

CASWELL COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MEMBERS PRESENT

November 20, 2023
OTHERS PRESENT

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Tim Yarbrough, Vice Chair
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Aisha Gwynn, Assistant County Manager
Jennifer Hammock, Finance Director
Russell Johnston, County Attorney
Carla Smith, Clerk to the Board

The Board of Commissioners for the County of Caswell, North Carolina, met in a work session on Monday, November 20, 2023 at 4:00 pm at the Gunn Memorial Library.

COUNTY MANAGER RECRUITMENT WORK SESSION:

Interim County Manager Smith said thank you for coming out early today. As you know our employees are our greatest asset. In order to retain, recruit, answer questions on payroll plans, and so forth, I've asked Johnna and Amy to review our policy. They found some inconsistencies that are not a matter with the state or payroll policies in other counties. I've ask them to go through, investigate and offer suggestions or ideas as to how we can get in line and like I said better retain our people. So at this time I'll let Johnna take the floor.

Johnna Sharpe said good afternoon. It's good to see you all again. Ashley and I want to share some background and some recommendations for you to consider that ultimately will be... if you can go ahead and put up the first slide. But ultimately will be asking for you to take some formal action on. But kind of why we're here is, Tony did a great job opening, but Ashley was reviewing some things and some things that had come out of the budget process and started asking me some questions. As we started peeling back the onion a little bit, I started saying well there are some things that don't necessarily align with best practices. So we spent a lot of time over the last several weeks to bring something to you today. Can we go to the next slide if you would? Go two more to pay plan fundamentals. Back one. Sorry. There we go. So what we'd really like to touch on today is just a little bit around pay plan fundamentals and how they relate to your classification and pay plan that you have in place. Here's some background and context that got us to wear we are as a foundation for where we might want to go. Then we have some specific proposed changes that we want to recommend, and we'll walk through the reason we're suggesting those and what they would be. Then one thing that we noted, as we were working on this, is there were just some Personnel Policy cleanup items of things had changed, but they never formally got changed in the Personnel Policy. The big one is you move from a monthly to a bi-weekly pay, and there's still some places where the monthly pay is referenced. So we we're taking this opportunity to do a little cleanup on the Personnel Policies to keep them current. Please stop me as we go through at any point. But I really just want to talk about what is a pay

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and classification plan. If you can go to the next slide, and if you can keep an eye on the slides. You have a pay and classification plan and most every county in the state does that sets the structure on how you're going to compensate employees. That is something that the Board takes action on, the Board approves, and typically these salary ranges are adopted during the budget process. Which with your plan being somewhat new, having been put in place in March of 22, it was in place for the 23 budget process, but it really wasn't addressed as part of the 24 budget process other than just providing pay increases. So typically because salaries are such a large portion of your county budget, it makes sense to look at those changes that you want to make in terms of pay and in terms of market competitiveness to have those discussions as part of the budget. So typically some of the items that we're bringing today we really should have probably taken care of during the budget process; which is kind of why we're bringing them now and not waiting till next year's budget process because we need some of these things addressed to make sure direction is clear, policies are clear, and that things are aligned properly. While the pay plan is adopted as part of the budget, it's also administered in line with your policies. So the pay plan is kind of your salary basis, your compensation, your pay ranges, and your job classifications. Then the Personnel Policies tell how all of that is administered on a day-to-day basis, which Ashley and the County Manager are responsible for. The next slide. I know you probably spent a lot of time on this when you adopted your new pay plan, but I always feel like it's just good to remind people and get grounded. Here slide five is really looking at the components of a pay and classification plan. There are two pieces. There are the salary ranges, which determine the market competitiveness and what a job is worth. So when the Maps Group did your pay and classification study, they looked at different jobs and decided they're worth x amount in the market. So you establish a scale that has a minimum, a midpoint, and a maximum. That is really the whole kind of pay consideration over the life of an employee: when they're hired, and then how they move through it as the Board awards pay increases over time. You have a minimum, a midpoint, and a max because depending on your years of service and your qualifications, that whole range is considered the general market. But the specific skills that you bring and the years of experience you bring help place you in those market ranges. So if you're a 30-year employee who's been doing that job for 30 years, you should expect to be paid near the top of the pay range. If you're a brand new employee that comes to the county, you might be bringing additional experience from another county which could justify you being paid up a little bit higher in the pay range. Or you could be right out of college, no experience, and meet the minimum qualifications of the job, and when it's that case then you're typically paid more toward the minimum. So you look at these ranges as the whole range as a market and depending on what the individual brings, they can be placed in various places throughout the whole pay range. Then you've got the job classification and grading. The job classifications are your Paramedics, your Sheriff Deputy, your County Manager, and your HR director. Each of those jobs then gets placed in one of those salary ranges based on the market work that's done by your consultant and where they have looked at HR directors in other counties and other industries. So what are typically HR directors being paid as an example. Then they take each of those jobs, and they slot them into the

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various pay grades. So at the time you do a pay and class study, when the Maps did that, at that point in time was the market condition and how they slotted the jobs, but the pay plans are really not meant to stay stagnant. You've got to kind of tend to them, grow them, and look at what market conditions are. That's some of what is done with the budget process each year. We'll talk a little bit more about some of the real mechanics behind moving the pay ranges, moving employees, and how that works because that all feeds into some of the recommendations we have today. So I'll stop there. I'm sure this is review for most of you, but I felt like I needed to go back and kind of remind everybody kind of what typically a pay classification plan looks like. We'll be looking at yours here shortly.

So again now to some specific history with Caswell. We can go to slide six. Okay as I mentioned earlier the Maps Group was hired to come in and do a pay and classification plan. It included looking at the market, where did the pay ranges need to be, as well as looking at your job classifications and where they needed to be placed in the market. So when the results were implemented, because they're consultants, it's ultimately your decision. My understanding is that the pay ranges that were put in were put in at 90% of the market recommendations made by the Maps Group. So your pay ranges are a little below or are below what the market was at that time. All employees, but there was range movement even though it was only 90% of what the recommendation was. All employees pay was moved to the new minimum of those pay ranges, and then as part of the 23 budget all employees received a 4.5% pay increase. Then certain DSS and Health Department employees received an additional 8% in positions where there was high turnover and there were challenges recruiting. That's not unusual. That tells you that the market for that job is very tight, and when you've got jobs where there's a tight market for lack of interest, you're going to have to pay more in those cases. So that was the condition of the pay plan as you came into the FY 24 budget process. March 2022 the new pay plan was implemented. All those range movements have been made, employees had been placed in their new salaries, and there were salary adjustments.

So then there's the salary range, if we go into slide eight. Moving into a salary range discussion, the salary ranges that were put in place when the Maps Group did the study, there are 28 ranges ranging from Salary Grade 55 to Salary Grade 86. With salary ranges, you have a distance between the ranges. So from a Grade 55 to a Grade 56, the difference between the minimums on those salary ranges currently is 4.3%. So if you did the math for each of those jobs, the minimum level, the midpoint, and the max, they're all 4.3% above the previous range. Then from the minimum to the max the range is 55%, and that's pretty typical when you're doing some broad banding. Typically, you see those ranges anywhere from 40 to 60%. I mean from 50 to 60%. So that kind of puts you right in the middle. And actually I never asked you. I don't know if you all had used a hiring range before, but when this was put in, a hiring range was set that is actually 4% below the minimum. Ashley Powell said we used it before. Johnna Sharpe said you used it before. Okay. When Ashley and I started having discussions, that was one of the first things that caught me off guard. Because in my career I've never seen a below minimum hiring range.

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Because the market range of the job is the minimum to the maximum, so you should be hiring within that range. My understanding is, that's typically the ranges that you've been advertising, just that hiring range. That is going to be extremely detrimental to your recruiting because that is 4% below. It may not be clear when you're advertising exactly how that pay gets up to minimum, but if you're just advertising that hiring range, you're never going to attract people who have experience because they think that's where they have to start in pay. So I'm already sharing some information on my next slide kind of talking about some of the observations.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said can I stop you for a minute. So the hiring rate is below the minimum is what you're saying on all of these ranges. Mrs. Sharpe said yes. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said the ranges just take 73 and 74 salary Grade, there's 4.3% difference of those. Correct? Mrs. Sharpe said right, from the 48 to the 50. But then that hiring rate is 4%. We've got a lot of fours going around in here. It's 4% less than the minimum. So if you took the 48 and divided it into the 51 on Grade 73, that's 4% less. So I believe the current practice is that's typically where you bring employees in, and then at the end of their probationary period, they're moved to the minimum. Well you're missing an opportunity to attract people who have some experience by not really showing that there's a broader range, and we'll get to that in a minute. When you have a minimum, midpoint, and max, typically the hiring range is between that minimum in that midpoint. But I have never seen a below minimum hiring rate except for trainees, and in some cases, you have a different grade that would be lower for a trainee. Maybe it's because it's equated to your probationary period, but that probationary period is determined if someone can do the job. You really want to make sure that your pay is attracting the kind of quality applications that you want to make sure they'll do that job. If somebody can go to a neighboring county and start at the minimum immediately, that's a real disadvantage to Caswell when it comes to recruiting. You're already in somewhat of a competitive disadvantage because the market ranges are lower, but you're further disadvantaged because of where you set the hiring rate.

Commissioner Jefferies said I have a question. I know in Social Service, they can come in qualified and have the skills to do the job, but the State won't let it go but so far. How are you going to address that? Mrs. Sharpe said well are these ranges within the State's ranges. Ashley Powell said within the State's ranges, but the State sets the guidelines for qualifications for those particular employees. Commissioner Gwynn said and that 8% you were talking about, I think, it's for certain employees like protective services, and it's over a period of years. It's not just this year. I think it's a period of three years that they get that raise. So when you're talking about where we need to be, how many employees are we talking about? Do you have any idea? Ashley Powell said you're roughly looking at 267 some fulltime employees. Commissioner Holt said so you basically saying everybody? Ashley Powell said everybody. We're looking at part-time temporary people too. Commissioner Holt said so we're talking a 4% raise no matter what for the whole county? Mrs. Sharpe said no sir. Because that 4% hiring rate is only for a short period, and after 6 months if they meet their probationary period, their pay is taken up to the minimum.

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Ashley said the department heads, correct me if I'm wrong, they budget at that probationary rate after the 4%. So it's included. Melissa Williamson said this is more or less addressing anyone that were hiring. Mrs. Sharpe said right. This is hiring. This hiring rate just is specifically addressing anyone that you're bringing in new to the county.

