

**CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**September 16, 2024**  
**OTHERS PRESENT**

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Jeremiah Jefferies, Chair  
Finch Holt, Vice Chair  
John Dickerson  
Ethel Gwynn  
Rick McVey  
Frank Rose  
Tim Yarbrough

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Scott Meszaros, County Manager  
Melissa Williamson, Deputy County Manager  
Russell Johnston, County Attorney  
Carla Smith, Clerk to the Board

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The Board of Commissioners for the County of Caswell, North Carolina, met in a regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, September 16, 2024 at 5:00 pm at the Historic Courthouse.

**CLOSED SESSION:**

A motion was made at 5:01 pm by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner McVey and **carried unanimously** to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee, which is hereby acknowledged NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (6). (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Dickerson, Holt, and Jefferies)

**WELCOME:**

Chairman Jefferies called the meeting to order, and welcomed everyone to the Caswell County Board of Commissioners meeting on September 16, 2024. Then all paused for a moment of Silent Prayer, and the Board of Commissioners and all the guest in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESENTATION:**

Antonio Foster said Commissioners, distinguished guest, ladies, and gentlemen I am Colonel retired Antonio Foster, Chairman of the Piedmont Community College Board of Trustees, and I'm accompanied by Dr. Pamela Senagal, President of Piedmont Community College (PCC). First and foremost, we want to thank all of the Commissioners, past and present, for your extraordinary support of Piedmont Community College. We dearly thank you. But today it is with great honor that we take a moment to recognize the outstanding contributions of one Mr. Jeremiah Jefferies, Chairman of the Caswell County Board of Commissioners. For 28 eight years, am I correct? Chairman Jefferies said 32. Mr. Foster said 32. I'm incorrect. Let me repeat that again so I make sure. For 32 years, Chairman Jefferies has been an unwavering advocate for education and community development throughout Caswell County. His tireless dedication and steadfast support has significantly impacted the lives of many including those within our academic community. Under Chairman Jefferies's leadership, Caswell County has seen remarkable progress and growth ensuring that opportunities for education and advancement are accessible to all. His commitment to fostering collaborations between local governments and

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educational institution like ours. He has been instrumental in driving positive change. Chairman Jefferies has been an enormous motivator for PCC as we live out our mission of transforming lives, strengthening communities, and inspiring individuals to excellence. Today we extend our heartfelt gratitude to Chairman Jefferies for his invaluable support, his vision, his leadership, and his passion for our community, which serves as an inspiration to us all. Now in the military we have reduced the word leadership to an acronym LDRSHIP, which stands for loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. We can honestly say that Commissioner Jefferies has consistently embodied these valuable characteristics in his daily walk. Ladies and gentlemen and Commissioners, please join us in expressing our deepest appreciation to Chairman Jefferies for his 32 years of exemplary service and unwavering dedication to the betterment of Caswell County and its citizen. Thank you so much sir. {Applause} We want to get a picture. We have a plaque for you. We're going to get right in front of your chair here. Chairman Jefferies said thank you Caswell County and Piedmont Community College.

**PUBLIC HEARING FY 2026 COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM, CAPITAL 5310 AND CAPITAL CALL FO PROJECT GRANT APPLICATION:**

Melissa Williamson said good evening.

Attorney Johnston said Chairman, sorry. If we could entertain a motion to go into the public hearing.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Yarbrough and **carried unanimously** to enter the public hearing. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Dickerson, Gwynn, and Jefferies)

Melissa Williamson said good evening. Caswell County Area Transportation System is required to complete the Community Transportation Grant application and the Capital Call for Project Grant application for fiscal year 2025-26 by October the 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024. We are required to hold a public hearing on the proposed projects to allow members of the community the opportunity to comment on the transportation needs and the grant application. We are requesting four replacement buses, tablets for the buses office furniture in the FY 2026 Capital Grant application. We are requesting administrative funding in the 5311 CTP application. The Capital 5310 purchase of service's objective is to provide transportation services that meet the special needs of elderly persons and person with disabilities to whom mass transportation services are unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate. We need to have the resolution put to a vote to duly adopt the program resolution. All local matching funds required are transportation dollars. No ad valorem tax dollars are required for the operation of CATS. CATS is operating as a stand-alone enterprise fund. And in the 5311 administrative, we're requesting \$138,869 and the local share is \$20,830, which would be CATS Enterprise funds. The combined capital is \$494,297 and the local match will be \$ 49,431, and that will also come out of the enterprise funds. In the 5310 Capital purchase of Service \$20,000, and the local match will actually come out of the ROAP,

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Rural Operating Assistance Program, E&D funds that we apply for every year to match that one. So the total amount being requested is \$653,166, and the local share including E&D funds will be \$72,261.

Chairman Jefferies said so you need a motion to approve this? Mrs. Williamson said yes, and to adopt the resolution. Chairman Jefferies said okay. Are there any questions from any Board members? Attorney Johnston said Mr. Chairman, if you will see if anyone else is here tonight to speak during the public hearing. Chairman Jefferies asked if there was anyone here who would like to speak on the public hearing? No one was there to speak on this matter.

Commissioner Holt asked is this already budgeted and approve? Mrs. Williamson said this is for FY 26. This is not FY25. The state works a year in advance. So this is for us to be able to pull these funds in for FY 26. But our FY25 has already been budgeted for, and we've already had all this done for it.

Chairman Jefferies asked if any other Board members had questions. Then Chairman Jefferies said do we need to hear from the public now? He asked Melissa Williamson if she had anything else?

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner Rose and **carried unanimously** to close the public hearing. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Dickerson, Gwynn, and Jefferies)

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Rose and seconded by Commissioner McVey and **carried unanimously** to approve. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Dickerson, Gwynn, and Jefferies)

#### **PUBLIC HEARING ON ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS ORDINANCE:**

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner Rose and **carried unanimously** to enter the public hearing. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Dickerson, Gwynn, and Jefferies)

Jason Watlington, County Planner said Mr. Chair, Board, Manager, and Attorney Johnson thank you for the opportunity tonight. I am Jason Watlington, the Planning Director. Tonight, I'll be discussing a new ordinance for ADUs, accessory dwelling unit. An early 2022 State legislation in an effort to promote diversity and housing passed a bill or introduced I will say, House Bill 409. It would require that all local governments allow the addition of an ADU or accessory dwelling unit to be built or placed alongside of a primary dwelling. The bill explicitly prohibits local authorities from imposing traditional zoning or ordinance restraints. Local governments must permit the establishment of at least one ADU per lot. This afternoon Attorney Johnston and myself did determine that this bill is still under review and is not mandated at this time. Many if not most North Carolina counties have already adopted this ADU or accessory dwelling in their ordinance. Rockingham County, Person County, Roxboro, Guilford, and Stokes to name a few. So they have already placed this into their ordinance and begin regulating. So I want to tell you a

little bit about ADUs. So an ADU can be attached or detached from the primary dwelling. For this purpose of the ordinance, we will be regulating detached ADUs. The ADU must have a bedroom, must have a bathroom, and a kitchen. So a tiny house if you will. The ADU must comply with North Carolina residential building code and the fire prevention code. Local governments are allowed however to set certain standards. Through researching other North Carolina counties, one of the more common standards is the type of construction and also the size. The bill states that the ADU must be less square feet than the primary dwelling. Therefore, we can specifically set a minimum and maximum square footage. This bill does however not suggest any particular construction type other than it must comply with building and fire code. So we feel that due to the cost of new construction and the continued inflation rates along with stagnant wages more and more people are looking for various or more efficient ways to construct a home. Hence, tiny homes, and they're becoming a very popular type of dwelling. You passed an amendment last month to better control the use of RVs. This was a step in the direction to better regulate the type of housing in Caswell County, and I should say permanent dwellings in Caswell County. So this new ordinance will allow a more economical option. However, it will require specific guidelines. The concept of ADUs goes back years ago. They were known as granny flats. This was a small secondary home used to take care of a grandmother, grandfather, or someone with mentally ill or physically challenged family members. I've had citizens inquire about these types of structures lately as a matter of fact. Some examples, the son is getting married can't afford rent. Can't afford to build a house right now. We as parents have land; so why not build them a small home right beside of ours in order for them to be able to afford it and become independent. Grandmother or mother needs to be closer so we can take care of her, but she still wants her own space. My daughter has a mental illness and needs to be close, but also somewhat independent.

