHAC thrive.

Chuck Weed



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