Commissioner Rose said what about if you did away with the hiring rate and started at the minimum rate? Wouldn't that be best? Mrs. Sharpe said that's what we're going to recommend. Commissioner Rose said for anybody else hired after today. Johnna Sharpe said but because every current employee, if they're at the 4%, the intent is that they'll get to the 4% within six months. I mean up to the minimum. It would really only impact anybody who right now is in their probationary period. They would go ahead and be moved to the minimum and not necessarily have to wait. Commissioner Rose said how many do we have in that? Ashley said I will have to get back with you on that one. I can email that to you. Ashley said it's not a lot. Commissioner Gwynn said it's not a lot in probationary over all the departments? Ashley said and it's already factored in their budget. Mrs. Sharpe said yes, so there's no budget impact. There's no impact to existing employees other than those who are on probation who would get to at least the minimum at the end of their probationary period anyway.

Commissioner Holt said so if somebody's been here for a year, are they making the minimum? Mrs. Sharpe said more than likely.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said it's a six-month probationary period. Correct? Ashley said correct for general employees. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said if after that six months they meet or the Department Head is satisfied with them and they're doing okay, they go to the minimum automatically. Am I correct? Ashley said correct if the Department Head sees fit that they are ready to go out their probationary period. If not, they can extend their probationary period. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said how long? Ashley said I think it's up to two months. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said is that common place? Ashley said that typically doesn't happen. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said most of the time after six months... Ashley said they move off their probation. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said they either stay or go. Johnna Sharpe said well that probationary period, I mean I don't know if it was because people thought that if you paid them or if there was some incentive for them to stay the six months, then that 4% was incentive to stay. But I think it's more of a deterrent to attract people than getting someone to move from day zero to day six months.

Commissioner Gwynn said so am I understanding this. If I'm on probation and I get to the point that I'm going be placed, I will be making the same thing as the person that's been there for a year. Is that correct? Johnna Sharpe said the way you're looking at it, yeah. That's the way your policy work right now. But it depends on when you were hired. I mean if you were hired when everybody else was hired, but eventually everybody's going to be at the minimum because that's your policy. Your policy is to not pay below the minimum.

Interim County Manager Smith said would you not have some employees come in above the minimum when they hired? Mrs. Sharpe said you could have. Interim County Manager Smith said so that wouldn't even apply to them. Mrs. Sharpe said correct, and that's where that probationary period is more about performance in my opinion than pay. I mean that's the time to see are they fit for the job, and if they met the minimum qualifications of the job, then they should already be paid at the minimum.

Commissioner Gwynn said I noticed in some departments we serve as a training ground. They come here stay six months or whatever, and they're off of probation to go to other counties because they do make more money. I don't know the answer to it, but I've noticed it. Mrs. Sharpe said well this would kind of give them some incentive just to stay. To come and especially if you could hire some folks away. Let's say you have somebody move from the mountains to Caswell County, and they're bringing six years of experience. Well that six years of experience, even though it isn't with Caswell County, is valuable. You should pay that person for that experience, and be willing to pay them not at the minimum because you might not even attract that person because they think the only pay that they're going to get is that advertised hiring rate. They don't even know there's flexibility. So you're getting people that aren't even applying because that hiring rate is a turnoff to them before they've even gone any further. So you want to make it as attractive as you can be for people who want to come and work here.

Commissioner Jefferies said I thought two years ago, we brought everybody up to 90% of their salary, and we did more than 2% or 3% for some people because they were just way behind. I know that's what we were supposed to have done. Ashley said we did that with our salary study with the Maps Group. That's what Johnna mentioned on the previous slide. We did do that. Melissa Williamson said and that was 90% of the minimum. Johnna Sharpe said that was 90% of the minimum from what the Maps Group recommended. So your jobs are all... So they said here's the market, and what was implemented was 10% below the market. So you're at a disadvantage because your current pay scale isn't at market. So you're kind of behind when people look at what the range of pay is because that 10% falls all the way from minimum, to midpoint, and maximum.

Commissioner Rose said on page six, you had 4.5% for all employees, but you didn't have anything in there about when we gave 13.5% to the Sheriff's Office. Mrs. Sharpe said that was 24. Commissioner Rose said okay. Mrs. Sharpe said that's what's coming up. I asked Ashley the same thing today. I'm like you did 4.5% in 23 also. So it's 4.5% in 23, and it's 4.5% in 24. We'll get to that in a minute. Let me just see if there's anything else that I haven't hit. I think I've hit everything on page nine. So if we go to slide 10, this visual may help. So the recommendation is to take the current pay scales and basically make that hiring rate column go away. So the proposed pay scale would be minimum, midpoint, and maximum. Then the hiring range is in between that minimum and midpoint based on qualifications, years of experience, and the ability to even hire for positions because you may want to talk a little bit about your challenges in hiring. Ashley Powell said so I do run across a lot of challenges with hiring far as qualified

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applicants. If we do get qualified applicants, we can't meet where they want to be, and they end up going to another county. I think a lot of our Department Heads are complacent. They don't know where to go far as you know they think we're stuck with the minimum. You know there's not a lot of clear... it's a lot... it's really vague in our policy. So we're just trying to get that where they can understand that they can ask for more, and if we change this, I think we will get lots of qualified applicants. We have not been getting them at all, and the ones we get that we end up hiring, like Mrs. Gwynn said, they're here a year and they go.

Interim County Manager Smith said what's the procedure for asking more for more pay? Johnna Sharpe said we'll get to that.

Commissioner Rose said under the current scale, if you do away with the hiring rate and go to the minimum, let's say you just hired an employee last year, he's at the minimum of \$23,911, and you hire an employee this year he automatically goes to \$24,628. You just put him ahead of someone who has one year of experience. Johnna Sharpe said well we didn't really because you gave everybody a 4.5% pay increase. You didn't at that time move the minimum of pay. Commissioner Rose said this is not reflective of an increase that they would have gotten in between. Mrs. Sharpe said correct, and that's one thing I hope to try and explain through this. The pay increases you give do not necessarily affect the salary ranges. They are independent of one another. So you gave a 4.5% pay increase for this year, but there was no range movement. So right now everybody in the county makes at least 4.5% above the minimum or 13.5% above the minimum of the pay range they're currently in. Commissioner Rose said but is not the minimum going to factor in that 4.5% also when you give it. Mrs. Sharpe said no, you don't move the minimum. Commissioner Rose said so you never move the minimum although you get the increases? Mrs. Sharpe said no. You can move the minimum, but it doesn't equal the pay increases. In most cases you don't want to do that. Commissioner Rose said you will boxcar everybody. Johnna Sharpe said right. I call it compression, but yes. If you give a 4.5% pay increase and you move the pay range 4.5%; then you're going to do exactly what you said. You're going to get everybody bundled up around the minimum. Commissioner Rose said so you're saying leave the minimum where it's at. Johnna Sharpe said well, I'm actually going to recommend moving it a little bit, but we're going to recommend only moving it 3% so that it doesn't move it all the way to the 4.5%. And so that the minimum would still be below what every employee is currently making. If you don't move those minimums periodically because that's determining your market range, one or two things are going to happen. It's going to be harder to attract people because that hiring range continues to get further out of market, or you're going to have to pay more into or higher into the range and get closer to the midpoint in order to attract people. So it's a delicate balance on which pieces you move when, but over the last few years in many places the market has been moving anywhere from 2.5 to 3% a year. So that's what the range movements have been and to the extent that there's funds available, most counties have given pay increases beyond their range movement so you don't boxcar people. So there's this balance between box caring people and keeping your ranges market based that in some cases

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you're going to need to look at how do you adjust the people who are still here to kind of keep them moving through the ranges and keep them moving toward the midpoint and not the minimum. So there are a lot of places or a lot of counties who if they don't address that for several years, they'll come and do kind of a one-time catchup to kind of get everybody in the right spot in the ranges. But your pay plan is still so new I don't think we're at that point yet. But it's things to think about on how much do you move the range by continuing to increase the market and increase the competitiveness while being mindful that you don't want to get a brand new employee necessarily making the same thing as somebody who's been at the county longer. If that brand new employee is bringing more years of experience than that person who's is currently at the county, then you should pay for that experience to get qualified people there. So there's always that measure of internal equity, but there's a balance between that and filling the position so that you have enough people to do the work. So that's the first recommendation to eliminate the hiring rate. You hire somebody at whatever the appropriate salary is: be it minimum or be it somewhere between the minimum in the midpoint. We'll get to the language in a little bit on what we would suggest or how that be administered. Then their probationary period, they're not going to get more money when it's over. They will have got what their market pay is from day one, but you still have that period of time if they're not performing well, you should make the decision to let them go.

Melissa Williamson said when we're putting out or advertising for positions, you're saying we would be able to put like a range from the minimum to midpoint and that would draw more attention to the job. It would be depending upon their experience, and they can see something besides just that hiring rate. Mrs. Sharpe said exactly. My experience has been you can do two things when you're hiring. You can say here's the whole range so that they know what their full potential is. They don't know if that hiring range is the most they can ever make. So a good practice is to show here's the min., mid, and max, but here's where we expect the hiring range to be between the minimum and the midpoint based on experience, qualifications, and those type things. Now there may be some positions, often see this in senior management positions and often see this in Social Services where there's challenges hiring, that you may advertise the whole range. If you get somebody who comes in here with 20 years of experience and they want to come work for Caswell County and you need to pay them over the midpoint, you may want to do that. We'll talk about that in a minute kind of what the process would be internally. But that way people know if I go to work for Caswell County and I stay in this job, here's my potential. They see the full range, but you also want to manage people's expectations on what they think they'll probably make. Just like the conversations we've had with you about the County Manager position. You want to kind of let them know here's kind of the hiring rate so that you can manage people's expectations so they know whether to apply for a job or not.