So the Planning Board has set the County's requirements, and I would like to go over these with you. Construction type, the state does not regulate. However, the Planning Board is proposing stick built, modular, or offsite built. It must have an engineer stamp, and then the interior must be finished. I'll elaborate on that. We all know of a modular; it has a modular sticker. So this would not be a mobile home. None of our surrounding counties are allowing mobile home or RVs to be used as ADUs. Stick built, simply stated, a contractor comes onto your property and builds a small stick built home. Offsite stick built meaning a type of pre-manufactured shed style. Now it has to be engineered. It has to come to Caswell County with no interior walls built, no electrical wiring done, and no above head insulation done. This will allow our building inspectors to move through this project and make sure it follows building code. With the engineer stamp, we already know the shell will follow code. This will have to be on a permanent foundation. It will have to be strapped or tied to the ground or placed on cinder block with a poured footing under the cinder block. So this will not be a simple shed that you go by for your lawnmower, take out, throw some cinder block under it, and call it done. Maximum square footage: as I said the State requires that we go less square footage but allows us to make our own determination. From

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surrounding counties, we have developed a 800 square foot maximum. Only one ADU per lot says the State. The property owner must own both. However, may rent out one or the other so says the State. An ADU can be sold; however, it must be removed from the property. Therefore, the owner has to own both; so if he were to sell, then he would be giving up ownership. One-acre minimum site will maintain as our County Ordinance states. They will be allowed an additional 30,000 square feet. So in other words, right now if you have an acre of land, you can have one dwelling. You cannot place a second dwelling on that property unless you have two acres of land. If you are building a multifamily housing unit with a well and a septic, an additional 30,000 square foot of land would allow you to build that multifamily housing unit per our ordinance. So an acre and 3/4 would allow that. So we would like to simply use that math for our ADU. You will not have to have a full two acres of land for that small ADU, but you will have to have 1.75 acres if it requires a separate septic system. A little about septic systems: most homes now are designed with a septic system being just efficient enough to run that primary dwelling. Very seldom do you run across a septic system that is going to accommodate a future home. Therefore if for some reason you built a two-bedroom home and you put in a three-bedroom septic system, then you would be allowed to connect this ADU to that septic system, but that is really not common, especially here in Caswell County. They will allow you to connect to the electric of the house; so one meter. So an electrician would be allowed to come in and do that and also be allowed to use the well. This is all advice from the State on how they would want this ordinance to be written. A minimum of 10 foot from a primary dwelling and placed behind the front building line of the primary dwelling. So we would not allow this building to sit in front of the primary dwelling. Again must be on a permanent foundation. It must comply with our County setbacks for a primary dwelling. For ADUs in the Hyco Lake zoning district, the ADU would be required to have a special use permit with supplemental regulations. The ordinance shall not take presidents over subdivision restrictive covenants or homeowner associations guidelines. So you may ask can I put a tiny home on an acre of land without a primary dwelling. As long as it follows code and Building Inspections is able to come out and inspect the home, yes. I guess the great thing about an ADU is the possibility of being able to use existing infrastructure from the primary dwelling and being able to accommodate that special person that that needs it. So while I'm not seeing this as a State mandated ordinance, I am seeing other counties as close by as our next door neighbors starting to look at this. I'm seeing people living in the Amish sheds right now with no regulation. So while this will allow us to regulate more, it will also help our community. And I much rather see a stick built home than someone living in a RV. RVs are great, but I just feel like if they can and if it's economical for them to buy a stick built type structure that's even pre-built and turn it into a home, then I think they will be better in the future with that. Are there any questions?

Chairman Jefferies said any board members?

Commissioner Yarbrough said I've got one for you, Mr. Watlington. I know you said let's see, the property owner must own both; however, may rent out. Correct? Mr. Watlington said correct.

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Commissioner Yarbrough said so am I interpreting this correct that I could have a or anybody could have a rental house, build an ADU beside it, and rent out both. Mr. Watlington said you have to reside in one. Commissioner Yarbrough said so the property owner has to live in one. Mr. Watlington said correct. Commissioner Yarbrough said good enough. Thank you.

Chairman Jefferies said anyone else. Anyone in the public like to speak on this? Thank you. We need a motion to go out of the public hearing.

County Planner Watlington said Mr. Chair, I would like to invite Attorney Johnson to speak if the Board pleases.

Attorney Johnston said Mr. Chairman, I'll just mention briefly following up on what Watlington indicated about this housing option not being mandated by the state of North Carolina. In your consistency statement in the agenda packet, the last sentence reads as follows: It states further this particular residential housing option is mandated by the state of North Carolina effective October 2023 per House Bill 409. That house bill is still pending in the legislature so it hasn't been enacted into law yet. So the conversation Mr. Watlington and I had was that it may be wise to air on the side of caution and let the Planning Board revisit this ordinance at their next regularly scheduled meeting on September 24th so that they can be aware that this law actually isn't mandated. It is within the discretion of Caswell County, and the General Assembly allows Caswell County to regulate these types of structures through North Carolina General Statute 160D. However, this isn't mandated yet. So I would advise the Board to review this, but postpone any action until your next regularly scheduled meeting.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Holt and **carried unanimously** to close the public hearing. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Dickerson, Gwynn, and Jefferies)

A **motion** was made by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Yarbrough and **carried unanimously** to table this item. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Holt, Dickerson, Gwynn, and Jefferies)

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

**Amanda Hodges:** Good evening. Thank you for allowing me to speak. My name is Amanda Hodges. I live at 1628 Allison Road in Ruffin, North Carolina. I wanted to touch base this morning or afternoon or evening because I'm here to update the timeline from the information shared at the last Commissioner meeting on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 when I was unexpectedly asked to speak on this particular issue. For the record, the information I brought to you at the last meeting on September 3<sup>rd</sup> stated that both the Town councils of Yanceyville and Milton had already approved the TDA as an ex officio on the Caswell County Economic Development Commission. It was brought to my attention that the timeline I reported needed to be updated as the Town Council of Yanceyville had not yet met at the time of the meeting due to Labor Day. I was mistaken. I thought they had. So subsequently, the council has met. They met last week, and

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they did approve that seat or that ex officio position on the Economic Development Board. Their Council has met and everything is passed. So I just wanted to make sure I had that correction on the timeline for the record. Thank you.

**Attorney Johnston:** Commissioner Jefferies, I apologize. We should have read this statement before Ms. Hodges spoke, but if I could read this statement briefly. Chairman Jefferies said okay. Go ahead. Attorney Johnston said each speaker will speak from the podium and begin their remarks by giving their name and stating whether or not they are residents of the County. Comments will be directed to the full board. Speaker comments are limited to a maximum of three minutes during the public comment period. Speakers must be courteous in their language and presentation. Personal attacks will not be tolerated. The Board of Commissioners or the administration will not provide responses during public comments period or in the same meeting. Thank you.