Commissioner Gwynn said one of my questions would be I know that a lot of people are going out of County due to pay. If we are able to do this, would we be able to do it across all the different employers that we have? Mrs. Sharpe said yes. This would move, because all of your

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jobs are in this pay scale. Commissioner Gwynn said correct. Mrs. Sharpe said so yes, you would do that for all the positions you advertise for. So that would mean Ashley would change your template on how you recruit for positions. Here's the new advertising range. Commissioner Gwynn said my next question will be at the end of this. The bottom line. What is it going to increase? How much dollar wise will it increase for the county, if we can? Mrs. Sharpe said it won't increase anything right now. Melissa Williamson said because it's not for any current employees. Commissioner Gwynn said okay, so going forward for new employees. Mrs. Sharpe said but the range is still within what's budgeted. Every position, the way the budget works is we took every position that was in the budget whether it was filled or not and increased their salary either 4.5% or 13.5%. So their salaries, even if we move the ranges and if we go to the next page I'll show you what we're talking about moving the ranges. Even if you move the ranges, every employee right now will be above what we're recommending. So there is no pay impact at all right now, and then as you go through the budget process for next year, we'll be looking at should there be more range movement and what does it look like there needs to be in terms of pay increases. So if you look at slide 11, there's kind of how you adjust salary ranges. There's two ways. The first way is to move everything. You move the entire scale: the minimum, the midpoint, and the max. If we say we're going to move it 3%, we move everything 3%. The other way, and actually we're recommending a combination of both these ways because the other thing you got to think about is the jobs are assigned to these grades. You may have and you do have general class employees assigned in the same grade as Public Safety employees. You can't move part of the people in one grade 4.5% and another part of the people in the same grade 13.5%. That's not how these structures work. So if you've got a job that needs to move because of the market, and that was why Public Safety was paid the 13.5%. It was the market issues. How you change the market on those jobs is you move them up to a higher grade because you can't have part of a grade be 13.5% range minimum and the other part of it moved 4.5%. So if you have to move certain positions because of the market, you look and move them up in a new grade.

Commissioner Rose said well aren't you going to reclassify them when you do that? Mrs. Sharpe said exactly. You reclassify them to a new grade. Commissioner Rose said but how do you reclassify them to a new grade? If you got let's say a Deputy one starts out at this salary, and we gave 13.5%. That 13.5% would take him to a Deputy two. Johnna Sharpe said what happens is you move everybody up. Everybody moves up in the range. Commissioner Gwynn said that would also happen in Social Services where you go from Social Work One to Social Work two, three, and supervisor. Mrs. Sharpe said so what you'll see in a moment is all of those positions that you awarded a 13.5% pay increase, every single one of them moves up. Commissioner Rose said but you're promoting? Mrs. Sharpe said nope. Commissioner Rose asked how are you not promoting if you're moving them from one classification to another? Mrs. Sharpe said well you're not reclassifying the position; you're reclassifying their grade. You're reclassifying the pay range that they're in. So they don't become a Deputy two. They're a Deputy one who's pay range is now two grades higher. The Deputy two is still a Deputy two, but their pay grade is two grades

higher. I think that's a good distinction that I need to the salary is being reclassified not the position. That's an excellent distinction because you could change the salary, but their job title isn't going to change. So if you need to move jobs because the market for that job has changed more than the market for all jobs, then that's how you move those jobs and adjust them.

Commissioner Rose said so one last question. So basically when we gave the salary adjustments, did they move up in that salary grade, or did they stay within like say a 72? Did they stay the 72, or did they move up? Johnna Sharpe said they didn't move up at the time, and that's what we need to fix. Commissioner Rose said okay. Mrs. Sharpe said because they're still...

Commissioner Rose said you'd be moving them from a 72 to say 73? Mrs. Sharpe said yes. So let's just go ahead and jump ahead to slide 15. I think that may help. So here's the jobs that we're proposing that the salary grade needs to be reclassified. These are all the folks who got the 13.5% pay increase. So what I did is I went through and I looked basically to kind of move them up in the range. Because you got 4.3% between each of the grades, I looked at moving them up two grades higher. That is 8.6%. So they now have more capacity to grow, and their pay will be wherever they are in that range. They'll be making more than the minimum of these new jobs. When you go to hire an Animal Control Officer, they were in a 62, but their new range is a 64. So Commissioner Rose, if you look, and these are in alphabetical order not grade order. So it's a little bit harder to see, but you can see that all the relationships change all the way up. So everybody in the Sheriff's Department, that structure of how they were in their grades, they all moved up two. No titles change; nothing of that changes. Their pay won't change because their pay is within those pay ranges. But everything moves to where the pay range is more reflective of what the market is for these jobs. Commissioner Rose said basically you're getting their current salaries amount in line with the salary grade that they should be. Mrs. Sharpe said yes. Yes, and because you can't pick and choose which job change in which grade. If the job needs to change, you have to change the grade. You can't have a grade 63 that's got two different minimums. Commissioner Rose said so basically right now if the Sheriff Department had somebody at 72 and the Health Department had somebody at 72, and they got 13.5% and the Health Department got 4.5%, you're trying to get it all back in line. Mrs. Sharpe said yes, because that market for that person is 72. It's not a 70 anymore; it's a 72. But the market for the Health Department, we didn't move it at the time. We moved their pay increases. What we recommend is because your scales were set below market to start with, we think it makes sense to move the pay ranges some but not in a way that it's going to create compression or box caring with current employees. Commissioner Rose said like Mrs. Gwynn said this has nothing to do with what's budgeted right now? Johnna Sharpe said it has no impact. If you read that red on that page, it impacts no one's current pay. It has no impact on the budget. No one's pay will be adjusted. The only thing that Ashley will do is she will go in the HR System and say that these jobs that were a 70 are now a 72.

Commissioner Gwynn said well let me go back to page 12 for me. A 4.5% pay increase for general employees and then 13.5% for certain other categories, how did these three get chosen as

the ones to get to 13.5%? Johnna Sharpe said that was done in this year's budget. This is the action that's already occurred. Commissioner Gwynn said so those employees got 13.5%? Mrs. Sharpe said yes. That was done as part of the budget. So all every employee got 4.5% for general employee, and then these other three classifications: Public Safety, Information Technology, and Solid Waste were all awarded 13.5%. That's already been done.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said let me make sure I'm on the same page. Mrs. Sharpe said yes, please. Commissioner Gwynn said because when I look at those getting 13.5%, I don't quite understand. Whereas we have some others that is really critical, and they didn't get that. But I didn't realize we did that, or if we did. Mrs. Sharpe said I think at the time, there was recruiting issues. There were market issues of attracting people. Commissioner Gwynn said this wasn't just these three. It was across all of our departments. Johnna Sharpe said I'm not so sure Mrs. Gwynn. That maybe in the prior year, everybody got 4.5% except there were certain jobs in DSS and Health Department that got more. So I don't know what the thinking was. I don't know if the thinking was those jobs had had gotten adjusted but some other jobs hadn't. I don't really know what all was behind the recommendation, but this is what was approved. So because the pay was...because the scales weren't adjusted at the time, we find ourselves now trying to come back in and do a little cleanup to have the pay ranges agree with the intent of this, which was to increase the classification or increase the pay ranges on that group of employees. I'm sorry Mr. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said no go ahead. Go ahead. Continue. Continue.

Johnna Sharpe said so what we're recommending, if we go back to slide 13, is eliminating the hiring range, we'll have to amend language in the Personnel Policy, and then I'm also recommending that you all adopt a Pay and Classification Plan. We'll go over that draft for you. It's a Pay and Classification Ordinance. That really sets this out and spells it out. It's the document that you should adopt with every budget. So it's like you have all of your numbers budget, and then you have your people ordinance. So I'm recommending, and we'll walk through that in a minute, that we go ahead and have the Board adopt that so you start getting this good practice in place. So we're recommending eliminating the hiring range and moving the entire range 3%. Then reclassing, a better word is reclassifying salaries for certain positions, and those would be the changes that we would recommend.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said but if you move the entire range 3%, and make sure I'm understanding. It will not have any effect on this year's budgeted amount for employee salaries? Mrs. Sharpe said no sir. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said and if we don't, just pulling a number out of the air, pay increases for FY 25 are zero. It's still 3% that you are talking about? Mrs. Sharpe said no impact. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said okay, carry on.

Commissioner Holt said this 3%, are you saying this should be 3% every year? Mrs. Sharpe said no sir. I'm not. Commissioner Holt said are you saying one time? Mrs. Sharpe said I'm saying there needs to be an evaluation done every year of if the pay ranges should move. Commissioner Holt said you're working your way around answer. Johnna Sharpe said no. There isn't a rule.

Commissioner Holt said I know it's not a rule, but you're thinking 3% because I heard you say it's going up 2.5 to 3% or the market is every year. Mrs. Sharpe said yes. Commissioner Holt said so basically you're looking at 3%. Mrs. Sharpe said potentially, or you address those jobs that have market movement because you may have some jobs that you don't have any problem recruiting. But if you want to you can keep the whole pay scale the same and look at certain jobs that you might want to adjust. This is one thing that I've shared with Ashley kind of another best practice is to take and re-evaluate the market of jobs. To take a third of your jobs every year and re-evaluate them for market competitiveness, and then if you do that you adjust possibly just those jobs and not the whole pay range. But at some point, that pay range is going to lag behind or those pay ranges are going to lag behind. But as long as you've got that flexibility to pay within the range, it becomes less of an urgent need to move the ranges every year. Commissioner Holt said so let me ask this. I know I wasn't Commissioner at time, but it was 90% of the minimum. You're trying to get rid of that 10% that the Board voted on. Mrs. Sharpe said yes, that's certainly one way to look at it because your pay is not competitive and is going to continue to be a challenge for you to recruit and retain staff. Again, these are recommendations that you can choose to accept or not. This is your pay plan. You set this. I think that was one of the important things when Ashley came to me because they had been given the direction to move some of the jobs pay grades up and in the same pay grade move other things. I'm like you can't do that. That's not how it works. So that's when we started looking at this and going we really need to try and fix the foundation on this so you're in a good place moving forward.

Commissioner Gwynn said I guess that's what's happening there in that reclass position that received a 13.5% to reflect market change. The Board of Commissioners can change the pay scale, and this was not formerly done? Mrs. Sharpe said correct. Commissioner Gwynn said when the budget was approved, and Mrs. Sharpe said exactly, and that is actually in the Personnel Policy that only the Board can change these salary ranges. It was not done at the time that the budget was adopted. So while there might have been some intentions to do these things, they weren't formally done, and you need to take a formal action to address that. Commissioner Gwynn said yes, I agree.

Johnna Sharpe said and so if you want to, let's just go ahead and jump right to one of the handouts we gave you. So you have the PowerPoint, and then you have a handout. The first page is entitled Caswell County Pay and Classification Ordinance for fiscal year 2024. So this is a very typical Pay and Classification Ordinance. Like I said you do it in conjunction with your budget ordinances. What this does is it basically says the Board is establishing these pay ranges, here are the salary schedule, and it's establishing the position classifications. So what it does is that section three would establish the pay ranges. You see there is no hiring rate, and this pay range reflects a 3% movement of the entire pay range. Then if you go to the next page on section four, these are then where all of your county positions are slotted with respect to their grade and their FLSA status, whether they're exempt or not exempt from Fair Labor Standards. So what I did is to identify the ones whose salary grades are moving. They are starred with an asterisk. So

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the ones with the asterisk, their grade is two grades above where it currently was, and every other grade has stayed the same. This list every job classification that the county currently has. Then on Section five, you also have some part-time classifications that would need to be given a pay range. So these are those part-time classifications that don't really have a regular classification otherwise. So we would be looking at setting a minimum and a maximum rate for these jobs, and this is based on what's currently being done and kind of the market where people are currently being hired in these jobs. So this kind of gives the Departments a good understanding of that range that they're able to hire the part-time folks into. Now these classifications don't exist up in the pay plan. But typically if you're going to hire, let's say the Sheriff wants to hire a part-time Sheriff's Deputy or the DSS Director wants to hire a part-time Social Worker, you can hire someone part-time and pay them within that Social Worker range. So those ranges are in essence there for any employee part-time or full time that does the work. So those are more regular salaries. What I did is I mentioned to Ashley at some point we may want to put these jobs up in the normal pay ranges as well, but I don't exactly know the right place to slot them. So for right now we just wanted to make it clear what the pay rate was for those classifications. Then it just notes that the administration of the Pay and Classification Plan is the County Manager's responsibility. But I also put something in here that I've experienced recently working with another county. Sometimes you make a typo or sometimes you miss or you fat finger a number, so I also put in here the ability for the County Manager to make technical corrections of things like typos or just human mistake, but then those need to be reported back to the Board so that you know that that mistake was made and been fixed. So my recommendation to you is that you adopt this Pay and Classification Ordinance. That really does clean up things that should have been addressed. It also really makes it clear to everyone the salary ranges. Also because this is typically, I would put this on your website with your other budget ordinances. So that anybody could come and see that these are the pay ranges. If you want to come and work for Caswell County, here's what you do.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said you got few more minutes. Mrs. Sharpe said all right. So just want to finish up. If you can turn to..., so keep going right after the ordinance. Then here are the changes that we're recommending to the Personnel Policies that start on page six of that handout, and if you can go to slide 23 on the presentation. So those recommendations, here are the things that as a result of the recommendations that we're making, some things that really need some clarification, and many of these things are questions that Tony's identified while he's been in the interim manager role: things that are not quite clear to him. So we thought this was a good opportunity to get some of these cleaned up because they're not clear him and they're not clear to Ashley. So we need to have something that makes more sense for the organization. So we have A through G policy recommendations that we would want to make. The first one is again just you all moving to adopting a Pay and Classification Ordinance. How I've done this is the language is as it currently is in the policy. They're strike through if we're removing the language, and it's yellow and bold if we're proposing new language. So this just says that adjustments to the

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pay scale will be done in conjunction with the annual budget process and reflected in the adopted Pay and Classification Ordinance. There's currently an Appendix O in the policies that is a pay scale that hasn't been updated since you did the Maps Group so we're just going to delete that appendix. So it would just go away. Then change B, there is language in the Personnel Policy that speaks to the hiring in the pay range. So we would just eliminate Section 10.7. Then change C is where we talk about what we've talked about moving the hiring rate between the minimum and the midpoint. What this does is if you look at the first yellow, and I'll just read it. It says the appointing authority may set hiring salaries, and I think the appointing authority for you all is the Department Head, between the minimum and midpoint of the salary range subject to the approval of the Human Resources Director. So that gives you that person who's making sure there's consistency in how that's applied, and that somebody doesn't come in and they're also looking at how does that compare with existing employees. So Ashley kind of become that piece of consistency that make sure there's proper application. Then let's say we've got some unusual situation where we want to hire someone above the midpoint. That could be a particular need depending on especially a lot of times in senior manager or department head levels. That can be done, but then that requires another level of approval by the County Manager. So Ashley is making sure everything that happens between minimum and midpoint. She's getting a recommendation from the Department Heads on why they feel like they need to hire these folks. She's approving that, and anything above the midpoint the County Manager would have to approve. Then it just talks about there were some language in that last paragraph that refers to steps. You no longer have a step pay plan so we changed that to the maximum. It also speaks to pay increases once the employee meets their maximum. The maximum is there for what it is; it's the maximum the job is worth. So once an employee reaches that maximum, they're not eligible for further permanent increases in pay, but what is typically a common practice is the Board can decide to award people who are at the maximum of pay by giving them a bonus. That bonus can be the same amount as what everybody else is getting or it can be something less, but that is something that you would address as part of the budget and information that Ashley would give you based on the pay increases that are being recommended. These employees would move to the max of the pay scale, and then would have a recommendation as to whether you do a bonus or not. So that just cleans up that language because that actually said that the employee salary is subsequent. The across the board increase is granted to the employee, but it doesn't say that you can go beyond the maximum so that language is conflicted.

Commissioner Rose said doesn't normally when somebody's maxed out, they're maxed out, but they would get anything from that Max point, it would be in a COLA, a cost of living adjustment like the state. If an employee is maxed out at top salary, they don't go any further. The only thing they get is what the state gives as far as a cost of living adjustment per year. Johnna Sharpe said well I think that that's something that you all have to look at is what's your policy is going to be. Because a cost of living is still a pay increase, and where the market range is the market range, typically if you're at the max you don't even get a cost to living. Commissioner Rose said okay,

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but that would be my next question. How would you do that if you're giving a cost to living adjustment to all the employees? Just because somebody had been here 30 years, served the county for 30 years, but they were at top pay, I think they should get the cost of living adjustment. Mrs. Sharpe said well if you're doing a cost of living adjustment, then then you may want to move the whole pay scale. Commissioner Rose said how would you opt out that person and say you can't get a cost to living adjustment? Mrs. Sharpe said well that's something the Board can do. I mean you can certainly say that you want to do that. Commissioner Rose said but legally, how could you do it? How could you say well we're going to give a cost of living adjustment all employees but these five who are at top pay? Johnna Sharpe said it's whatever your policy is. If you want to change that so that they can... Because your pay raises weren't necessarily characterized as cost of living, they were pay increases. They weren't cost of living adjustments. Commissioner Rose said okay. So the 4.5% wasn't considered a COLA? Mrs. Sharpe said no. Commissioner Rose said what about last year? Mrs. Sharpe said no, they're just pay increases.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said once an employee is at their maximum on their pay grade, and we did a 5% COLA, that employee is not eligible for it. But the Board can say well Mr. McVey you're at your max. You're not eligible for this COLA, but the Board will give you a bonus of X amount. Mrs. Sharpe said yes. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said which could be equal to the 5%. Mrs. Sharpe said absolutely could be equal to the 5%. Commissioner Rose said which by doing that it wouldn't make your scale change. Mrs. Sharpe said correct. Commissioner Rose said you robbing Peter to pay Paul. Mrs. Sharpe said well okay. Yes, but you would still budget it. Yes, but if you think about what those ranges are there for is that those ranges say what the job is worth. Typically, how you move through pay ranges is through time. Just by staying here longer, by getting new skills, getting promoted, and going up to different pay ranges. So you know there's a philosophy that some employees say I want to meet the max of my pay range. But you can also argue I don't ever want to meet the maximum pay range because I want to keep going up in pay range. So I mean there's lots of different pay philosophy on that.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said after working 30 years you may be at top pay, and Mrs. Sharpe said yes, if you've been here 30 years and you're at top pay, yes I would retire. 30 years is a long time, and I think too that local government is hard work. They are not easy jobs. I mean it is saving lives. It is trying to protect children with CPS. So 30 years working with local government, you're ready to retire. But let me just finish the last few changes, and then we'll be done. So there's been some confusion on kind of what happens when someone's reinstated. If they leave and come back in a year so we're just clarifying that. Really saying if somebody leaves and there were pay increases while they were gone, they really shouldn't get those pay increases because those pay increases were for employees who need to stay. But also when they come back, they're being rehired so they kind of get to renegotiate their salary so that shouldn't be a given that they get across the board. Then here's something that right now the policy says, that if someone is promoted that they get a 4% pay increase here. Well I'm not sure where the 4%

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came from, but if you're getting promoted, in most cases you're going up to a higher grade. Well if the difference between your grades is 4.3%, you ought to get at least 4.3% because you're going up into that grade. If you're going up two grades, you should probably get more than 4% because what's going to happen is you're always just going to slide back down to the minimum. If you're not getting an increase that's at least equal to the distance between the pay ranges, you're sliding back in the pay scale. In theory when you get a promotion, you want to stay relative in the same place in the new pay scales. Really just having 4% for any kind of increase doesn't seem sufficient, and doesn't really encourage people to try and get promoted. So typically what I see is that if somebody moves one grade, they get a 5% pay increase. If somebody moves two grades, they get a 10% pay increase. That makes it easy to administer, and it takes a lot of judgment out. Now if somebody moves more than three grades, then you can move them to the minimum, or this language provides for some other justification.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said but this will have no effect if we reclassify these grades? If somebody's at a 70 now and we change it to a 72, they won't be expecting a 10% raise? Mrs. Sharpe said correct. Correct because their salary is currently within the range. Their job isn't changing; we're just changing the grade. Then Section F, there's been some confusion on when people take on temporary assignment. As to the language in the current policy was a little bit unclear. So we're mirroring this off of what happens if you do a promotion. So if you take on a temporary assignment that's one grade, you get a 5% bump. If you take on two grades, 10% bump. If that still doesn't put you into the pay range of your temporary assignment, you would move to the minimum. Then at the time that the assignment's over, your pay goes back to what it was. But in this case if there were pay increases, then that person would get the pay increase. So you go back to what their salary was, apply any pay increases, and that reinstates their salary. Then the last couple of items are just to clean up those bi-weekly to monthly.

Johnna Sharpe said so the other thing we would be asking the Board to do is to accomplish what we put forward tonight if you so choose. It is to adopt the Pay Classification Ordinance, and then adopt these Personnel Policy changes. That would accomplish what we've recommended this evening. So kind of next steps is to see what other information you all need. I think this is on the agenda for tonight, but certainly understand if you want time to process it. We could bring it back on the December 6 meeting if there's any changes that you want us to consider. I'll let you take it from here Tony.

Interim County Manager Smith said I will bring it up tonight. It's depending on the Board if it moves forward or let Ashley do more homework for the next board meeting.