**Shannon Moretz:** Good evening. My name is Shannon Moretz. 1117 Deer Trail in Cherry Grove, and I'm so excited to be here tonight over something good and positive. I am here tonight to speak in support of the mural project that the Arts Council is doing. Maud Florence Gatewood, who died in November of 2004 at the age of 70, is considered by Art Historians, Curators, Museum Directors, and collectors as one of the most important painters in North Carolina history. She achieved National and International recognition for her work, but apparently her heart never left Caswell because she kept coming home. In addition to being a highly successful artist, Gatewood also served on this board from 1976 to 1980 as the County's first female commissioner. I did not know her but historical accounts describe her as very outspoken, direct, and someone who stood firmly on her principles, and so I suspect that she probably ruffled a few feathers. I know that she loved this community. She came back, she served, she gave of herself, and then she gave of her estate, land, and paintings gifted for the public good. She wanted Caswell County to thrive and the people who live here to have every opportunity to get ahead. As one of Caswell's most famous daughters, it makes total sense for her to be included on the mural here in downtown Yanceyville. Western North Carolina has been absolutely buzzing about all things Maud Gatewood for months since a temporary exhibit of her work opened at a museum in Boone. I find it really cool that Caswell County is home to artists and craftsman like Maud Gatewood and Thomas Daye, and I think that we should be really proud of that and celebrate it. This mural gives us the opportunity to do that, and it comes with some pretty cool community engagement, culture, and tourism benefits. So I enthusiastically encourage you to support this project.

**Michael Ward:** Mike and Virginia Ward. We live in Caswell County. We got broke into on some property we have (me and my wife), and I found it on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. Anyway I went by the store the deputies were up at Lillard's eating. They'd been up there over an hour that morning. They were there when I went to the property, and anyway I got one of them or three of them come down there. They was laughing, joking, and everything. So we had about \$8 to \$10,000 worth with tools, three storage trailers broke in, and the house broke into. Like I said,

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I asked them did they need to get in the camper. The camper, they knocked a hole in the slide out, pulled the window out, and everything. They told me no. So once they left, I turned around. When we got in the camper, we found drugs in the camper. I called 911, and I couldn't get them back. They called me. That was on a Thursday morning, and they called me back Monday morning. So Saturday morning, they got more drugs out of the camper. They treated my wife bad. They come in and made her lay the gun down, and unloaded your gun. Then they took pictures on Saturday, but they didn't take no pictures on Thursday before. So I went in Monday morning to see the Sheriff, and I was told I couldn't see him. I had to go through chain of command, and so that was the Monday morning following Thursday after. So the Sheriff called me on the 10<sup>th</sup>, and I talked to him a few minutes. But it's like we ain't getting nowhere. Everybody you see, they want to give you the runaround. That's about it. The Sheriff told me he had an open door policy when he called me on the 10<sup>th</sup>. It's a whole lot of difference from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup>, and I told him when I go to vote maybe I'll just go turn around and go through the chain of command. Thank you.

**Julia Fair:** I am Julia Fair. I reside at 53 West Main Street in Yanceyville. I would like to read a letter from Alice Shelton, who was a journalist, who covered a lot of the Caswell County meetings during the time that Maud Gatewood was a part of this community. As far as I understand, she covered a lot of what Maud Gatewood did with this community, especially representing the community. So I would like to read this, and then offer my support also in regards to the mural project for the Arts Council. But for the letter from Alice Shelton, it says:

Commissioner, I want to address your concerns about the mural. I was a journalist covering the County Commissioners when she was a member. She was always prepared to listen to everyone's concerns. She treated all citizens fairly including farmers. It is an honor that the Arts Council was selected to receive this grant to showcase all these worthy citizens. I grew up on a dairy farm in the Blanch community, and my late grandfather was a tobacco farmer. I know the importance of farming to Caswell. However, this mural isn't about farming or farmers. So comments someone may or may not have said about the farming community don't have a bearing on this situation. I ask that you approve this project. signed Alice Shelton.

Aside from that, I would like to just make note that this project is being supported by the Art Council and promoted by the Art Council. It is also funded by one of the most prestigious, if not the most prestigious, Arts organization in our nation. As an art council with an art project to have concerns over the most prominent artist from this community to be represented or not represented on this is concerning to me. So I would really like to just make a note of that that. I would really like people to be thinking about that. It is a great honor and a great privilege to be able to start some sort of art projects here. And yes this is the first one. It doesn't have to be the only one. So thank you so much for your time.

**Benton Kay Covington-Thompson:** My name is Benton K. Covington-Thompson. I'm a resident of Caswell County. I live in the Blanch community, retired employee of the Caswell County Health Department, a graduate of Bartlett Yancey High School, and a long and varied

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experience as a registered nurse since 1965. The most wonderful words heard at the time of a newborn delivery is a perfect baby, but it's life and living have shown us none of us are perfect and never will be. We are all a work in progress, and we all have a prejudices even if we deny them. A very important definition I learned many years ago is health is a state of complete physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being not merely the absence of a disease, and I'm afraid none of us are qualify for that at all times. We enter life and experience it with a variety of good and not so good poker chips. Be it material plenty or poverty, physical good health or poor, emotional stability, or abuse and neglect, spiritual nurturing, or absence or radically forced beliefs. As our world grows smaller in the United States, our state, and our county with the evolving of many cultures, religious beliefs, races, and many other important identities evolved, it is vital that we educate ourselves to these variables and recognize that exclusion from or hate of can only harm our world and our domain and cause us to be uninviting to new people and industries. Changes cause much fear, and education of differences reduce these fears. Denial about these changes exists and are counterproductive. I am one of a part of a founding members of a group with diverse age, sexual identities, racial, religious backgrounds and varied life experiences of this virtually important organization the Caswell County Human Relations Commission. We are evolving and learning of ways to help us as one of many groups and individuals, stretch our minds and hearts to grow in healthy ways, discourage discrimination, and be advocates of those who perceive they are subject to discrimination. As our Commissioners, I believe it is vital to you as our leaders to strive to grow to identify and learn how you and those under your leadership can embrace greater opportunities to learn inclusion along with us and others interested at no expense. At our initial REI phase one training in Caswell County on October 17th and 18th in Yanceyville and information is enclosed. I'm going to pass this on to Frank, and let him pass it around. Commissioner Rose. Excuse me. So I think it's very important that the Commissioners appoint one or two people to come to this educational opportunity so that we can aid in showing compassion, caring, leadership for Caswell County and its residents. I want to thank you for your time and service. I'll pass this to Commissioner Rose.