Commissioner Jefferies said I have one question more. This is something going to be like a Department Head or supervisor as a merit raise. Right? Mrs. Sharpe said excuse me? Commissioner Jefferies said it's going to be used something like a merit raise. Right? Vice Chairman Yarbrough said merit raise. Mrs. Sharpe said not this. There's no pay impact for moving these pay ranges. There's just more earning potential. Then you'll decide what you want

to do for pay increases for next year as part of your budget process. Commissioner Jefferies said well it won't be as a supervisor who comes up and says I want to promote him for doing a great job. It wouldn't be like that? Mrs. Sharpe said no. If you want to promote somebody, typically the process would be there's an open position, they apply, and if they're awarded it, then they would get the increases as outlined in the policy.

Interim County Manager Smith said we want to use this to attract potential people coming in, and also we want the employees to realize their potential.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said thank you Johnna. Thank you Ashley. Mrs. Sharpe said thank you all. I know this was a lot, but I appreciate your time. I think some of this could be very impactful for the county. Ashley said if you have any questions, feel free to email me or Johnna or give us a call.

CLOSED SESSION:

A motion was made at 5:13 pm by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Rose 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 privilege is hereby acknowledged NCGS 143-318.11 (a) (6). (Ayes: Commissioners Holt, Gwynn, Rose, Jefferies, McVey, and Yarbrough)

RECESS:

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said folks we will go into recess until 6:30 pm when the Regularly scheduled meeting begins.

WELCOME:

Chairman Dickerson called the meeting to order, and welcomed everyone to tonight's meeting of the Caswell County Board of Commissioners. 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.

PUBLIC HEARING ON TAX SCHEDULES:

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

Thomas Bernard, Tax Director, said this is what we presented the schedule of values to the Board 30 days ago so we could have a public hearing for any public comments on the schedule of values. After the public hearing, if no comments are made and the Board is satisfied with that, if they will make a motion to adopt the schedule.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said Chairman since there are no public comments, I'll move...

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Someone in the audience said excuse me. I put my name on there.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said is this for the revaluation? The lady said yes.

Vicki Hasting: I don't think I need a mic. Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. My name is Vicky Hastings. My residence is at 336 West Main Street, and I just wanted to bring to your attention that your public notice has a different venue location. I wanted to bring that to light. It did not say the library. It specifically said the Old Courthouse. So I think it's very difficult to have a public hearing when we're not in the venue that we advertised for. So I just wanted to bring that to your attention. We certainly want to hear the information though tonight. I see several folks are in the audience, but I do think you may need to reconsider having another hearing where it's publicly notified in the correct venue. Thank you.

Chairman Dickerson said with that being said. Attorney Johnston said Mr. Chairman, could we address the clerk now to actually see a copy of that Public Notice. Thomas Bernard said it was scheduled I think for the Courthouse. I think so. That's where we were meeting when we presented the schedule of values. I don't know. Attorney Johnston said if that's the case, then we should probably reschedule the public hearing at a later time. Ms. Hasting said I have the notice on my phone if you need to see it. Attorney Johnston said Mr. Bernard, do we need to do 30 days from today? Mr. Bernard said no, 30 days from the time to the meeting. So the next meeting we can probably have the public hearing. As long as it was 30 days from the time, am I right Jerry? 30 days from the time we presented the schedule of values. In that event Mr. Chairman, if it's within the pleasure of the Board and they wish to postpone the public hearing, it may be appropriate to make a motion to postpone the public hearing to the next regularly scheduled Commissioners meeting. But you may want to hear further comments.

Chairman Dickerson said does anyone have any more comments?

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Holt and seconded by Commissioner Dickerson and **carried unanimously** to postpone the Public Hearing to the next meeting. (Ayes: Commissioners Holt, Gwynn, Yarbrough, Rose, McVey, Jefferies, and Dickerson)

Thomas Bernard said Mr. Chairman, I had a one appeal for personal property. It was Conterra. I don't know if it's on... It's not on the agenda, but they, Ryan LLC, is the tax representative who appealed that. I talk to the Department of Revenue on this. They're appealing in five or six counties for fiber optic. It's the same as dark fiber, but Conterra put extra fiber in when they were laying the original line. The Department of Revenue suggests that the Board deny that appeal because they haven't presented any evidence that the fiber optic is obsolete. I don't know if anybody is here from Ryan LLC.

Chairman Dickerson asked if anyone was in the meeting from Ryan LLC?

Thomas Bernard said my suggestion is to deny that appeal for lack of evidence.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said Mr. Chairman don't we need to come out the public hearing before we proceed? No, we're not having a public, but we had a motion to go into one. Attorney Johnston said sorry. There's a motion to postpone the public hearing, but Commission Yarbrough you make a valid point. Maybe you should take an official motion to come out public hearing first.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Jefferies and seconded by Commissioner Gwynn and **carried unanimously** to go out of the Public Hearing. (Ayes: Commissioners Holt, Gwynn, Yarbrough, Rose, McVey, Jefferies, and Dickerson)

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Holt and seconded by Commissioner Yarbrough and **carried unanimously** to postpone the Public Hearing to the next meeting. (Ayes: Commissioners Holt, Gwynn, Yarbrough, Rose, McVey, Jefferies, and Dickerson)

Chairman Dickerson said the next item Mr. Bernard. Thomas Bernard said It's Conterra, Ryann LLC. I make a suggestion that the Board deny that appeal. They have not presented any evidence. The Department of Revenue recommend that all counties deny that appeal also. Chairman Dickerson said there are no representatives here from that company tonight. So they are saying that they recommend we deny their appeal.

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

John Claggett: Good Evening. My name is John Claggett. I reside at 108 Jaye Lane in Providence NC.

There have been multiple reports of "shots fired" on social media both in the Town of Yanceyville and at various places within Caswell County. Some of these reports have been verified and some have not. Some of those that have been verified have resulted in woundings and death. The only municipality to publically respond to these current issues is the Town of Yanceyville with their plan to light up darker areas of the town with 50 more street lights. This just so happened to be addressed at a joint public meeting last Thursday that also hosted a locked door and an armed deputy.

Where's the same compassion and concern for the safety and welfare of our citizens that the stewards of Caswell County displayed for a historic statue and zoning prospects? The absence of Emergency Communication Notifications and your silence is deafening. Thank you.

RECOGNITIONS:

Commissioner Yarbrough: Mr. Chairman, it was definitely an oversight on my part at the last meeting. So I'll recognize them now. I take this time to recognize our County veterans. Those that have served, and those that are serving. I'm sure that we all appreciate the sacrifice that many of them have made and because of them, we can sit around and have these meetings like

this. Nowhere else in the world. Chairman Dickerson said I whole heartedly agree. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said we have our problems granted, but there's nowhere else in the world like the United States. I thank them for their sacrifice.

AGENDA:

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

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

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. November 6, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

COLLECTION AGENCY FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SERVICES:

Barry Lynch, Emergency Management Services Director, said good evening Commissioners. The first thing to present to you is you all should have gotten a copy of a proposal from Lifeline Collections. I'm present this to you again. For the last two years, we have about \$753,000 worth of bad debt. This is debt that is over 180 days. Our current billing company will work the claim for 180 days, and at that point it's turned over to bad debt. We did collect almost \$1.3 Million last year, but we do have roughly \$300- \$350,000 per year in bad debt that we have. Lifeline Collections has just been purchased by our billing company that we currently use so the transition to them is all kind of under one umbrella. It would be an easy transition for our bills and for our collections to go over to them. If we turn everything over to them, their average is about a 6% collection rate which is not a huge amount. Of that 6%, they get 20% of it. So of \$750,000 we're estimating about \$36,000 that we would actually get. It doesn't seem like a lot, but if it's \$5, it's more than we had. The process that they go through is once they get the collection, or it's turned over to a collection, they verify addresses, they do skip tracing to make sure that all the addresses are correct, and then they're sent letters every 30 days until it's collected. They will also dedicate 60 hours a week of telephone follow-up or messages for just our accounts. So like I said I've presented this before, but I felt like that since this company is part of the umbrella of our billing company that we already have, it's a good time to look at this option again.

Commissioner Holt asked are you saying they of the \$750,000, they would average getting just 6% of that? Mr. Lynch said yes sir. That's kind of the method. Sorry. It's kind of what they're

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collecting on. A lot of those debts we're not going to get anyway, but that's kind of the national average or the average. This is the fourth company that I've gotten quotes from, and all of them are 5-6%. That's what they estimate that they would collect. This company is actually about 3% to 5% less than other three proposals, and they have a flat rate. The other companies depending on how old the debt is as to how much their percentage is, and it goes up for other companies up to 15%. They said that we could go back, if we started now, we could go back two years and start the collection from two years back.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said I know their delinquent after 180 days. Mr. Lynch said yes. Vice Chairman Yarbrough asked how long does this pursue after the 180 days? Mr. Lynch said as long as we tell them to. We can set up protocols in-house that says once it gets to, and I'm just picking a number, five years then it cuts off and is written off at that point. With the bad debt, we do debt set off now. Last year, 2023, we collected \$29,000 from debt set off. In 2022 we collected \$25,000 from debt set off. They will be put into collections and bad debt simultaneously. So if it gets collected in one area, it'll be taken off of the other area. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said this company will take 20% of any amount collected. Correct? Mr. Lynch said yes sir, and we don't pay anything unless they collect something.

Chairman Dickerson said what has been the reservations on the part of past Boards not to implement the collection? Mr. Lynch said honestly I think it's perception was what was brought up multiple times of County government trying to collect or send to collection agencies for that. The last time I presented it, I'm not sure what Commissioner it was that asked about the possibilities of using the collection agency to do other departments within the county also. The two that I had prior to this did not do that, but Lifeline, they represent or collect for over 300 municipalities I think. So they do whatever collections for County government you want, whether it's taxes, fines, or whatever it may be. They collect that also, but my suggestion would be to start with EMS first and see how it works. Then add additional departments in at a later time.

Chairman Dickerson said I understand the perception, but it's also the flip side to that perception. If you let folks that owe a legitimate debt to the county slide and they're not expected to pay, other people that do pay are treated unfairly by that same formula. So I don't see a problem with going after folks that owe legitimate funds to the county.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said so there's no upfront cost? No cost at all unless they do collect it? Mr. Lynch said unless they collect, there's no County funds spent. The way that they invoice it is they take their part off the top. Then they make a deposit every day through electronic funds or credit card. Whichever. From start to setup or from saying we want to do, it's three weeks until they're operational.

Chairman Dickerson asked are there other questions or comments from the Board?