**Sharon Hill:** Good evening. My name is Sharon Hill. I live at 170 Julia Street, and I was born and raised in Caswell County. I've been away most of my adult life. I am honored to be able to speak to this board today partly because it just allows me the opportunity to participate in the civil life of Caswell County and to exercise my rights as a citizen, but it's also doubly a pleasure because it gives me a chance to support the Casual Arts Council. I am here speaking in support of the mural project. When I was making the decision about whether to return to Caswell County at this stage in my life, contribute, and participate with the skills that I've been using around the state and across the country in the last few years, the Arts Council programs weighed into that decision because I had the opportunity to stay with my parents during the last six months of their life here in Caswell County while I was caretaking. The arts, I was so impressed with the art programs and offerings that contributed to the quality of my life and continues to contribute to the quality of my life since I've moved or since I've returned to Caswell County. I also want to

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offer my support of the project because I see the value in it for the community both as a cultural touchstone, as a representation of the rich and varied history of Caswell County, and the contribution of its prominent citizens. I think that all four of the people who will be recognized in the mural have contributed greatly not just to the life of Caswell County. Although that's a definite fact, but all of them also participated in such a way as to contribute to the wider state and in some cases the world. Each one of them: Maud Gatewood, Nicholas Longwood Dillard, Henrietta Jeffries, and Neil Watlington have all been examples of excellence as citizens and as human beings. When people even drive through our town, that will or we want to be represented by our best. As the person who spoke earlier said, this may be the first mural, but it doesn't have to be the only one. There is so much history, culture, and value in the county that I could foresee you know having many expressions of that in the county. I'm sure that we all want to be governed by facts and not innuendo or suspicions. And I've heard that some of the concerns about this project had to do with some things that someone said someone may have said, but that the official record represents that those comments by Maud Gatewood were not made in any official capacity and that she being the first woman to serve on the County Commissioners as well as an artist of national note, if not international note. I first was exposed to her work at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, and my family connected her to the house on the Square. But growing up here, I just I hadn't learned enough about her for her name to be in my mind and recognizable. So I'm getting off track here, but I wanted to say definitely that I support the mural project. I think it will add value to our public persona and presentation. Thank you for your time. Chairman Jefferies said thank you.

**Kent Williamson:** My name is Kent Williamson. I reside at 562 Graves Road in Reidsville, North Carolina. Commissioner Jefferies and other Commissioners, I'm here to make an announcement or an invitation also. Celebrating the community services of Jeremiah Jefferies, County Commissioner, Gladys Garland, School Board, and the remembrance of the contributions of Nate Hall, County Commissioner Chair. This celebration will be Saturday, October 5th at 4 o'clock at Blackwell Funeral Home located at 143 3rd Avenue in Yanceyville, North Carolina. We will be putting together a booklet to celebrate them, and this booklet will include any advertisements, family portraits, memorials, tributes, special wishes, and any other announcement that you would like to make. The booklet is for one page \$100, \$50 for a half, and a page \$25 for a quarter page. It says remember our retired officials were elected by getting out to vote. Please help make this election successful and register and vote. Thank you.

#### **RECOGNITIONS:**

There were no recognitions.

#### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

A **motion** was made by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Rose and **carried unanimously** to approve the agenda. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Dickerson, Gwynn, Holt, and Jefferies)

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**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:**

- a. September 3, 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

A **motion** was made by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Rose and **carried unanimously** to approve the consent agenda. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Dickerson, Gwynn, Holt, and Jefferies)

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

There were no discussion items.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

**ABC BOARD WORKING CAPITAL REQUEST:**

County Manager Meszaros said I don't see Mike here this evening. So the ABC Board has put in a formal request to the Board of Commissioners. They're asking for the potential use of \$ 47,294 towards capital improvements of their building. Their building was built in the 60s and had little to no improvements in that time frame. They are requesting to use this additional capital, which needs to come before the Board if they're to do that. They would like to improve the appearance of the store by upgrading the lighting, new flooring, and exterior improvements as well as adding a room so that they have additional sales. They think that the casino and the travel on the route is... The store is extremely busy, but it is small. So I don't see Mike here this evening, but they have put their formal request in to utilize these funds. Under the general statute, these additional excess funds can be reallocated as they're requesting. Of course the Commissioners can always use that for something else if they so choose as well. So I just formally presented their request to you. It's up to you if you wish to proceed.

Commissioner Dickerson asked where did these excess sales tax come from? County Manager Meszaros said these are additional gross revenues. So it's unanticipated revenue that's above their estimated budget. So they basically made more sales tax than they projected, and those funds are just excess. So they aren't budgeted for expenditure; they would need to... They are not a county entity. The county doesn't own that facility and operate them. It's kind of like the animal shelter. So they're requesting to use those additional funds for building improvements. Commissioner Dickerson said so if we don't approve it, does the county get it back? County Manager Meszaros said the county could reallocate those. In the past, they've done some Health Department improvements. They gave me a list of other things that the County's reallocated those to.

Chairman Jefferies asked if anyone else had any questions for the County Manager. Then Chairman Jefferies said I think this money was \$47,200 something. This was money that they had left over in reading the minutes, and that they had gave the school their part of fund and everything. This was extra money that they had setting aside, and that store was built in the 60s. This is the store that they want to remodel. I think I'm right in what I read. So what's pleasure of

the board? We need a motion or something to pass it or whatever. It's \$47,200 I believe or something like that.

Commissioner Yarbrough said Mr. Chairman, until somebody from the ABC Board can come and answer whatever questions this Board might have, I move we table this, or just not take any action at all. Because I know we're talking about building improvements, but I want to know what these improvements are. I don't believe the County Manager has those details. Do you? County Manager Meszaros said you know I've been in there. It's very general. So they're just asking for exterior finishes, lighting, and flooring. So \$47,000 goes pretty quick on those things. Commissioner Yarbrough said I agree with that. It's up to the Board. Commissioner McVey said but we don't want no issues. Commissioner Yarbrough said no.

Commissioner McVey said I'll go along with Mr. Yarbrough. And the fact that we don't own the building, they need to come before us to talk to us about what's going on before we just give them that \$47,000.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner McVey and **carried unanimously** to table this item until the ABC Board is at the meeting. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Dickerson, Gwynn, Holt, and Jefferies)

County Manager Meszaros said I'll make sure they have a representative at the next meeting. Chairman Jefferies said thank you.

#### **ARTS COUNCIL MURAL:**

Chairman Jefferies said we got to have a motion. This is the Arts Council Mural, but we tabled this. We need a motion to take this off the table and to put it back on the board before we can go through what we got.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Rose and seconded by Commissioner McVey and **carried unanimously** to untable this item. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Dickerson, Gwynn, Holt, and Jefferies)

Karen Williamson said good evening Commissioners, and thank you for letting me come back and speak to you in regards to the mural project for the Arts Council and for the community. I'm Karen Williamson, and I'm the Executive Director of the Arts Council here in Caswell County. In regards to... Well actually to say that I'm going to just go over a brief synopsis of the mural. I'll take additional questions that you may have for me, and then I would like to have your vote for the Arts Council to move forward with the process of painting the mural on the side of Co-Square. Alright. So the brief synopsis is we're going to highlight four Caswell County historic icons: Maud Gatewood, Neil Watlington, NL Dillard, and Henrietta Jeffries. Some of the changes, and we've been listening to some of the concerns that you have. Some of the changes that we've agreed to make is that the background or the wallpaper part of the mural will feature the bright leaf tobacco. So that is one change that we will do. Additionally, because Neil Watlington was a war veteran in World War II; he fought in the Battle of the Bulge. In lieu of

painting him in his major league baseball uniform, we're going to paint him in his army green uniform instead. So that hopefully will address the concern for representing or having someone be represented from the military. Additionally, I thank everyone who talked in the public comments in support of this. Additionally, I'd like to add another kudos to Maud Gatewood in that in November of 1989 the Thomas Day House suffered a catastrophic fire. That next day Maud Gatewood in conjunction with Marian Thomas, they raised or they started the process of raising a half a million dollars to do the restoration for the Thomas Day House. Had it not been for the two of those ladies, especially Maud Gatewood because she donated some of her furniture that was Thomas Day authenticated furniture. She donated that to the museum. Had it not been for Maud Gatewood stepping up to do that for not only the Town of Milton but also for the Thomas Day House, it would not today be the 28th state recognized Historic Site in the state of North Carolina. It's the only state recognized historical site here in Caswell County. The mural will definitely help to augment tourism and economic development. We're going to accomplish that by having a QR code so that people can do their own self-guided tour, and that QR code will lead them to various bits of information on each individual. Additionally, two years ago the Arts Council created a documentary called the Veterans of Caswell County, and it features Connie Steadman, Joseph Carter, and Neil Watlington. So in that QR code people will also be directed to that video that anyone can see on YouTube. Thank you for listening to our request. This has been a passion project for Caswell Arts, and I'd like to turn it over to you, the Commissioners, for any additional questions that you may have for me before we're hoping that you will allow us to move forward with the project. So Mr. Jefferies, I'll turn it back over to you.