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Jefferies and seconded by Commissioner Yarbrough and **carried unanimously** to approve the Collection Agency since there is no cost to the

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County. (Ayes: Commissioners Gwynn, Jefferies, McVey, Dickerson, Holt Rose, and Yarbrough)

ADDITION OF 2 GRANT FUNDED COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE POSITIONS:

Barry Lynch, Emergency Management Services Director said I'm going pass these out if it is okay. This is an actual job description, and I apologize. I just got this today. I've been contacted by Cassandra Shelton from the Reach Partnership. To give you a little bit of history, the Reach Partnership is who pays the salary for our Community Paramedic Program. It's 100% funded by them. The Reach Partnership has been going on for about six or seven years. It started out with community health workers for the first iteration of the grant, and then in the second one, they added the Community Paramedics. That's when we got the funding for the Community Paramedic Program. The Reach Partnership is a system to improve community health, involves a strategic effort to bring death count down and disparate and siloed health providers together. It employs Coordinated Care Teams to reduce available Emergency Department and Hospital use and address chronic disease and health factors. Coordinated Care Teams include Cross Agency Community Health Workers, Care Coordinators, and Community Paramedics. Community Health Workers and Community Paramedics are trusted members of the community who are linked between Health Care, Social Services, and community members. Currently the Reach Program has 20 Community Health Care Workers, and two of which are specifically assigned to Caswell County. The Reach Teams are liaison between the community and available resources. We've had these two positions in the county. We're in year three of the grant right now, and we've had two positions that's in the county. They have been housed at Compassion. Compassion has decided to relinquish their funds for those two positions so it opened it up for us. EMS already has a business agreement with the Reach Program. We have the agreements for data exchange already in place so they felt that it would make an easy transition for us to do that. Some of the outcomes for 2021-23 for the Reach Program are 3,592 connections to resources for 350 clients, maintained the active minimum client load of 250 clients, reduce Emergency Room visit for 45% of clients, connect 53% of clients to Primary Care, and connected 63% of clients to food and housing resources. These two positions would work together hand in hand with our Community Paramedic that we already have. It's two more years, 100% grant funded, and no cost to the county. I think that they're a valuable asset to the citizens of the county.

Commissioner Holt said can I ask a question? Mr. Lynch said yes sir. Commissioner Holt said I know how grant work can be a trap. You say two years. Mr. Lynch said yes. Commissioner Holt said are they on our employment after the two years? Mr. Lynch said no. Not unless you all as Commissioners vote to approve them, but they're hired knowing that it's a grant funded position. At the end of two years, if the Danville Regional Foundation don't pick it up for an additional period of time, they know that that position is no longer there.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said no cost to the county whatsoever? Mr. Lynch said no sir.

Commissioner Rose said this will cut down a lot on the EMS travel. As far as will they go out and deal with the calls like a nose bleed. How will these position work? Mr. Lynch said no, they won't be doing that. What they will do to reduce EMS calls is just like the Community Paramedic, that gets some of our frequent flyers. We will send her out. Like one instance, we had a gentleman that called us on an average of 12 times a month. We sent the Community Paramedic out there to interact with him and get him set up. He hasn't called us since. Those are 12 calls that were not transported. Those are non-emergency. Commissioner Rose said that's what I was getting at. They'll come out and do stuff like that. They will alleviate some transportation possibly. They can handle it on scene. Barry Lynch said well the Community Health Workers would not be responding to actual calls, but they would be helping with patient education and the preventive side of everything to keep them from calling EMS. To get them hooked up with a personal Physician so they're not using us or the Emergency Department as their primary Physician. Commissioner Rose said question. How will that work if somebody was to call 911? Mr. Lynch said they're still going to get an ambulance. These are completely non-emergency. They'll work with the Community Paramedic to arrange doctor's appointments. Sometimes right now the Community Paramedic may go to a doctor's appointment with the patient just so that they can get the true history and get the patient set up with the treatment plan that they want. Just from my EMS response numbers, and it's been three or four months ago that I ran the numbers, the patients that a Community Paramedic have been involved, she's decreased the number of 911 calls from that group of people by 64%.

Commissioner Holt asked whose insurance will they be under? Mr. Lynch said ours. Commissioner Holt said then what will that cost there? When you say you send them out that means two more vehicles we need. Mr. Lynch said currently they would drive their own vehicle, and there'll be reimbursed mileage for it. Commissioner Holt said that we pay? Mr. Lynch said the grant pays for that. Commissioner Rose said the grant covers insurance and everything. Mr. Lynch said yes, grant pays any cost related to that. They will pay for it, and aside from that, they've agreed to buy computers or whatever they would need as a start also. That wouldn't come out of County funds at all.

Chairman Dickerson said so no cost to the county. No obligation to extend the employment after the grant runs out. If it does run out, and savings with cutting down on unnecessary calls for EMS. Mr. Lynch said correct. We just found out, I got the email Friday and we don't know the 100% details of it yet. That was why I'm a little hesitant, but Medicare has agreed to pay \$49 per visit for a Community Health Worker to come to the house or to do home visits. That's something we just found out about last Wednesday. That's when they went to the class, and I found out about it Friday. So we don't know how that's going to work honestly, but there's a potential down the road for revenue from them. But we don't know how it's going to work yet.

Chairman Dickerson said any other comments or questions from the Board? we approve have a motion and a second to approve all those in favor signify by saying I oppos motion carries okay thank you.

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

PELHAM INDUSTRIAL PARK PROSPECT:

Interim County Manager Smith said Commissioners, tonight I want to brief you on prospect we have interested in building a new manufacturing department in Caswell County. We're looking at Pelham currently. Two sites. Now one site will be on the CEAD project, but I want to have a back-up plan in case that proposition fails. So I wanted to talk to the Commission about having maybe a track allocated for them in the Industrial Park. Having a copy of the sketch in front of you of the Industrial Park with the layout of the building and so forth. It's from Dewberry. So currently they have four buildings actually located on the 80 acres of the Pelham Business Park. The Western most building is 200,000 square feet, and this Prospect will need 100,000 square feet to start out with expansion. He's going to invest \$10 million up front, and it's going to have 50 jobs up front. Each paying more than the State average wage. So like I said, I want to have a plan to where if the plan with Pelham CEAD Project fails, we can just take them right across the road and keep going. But that's going to be the number one choice, the CEAD Project. But with the Topo and the lay land there, there's some doubt in my mind as to what they can make it work. We're ongoing with discussions with PCC, the prospect, and the Architect Engineers about making it work, but quite honestly we're so late to the game putting them on that track, it may hold up progress of the CEAD Project.

Commissioner Holt asked did he make you an offer on the cost of the land? Mr. Smith said we have not talked about that. Here again this is just a back plan. I want the Board to be aware that we've got this prospect interested in coming into Caswell. They are currently in Virginia processing. It's an established company that's got quite a good network. So it's just a win-win for us if we can pull them in. Commissioner Holt said you know that that land is skyrocketing right now. Mr. Smith said well that's the reason I was thinking, if we could consider the Western most part of that land to pull in a \$10 million investment. We still have the rest of the park. 80 acres carve out that 10 acres, and 70 acres for industrial prospects, hotels, restaurant, or whatever. We got two sites that have more visibility from the highway than the site I'm talking about, which may be better for hotel location.

Commissioner McVey asked is that on the side road with the rest of it? At the back? Mr. Smith said yes sir it is. Commissioner Holt said that's prime hotel and restaurant locations there. Mr. Smith said here again this is \$10 million investment. One prospect that will be there and hopefully use the spot.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough asked how many jobs you say? Interim County Manager Smith said 50 jobs. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said it's paying above State average, and Mr. Smith said yes sir.

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Commissioner Jefferies said this is 8 acres you talking about? Mr. Smith said yes sir. 8 acres in the West most part of that 80 acres. About 8 to 10 acres is what they said they would need, but 100,000 square feet with expansion up to I would say probably another 50,000. But eight acres just about to get that done.

Commissioner McVey said that CEAD Project, is that 80? Tony Smith said 80 acres across the road and 70 acres. Yes, sir, but the topo is pretty bad on that project. Commissioner McVey said right. Mr. Smith said you can use it to put parks, fields, and things like that, but it's hard to put a big 100,000 square foot building there. Commissioner McVey said I been over there. I just couldn't remember how much land we still had in the CEAD Project. Mr. Smith said we'll try to make that work. I just want to have a backup plan with the Board so we can discuss it again in the next meeting or whenever we have a decision from PCC.

Chairman Dickerson said do you have a feel from speaking with the company about them purchasing that land in the Industrial Park pricewise? You may kind of know, but we don't want to discuss all that in an open meeting. Mr. Smith said actually this is the same prospect that was presented to the Board earlier this year with the idea of building a shell building. This was the plan all along. They knew they were going to have manufacturing needs. It didn't come out, didn't say who it is, but it was mentioned as a shell building. Actually this is the same prospect. Chairman Dickerson said okay.

Commissioner Holt said bear with me here. I hope I misunderstood you. They're only wanting to buy 8 or 10 acres with the idea they would buy the rest, or was it the whole project? Interim County Manager Smith said eight to 10 acres is what they would need total. Commissioner Holt said but do they want to buy the whole site? Mr. Smith said the whole 10 acres, yes sir.

Commissioner Rose said I don't think they want to buy the whole 80. Commissioner Holt said there's not that much road frontage. Mr. Smith said 8-10 acres is all they need. Commissioner Holt said but what I'm saying is you're cutting off back side. Mr. Smith said at this particular site the Windsend mode, you would not be cutting off back tract.

Commissioner Rose said out of those pictures, which one you talking about? It's in that 200,000 square foot building to the left. Commissioner Rose said the 200,000 square foot building right here.

Chairman Dickerson said can you put that picture up on the screen? Do you have it on your computer? Attorney Johnston shared the picture with Chairman Dickerson. Chairman Dickerson said so this if I'm looking at this drawing correctly. The 200k one, that's on the back side of Industrial Park. That's not taking up the road frontage on Highway 29. Mr. Smith said no, not at all. It's kind of stuck off to the side there. It lays it lays good. It's a nice piece of property, but here again you don't find many investments of that size and that many good jobs coming. That's going to be one of the major investments that we've had as far as industrial.

Commissioner Rose said that 50k and that 75k, can they be accesses off of 29? Mr. Smith said I see a road going to that so it can be accessed from 700, but I don't think you can access that from 29. Commissioner Holt said no, you can't. It's going to make basically a small alleyway into all the rest of the property. Mr. Smith said actually we could cut down the 200,000 square feet to the size of the building and make it longer I suppose than it is now giving you more road frontage on 700 for other industries.

Commissioner Rose said I think the thing the Board needs to look at is whether we want to take somebody wanting to come here, or we want to say let's wait and see if somebody does come here. You get what I'm saying. We got somebody interested in it. Mr. Smith said these guys are ready to go. They're waiting on us. We're waiting on the State. Commissioner Rose said basically you haven't got a definite on the CEAD Project side to see if we can make that work. Mr. Smith said because we can't say for sure that we can make it work. That's where we at right now. Commissioner Rose said okay. Mr. Smith said and time was of the essence. I didn't want to waste any more time stringing that with the Board. We wanted to go that way, but we didn't get that way. So I wanted to start the process tonight.

Commissioner Holt said what do they make? Interim County Manager Smith said tobacco processing.

Commissioner McVey said Manager, are we going to be able to use the existing road going in there, or would there have to be a new road cut? Mr. Smith said well there's a site plan here with Dewberry, which shows a new road going into it, but we've got a lot of flexibility at this point in time. Commissioner McVey said okay. Commissioner Holt said they would need to build the road down to the back of their property. It would be part of the deal. Mr. Smith said we could have Dewberry, if the Board's interested, we could have Dewberry take this plan and resize it a little bit. Make it a little deeper not so wide to minimize the road frontage to be given up. Hopefully it's not necessary. Hopefully PCC can work it out with this process.

Chairman Dickerson said well you're thinking ahead man. Playing chess. That's admirable. Thank you for bringing that information to the Board.

Commissioner Jefferies said Mr. County Manager, haven't this came up before this Board before. Mr. Smith said it came up earlier as the shell building. Commissioner Jefferies said yes, and I think it was some price otherwise negotiating on this thing too. I think I remember it. Commissioner Rose said was it an offer made before on the land. Mr. Smith said there was an offer made on the land, and I think it was turn down because we want to hold the property for casino related investments. But that's before we knew it was a \$10 million investment. The County's already offered incentives to this prospect amounting to just under \$300,000 in tax savings over five years. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said so are you asking the Board to take any action tonight, or are you trying to make the Board aware? Mr. Smith said no sir. Just make you aware.

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Chairman Dickerson asked are there any more questions or comments about the Industrial Park project? There being none we will move on.

CEAD PROJECT UPDATE:

Dr. Senegal had a schedule conflict and was unable to attend. We will place this item on an upcoming agenda.

ACTION ITEMS:

BOARD AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS:

Juvenile Crime Prevention Council: This Board has one member whose term ended 10/30/2023, and we received 1 application.

Attorney Johnston said Mr. Chairman, if we can have a motion to open the floor for nominations.

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

A **motion** was made by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Holt and **carried unanimously to reappoint Gwen Vaughn to the Juvenile Crime Prevention Council.** (Ayes: Commissioners Holt, Jefferies, McVey, Rose, Gwynn, Yarbrough, and Dickerson)

REVISION TO HIRING RATE POLICY:

Interim County Manager Smith said Mr. Chairman, as you are aware earlier today we reviewed revisions to our payroll program from the NCACC. I wanted to present to the Board tonight for discussion and possibly action to see if we want to move forward with that recommendation from the NCACC. Basically it's Caswell County Pay and Classification Ordinance Fiscal 2024 changes: Eliminating the starting pay and having only minimum starting point and maximum per her discussions.

Commissioner Rose said was I not mistaken that she said the minimum was already budgeted into the budget instead of the starting salary for 6 months, you get to the minimum. It was already budgeted in the budgets for these positions. Mr. Smith said she did say that. I don't think it's going to affect any employee we've got. I may be wrong. I doubt it's going to affect any employee at this point in time. This is just moving forward. Commissioner Rose said this is moving forward with new hires from today. Mr. Smith said yes sir.

Chairman Dickerson said but what does it do? Mr. Smith said it eliminates the starting pay which is less than the minimum. She said we're the only county that she knows of that does that. That's something we need to review and change. Basically in the past, we've had a starting grade. Then after six months, we would increase after the probationary period. After the probation period they would get an increase up to the minimum. She recommended that we eliminate that and

start with the minimum or higher. They just have to have a probation period and work that out for 6 months and make the decision.

Commissioner Holt said I think it's a lot of information. I don't feel comfortable and don't think we should vote tonight.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said can I ask HR a question? How urgent, for lack of a better word, is it. I know it's something that hadn't been done recently or hasn't been done at all. But if it was a month later down the road doing it, would it make a huge difference? Ashley Powell said not really, but the sooner the better. Before we hit the budgeting process, that way we've already got it in place. I mean if we need to get back together and have another work session just to go over and hash out some things, we can. I can email you those too Mr. Dickerson since you weren't here. But we can do that, or we can just bring it back to the next Board meeting. It's whatever y'all decide. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said Mr. Chairman, I'm kind of in the opinion of Commissioner Holt. I'm not saying it's good, it's bad, or whatever, but it's a lot of information. A lot and an hour to look at it, I would like a little more time. Chairman Dickerson said I wholeheartedly agree with you. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said and that being said, that December the 4th meeting is already getting pretty full. Now that we have a 5:00 work session with the ladies. I suggest either the second meeting in December or the first meeting in January myself. That's my opinion. Ashley said will we have the second meeting in December? Typically, we don't. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said I said either. That's the reason I said either. I don't know which one. Ashley said we can wait til the second one. I mean the first one in January. That's fine, and if you want to do a work session just to go over, we can send this information out via email as well for y'all to review. If you have any questions you can always shoot me and Johnna a call or an email. But if you want to have a work session we can, or we can just put it back on the agenda. Because it is a lot, and we really didn't expect y'all to vote today on it. But we wanted to put it on there just in case you did.

Chairman Dickerson said I personally as an individual, I don't have a problem waiting on this. I do have a question. I apologize. I know you all already went over this, but this proposal is wanting to do away with the hiring rate and start any future employees at the minimum. Is that the crux of it? Commissioner McVey said yes, and it changes their classification. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said it changes certain pay grades. Commissioner Holt said the pay grades go up. Commissioner Rose said the pay grades go up, but I think she said that salaries didn't change. Tony Smith said no financial impact. Chairman Dickerson said I myself, I kind of I agree with Commissioner Holt and Commissioner Yarbrough. I'd like to have some time to look that over. I think it'd be better serve in January, but what's the pleasure of the Board?

Commissioner Jefferies said I think that we need to have a work session on this. It's going to cost. We got to know where things going to come from. We can sort things out in a work session. It's a good program.

Commissioner Gwynn said I think we should look at January.

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Vice Chairman Yarborough said Mr. Chairman, I suggest that we have a work session an hour prior to our first board meeting in January. Ashley said do you think an hour will be enough? Vice Chairman Yarbrough said personally I do. I don't know what the other six members of the Board will say, but I do. Commissioner Rose said excuse me. That meeting will be held on the second because Monday is a holiday. Ashley said it seems right.

Commissioner Holt said there was a lot of flak last year about us canceling that meeting right before Christmas on the internet. I know you said typically we don't do it, but I think we might want to consider that. Commissioner Gwynn said in December? Chairman Dickerson said it'll be a lot of people out of town that week. Commissioner Holt said I was just saying people was fussing about us not meeting. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said I think we will decide that at our next meeting. That's usually the case. My suggestion still holds to have a work session an hour prior to our normal board meeting at the first meeting in January. That will be the second I'm sure. You said the first was on Monday? Commissioner Rose said yes, the first is on Monday. Commissioner McVey said do you need a motion on that? Vice Chairman Yarbrough said yes, I'll make that motion.

A **motion** was made by Commissioner Yarbrough and seconded by Commissioner McVey and **carried unanimously** to have a work session an hour prior to the January 2nd board meeting. (Ayes: Commissioners Holt, Jefferies, McVey, Rose, Gwynn, Yarbrough, and Dickerson)

Commissioner Gwynn said we have a lot of meetings going on. Are we going to get a date reminder from our clerk? I don't think she was here to hear about all the meetings. Chairman Dickerson said we will make sure she gets all that. If there is no more discussion with that, let's go to the next item.

COUNTY MANAGER'S UPDATES:

Interim County Manager Smith said at this time I'd like to have Russell Johnston give an update on the drone policy and proposed changes.

Attorney Johnston said yes sir. I'll be glad to. Thank you Mr. Smith. Mr. Chairman and members of the Board at your last meeting there were several questions and concerns about the collaboration between the State Highway Patrol and the Local Sheriff's Department in regards to working together on public emergencies. So I was asked at the last meeting several questions about this, and I want to try to answer all of your questions tonight. In analyzing these issues, I communicated with our local Sheriff here in Caswell County and the Highway Patrol Sergeant in Roxboro or Person County, and I believe that's Patrol Troop D District 4. I also reached out to the First Sergeant of the State Highway Patrol office in Raleigh.

- So the first question that was posed was what is the liability of the Highway Patrol? What type of liability coverage do they have in their department? So in researching that I looked at the North Carolina General Statutes 20-194, which states "In the event that a member of the

Highway Patrol is sued in a civil action for acts occurring while they're active within the scope of their duties, then the Attorney General's Office will defend such employee. Any potential civil judgment rendered as a result of the civil action shall be paid as an expense up to the limit provided in the NC Tort Claims Act subject to the state's maximum limit of liability insurance.” So just like Sheriff's Deputies here in Caswell County are covered under our county's liability insurance, the State Highway Patrol has a separate State liability insurance policy that covers them. So that covers the Highway Patrols.

- The next question was can a State Trooper ask EMS employees to assist in a law enforcement decision? So also in researching the general statutes related to the State Highway Patrol, there's no specific mention of EMS employees or emergency workers under the general statutes that cover the State Highway Patrol, but that being said it doesn't prohibit the Highway Patrol from working with an emergency worker. The statutes do state that the Governor's Office that governs the Highway Patrol does encourage cooperation between the State Highway Patrol and the local Sheriff's Department for the enforcement of all traffic laws. So the answer to that question is there's no language that explicitly prohibit an EMS employee from assisting the Highway Patrol, but certainly an EMS worker is a county employee. So I think the County Commissioners or the County Manager would have discretion whether or not they would allow that employee to work in conjunction with the State Highway Patrol.
- The third question is if Caswell County refuses to allow county employees to assist the State Highway Patrol, will this jeopardize State funds allocated for Caswell County? So also in the general statutes it states in part that the Secretary of Public Safety with the approval of the Governor may make arrangements for compensation of special services rendered by such local Sheriff's Deputies or Officers out of the funds allotted to the State Highway Patrol. So I was a little curious as to whether the local law enforcement agency here in Caswell County receives funds from the State Highway Patrol. Commissioner Rose may be able to elaborate on this, but I did speak with the Sheriff's Department. They're not aware of any specific funds that come from the Highway Patrol, but certainly they have collaborated with the Highway Patrol in the past, especially a couple of years ago when the traffic incidents spiked on Highway 86. There was a campaign by the Highway Patrol to slow down the traffic and minimize accidents out there. So the bottom line is if the Governor does allocate resources to Caswell County for us to work in conjunction with the Highway Patrol and we refuse to do so, then funds could be taken away.
- The next question that was posed was does the Sheriff have an issue with the Highway Patrol contacting EMS to operate a drone on the Highway Patrol's behalf? Again in speaking with the Sheriff, there are no issues from them.