Chairman Jefferies said okay. Do any board members have any questions for Mrs. Williamson?

Commissioner McVey said Did Ms. Smith find anything. We had tabled this to have her have time to look and see if there was anything Ms. Gatewood. The Clerk, Ms. Smith, said I was not able to locate anything. The minutes from 1976 to 1980 when she was a commissioner was just motions. It wasn't a lot of discussion so I wasn't able to see what they discussed in those meetings.

Chairman Jefferies asked if there was anything else.

Commissioner Rose said Mr. Chairman, there's a couple of things I would like to say. Ms. Williamson, thank you for your presentation. I also did a little research. I always like to do that. I know some questions were raised about some things that may have been said or may not have been said. I don't know. I wasn't privy to those conversations, but I did do some research on all four of them. Mr. Wallington in his service to our country. As well as a successful businessman and a professional baseball player. Also Mr. Dillard, I done some research on him and the contributions he made through education to this county. I also looked at Miss Jeffries, and I was quite impressed. Back in 1911 where she was put on trial. Ms. Williamson said actually that needs to be updated. The trial took place in 1913. Commissioner Rose said okay. Well 1913. I was kind of impressed she was tried by an all male white jury. The judge was also a white male,

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and at the end of the trial, he stepped down, defended her cause, and overrode the decision. I also went through and looked at Ms. Gatewood and did some looking into her stuff. I found something interesting. As late as July the 5<sup>th</sup> 2024, WXII 12 did a piece on her work where her work is on display at the Blowing Rock Arts and Historical Museum there. There is a building named after her at UNCG in Greensboro. I found out that she actually has a scholarship there for up and coming Juniors and Seniors that want to pursue an artist career. In looking through her paintings and stuff like that, I did find several paintings where she had depicted tobacco fields, tobacco barns, and I saw a couple of photos was she was smoking a cigarette. So I appreciate everything that you did in your presentation. Nothing further Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Jefferies said anyone else.

Commissioner Yarbrough said one or two questions. I believe going back to your presentation at our last meeting that the Arts Council will own this mural for 10 years. Am I correct? Ms. Williamson said yes sir. Commissioner Yarbrough said after that 10 year time period, what becomes of this mural? Ms. Williamson said after that, then we can have another discussion. Either it can stay there, and we can continue maintaining it, or it transfers over. I mean I don't know yet. But that is something that we can definitely discuss after the 10 year time period, or even before so that we know what everybody expects after that 10 year time period.

Commissioner Yarbrough said what assurance can you give this Board that if it was to go along with the Art Council's request, that once that mural is in place that it will not be updated or changed as the Art Council so desires. Because you will own it as you say. Ms. Williamson said right. Personally speaking, that's not something that we want do, and also that would be interfering with the ... Correct me if I'm wrong, Jason, but the artist also will own the ownership, if you will, you know of his creative process for that. We're using federal monies to put this mural up on the wall, and I don't think that they would appreciate us making any changes.

Commissioner Yarbrough said one last question. Has the Art Council looked at locations that are privately owned and not public building? Ms. Williamson said yes. Commissioner Yarbrough said with no success. Ms. Williamson said correct. Commissioner Yarbrough said okay. Thank you.

Chairman Jefferies said anyone else.

Commissioner Dickerson said has anyone reached out to the Historical Building on the Co-Square. Wasn't Maud Gatewood associated with that building at one time. Ms. Williamson said which building on the square? The audience responds. Ms. Williamson said are you talking about the house where the Historical Association is located? Commissioner Dickerson said yes. Ms. Williamson said that's her house where she was born. Commissioner Dickerson said have you thought about putting the mural on that house? Ms. Williamson said no. Commissioner Dickerson said why not? Ms. Williamson said we just haven't had that conversation, and a mural of this type, we were just basically looking at large scale brick walls within this community. Commissioner Dickerson said well again I can go with three out of four of the figures that you've

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chosen, but I cannot support one with the Ms. Gatewood on it. But my next question is for our County Attorney. When Co-Square was purchased, didn't the Town of Yanceyville provide part of the money for the purchase of that?

Attorney Johnston said Commissioner Dickerson, I'll have to research that. That was my understanding. Commissioner Dickerson said that was my understanding as well. If they are part owner in that building and they provided the money, how come they have not been brought into the conversation on whether it's allowed to be put on there? Attorney Johnston said I could research that for you Commissioner Dickerson. I know when the Economic Developer was hired several years ago, there was a joint venture between the town and the county to provide that salary, but as far as ownership of the building, I'll be glad to research that and report that back to this Board. Commissioner Dickerson said I think it was \$30,000, if memory serves me correctly. So if they've got skin in the game, I don't think this Board is a sole decision maker for what takes place on that wall. At the very least they should be consulted, in my opinion, before we move forward. Attorney Johnston said yes sir. I think this Board should have the Town of Yanceyville consulted before we make any decision on this. They put money in that building, and they're entitled to have a say on what goes on the side of it.

Chairman Jefferies said Mrs. Gwynn. Commissioner Gwynn said I feel the same way. We need to consult with Yanceyville before we consider it. Chairman Jefferies said so is this a motion you guys want to put on the table.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Dickerson and seconded by Commissioner Gwynn to table it.

Commissioner Dickerson said to consult with the Town of Yanceyville because they provided part of the money for that building before we make a decision on it.

Chairman Jefferies said until the County Attorney research this and come back before the Board, the motion is to table this. Right? Commissioner Dickerson said yes sir.

Commissioner Rose said Mr. Chairman, I just have one question. Are you on a deadline or something? Can you tell us when... Ms. Williamson said it takes 30 days for us to get the materials, and then it'll take another three to four weeks for us to paint it. It needs to be completed by the 31st of December. Commissioner Rose said I have no issue with speaking with the Town, but I would like to see if we can go ahead and make arrangements for them to be brought up to speed on this and see what their board has to say on it as soon as we can.

Chairman Jefferies said Ms. Williamson did I understand you said 30 days? Ms. Williamson said 30 days, yes. Chairman Jefferies said okay. You all heard the motion, and we're going to vote on it. Any questions before we vote? Any more? We'll start with you Rose. Commissioner Rose said I don't understand why we can't vote as a Board on our approval, and then have the town consulted to get their approval. Chairman Jefferies said so you want to vote on it as a Board, and then if they don't get enough, we can table it. Commissioner Dickerson said Mr. Jefferies, first

we got a motion on the floor here that we got to take care of. Chairman Jefferies said I understand that.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Dickerson and seconded by Commissioner Gwynn and **carried 4-2** to table it. (Ayes: Commissioners Yarbrough, Holt, Dickerson, and Gwynn. Nays: Commissioners Rose and McVey)

A **motion** was made by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Rose and **carried 3-3** to approve it for the Arts Council to proceed with the approval of the Town of Yanceyville. (Ayes: Commissioners Rose, McVey, and Gwynn. Nays: Commissioners Yarbrough, Holt, and Dickerson.)

Chairman Jefferies said so the no's have it. We have to wait until the Town. Commissioner Rose said wait a minute. Chairman Jefferies said so we will have to put this back on the agenda. Commissioner Rose said what did you vote Mr. Chairman? It's four for and three against. Chairman Jefferies said I didn't vote either way. So we'll put it back on the agenda for the next meeting. We'll have it back on the agenda. Commissioner Holt said I don't think she understood what you're asking. Attorney Johnston said yes sir.