So that would conclude the questions that were posed at the last meeting. Certainly I'll entertain any more questions or concerns at this time.

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Chairman Dickerson said so did I understand you said at this time there are no funds coming from the Highway Patrol to the local Sheriff's Department here to your knowledge? Attorney Johnston said to my knowledge in speaking with the Sheriff's Department and the Highway Patrol office not at this time, but the option is there for the Governor to allocate resources. Chairman Dickerson said we had options there for him to give everybody in Caswell County a huge pay raise if they wanted to, but I don't know how that's going to go down. Well this Board voted last time around to adopt the recommendation from the Sheriff's Department as Tony Durden, Sheriff of the county proposed to us. So is the matter closed now? I mean we adopted an official policy on it? My understanding was that if they need assistance, they would reach out to the Sheriff's Department, and the Sheriff's Department in conjunction with the County Manager would make the call if it was an emergency. But after a certain point in time, the Sheriff's Department is going to have all their people trained that they need to fly the drones. So after that is set in place, they wouldn't need us anymore anyway. So doesn't it all take care of itself? Attorney Johnston said that's my understanding, and a vote did take place at the last meeting. But there were additional concerns presented, and I promised the Board I would get back to you on these concerns. I just wanted to address those in case there were any other questions. Chairman Dickerson said I appreciate that.

Attorney Johnston said all right. If there are no further questions, I've got one more item to update. I appreciate Mr. Smith allocating the time for me to address the Board. I just want to give you an update on the FOIA request that's pending. I did reach out to the IT Director, Mr. Benson, a few weeks ago. He was able to isolate the emails that have been requested as a part of that FOIA request, and he has presented those to me on electronic form. I'm in the process of reviewing those emails to separate which ones are confidential and which ones are not. So I should have that completed by next week, and then I'll meet with the IT Director again and make the necessary arrangements to fulfill the FOIA request.

Chairman Dickerson asked what kind of time has that taken on your part? Attorney Johnston said I did promise Commissioner Yarbrough I would get back to him on that time. It's taken me about four hours thus far and probably another four hours to complete it. Vice Chairman Yarbrough asked how many emails, and Attorney Johnston said approximately 2,000.

Commissioner Rose asked what is the charge on that? Attorney Johnston said I don't know that an invoice has been presented by the IT Department yet. My hourly rate based upon the county contract would be \$200 an hour. Commissioner Rose said for 8 hours. Attorney Johnston said it may be less than that. It's taken me about four hours thus far, and I'm anticipating it will take at least four more hours. Commissioner Rose said do they have pay that prior to getting them? Attorney Johnston said not pursuant to the general statutes. That charge would be the County's responsibility.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said you've lost me there for a minute. That charge? You're talking about your hourly charge? Attorney Johnston said yes sir. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said I

thought... that's okay. But as far as the individual that requested the material, whatever it cost the county to get that material that they wanted, does that individual have to pay up front before they're given to him? Attorney Johnston said that's my understanding. Yes, sir, and I'll meet with Mr. Benson again to determine the time he has in this process as well. Those are my updates at this time, I'll turn it back over to Mr. Smith.

Interim County Manager Smith said earlier today Melissa Williamson and I met with Jeff Brooks, who heads up the Statewide Department of Information Technology. We talked about the new CAB Program coming down and we're now where we're getting ready to crank it up. We talked about the amount of funds we had allocated to match. We talked about the total ARPA grant that we had, and I think we're going to fall within the parameters that we were hoping to there. We got \$350,000 I believe for match currently for the CAB Program. So that's going to amount to about \$3.5 billion worth of connectivity. So it's going to be a pretty good number of houses. He couldn't tell me how much it was per house, but that's going to be a large project. Additionally, we talked about getting an update from Zitel. We have become a little bit concerned because we had not heard much from Zitel. They promised to get started a month or so ago, and I've not seen any activity. So he's going to give us an update on that and see if he can get them underway. Lastly we talked to Piedmont Electric today, and they're going to provide us a \$25,000 grant for broadband. We're going to take part of that and put it with Spectrum's second phase of the GREAT Grant. Was it 600 households? Melissa Williamson said yes. Mr. Smith said they'll be connecting there. We had allocated money originally to Zitel in the GREAT Grant, but we never addressed the second phase of the GREAT Grant, which is going to be done by Spectrum. So that'll take care of that \$10,000 match required, and give us \$15,000 to go towards the CAB Project. So hopefully we'll get that check this week.

Chairman Dickerson asked so when do you see the light at the end of the tunnel? I know you got to hear back from them. Mr. Smith said well I hope we can get cranked up with the CAB Project the first part of the year or by spring of the year anyway because then we're going get started with the GIS surveys and so forth. So we're underway now that he knows we've got the money set aside for it. He's got millions of dollars to give away. He says it's in his Fiat, and he's got to give it away. So he's real anxious to get things going in the county. So we're going to work with him.

Commissioner Holt said so we were told several times that that second phase, what they didn't cover, we had the money set aside for that. Mr. Smith said we've set aside money. I think we set aside \$250,000 for Zitel. Here again we've not seen any progress out of them, but they're tell us that they are Engineering. You can't see that on the side of the highway. I think after next week we're going to probably get a progress report from Zitel about when they're going to be in here and get cranked up. Their contract is expecting them to be completely finished by May of 2025. They've got about 3,900 households to connect. So they have got to get started.

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Chairman Dickerson asked are there penalties if they don't get it completed on time? Mr. Smith said I do not know. I'll be honest with you. I do not know. But what I'm concerned with is if they back out of the contract. I don't see them moving forward.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said that money that the county allocated, they don't get that until the work is completed. Mr. Smith said they do not. But if they pull out, it's going to set us back a year. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said true. What I'm saying is we won't have any money invested in them. Mr. Smith said we will not. Vice Chairman Yarbrough said if it falls through, and Mr. Smith said right. Like I said Spectrum has got the second phase the GREAT Grant, and we're going to be putting \$10,000 match with them. So we just signed today the Form J to get them started. So they're underway. We'll be sending some progress reports on that in the coming days, and we talk about also what's called the next stop. Melissa Williamson said Stop Gap. Mr. Smith said Stop Gap, which will take care of all those that were not covered by phase one, two, and three. That's going to be completely paid for by the State. That's the ones down in remoted areas and two mile pull to get to them. So it may take a while, but that's between the three phases and this last phase, it should cover just about everybody in the county.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said so anybody in the county that wants broadband should be able to have access to it. We don't know what kind of time frame, but it will be available if they want it. Mr. Smith said hopefully within two years. So we had a really good meeting with Mr. Brooks, and he's there to help us.

The next item, we were scheduled to have some Film Production starting December 1st, but that's been pushed back to the Spring of the year. They had some problems scheduling so they pushed that back to the spring of the year. Which may be a good thing because starting next week we're going to start painting the courthouse. It's going to take about 30 days. We're hoping by the first of the year we'll be finished up with that. Audio, I did check on the audio. We got a price on wireless speakers and wireless mics versus wired. The wired mics and audio equipment is just under \$40,000, and the wireless was just over \$64,000. So I looked, but I didn't find anything in budget for that. So we may want to talk about that come budget time next year. That's the state of art audio system, and if we decide to proceed, I'll have the company come in to talk about specifications unless you want to proceed now. We will find the money somewhere else. I'll be glad to do that too.

Chairman Dickerson asked the difference in the wired and the wireless far as sound quality, was there any? Mr. Smith said he talk like the wired would be more dependable than the wireless, but you just have cords to deal with. But you got the platform now. I think you can go through the desk there up under the platform, and then have one or two runs across to the processing unit to the side. That's a lot of money difference.

Commissioner Gwynn said I definitely feel like we do need a better hearing system as soon as possible because I was sitting on the other side of Jeremiah and I could not hear either. I had something all confused until somebody else explained it to me. Mr. Smith said with the Boards

permission, we will see if we can find the fund somewhere and bring it back to the Board at the next meeting.

Chairman Dickerson said what's the pleasure of the Board? Questions or comments.

Vice Chairman Yarbrough said if he can find the money.

Commissioner Holt said yes, I would say the wired. No harder than that would be, that would be a better option. Mr. Smith said I think you're right. Commissioner Holt said just getting it underneath that canopy. I mean the podium and then up to the desk. It's all you got to cross at that one spot.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Gwynn: I would like to get this before tonight when I walk in. The agenda, I didn't have an agenda until I got here, and I saw it being passed out. We usually get them ahead of time. I didn't get it. Maybe everybody else did. Some of the Commissioners said I got it in email. I didn't get it. I got after I got here. The Clerk said it was sent out last Thursday. Commissioner Gwynn asked Mr. Jefferies did he get it, and he said I got it on my iPad. I never got it, but it might have been my iPad. Commissioner Jefferies said you didn't get it on your iPad. I got it on mine. Mrs. Gwynn said I'm okay with it, but I just thought it wasn't being sent out.

Commissioner Rose said I guess we just need to make some announcement that we will be here since you said the courthouse will be started. Mr. Smith said it will be next week. Yes, sir. So we won't be able to meet up there for these hearings. Commissioner Holt said so we need to send something out saying the public meeting will be here. Mr. Smith said correct.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPCOMING EVENTS:

- November 23-24, 2023 County Offices Closed to observe the Thanksgiving Holiday
- December 2, 2023 Parade and Christmas Tree Lighting 2 pm-7 pm
- December 4, 2023 Board of Commissioners Meeting at 6:30 pm at the Gunn Memorial Library
- December 9, 2023 Pelham Winter Fest 9 am to 6 pm at the Pelham Community Center

ADJOURNMENT:

A **motion** was made at 7:45 pm by Commissioner McVey and seconded by Commissioner Jefferies and **carried unanimously** to adjourn the meeting. (Ayes: Commissioners Holt, Gwynn, Yarbrough, Jefferies, Rose, McVey, and Dickerson)

Carla R. Smith
Clerk to the Board

John Dickerson
Chairman

November 20, 2023