Commissioner McVey said what did you end up doing on that vote. We cannot hear you down here. Chairman Jefferies said I ended up voting with the person that said we're going to do it. I didn't vote no. I voted yes if you're asking me for my vote. Commissioner Rose said well that is 4-3.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Rose and **carried 4 -3** to approve it for the Arts Council to proceed with the approval of the Town of Yanceyville. (Ayes: Commissioners Rose, McVey, Gwynn, and Jefferies. Nays: Commissioners Yarbrough, Holt, and Dickerson.)

Commissioner McVey said we voted to do it with the Town's approval. Chairman Jefferies said yes. Commissioner Rose said so it passed.

### **RECESS:**

The Board took a brief recess.

### **FY 23 AUDIT CONTRACT DATE CHANGE:**

County Manager Meszaros said so the audit, the fiscal year 23 audit was approved on February 5<sup>th</sup>, and they speculatively had hope that that would be completed and submitted by the end of May, which at this point we know has not been completed. So this is very similar to that audit item you had two meetings ago or three meetings ago where you extended the date. There's no change in service. There's no change in scope. It just extends the date. So we are requesting that the date be extended to February 28th 2025, which is a fiscal year end date for all those contracts. Obviously won't take that long, but if it does take longer, then we don't have to come back and get an extension on the date. The Interim Finance Director is here if you have deeper questions, but staff recommends approval to extend the audit deadline. We have to do the audit

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one way or the other so extending the contract with the current auditor is a wise recommendation.

Chairman Jefferies said okay. You all heard what is coming from the County Manager. Does anyone have any questions on the Board?

Commissioner Yarbrough said yes sir. And I hate to keep hashing over this Mr. County Manager, but we were told that the 22 audit and the 23 audit were more or less going to be piggyback together. Soon as one's done; the other one's right behind it. What happened? County Manager Meszaros said so I don't want to speak for our NCACC representative because they work for us for free, but I did send a list of questions and items on all of these recent issues. As far as the audit goes they're struggling right now because there's so many things that are messed up and taking a lot of time to unravel. The library's item took 20 hours to get straight because it was so messed up for so many years. They're currently working on the Cooperative Extension and Senior Services right now. They are both complete messes. The PSAP 911 funds have been taking a great deal of time as well. It's going to be at least a \$200,000 hit to the general fund. It's impacting future funding. Of course there's Family Services' issues with payroll and salary allocations. They cannot complete the fiscal year 23 audit until these items are cleaned up. Not to mention being unable to spend some funds because they have not been properly accounted for or budgeted for in previous years. The opioid funds had not been accurately accounted for in two years but are now accurate and complete. She's trying to correct three years of improper accounting, which cannot be fixed overnight. I would say that I have personally never seen any finance people work as diligently and extremely hard to correct any type of a situation like this. I've also never had a situation like this myself. If there's a different way you would like to handle this, I'm all ears to your recommendation. That would probably entail private third parties. I know I had a recent records request about the audit firm and the accounting services. Last year we spent \$129,000 just on the accounting firm. So you know some of these items I've tabled until those experts can come before you. There is a reason. Our consultant has some personal family stuff. Obviously I can't have... I mean I guess if they're willing to participate via Zoom or something, we can go that route, but until we get that ability to have them here, it's really difficult to present and do work when someone's out for family emergencies. But yes, the audit needs to be completed. Basically when you get into the year-end close, you know I've got a list of items that you've asked me for, and one of those includes you want to see some of the quarterly expenditure reports. I asked can we do one through the end of June or maybe get to the next quarter reports, which are not until October. My response is they can do a report for June or through August, but none of those are going to be accurate until they have accurate year-end closing figures. So giving you numbers that are not actual and valid, I feel like I'm not going to urge them to do that. If you wish for me to have them produce that, they will gladly do that for us. I think it's hard because there's only two or three people working on all of this. It's going to take some time. So yes, I felt like... I sent the state a letter stating that hopefully the 23 audit will be done before the end of September and into October. I don't know if that's feasible. That's the

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information that I got, and I passed that on to you. So I'm not actively personally doing that work; I can only go on what I'm being informed. Commissioner Yarbrough said the problem I have with it is that this Board was told when 22 is done, 23 is right behind it. And now we're being told something completely different. County Manager Meszaros said yes, the consultant is telling you that. I've provided that in writing from them, and that's what I am hoping to see as well. I don't know what to do to correct that. I could hire some more people to help that has a pretty stiff cost to it. We do have the Accounting I position interviews coming up. We do have the payroll position. So some of those functions we're doing in-house because we're short staffed, but those don't have anything to do with the audit and the day-to-day. That's mostly the three people we have in Finance. I have to praise the staff we have doing the work they're doing. It's a lot. They're doing it correctly, but it's a lot of work to clean up.

Commissioner McVey said I have a question. County Manager Meszaros said yes sir.

Commissioner McVey said is the Isley group still involved in this? County Manager Meszaros said so we can try to find a Finance Director. I've brought forth the CFO. That's coming from the recommendation of the association. Commissioner Holt said that's not question. Commissioner McVey said the question is the Isley group, who were hired, are they still involved in this?

County Manager Meszaros said they are not currently involved. We paid them out through the end of the year. Last year we spent about \$130,000, but they're not into the accounting portion of this. We're in the year end closeout. Commissioner McVey said they're paid out and we're through with them. Interim Finance Director, Melissa Miller said the only thing that the Isley group is working on is the general bank account and the fixed assets. Commissioner McVey said so are we still paying them? Mrs. Miller said yes. We've been continually paying them.

Commissioner McVey said when this first come up Bryan Miller was the County Manager, and I think I was the Chairman. He asked about using the Isley group, and I agreed to do it. How many years has it been? I agreed to do it. It's all my fault. I thought it would go really quick. Why is it taking the Isley group how many years to do this? Were we that screwed up in the Finance Department? Mrs. Miller said yes sir. I don't want to speak on that, but when we were five years behind on bank statements being reconciled, that takes a lot. Since I've been here for three and a half years, I have done nothing but identify items that weren't recorded. We had to identify before they could reconcile. Commissioner McVey said I explicitly remember asking had the bank statements been reconciled. I was told yes. We had five years that had not been reconciled. Mrs. Miller said oh Isley has them current. They're up to 2020 for now. So they are now, but they weren't they weren't. Commissioner McVey said they weren't but they are now. So what's the Isley group working on right now? Mrs. Miller said the general bank account only. That's our Fidelity account, and everything runs through there. And fixed assets. Those are the only two things that they're helping us with. We've brought everything else back. Commissioner McVey said how much longer are we going to have to have them work? Mrs. Miller said we're hoping not long. Like I don't want to give you a time because you'll come back at me on that.

Commissioner McVey said no I wouldn't do that. Mrs. Miller said but we have been trained on

the bank reconciliation in Munis because previously they were all done on spreadsheets, and that's really not reconciling on spreadsheets. You got to do it in your system. So we are in the process of getting that started. Johnna said it won't be long, and we're pulling it back to do it ourselves. Commissioner McVey asked how much money have we paid them so far? Mrs. Miller said well I just pulled for the public record request, and from when they started I'm not sure. I can look that up and tell you, but for July 1 of 23 to the current, was it \$129? County Manager Meszaros said yes, 129. They're still going back to get this straight to 2017 figures and budgets. Mrs. Miller said yes. Commissioner McVey said I was told in the beginning and it's probably in the minutes too that the Isley group was going to do this job for \$50,000, and I said well go ahead and get them to do it. Mrs. Miller said but I believe in the beginning no one knew what kind of shape the books were in or as bad a shape that books were in because we're still discovering stuff as we go through them.

Commissioner Rose said one question I got Mrs. Miller, and I do appreciate everything the LGC has done. I appreciate everything Johnna's done. I guess my question is this how many hours are being dedicated to this problem. Reason I'm saying that is, and I didn't mean to cut you off. If you're devoting 20 hours a week to it, well it's going to take a while. But if more time is being devoted to it, the quicker we will get it done. Mrs. Miller said when he said 20 hours a week that was just 20 hours that week on one department. That's not the only thing that was worked on that week. Commissioner Rose said right. Mrs. Miller said I could get you a figure on the amount of hours that Johnna works on Caswell because she works just about every weekend on Caswell. She's usually here once a week until this family emergency happened, and we're constantly teams and working on things. But on top of that I have to keep Finance running. Commissioner Rose said right. Mrs. Miller said so I got to do the daily stuff. Commissioner Rose said I understand. Mrs. Miller said we're trying. I mean honestly no one wants to see this wrapped up any faster than we do. Commissioner Rose said and I understand that. Like I said, I do appreciate everything she has done and everything the LGC has done that's helping us out at no cost. I guess we're all in the same boat on this board as you are; we want to see it wrapped up. Mrs. Miller said I want to see it done. I mean we're trying to fix years of mess ups. You guys are wanting it done in a short amount of time, and we're trying. Commissioner Rose said this next question I have is if you're going down a road with bad practices and you find out let's say 23 what the problem is, from 23 until current how are those practices being corrected so you're still not going down that path? Mrs. Miller said and that's what's taking us so long too because when we discover what the issue is, we figure out the best practice to fix it. We fix that year. Well, we fix 23, 24, and make sure we're doing it the same way in 25. So 23 is really our stumbling block because we've ran across issues with a few departments. That's what has been causing us to slow down. We have to get those right so when we move to the next year, the problem's already fixed. We're fixing everything as we go ahead of time. Commissioner Rose said okay. Is there any way that you would be able to or somebody be able to advise this Board at our meetings of what has been done that week concerning what problems you found, and how it was corrected? Rather

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than us get frustrated, then call you up, and then fuss at you. Mrs. Miller said you want us to share our frustrations with you. Commissioner Rose said but I mean like I've heard a couple departments mentioned that there were some issues. Well, let the Board know this is what we are finding. This is what we have had to correct. So we kind of got an idea of different things. Mrs. Miller said you would like an update of what we've discovered and fixed every meeting. So like every 2 weeks. Commissioner Rose said I would love it. Mrs. Miller said okay. Commissioner Rose said thank you. No further.

Commissioner McVey said I'm not trying to hammer you. Really I'm not. Mrs. Miller said it's okay. Commissioner McVey said I appreciate what you are doing, but I am disgusted with this Isley group long as they been working with us. I want you or the County Manager to put a fire under them. Mrs. Miller said Johnna has put a fire under them because it's probably, I don't know how long, but that's why she has pulled the majority of the stuff back because she's trying to get down the hours that they're billing us. So I don't think we're going honestly have Isely very much longer. I don't want to give you a time, but it's in the works to get rid of them. County Manager Meszaros said so we're currently trying to hire an Accountant I, and they wouldn't come in and be on board and trained to do like their general job. They're going to be pulled in to help them reconcile and go through the bank statements. They're going to help specific pieces for their initial term with us, which will help alleviate some of that backlog. But again when you have an expert looking at it, it doesn't help to bring three other people in and explain to them how to do it when you just got... Mrs. Miller interjected and said Johnna has over 30 years of experience, and you've seen how good she is with things. When she's coming across things that stumps her and takes her a long time to figure out, you just can't pull in anybody to help with those situations without costing us a fortune. Commissioner McVey said well I want to reiterate I'm not hammering you. I appreciate all you do. Mrs. Miller said that's fine. Commissioner McVey said I just want a fire put under that Isley group. It's been how many years. Mrs. Miller said I know. Commissioner McVey said and how many thousand more dollars has it took. Mrs. Miller said but it takes time to fix years of errors of poor accounting. Commissioner McVey said thank you, ma'am.

Commissioner Gwynn said how many hours are hey working? Mrs. Miller said Isley? Commissioner Gwynn said yes. Mrs. Miller said I'll have to pull up their last invoice to look. I don't know that by heart. Commissioner Gwynn said is it less than 40? Mrs. Miller said oh I'm sure it's less than 40 because we just have one person. Now we just have one person doing fixed assets, and one person doing recon. Okay, but I can find that out for you.

Commissioner McVey said these are in addition to their other duties. Mrs. Miller said they invoice us by hours that they work.

Commissioner Yarbrough said mine is for the County Manager. Mr. Meszaros, you made the comment from what you were reading that it took 20 hours to fix something from the library. County Manager Meszaros said just to fix the library item that you approved last week.

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Commissioner Yarbrough said and that now they're working on some problems with Extension and some other department. Am I correct? County Manager Meszaros yes, the Extension office and Senior services. So like just today, one of our staff pulled all the 911 records going back to the date they need. They have to pull all and basically go through and redo several years to find the discrepancy. Then put that all in to get it accurate because you're working off of errors from 2017 in that department. Commissioner Yarbrough said well my question is is any of the problems, and I'm not saying that it is, is the way... Is any of the problem related to the way that maybe departments are submitting some of their expenses? County Manager Meszaros said a lot of the Departments operated... They're state funded; they're federally. Public Health. They weren't working off of the Munis program that we now have. So now we're making all the departments work from Munis, and the budget the county operates under. So all the grants have to be tied back. They have to reconcile them back in. You can't have two different sets of books and expect everything to be done appropriately. This item is about the CFO reclassification, and I'll just kind of state this. Advertising the former position would not attract what the county needs to not end up right back in the same place where we were without. That job description was written to the capabilities of a person in the job not the capabilities needed for the correct person to have in finance. If you want us to go with that new job description and not change the pay scale, we can get that posted. But I think it's paramount. This is in all counties. The Finance Director is probably the most important position in city and county government. Commissioner Yarbrough said now one other comment I believe you made in the statement you were reading. There was a figure in there of \$200,000. Could you elaborate on that number a little bit? County Manager Meszaros said again it's an error we found. I'll have Melissa Miller come up. Mrs. Miller said I think the \$200 balance you mentioned was 911. Okay we have found a discrepancy going back to 2016-17 that the fund balance that the state and the fund balance that we had did not match. I'm not going to quote exact figures because I can't remember them right off hand, but as of right now, the 911 Communications are not receiving their monthly allotments because the state thinks we have a really large fund balance in 911. However, our financial statements only show that the fund balance is less than \$100,000. The annual report was brought to me to sign off on, but Johnna and I could not match the figures that our book showed to what the state had. So Johnna refused to let me sign that form until the books matched. So Johnna went back and reconciled from 2016 or found that the year 2016-17 was off. We went down through our books. We call it the dungeon, and pulled out all the documentation that we could find. Then today Tonya Fuller actually found a file cabinet that had all of the 911 Communication back records. So now we can go and prove to the state because that includes the invoices to be able to back everything up. Because if we can't prove it, then the general fund is going to owe 911 money. That's what we're trying to avoid, but we have to go back clear to 2016-17. This is just one of the things that is taking up our time. We're trying to save you guys money to prove it out, but it takes time. Commissioner Yarbrough said but the problem was 8 years ago? Mrs. Miller said yes. Is that everything?

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Chairman Jefferies asked if anyone else had any questions. Then said thank you Ms. Miller.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner McVey and **carried unanimously** to approve the date change. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Dickerson, Holt, Gwynn, and Jefferies)

Chairman Jefferies said next on the agenda will be reclassifying the Finance Director position, and it will be tabled. Budget amendment from the Sheriff's Department will also be tabled for a later date.

#### **COUNTY MANAGER UPDATES:**

County Manager Meszaros said thank you Mr. Chairman. So I was given some direction to provide more information and reporting. So I pulled the former manager or two managers ago report that is provided to this Board, and I just threw that together today. So this is the most current up to date.

1. The first thing is the elevator pre-work in the new courthouse. So the contractor was here today. They're doing some alarms and electrical pre-work so that when they get here in December to do the final elevator stuff, it's not going to be an untimely project.
2. The Brightspeed GREAT Grant was finalized last week. So Spectrum had done that quite a bit or a time ago. But so now all the contracts on the fiber are approved and completed. So I think we're good from funding in having the state pay for all that.
3. I emailed you all this color swatch last week, and I got feedback that the light blue like the Co-Square building is the selection. I can pass this out if you want to choose a different color. That's fine, but this is for the Post Office, the Clerk's office, and Animal Control. The awarded contract vendor is wanting to have a color choice so they can order this stuff and get it up. So the light blue color on here matches the Co-Square almost to a T. It is the Post Office, and they're usually blue. So if you give me direction on this tonight. The Public Works Director is here, and I could have him give more specific updates.
4. The TDA committee meeting, I want to thank the Finance liaison and the Interim Finance Director. We met with the TDA. There are some compliance issues; we got them on task for doing the things to assist them with having our auditor look at their stuff. So it saves them a lot of headache that they were doing. Again these areas that really should have been held in house, we're doing that.
5. The Piedmont Electric membership meeting last week, I think the three of us, the Deputy County Manager and I met with their new general manager. We talked about long-term planning and their strategic goals for the county from electrical side.
6. Then I do have a Personnel update. Johnna was going to provide the Personnel update, but she hasn't been here for a few meetings. We are interviewing Thursday for the Payroll position. They've done several rounds of interviews and have not found the right, maybe not the right fit yet. We don't think. Then the Accounting I position will be interviewing shortly.

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7. I won't be here on Wednesday due to a medical issue. Then I do, in advance, want to make notice I have time off plans. I'm moving one of our households in Colorado. We're moving our stuff to storage, and my wife needs my assistance on September 30th to October 4<sup>th</sup>. So I will be in Colorado doing that move. I also have an event October 10th and 11<sup>th</sup>. I've arranged all these things around the county meeting, but I do want to start providing you a format in writing.

Which the only thing I didn't address earlier on some of this sheet was on the quarterly report. Again I don't want to give you numbers that aren't accurate, and until they have the year-end, I can't provide you that quarterly report from the financials. I don't like that, but we're working to get that addressed and resolved. They said they could generate me a report. I don't think that helps if it's not accurate. So I would prefer to not give you inaccuracies. That's all the items I have unless you have questions. The Maintenance Director is here. There's a lot of projects. We're doing paving projects, HVAC projects, and several roofs. It's busy. It's a good time to be busy. We continue to have problems with Yanceyville with the sewer line at this building, and the Extension has backed up at least six times since I've been working here. The pipe is failed. They need to line it. We keep pressuring the Mayor and the Manager to do something because it's not on our end. So I don't want that to be a surprise if you hear from them. I think that's all the short updates I had.

Chairman Jefferies asked if there were any questions from anybody on the Board or comments.

Commissioner Yarbrough said just one thing. Looking on your updates, I didn't hear you highlight it. Maybe I was not listening well. The Brightspeed GREAT Grant, it says that Spectrum had contracted previously. Is this the one that Zitel was awarded to start with. County Manager Meszaros said yes sir. Commissioner Yarbrough said did Spectrum have it, and give it up? County Manager Meszaros said so they were waiting. Commissioner Yarbrough said it says that Brightspeed is going to do it now. County Manager Meszaros said so BrightSpeed was waiting on us to do the match forms, and the Director at the state level said oh you're not required to do a match. Well we already obligated a match to Spectrum and to Brightspeed from the Zitel contract. It was 250 originally. Spectrum's doing it for \$10,000. We originally, I submitted it with zero because they said you don't need to match it. So trying to save the county money, and they said oh so you're not going to partner with them. I said no. That's not what we're doing. So we've sent them in the \$10,000 that was what we did with Spectrum, and they've executed the contract. So they were waiting for about three weeks just to get that form. So that's all been handled and taken care of. I'm not sure how many households that affects. Probably like 300 maybe, but yes so all of our broadband contracts are in place and executed. Melissa Williamson said just remember with the GREAT Grant, we didn't have a choice to pick who we would get. Commissioner Yarbrough said okay. Thank you.

County Manager Meszaros said then if you could give me a direction on the color. If the light blue is acceptable, I could just do that, or if you want something different. Commissioner Rose

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said is the light blue the color of the current county building? County Manager Meszaros said the current Co-Square building and several of the others. It's similar to this roof, but not quite as faded. Commissioner McVey suggested red. County Manager Meszaros said I mean I normally don't want to pick a color and everybody goes wow that's really special. Commissioner Rose said if we are getting the consensus of the Board, I say if we already got a couple buildings that's got the blue, I'd vote just to go with the blue to match it. My opinion. County Manager Meszaros said I can pass this out. Vice Chairman Holt said give Mr. Jefferies just a second here, he'll be back. County Manager Meszaros said there he is. Vice Chairman Holt said okay. I think we're ready. Commissioner Yarbrough said Mr. Chairman, the Manager asked for a consensus on the color to use on the Post Office. The Board agreed that the light blue was fine. County Manager Meszaros said okay. We'll make that happen. Thank you.

#### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

**Commissioner Rose:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. First of all, I'd like to thank everybody that came out tonight to the meeting and everybody spoke in public comment. I will say this and it's probably a consensus of this Board. You all don't know how tired we are of dealing with this audit. We want it done as quick as anybody, especially the ones that are watching out there tonight. There's probably ways we could do it, but it's probably going to cost us a pretty penny of taxpayer dollars. And I'm all about saving taxpayer dollars. I wish I could snap my fingers today, and it would be over. But I do like the fact that we can get some updates from Finance as far as problems that you found, how you corrected them, and if we're in a deficit or if we're in the good. And I'm a little bit leery on the 911 until I see something different that says we're in the good because most times what the state says, they're never wrong. That's all I have.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- September 28, 2024 Bright Leaf Hoedown
- October 7, 2024 Board of Commissioners Meeting at 6:30 p.m. at the Historic Courthouse

#### **CLOSED SESSION:**

A motion was made at 8:25 pm by Commissioner Gwynn and seconded by Commissioner Dickerson and **carried unanimously** to consider the qualifications, competence, performance, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial employment of an individual public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee, which is hereby acknowledged NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (6). (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Dickerson, Holt, Gwynn, and Jefferies)

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Holt and seconded by Commissioner Dickerson and **carried 4 - 3** to terminate the County Managers employment pursuant to his employment agreement with the County. (Ayes: Commissioners Dickerson, Holt, Gwynn, and Jefferies. Nays: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose)

**ADJOURNMENT:**

A **motion** was made at 8:40 pm by Commissioner Rose and seconded by Commissioner Yarbrough and **carried unanimously** to adjourn the meeting. (Ayes: Commissioners McVey, Yarbrough, Rose, Dickerson, Holt, Gwynn, and Jefferies)

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Carla R. Smith  
Clerk to the Board

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Jeremiah Jefferies  
Chairman

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